Despair not:
It is only the end of the world

Differences in the representation of social cohesion between three post-apocalyptic novels from the 1950s and their 21st century film adaptations

Emmi M. Vissër
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Declare this an emergency
Come on and spread a sense of urgency
And pull us through
And pull us through
And this is the end
This is the end of the world
Muse “Apocalypse Please”

Emmi M. Visser
2041405

Prof. dr. M. G. Kemperink
Dr. M. Kiss

Master’s Thesis Arts, Culture and Media
University of Groningen
Arts policy and Marketing / Literature

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Abstract

This thesis investigates three classic post-apocalyptic novels written in the 1950s: *I Am Legend*, *The Day of the Triffids* and *On the Beach*. It compares each work against a 21st century film adaptation of that same novel. The first chapter of this thesis comprises an overview of the field of utopian studies, science fiction and (post-)apocalyptic fiction in order to provide a theoretical background to the works under discussion. Chapter two briefly discusses the difficulties in adapting literature to cinema and shows how this medial change often warrants certain deviations from the original story. The element of comparison for the three 1950s novels and 21st century films is the representation of social cohesion and changes herein, which may be thought to reflect sociological views held in society at the time. Social cohesion constitutes the ways in which humans interact with one another in the post-apocalyptic landscape. As a framework against which to pinpoint this social behaviour, the thesis develops a model based on human motivations in chapter 3. The list of motivations which people experience and causes them to behave a certain way, is limited and is thus suitable as a tool for the analysis of social cohesion. The hypothesis of this thesis is that the 21st century films present a greater focus on individuality while simultaneously showing a greater emphasis on man as an essentially social being.

Chapter 4 discusses both versions of *The Day of the Triffids*, showing the important ecological layer in both works. The novel shows the failure of modern society, the need to abandon old morals, the importance of reproduction, the failure of power-lust and the family as the ideal social unit. The film also critiques modern society, power and aggression and has a stronger focus on career, success and meaningful work, but also highlights the importance of belongingness. Chapter 5 shows that both novel and film *I Am Legend* call attention to the difficulties of living completely alone. The novel further emphasises the resulting sexual frustration. It depicts morality as relative and science as virtuous, and shows humanity’s reign as finite. The film especially emphasises the unmeasurable momentousness of social contact and belongingness, and the importance of persevering in one’s work. It also has a religious component. In chapter 6 *On the Beach* is discussed as a novel centring around the idea of dying with dignity. Duty and loyalty are praiseworthy qualities. Scientific inquiry, career and success are considered important. The film also shows career and work in a positive light, but especially emphasises the importance of dying with one’s loved ones and the frustration of dying without knowing if there is a meaning to life or death.

This thesis concludes — in line with sociological findings and the hypothesis of this thesis —, that there are two distinct social trends to be found in the 21st century films as opposed to the 1950s novels. Firstly, the need for belongingness has grown in importance. People crave close human contact. The other trend is a greater individuality, shown in the greater focus on work and career, the ‘upgrade’ of average protagonists to distinguished protagonists, and the diminished focus on the survival of humanity as a whole. The thesis further concludes that this is not a paradox, because the focus is shifted to belongingness on a micro level rather than a macro level. Group membership (macro) provides a sense of identity, but because the 21st century protagonists already derive identity from their personal accomplishments, they no longer need such membership. As essentially social beings, they do still crave human contact and instead find this on an interpersonal (micro) level.
Introduction

Throughout the thirteen-year tribulation that began on the winter solstice 1999 we can expect to see a number of dramatic events guiding us to our ultimate destiny in 2012. Among these events we can expect to see an increase in social and political unrest, new and untreatable pandemics, unusual and unpredictable weather patterns throughout the world, devastating natural disasters in the most unlikely of places, and man made devastation beyond our wildest imagination.

The 2012 Network

The year 2012 marks the end of a cycle of the Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar, better known as the Maya Calendar. According to some, this end of time amounts to nothing less than the end of the world, as the citation above illustrates. Of course, there is no scientific basis for the idea that the end of a cycle in the Maya Calendar amounts to anything like an apocalyptic event. In fact, for the Mayans it was seen as a celebration to reach the end of a cycle. Still, some with less scientific and less optimistic views believe that on December 21st of this year, the apocalypse will strike on planet earth, and the human race will find its doom. Or will it? The long history of apocalyptic fiction almost invariably leaves room for survivors of some kind — from the Judaist/Christian tradition with its Book of Revelation to the recent already-classic literary novel The Road by Cormac McCarthy from 2006. There is hope for the human race yet, if we may believe our literary visionaries.

What better moment, then, to write a thesis about post-apocalyptic stories than this supposedly apocalyptic year of 2012? Just in time for the end, it might give some insight in what the future survivors of 21-12-2012 could expect in terms of post-apocalyptic life. Post-apocalyptic narratives, after all, contemplate this new type of life. As James Berger puts it in his book After the End:

The study of the post-apocalypse, is a study of what disappears and what remains, and of how the remainder has been transformed.

With this, he concisely summarises the essence of the post-apocalyptic tale. In most religions, there are stories of terrible disasters — most commonly the flood myth — killing most people while preserving a select group of devote worshippers. These stories describe the apocalypse as a cathartic event, washing away all sin so as to pave the way for a fresh, better start for the survivors. The best known example of this in the western world, perhaps, is the biblical story of Noah and his ark.

However, since the twentieth century, and in particular since World War II, this optimism of a ‘fresh start’ has much subsided, as Heffernan argues. The notion of the shape of post-apocalyptic life is not a constant factor, but one that changes with time. According to Heffernan, the pessimistic turn started with growing doubts at the beginning of the twentieth century, culminating at the unthinkable events of the middle of the century. She argues that “the power of the end to conjure up meaning is spent”. Thus, the ‘postmodern’ apocalypse, if it may so be called, no longer gives rise to a new, better human society per definition. Instead, post-apocalyptic narratives are inclined to recount stories of descent in anarchy, featuring flawed people attempting to survive in a landscape destroyed by a catastrophe — a dystopian landscape.

Apart from its religious origins, the (secular) post-apocalyptic or catastrophic narrative is strongly related to the dystopian genre, a sub-theme and predecessor of the much broader field of science fiction. Science-fiction narrative in general, and dystopian narrative in particular, has a strong

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2 Sandra Noble (executive director of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies) as quoted by G. Jeffrey MacDonald 2007.
3 James Berger 1999, 133.
4 The Oxford Companion to World Mythology.
5 Stef Aupers 2012.
6 Teresa Heffernan 2008, 8.
tendency to reflect and comment upon the society from which it originates. As Moylan phrases it in the preface to his 2000 book:

> [...] the pleasure [of reading sf] includes the satisfying work of analytic thinking as a reader engages with the premises and puzzles of an intellectually demanding text, one that requires consistent thought but also mental leaps that stretch the mind beyond the habitual or accepted. As I lightly but seriously tell students, this degree of involved reading can be dangerous to their social and political health, for it can “damage” their minds by allowing them to think about the world in ways not sanctioned by hegemonic institutions and ideologies.

Since these hegemonic institutions and ideologies are prone to change over time, it is only logical that dystopias are equally susceptible to changing times and ideas. After all, the most discerning quality of dystopias is that they serve as a reflection of and commentary on the society from which they originate. Tracing these changes in dystopian narrative, then, gives an engrossing insight in changes in views on society and its ideas.

Since the dystopian novel as a narrative genre, in the form that it is now recognised, has generally emerged only as recently as the twentieth century — notwithstanding some early exceptions — it may be wondered what kind of timespan would be wide enough that changes in dystopian strategy could be discerned. Taking the first decade of the 21st century as the starting point and looking back at the past decades, it can be argued that some forty or fifty year would be a reasonable timespan in which to expect certain changes in dystopian narrative. This teleports us back to the 1950s, a decade very convenient for the current purpose since it brought a wealth of dystopian and apocalyptic tales. This is not so unusual, considering that they are written by a generation disillusioned by the concentration camps of World War II and its devastating nuclear resolution, and now facing the Cold War. Their catastrophes are no longer an act of God, like those in the religious apocalyptic tale, but caused by man himself. The atomic bomb had made it clear once and for all that mankind was perfectly capable of destroying itself, without the need for divine intervention.

This realisation of mankind’s destructive power is still potent in the 21st century, as illustrated by the undiminished production of post-apocalyptic dystopian novels in the 2000s, including such bestsellers as Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* or Justin Cronin’s *The Passage*. Nonetheless, the 2000s are a much different era than the 1950s, marked arguably by great affluence, greater secularism and a strong focus on individualism and self actualisation, as I will be explaining in more detail further on. Through technological development the world is considered to have become a ‘global village’, and information is said to have become the core business of the western world. Post-apocalyptic narratives of both era’s, then, are no longer exploring the relationship between God and humanity, but between man and his neighbour.

Comparing one or more post-apocalyptic dystopian works from the 1950s to works of the same genre from the 2000s, then, one would expect to see some kind of shift in the narratives, paralleling the shifts in views on society. Still, such an approach would have difficulties accounting for the differences arising simply from different authors with different characters and different methods. More interesting, perhaps, would be to investigate changes in one and the same basic story over fifty years’ time. This is not normally possible with novels — not considering oral tradition — as they are (generally) only written once and their narrative thus remains fixed in time. However, taking into account a novel from 1950’s and a 2000s film adaptation of this novel, would overcome this limitation. Of course, with such an approach, it is paramount not to overlook the differences that may be accounted to the transition from one medium to another.

This thesis, then, will consider three critically dystopian post-apocalyptic novels from the 1950s and three film adaptations from the 2000s based upon these novels. The beauty in such a selection is that it

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7 Chris Ferns 2011, 61.
8 Tom Moylan 2000, xvii.
9 Chris Ferns 1999, 105.
10 K. Kumar 1987, 381.
11 Stef Aupers 2012.
thus allows for a historical analysis, as the original narratives are re-told fifty years after their conception. Moreover, by taking not one narrative but three narratives, it will be possible to widen the scope somewhat, comparing the differences found in each novel-film pair. As has been mentioned before, the 1950s brought a wealth of post-apocalyptic and dystopian tales, many of which have become classics. Not all of those stories, however, have been adapted to the screen, and those that have been, have often been adapted before fifty years had passed.

Considering these strict criteria, the following three novels have been selected as most suitable for this investigation:

- *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) by John Wyndham
- *I Am Legend* (1954) by Richard Matheson
- *On The Beach* (1957) by Nevil Shute.

All three novels relate the story of survivors in a world after ‘the end’ and can be considered critical dystopias of the time they were written in. In addition, not much has been written about these novels yet, despite their classic status and continued popularity among the reading audience. All three novels have in fact been adapted to the screen more than once, but in this thesis only the most recent 2000s adaptations will be analysed. The reason for this is that I want to uphold a timespan of around fifty years, but also the limited scope of this thesis. In a lengthier investigation, it would be highly interesting to consider all film adaptations of the three novels under discussion. Since this is not the case, I will discuss the following three film adaptations:

- *The Day of the Triffids* (mini series, 2009) directed by Nick Copus
- *I Am Legend* (motion picture, 2007) directed by Francis Lawrence
- *On The Beach* (mini series, 2000) directed by Russell Mulcahy

In order to give more focus to my analysis, one specific element of change will be investigated. Although there are several choices in this regard, I have opted for the concept of social cohesion. Since dystopias reflect on their society and post-apocalyptic narratives offer a playground for considering human interaction in the face of catastrophe, the choice of a social approach seems both logical and highly interesting. As Claire P. Curtis describes it:

> The apocalyptic event created the social contract thinker’s state of nature. [...] If such an event creates a state of nature, then how might we think about coming together and creating a new social contract after such an event? Postapocalyptic fiction provides a window into that imaginative possibility.\(^\text{12}\)

In order to investigate social cohesion, I will develop a sociological framework in the third chapter of this thesis, as will be outlined further on. In addition to the already mentioned reasons for choosing social cohesion as the subject of investigation, I also expect that this is a notion that might have shifted in meaning and emphasis between the 1950s and 2000s. In fact, my hypothesis in this regard is the following:

As we come closer to the 21st century, there is a stronger focus on the survivor as an individual and less as a member of a society — thus being less burdened by a sense of duty or debt to his society, humanity or some other higher goal — but there is simultaneously a stronger focus on man as an essentially social being, craving meaningful human contact at all costs.

Transporting us to the scholarly study of man and his neighbour — sociology —, this hypothesis is based on the assumption that in the early 21st century, as opposed to the 1950s, society is seen as having become much more hedonistic and individualistic. Rather than feeling a sense of duty toward

\(^{12}\) Claire P. Curtis 2010, 2.
his boss, community, society or nation, 21st century man is generally seen as being more concerned with the ideal of self-actualisation and personal growth and accomplishment. This is supported by Lawler et al., who point out that narratives are constantly constructed around the perceived social transformation of contemporary times, and that there are two main narratives. The first is about individualisation, while the second, more obscure, narrative centres around the inherently social nature of the human species.\textsuperscript{13}

It can be said that philosophers within the social sciences have struggled for centuries with the dichotomy between individual and collective interests, which are often seen as fundamentally conflictual, as Postmes and Jetten point out.\textsuperscript{14} What the individual wants, is frequently in direct conflict with what benefits the group. And yet humans have an irresistible and natural inclination to group together in communities and societies. This urge is so strong, that it may well be considered man's primary distinguishing trait, as illustrated by the many academic books entitled The social animal (e.g. Aronson, 1992; Runciman, 1998). Baumeister, in fact, states that: “nature has designed the human psyche for participation in cultural society”.\textsuperscript{15} And yet this idea seems at odds with the individualistic tendencies of the 21st century. Whether this suggests a slow corrosion of the rock-solid idea of the ‘social animal’ or that human nature is inherently paradoxical and antithetical, is an interesting discussion.

Considering man as an inherently social animal, post-apocalyptic narratives offer an interesting playground for experimentation with the effects of different circumstances on this social nature. What happens to a man, such as Robert Neville in I am legend, who ends up as the sole human survivor in a world full of monsters? What happens to social relationships in a world where the majority of people is struck blind, and only a small minority remains sighted, like Wyndham’s premise in The Day of the Triffids? Or worse, what if a whole nation knows that it is inevitably, without exception, going to die in six months time, like the Australian population in On the beach? Will they cling to traditional norms and values until the very last day? And what happens between the novels and the film adaptations? Are these issues dealt with differently after fifty years?

Considering the main hypothesis of this thesis again, I expect to find evidence of the aforementioned trends in my analyses of the three novels and the three films, although I will conduct my investigation with an open mind. Proving myself wrong would be interesting in its own way. This thesis, then, will explore the shifting concept of social cohesion in The Day of the Triffids, I am Legend and On the Beach through a hermeneutical, analytical approach. Within each story, it will be investigated how the apocalyptic event changes the traditional notions of social cohesion. Between the novels and the films, it will be investigated how the representations of social cohesion have shifted across fifty years of time. Although the fifty years separating the novels and the film versions may seem like a relatively short period, it spans an ongoing period of critical transformation in most realms of human activity, including the social realm, as Lawler, Thye and Yoon point out.\textsuperscript{16} Specifically, I will investigate the following research question:

\textit{What is it that remains and what develops anew — after the end — in the area of social cohesion as represented in The Day of the Triffids (1951), I Am Legend (1954) and On the Beach (1957) and recent film adaptations (2000; 2007; 2009) of these novels, and in what ways, if any, are these remainders and new developments of social cohesion evolving in the post-apocalyptic landscape both within and between the different versions of the same story?}

This thesis will be structured by systematically and thematically analysing the theme of social cohesion first \textit{within} each of the six narratives, and then more generally \textit{between} the 1950s novels and 21st century films. To give a basic structure or framework to my analysis, I will take into account the four basic elements of post-apocalyptic stories as I perceive them, with a focus on the third element:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} E. J. Lawler, S.R. Thye, & J. Yoon 2009, 17-19
  \item \textsuperscript{14} T. Postmes & J. Jetten 2006, 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} R.F. Baumeister 2005, 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} E. J. Lawler, S.R. Thye, & J. Yoon 2009, 12.
\end{itemize}
1. *pre-apocalyptic society*: the three novels under discussion are all set in the near future, thus providing the authors with some space to ponder the future of their own society, the society in which their apocalypse will strike.

2. *the apocalyptic event*: especially the cause or origins of the apocalyptic event are highly interesting and a frequent platform for ideological critique.

3. *the survivor(s)*: the psychological state and behaviour of the individual apocalyptic survivor betray a certain view on human nature and social cohesion, while the new societies emerging in the post-apocalyptic landscape give a great deal of space for ideological contemplation, especially when it comes to social cohesion. This is often in part linked to the fourth element, the threat.

4. *the threat*: the survivors in all three novel do not only have to survive the apocalypse, they also have to survive its resulting continuing threat.

I opt to use this particular framework because I feel that it focusses attention on what makes the post-apocalyptic narrative unique as a genre, and since the post-apocalyptic genre is the topic of investigation, it would seem peculiar to treat it otherwise.

Chapter 1 will discuss the theoretical background of science fiction, dystopian/utopian and (post-)apocalyptic studies, elaborating on what has already been outlined briefly in this introduction, keeping in mind the two different eras of the 1950s and the 2000s. Chapter 2 will investigate some theoretical background on book to film adaptations. This is essential, because differences between the novels and films that are caused by the medial transition should not be confused with those that may be attributed to other influences, including ideological and societal changes. Chapter 3 will be devoted to developing a practical, usable framework for analysing social cohesion in the novels and films. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will comprise the actual analysis of the primary sources. Each chapter will discuss the novel and the film, analysing and comparing each work. In the conclusion, finally, an answer to the research question will be given, taking into account the comparisons between each novel-book pair and lifting this to a higher level by searching for any common trends in the differences between the novels on the one hand, and the films on the other hand.
Chapter 1: Apocalypse Please

The Doctor: You lot, you spend all your time thinking about dying, like you’re gonna get killed by eggs, or beef, or global warming, or asteroids. But you never take time to imagine the impossible. Like maybe you survive.

Doctor Who “The End of the World”

In this chapter I will outline the place the three novels (and films) under discussion, The Day of the Triffids, I Am Legend and On the Beach, take within the field of literature. As emphasised in the introduction, all three works are generally classified as secular post-apocalyptic works, and I believe that this genre offers an especially interesting field of inquiry when it comes to social issues, something that is also emphasised by other academics as will be outlined further on. Although the post-apocalyptic genre and its sibling the apocalyptic genre are quite unique in their basic premises, they are generally classified as related to utopian studies. This somewhat broader field includes the utopia, dystopia and related notions, although the definitions of these terms are much discussed. As will be outlined in more detail below, post-apocalyptic works frequently contain both dystopian and utopian elements. The field of utopian studies, in its turn, is currently considered a sub-genre of the much wider and indefinable field of science fiction.

All three genres are particularly concerned with ideology and societal critique. In this chapter, then, I will adopt a top-bottom approach and discuss first science fiction, then utopian studies and finish with some ideas about the post-apocalyptic genre, including a brief explanation of my own basic framework.

As a preoccupation with ideology is prominent in all three genres, I will first give a basic idea of this concept before moving on to discussion of each of the three genres. Utopias and dystopias are generally considered to be tracing the limits of the ideological framework of their contemporary society by addressing concerns and extrapolating elements of this society. The same is true of post-apocalyptic narratives, and in fact the field of science fiction. These genres’ preoccupation with ideology is intricately linked to the genres’ critique of contemporary society its ideologies. Although, in this light, the ideological components of science fiction, utopian narratives and apocalyptic works is fairly straightforward, it is necessary to be clear on the exact understanding of the notion of ideology.

Ideology is a difficult concept to define, and one that has often been interchanged with the notion of discourse, as Sara Mills points out. Terry Eagleton very practically puts forward a number of possible definitions, depending on the scope of the inquiry. For this thesis, Eagleton’s second, fairly broad definition of ideology is most practical, which “turns on ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolise the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class.” Basically, ideology here can be understood as ‘world view’. This definition is rather broad, but is well-suited to the current discussion. With regard to dystopian and utopian narratives, it should be noted that ideology works in different ways in each type, one being more prescriptive and the other more descriptive. More will be said about this in section 1.2.

1.1 Science Fiction

Starting with science fiction, then, it is generally agreed that it is impossible to formulate a single definition that covers all works considered science fiction and excludes those that are not considered
Practically every handbook on science fiction begins with defining its own subject matter, and while offering several possible definitions, has to admit defeat. This, however, is by no means a reason to abandon the effort or the study of science fiction. Andy Sawyer & Peter Wright point out some attributes they feel are characteristic for science fiction, which offer some explanation as to why science fiction defies defining. They feel that science fiction is speculative in nature, always asking ‘what if?’, and demanding active participation from the reader in its thought-experiments. It reacts to transformations in its ideological and cultural environment and is thus constantly reinventing itself, provoking the reader anew. Any definition of science fiction is thus likely to be confronted with the inclusion of some books that are not actually science fiction, and the exclusion of some books that clearly are science fiction. Nonetheless, it is important to use a good working definition.

Turning to a famous science-fiction author, Robert A. Heinlein, we are given in a 1947 essay the description of science fiction as a story in which “accepted science and established facts are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action.”

The notion of extrapolation has generally been acclaimed, as illustrated by the fact that it became the title of the first academic science-fiction journal. Interestingly, however, this definition equally applies to the utopian/dystopian genre, which is considered only one one sub-genre of science fiction. Thus being left without a clear definition of science fiction, I am also left with the freedom of creating my own definition in such a way that it works with this thesis. Therefore, I will adopt a definition which combines three separate definitions, and encompasses all the elements I deem relevant to a discussion of post-apocalyptic works:

Science fiction is a genre of literature that explores the probable consequences of some transformation of the basic conditions of the world in which the reader actually lives. This transformation is normally based either on scientific or technological advance, on a natural or social change, or on a suspicion that the world is not as it is commonly represented. Science fiction often draws upon earlier kinds of utopian and apocalyptic writing.

This definition works well because it does not limit the transformation to scientific or technological factors, but leaves open social or natural change (such as an apocalyptic event) and focusses on the consequences of such a transformation, which is exactly what post-apocalyptic fiction does. Furthermore, this definition includes the links to the utopian genre and the apocalyptic narrative, although the latter refers predominantly to the religious apocalypse, which is not the type discussed in this thesis. This will be explained further on.

The strong relation of science fiction to utopian studies is exemplified by the fact that the book which is frequently considered the first science-fiction story, is in fact Thomas More’s *Utopia* from 1516. This book can be seen as a product of the Renaissance developments of humanism and the exploration of the New World. Other utopian stories followed, further inspired by a growing interest in science and scientific methods. Extraterrestrials appeared, and stories imagining the interior of the earth. By the end of the eighteenth century the gothic emerged, resulting in darker types of science fiction, with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) as a prime example. Some authors consider this the first true work of science fiction. Shelley also wrote *The Last Man on Earth* (1826), which is usually considered the first true post-apocalyptic work. Following Shelley’s gothic and the advent of the industrial revolution, all sorts of artificial life and wondrous pieces of technology came to life in science fiction.

The most important science-fiction writer of the late nineteenth century was H. G. Wells, who continued writing well into the twentieth century. He was heavily influenced by Darwin’s evolution theory and evolution through natural selection, while his own work was highly influential on the development of science fiction as a genre.

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10 Andy Sawyer & Peter Wright 2011, 1.
12 Gary K. Wolfe 2011, 50.
14 Paul Kincaid 2011, 21-25.
Whereas the previous centuries had brought about relatively few science-fiction works, the nineteenth century saw a steep rise in output. Although I cannot tell how this rise in the number of science-fiction works relates to the general growth in novel output in the nineteenth century, it can be observed that science fiction arguably flourishes most in popular media such as novels, and, later, films and television. The flourishing of science fiction continues into the twentieth century, which produced many science-fiction classics, such as Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), Huxley’s Brave New World (1932) and the extensive science-fiction oeuvres of Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein.

After the nineteenth century, the First World War is the true turning point, ringing in a darker, more pessimistic or dystopian science fiction. An example is the Russian Yevgeny Zamyatin’s We (1920), which inspired George Orwell to write the twentieth century’s most famous dystopia, Nineteen Eighty-Four. The second turning point, the rise of nazism and the Second World War inspired a genre of science fiction that imagined a world in which Germany had not lost the war, and led to a surge in (post-)apocalyptic narratives.15

American 30s and 40s science fiction was characterised by the ‘space opera’, science fiction of a simplistic, fast-paced, melodramatic and colourful nature. By the early 1950s, however, this was replaced by ‘hard science fiction’, which focussed on an approach that adhered to scientific laws, with some exceptions allowed, and a greater character development. Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke and Robert A. Heinlein became popular in this period, while the 1960s saw the appearance of Philip K. Dick and his questioning of what constitutes being human. The late 1960s New Wave had distinctly literary ambitions. The ‘ecotopia’ also emerged in the 1960s, complaining about technology’s abuse, not about technology an sich. At a small scale and used properly, technology could be a blessing. In the 1970s this focussed on alternative technologies to replace finite energy sources.16 The 1970s were marked by the development of feminist science fiction and critical utopias, epitomised by Ursula K. Le Guin. The eclectic, dark cyberpunk of the 1980s found its paradigm in William Gibson’s Neuromancer (1984) and returned to the concerns of artificial intelligence and cybernetic issues, as pioneered in a more basic version almost two centuries earlier by Mary Shelley.

The first Star Trek series of the late 1960s and the three original Star Wars films in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a profound effect on science fiction of all media.17 Here it can be observed that both the general and the academic field of science fiction are generally unconcerned with differences in medium, allowing an easy transition from screen to page and vice versa, and a lexicon applicable to science fiction of all media. More recently, video games — another popular mainstream medium — are fighting for a place in the ranks of science fiction theory, too.

What happened in the 1990s and 2000s is difficult to trace due to its recency, but according to Lyman Tower Sargent, a new concern that has arisen in the 1990s is that of genetic engineering and all of its consequences: biological, ethical, moral, social etcetera.18 I personally believe that in addition to an unprecedented outpouring of science fiction of all types, it is marked by the arrival of more intellectual, more complex science fiction into popular culture, the pioneer success being The Matrix (1999). This more complex type is closely related to postmodernism and is especially concerned with questions of reality. What is real? What does real mean? Does it matter what is real?

1.2 Utopianism

Having thus outlined a brief overview of science fiction, I will now turn to the field of utopian studies, with the focus on dystopia, although both forms are relevant to the post-apocalyptic genre. As simple as they may sound initially, the notions of utopia and related terms are much discussed and frequently not agreed upon, just like the field of science fiction.19 As Lyman Tower Sargent puts it, there is a

16 Krishan Kumar 1987, 389-417.
17 Paul Kincaid 2011, 28-36.
18 Lyman Tower Sargent 1994, 216.
19 Christopher S. Ferns 1999, 10.
strong case to made “against the possibility of defining since the act of definition depends on where we stand and who we are.” Nonetheless, or perhaps exactly for that reason, it is useful to outline the way I use the terms in this paper, to avoid any confusion.

A distinction frequently found in literature is that between ‘eutopia’ (positive utopia) and ‘dystopia’ (negative utopia), both of which are assembled under ‘utopia’. When such a distinction is made, the umbrella term ‘utopia’ refers to a “non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space,” as Sargent describes it. However, I believe such a distinction to be confusing in relation to everyday use of the notion of ‘utopia’, which has a strongly idealistic — and thus a positive — connotation. Moreover, I find Sargent’s definition too broad, being equally applicable to the notion of science fiction and even then being rather vague.

In this paper I will adopt a more intuitive definition of utopia, for which I combine a dictionary definition and Lyman Tower Sargent’s definition as: “an imagined place or state of things that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as everything being good or pleasant”. I appreciate this definition for not limiting utopia to a ‘place’ but acknowledging that it might likewise be represented as an unspecified ‘state of things’. Furthermore, by using ‘good’ and ‘pleasant’ rather than ‘perfect’, I widen the scope of utopia somewhat to a perhaps more ‘realistic’ version of utopia. Although nowadays utopia frequently alludes to a sense of naivety and over-idealistic tendencies, I will not include these connotations in my definition. Having defined ‘utopia’ in such manner, it is not difficult to match a definition for ‘dystopia’ as: “an imagined place or state of things that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as everything being unpleasant or bad.”

Like its siblings, the precise definition of ‘anti-utopia’ has equally been discussed at length. Some authors do not distinguish between ‘dystopia’ and ‘anti-utopia’ and consider both a society worse than the readers’ society. Personally I do make a distinction, following Sargent’s definition of ‘anti-utopia as an imagined place or state of things “that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of utopianism or some particular utopia.” Other terms that are used are ‘critical dystopia’ and ‘critical utopia’. The critical utopia is frequently used to refer to the ecological and feminist utopias of the 1970s, which depict utopian societies while being aware of and pointing out the limitations of such a society. The critical dystopia, in Sargent’s generally adopted description, described a dystopia that “normally includes at least one eutopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced with a eutopia.”

The most interesting and crucial aspect of utopias, perhaps, is their direct relationship to the author’s contemporary society. It is the nature of a utopia that it builds from its contemporary society to arrive at a state of perfection. As such, utopia does not only imagine a good or pleasant world, it also highlights and criticises the faults of its root-society. Like utopias, dystopias are equally rooted in contemporary society, the faults of which they bring into view. However, rather than imagining ways in which these faults and problems can be overcome, they imagine what happens if these persist. Ferns very fittingly summarises this difference:

[…] unlike the traditional utopia, dystopian fiction posits a society which — however outlandish — is clearly extrapolated from that which exists. Where utopian fiction stresses the difference of the society it depicts, often obscures the connection between the real world and its alternative, and rarely indicated how such an alternative might be created, the dystopian writer presents the nightmare future as a possible destination of present society [...] .

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20 Lyman Tower Sargent 1994, 4.
21 Ibid., 5.
22 New Oxford American Dictionary, 2nd ed. 2005. I have altered the definition by changing ‘perfect’ to ‘good or pleasant’ for a more realistic utopia. It should be noted that most definitions do use the term ‘perfect’.
24 Lyman Tower Sargent 2004, 207.
26 Lyman Tower Sargent 2004, 207.
Both utopia and dystopia, then, are *extrapolations* of trends in contemporary society, affirming the link with science fiction.

As I mentioned before, an important difference between the utopia and the dystopia concerns their treatment of ideology, which takes the form of social critique in both types. However, whereas utopian narratives tend to be *prescriptive* in their treatment of which ideologies are ‘good’ and which are ‘bad’, dystopian narratives frequently take a *descriptive* approach. In this descriptive approach a world is shown that is meant to be viewed as worse than the audience’s contemporary society, but it is not always clear what elements are to blame for this, or in fact which elements might be the cure. As such, it is often more difficult to extract the ‘good’ versus the ‘bad’ from dystopian narratives than from utopian narratives. As Ferns points out, the reader of dystopian works has to actively look for these elements, while in utopian works they are often spelled out.  

In addition, in my definitions of utopia and dystopia I have purposely adopted Lyman Tower Sargent’s specification of the author intending the work to be viewed as good or bad by a contemporaneous reader. This is important, because what would be considered a utopia some hundred years ago, may in fact now be viewed as quite dystopian, and vice versa. There is no such thing as a fixed ‘good’ or ‘bad’ society. As the world changes, ideas about good bad also change. Ideologies change.

There are other differences between the utopian and dystopian genres as they developed in practice. Traditionally, the utopian narrative takes the form of an essay in disguise. Good examples are Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* and Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. The narrative structure of both novels precisely follows the traditional narrative structure of the utopian genre, as Frye describes it (cited in Ferns):

> In utopian stories a frequent device is for someone, generally a first-person narrator, to enter the utopia and be shown around it by a sort of Intourist guide. The story is made up largely of a Socratic dialogue between guide and narrator, in which the narrator asks questions or thinks up objections and the guide answers them...  

This makes for a dialogic — or rather, monologic — novel, which is generally considered very tedious reading and ‘bad art’. In addition, there is a curious lack of dramatic events in most utopian worlds. The origins of these problems, which appear to be inherent to the genre, can be traced to the frozen state of utopias. A world that is perfect cannot change, because any small change would make it less than perfect. Consequently, there is no room for drama. As Huxley and Zamyatin say according to Kumar: “In utopia […], we would die of boredom.” Another characteristic of utopian works is the stark opposition between country and city, which has emerged time and time again in utopian fiction, but also in dystopian fiction, where the country-side is often experienced as a liberation.

With the advent of the second half of the 20th century, emphasis shifted from utopia to dystopia, with pessimism taking over. In his autobiography, Leonard Woolf describes the years 1933 to 1939 fairly representatively as “the six years in which civilization was finally destroyed.” Utopianism was now considered thoroughly unrealistic. With this change from utopia to dystopia, there has also been a shift away from the narrative limitations in utopian works. As Ferns puts it: “the dystopian narrative tends to dramatise both the similarities and differences between the real and imagined, rather than spelling them out.” As dystopia depicts an explicitly less than perfect society, change is no longer impossible, and drama almost obligatory.

29 Ibid., 110.
30 Ibid., 13.
31 Ibid., 5, 111.
32 Krishan Kumar 1987, 102.
34 Christopher S. Ferns 1999, 120.
35 Krishan Kumar 1987, 381, 388.
37 Christopher S. Ferns 1999, 111.
The traditional dystopia also has its own specific narrative characteristics. Many dystopias depict a society where people live extremely public lives, ensured by a high degree of surveillance. The dystopian society is usually highly hierarchical and regimented, with its inhabitants being characterised by a high degree of uniformity and conformity. Sexuality is usually an important item, often being brought into the public realm to a degree that is shocking to contemporary readers. Dystopian citizens are kept childlike, uninformed about the past and are strongly conditioned. Similar to utopias, change is always a threat to the dystopian society. Rebellion, when it emerges, is usually repressed successfully.38 Of course, not all dystopia’s conform to this traditional form.

Similar to science fiction, historical trends can be discerned in the history of the utopian and dystopian genre. This mostly overlaps with the aforementioned history of science fiction — the utopian genre being the older of the two. In the twentieth century, science fiction and the utopian genre have merged. In this unified field of science fiction, the utopian genre is generally considered a sociopolitical sub-genre of science fiction.39

1.3 The (post-)apocalyptic narrative

The concept of ideology is equally relevant to post-apocalyptic stories, which is not surprising since apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are frequently considered to be a sub-genre of the utopian/dystopian genre, albeit a very specific, and very popular, one. What is it that makes the destruction of the world and the consequent chaos, bloodbaths and search for a new life so appealing? As James Berger ponders in his book After the End:

I was disgusted, yet, at the same time, I felt the appeal. I loved seeing civilization as we know it burst open in flaming centrifugal ecstasy. And I loved seeing those stories of aftermaths, the post-apocalypses in the Blade Runner mode, in which every gesture seemed pure, somber, and meaningful when performed in a garish wasteland.”40

Berger is not alone in this fascination, as the popularity of the disaster story, especially in film, and the post-apocalyptic story testify.

The secular (post-)apocalyptic genre is one that has not been written much about in academic circles, as Claire P. Curtis points out.41 For this thesis, this is both a limitation and an advantage. It provides a lot of freedom to theorise and analyse and adds one puzzle piece to the exploration of a genre that is yet to be investigated in detail. I am specifically referring here to secular (post-)apocalyptic stories, because the religious apocalypse is in fact a well-researched topic. The difference in meaning can be attributed to a shifting understand of the concept of the apocalypse. The word ‘apocalypse’ is derived from the ancient Greek ἀποκάλυψις (apokalupsis), which denotes the unveiling or revelation of things previously unknown. Heffernan translates it as “the unveiling of the true order.”42 It is, however, best known as a prominent concept in Jewish and Christian thinking, where it refers to the end times and the final confrontation between good and evil. This meaning of the apocalypse has also emerged in popular culture, most popularly in the Left Behind book series.43

James Berger discerns three types of apocalypse, both with religious and secular counterparts. The first is the eschaton, or the end of the world catastrophe. The second refers to “catastrophes that resemble imagined final ending, that can be interpreted as eschaton, as an end of something, a way of

38 Ibid., 112-121.
39 Christopher S. Ferns 2011, 56.
40 James Berger 1999, xiii.
41 Claire P. Curtis 2010, 12.
42 Teresa Heffernan 2008, 4.
43 Claire P. Curtis 2010, 5.
life or thinking.” In the twentieth century, the Shoah would be an example of this. The third type refers to the apocalypse as an explanation, as an illumination of what has ended by disruptive events. In this thesis, I understand the apocalypse as the secular eschaton, a major catastrophe which wipes the world clean of its social structure, and usually also of a large portion of humanity. I thus understand apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction in the same way as Curtis, who defines post-apocalyptic fiction as:

[...] any account that takes up how humans start over after the end of life on earth as we understand it. The apocalyptic event or events cause a radical shift in the basic conditions of human life; it does not require the destruction of all humans or even the destruction of all potential conditions of human life.

As Heffernan points out, apocalyptic stories originally were strongly tied to a sense of catharsis — a world swept clean of all that is dirty, despicable and redundant. It signals a fresh start, a chance to start over. However, she writes, “this faith that the end will offer up revelation has been challenged in many twenty-century narratives. [...] these narratives refuse to offer up a new beginning or any hope of rebirth or renewal.” James Berger agrees with thus, identifying a shift away from the traditional cathartic apocalyptic event. Thus, in recent times, post-apocalyptic tales have become darker, less positive.

Although so far I have mostly been mentioning apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic stories in one breath, it should be noted that there is in fact a clear difference between the two types. As they are simultaneously intricately connected, I will also give a brief overview of apocalyptic stories before continuing with post-apocalyptic stories. Apocalyptic stories are perhaps more popular as film rather than novels, for the simple reason that they tend to be stories of spectacle. They like to show destruction, ruins and, above all, extraordinary pictures. Take for instance the rather spectacular imagery of an enormous, abandoned ocean tanker slowly cruising through the flooded streets of New York in The Day After Tomorrow. Especially compelling in such films is the destruction of symbols of civilisation. In the same film, the statue of liberty is seen tilting over and falling apart as a tsunami hits the New York coast. In its sister-film 2012, the statue of Christ looking over Rio de Janeiro and the White House are targeted as easily destroyed symbols of the civilised world. The greatest criticism of such films, not surprisingly, is the lack of story and the complete focus on dramatic pictures.

However, in my experience, there is another type of apocalyptic story, the almost-apocalypse. In this type of narrative, an impending apocalyptic disaster is identified some time before it will strike. The remaining time is spent finding a way to avert the approaching apocalypse, usually successfully. In a way, such an ending is anti-climatic. Both types of apocalyptic stories can be captured by a single prototypical structure. In the first part, someone — usually a mocked but brilliant scientist (still in love with his ex-wife) — discovers the impending apocalypse. He attempts to alert the authorities, but is only mocked more (also by the ex-wife). Then the apocalyptic event commences, and the scientist is immediately summoned by the authorities (accompanied by the ex-wife). The scientist goes to work and comes up with plan. This plan, either to prevent the apocalyptic event or to save some portion of mankind, is frequently executed by a brawny hero. In the final part, the apocalypse is either averted or survived by a fairly significant number of people. The misunderstood scientist is now respected and the human race is saved (while the scientist gets back together with the ex-wife).

The post-apocalyptic story, on the other hand, normally commences where the apocalyptic story ends, although flashbacks usually give some idea of the apocalyptic event and the short time leading up to it. This is the paradox of the (post-)apocalyptic story: the end of the world is never the end of the

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45 Fittingly, the word ‘shoah’ literally means ‘catastrophe’. The more frequently used word ‘holocaust’ denotes an offering (at the altar), and is thus problematic.
47 Claire P. Curtis 2010, 5.
49 James Berger 1999, 8.
world. The Doctor could not be more wrong in the motto to this chapter — we humans do imagine surviving the end of the world, and fervently so. The traditional post-apocalyptic story can also be captured in a prototype, as Curtis points out and describes. The main character, the heroic survivor, is usually out of town for the apocalypse and thus survives it. The first thing he does is trying to secure food, water, shelter etc. In this process he chances on another survivor, usually a woman or child or a know-it-all equal. Around this core some other characters will emerge, creating a small social group that starts to build towards to long-term survival. At this point, danger will be introduced. Not seldom, this danger consists of other, anarchic people, who force the small social group to seek out safety in numbers, and create a larger social group. Thus the story ends with some small hope of the return of civilisation. Again, it should be understood that this is only the archetype. As will be shown, only one of the three narratives that will be explored in this thesis closely resembles this structure.

Virtually all post-apocalyptic stories do resemble one another in two important aspects. The first is that post-apocalyptic stories, related to the utopian genre, strongly comment on their contemporary society. They do so especially in the choice of catastrophe, but also in the description of human behaviour during and after the catastrophe. The ‘realism’ that such an extrapolation of current events offers, is perhaps what makes post-apocalyptic imagining so attractive. Curtis points out that this fictional realism transports the reader to a place where he or she has no trouble imagine being. Berger agrees, stating that apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic representations “put forward a total critique of any existing social order.”

This ties in with the second common feature of post-apocalyptic tales, which is its focus on social experimentation. Berger argues that such fiction studies some version of humanity in the middle of an inhuman world. It forces people ‘back to basics’ and in doing so, the story reveals where real value lies. Curtis agrees, and states that in post-apocalyptic fiction, people are reverted to a state of nature. They have to reestablish a social contract. Her study Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract investigates this new social contract in various post-apocalyptic works. Post-apocalyptic fiction thus offers a playground for revealing human nature and the renegotiation of social cohesion.

To structure the upcoming analyses of The Day of the Triffids, I Am Legend and On the Beach, I propose a basic framework which I believe to be applicable to most, if not all, post-apocalyptic fiction. As listed in the introduction, I discern four basic elements of post-apocalyptic fiction. I will briefly explain them again. The first is pre-apocalyptic society. Whatever glances are offered of pre-apocalyptic society generally show a vision of the near-future society that produces the apocalypse. These glances allow readers to judge how close their own society is to the apocalypse. The second element is the apocalyptic event itself. Almost all post-WWII post-apocalyptic stories leave no doubt about the source of the apocalypse: mankind itself. The exact form of the catastrophe gives an idea of what aspect of contemporary is considered most calamitous, according to the author.

The third element is the apocalyptic survivor(s). As described, the post-apocalyptic landscape, with all social structure destroyed, offers a perfect opportunity for experimenting with human nature, ideology and social cohesion, both at an individual and a communal level. As will be shown in chapter three, humans experience a constant contradiction between individual desires and what is best for the community or society. When all societal bonds are severed, what happens to this balance? The fourth and final element is what I term ‘the threat’. Curtis also discerns this element in her archetypical post-apocalyptic fiction. Indeed, the survivors are not usually left in peace after the apocalypse has passed. An additional threat makes life increasingly difficult beyond the normal challenges of staying alive.

These four elements together constitute what I consider the basics of the post-apocalyptic stories. They will provide a framework for structuring the upcoming analyses. First, however, the consequences of novel to film adaptation (chapter 2) and a framework for considering social cohesion (chapter 3) will be established.

50 Claire P. Curtis 2010, 7.
51 Ibid., 7-8
52 Ibid., 6.
54 James Berger 1999, 8, 10.
Films adapted from novels suffer an ambivalent status. On the one hand, original screenplays are frequently held in higher regard than screenplays adapted from novels, which are easily condemned as made for the monetary gain only, especially when there are several sequels in a series. On the other hand, novels turned into films are not only immensely popular with film makers and audiences alike, but they are also especially successful, dominating both the list of the all-time greatest box-office successes and the list of Best Picture Academy Award winners.

Apparently then, there is something about novels that works equally well in film, unless one assumes that the success of a novel — considering that it is usually best-seller novels that are adapted to the screen — guarantees the success of a film. The success of a novel certainly has influence on the success of a film, as a result of the medial hierarchy of literature over film. A film adapted from a famous novel might attract more attention and be valued more highly before the film is viewed. The fame and esteem of the novel provides a positive general attitude towards the film, too. However, this is not the entire story. There is also something more inherent to the literary medium at play, some commonality between novel and film that works at a more basic level.

When it comes to the study of film adaptation at the broadest level, the inevitable main discussions are on the one hand about the similarities between film and literature, and on the other about the differences between both media. This thesis works from the idea that the similarities are striking enough to allow for a comparison of the treatment of social cohesion in both novels and films. By also studying the differences between the two media, it will be possible, to a certain extent, to filter out the differences attributable to the change in medium, and retain the more general differences. This chapter will first look at the issue of semiotics, followed by a list of some more concrete differences between literature and film, and concludes with a brief discussion of fidelity.

2.1 Semiotics

A good starting point at a meta-level of comparing films and novels is to look at it from the vantage point of semiotics. One could say that film is primarily concerned with visual or cinematic signs, whereas literature is primarily concerned with written or verbal signs. Of course this is a very rigid division, since there are both prose and poetry writings that also rely on visual signs — consider for example a post-modern text such as *House of Leaves* — while most cinema also relies heavily on dialogue and other verbal signs.

Semiotics teaches us that signs comprise of two distinct elements. The first is the signifier, the communicative element (an image or a word), the other is the signified, that something which the signifier refers to. The signified is thus something that exists in the real world, and which is “mentally represented by the sign’s conceptual content.” This mental representation is *meaning*. There are three major classes of signs and this is where the difference between cinema and literature is most tangible. The images of cinema are predominantly iconic in nature, meaning that they bear direct resemblance to their referent/signified. In the case of literature on the other hands, the signs hold an arbitrary

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1 Michael Sragow 1999.
2 Peter Verstraten 2008, 83.
3 Brian McFarlane 1996, 8.
relationship to their referents. Literary signs are symbolic signs. Neither the graphemes or the phonemes of the word ‘tree’ bear any resemblance whatsoever to an actual tree, whereas an image of a tree does resemble an actual tree. The third type of sign is indexical, and is typically a representative or partial sample of its referent.\(^6\)

The main difference between literature and film, then, is that one is a medium consisting primarily (but not exclusively) of iconic signs, while the other consists primarily (but not exclusively) of symbolic signs. The main similarity, on the other hand, is that both types of signs evoke mental concepts. This seems not far removed from the concept of ‘narrativity’. As Cohen puts it: “narrativity is the most solid median link between novel and cinema, the most pervasive tendency of both verbal and visual languages. In both novel and cinema, groups of signs, be they literary or visual signs, are apprehended consecutively through time; and this consecutiveness gives rise to an unfolding structure.”\(^7\) Considering the predisposition of the human species to continually search for cause and effect, for narrativity, I support Cohen’s statement. People are biologically predisposed to search for story, for narrative, in any sequence of events. This predisposition is combined with learned experience about narrative patterns from a very young age. Monika Fludernik argues that humans, when reading a text, will try to fit the narrative into a shape that is familiar by experience. She calls this ‘narrativization’ and it is related to Jonathan Culler’s notion of ‘naturalization’, which occurs when we try to reconcile incongruent elements of a text with our own experience of the world.\(^8\) Returning to the issue of different media, it is clear that both iconic and symbolic signs evoke meaning (mental concepts) in the brain and the brain is predisposed to link together (story-ise) these meanings. It is through the similar mental concepts evoked by both types of signs that narrativity emerges.

It is no surprise then that film makers have been keen to adapt literary sources to the screen from the very start, since film has established itself as predominantly a narrative medium. In these adaptations, a number of technical differences has come to the fore. Despite the common factor of narrativity, symbolic signs cannot always be transferred directly to iconic signs. Brian McFarlane juxtaposes the terms ‘transfer’ and ‘adaptation proper’ to indicate the difference between elements of literature that can be transferred to film without much interference, and those that need to be adapted specifically to the new medium.\(^9\) If one would consider film and literature two different systems of communication, “adaptation would then become a matter of searching two systems of communication for elements of equivalent position in the systems capable of eliciting a signified at a given level of pertinence.”\(^10\) This is the key. Both film and literature can evoke the same meanings or inferences in the human mind, even when the signs are entirely different. Adaptation is finding the corresponding sign in a different medium.

### 2.2 Practical differences

As I will be conducting an analysis of three concrete film adaptations, I will need to be aware of some concrete differences between film and literature in order to be able to detect these and separate them from differences otherwise attributable. Several authors discuss the technical or practical difficulties encountered when adapting a written text to the screen, most notably perhaps Seymour Chatman in his 1980 article ‘What Novels Can do That Films Can’t (And Vice Versa)’. Aided by a case study, this author points out a number of pertinent differences. An interesting feature of narrative is double time structuring, or rather triple time structuring. There is the time that passes in the story (story-time), the time or order in which the events are represented (discourse-time), and there is the time it takes someone to read, view or listen to the narrative. Taking the novel *I Am Legend* as an example, the story time reaches from the aftermath of a destructive but unspecified war to the death of the protagonists several years later. The discourse time, however, function diachronically, with the earliest events being

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\(^7\) Keith Cohen 1979, 4.

\(^8\) Monika Fludernik 2002.

\(^9\) Brian McFarlane 1996.

\(^10\) Dudley Andrew 2000, 425.
narrated through flashbacks. Reading the novel and experiencing its several years of events, finally, takes only a number of hours. Thus, Chatman concludes, any medium that is able to work with this double time structuring is able to represent any narrative.\textsuperscript{11} Since both literature and film are able to represent these two time structures, there is a firm basis for adaptation.

On the other hand, the third time structure, the time of consumption, tends to be different for film and literature. Novels are both interruptible and portable, that is, one can read a novel in one sitting, but most people will read one in many shorter sittings that can take place at virtually any location.\textsuperscript{12} Although with the advent of recording devices and portable screens it has become possible to do the same with film, it is still customary in the private sphere and inescapable in cinema theatres to watch a film in one sitting. This constraints film in a manner which does not apply to literature. Due to the limited time of a film (not usually more than two hours), the storyline necessarily needs “move with greater clarity and simplicity”\textsuperscript{13} than a novel which can easily add material not directly related to the story line and tolerates a high level of ‘retardation’. This slowing down of the discourse-time exists equally in film, but is more limited and constrained.\textsuperscript{14}

Arguably the most extreme form of retardation in novels is description. It is not at all unusual for a narrative to halt temporarily in order to give a detailed description of a landscape, character, prop or other state of being. Chatman argues that in film it is impossible for story-time to halt. Even when a certain element is viewed in detail, the viewer continues to sense a passing of story-time. And if description in literature equals a full halt in story-time, “then it is reasonable to argue that films do not and cannot describe.”\textsuperscript{15} This statement, however, has been disputed. Although the halting of story-time is indeed rare in film, it is by no means impossible. Consider for instance the famous bullet time of \textit{The Matrix}, where special effects allow the camera to circle around a character in mid-flight while briefly stopping time. Or a film like \textit{Le Fabuleux Destin d’Amelie Poulain}, where characters are described by the narrator in a vacuum that is no part of story-time.

There is another difficulty presented by description. A physical description of a character may of course be executed in the choice of actor and clothing: “I turned, and saw that Josella had come into the room. She was wearing a long, pretty frock of palest blue georgette with a little jacket of white fur.”\textsuperscript{16} When it comes to a more subjective description, or a description of character, however, immediate problems arise: “He was a tall man, thirty-six, born of English-German stock, his features undistinguished except for the long, determined mouth and the bright blue of his eyes.”\textsuperscript{17} How does one translate subjective features such as a ‘determined’ mouth into an image? These features cannot be transferred directly, but need to go to a process of adaptation proper.

The reason that descriptions are so difficult in film is that they are assertive in nature. Chatman distinguishes between ‘asserting’ and ‘naming’ to differentiate between the ways in which films and novels present visual details. An assertion, which is what novels can do, is “a statement, usually an independent sentence or clause, that something is in fact the case, that it is a certain sort of thing, that does in fact have certain properties or enter into certain relations, namely, those listed.”\textsuperscript{18} The description of Josella cited above is primarily a case of naming. Her clothing is simply named, with only the adjective ‘pretty’ as an assertion. The second description I gave above is primarily a case of assertion. Not only is his mouth long (naming), it is in fact determined (asserting). Since most film narratives are focussed on naming and asserting is only possible through special effort (for instance a voice-over), it is clear that assertive description is less easily adapted to the screen. Film does not \textit{describe}, like literature, but it \textit{depicts}.

Two other issues are related to this. The first is the difference in focalisation or “the point from which (or the eyes through which) you are given the illusion of seeing the action.”\textsuperscript{19} In literature

\begin{enumerate}
\item Seymour Chatman 1980, 122.
\item Ibid., 109.
\item Ibid., 109.
\item Seymour Chatman 1980, 129.
\item John Wyndham 1951, 71.
\item Richard Matheson 1954, 2.
\item Seymour Chatman 1980, 128.
\item H. Porter Abbott 2002, 115.
\end{enumerate}
focalisation enjoys great freedom and fluidity. Not only can focalisation switch any number of times between any number of points of view, but it can also take the reader anywhere, without limitation. A good example of narrative in which this is not the case, is theatre drama. Focalisation there lies with the audience, who normally observe the action on stage from their own fixed seat. Some effects may be used to guide the audience’s gaze, but on the whole focalisation is constant in theatre drama. Film, on the other hand, is not unlike literature in its freedom of focalisation. Montage has opened up a virtually unlimited choice of focal points through its ability to switch from scene to scene, from person to person and from location to location as freely as literature can.\(^{20}\)

There are also differences between film and literature when it comes to focalisation. Chatman argues that the camera is a neutral entity, devoid of human sensibility.\(^{21}\) The camera observes, but does so objectively, without judgement. This, however, is not quite so simple. The camera is not entirely neutral. By showing certain things or not showing things, it is able to give some indication of a subjective presence. Nonetheless, on the objectivity-subjectivity scale film has less freedom than the written word. Related to focalisation is the issue of the narrator. In literature, the narrator — who may be auctorial or a character in the story, — can simultaneously be the focaliser (novels written in the first person), or he/she may delegate focalisation to a character. Moreover, this division can change at any point during the narrative.

In film both focalisation and narration are problematic. Some films have a narrator, frequently through the technique of voice-over, who occasionally makes remarks. However, this is always limited to ‘moments’ intersected with (usually longer) parts without a narrator. Focalisation, on the other hand, lies firmly with the camera. It can, however, temporarily create the illusion that a character is focalising. A good example is any moment where a character, having been knocked out, wakes up with initially blurry vision, seeing worried people lean over him or her. Such moments, too, never last very long before the illusion of the character’s point of view is abandoned. When it comes to the narrator and focalisation, film is thus more limited than literature.

On the other hand, no novelistic narrator is quite capable of achieving the extent of objectivity, of merely depicting and not describing, that the camera is able to achieve if it wants to. An interesting phenomenon in literature is the unreliable or ignorant narrator. In literature there is always a question of reliability, but it gets particularly interesting when the reader is seeing things beyond the comprehension of the narrator. An example is the Irish novel *Good Behaviour* by Molly Keane. The focaliser is Aroon, an unintelligent and ignorant girl who, amongst other things, fails to see that her brother and his best friend are gay and that her father is impregnating half the village, which does, however, not escape the reader’s notice. As H. Porter Abbott points out, the ‘cold’ eye of the camera is largely incapable of achieving this type of character-bound focus and the depth of internal focus that accompanies it.\(^{22}\) Literature, on the other hand, cannot easily achieve’s the camera’s objectivity.

Combining this idea of film as a medium that depicts, it can be observed that this results in an entirely different type of imagery than literary imagery. A written description of a certain scene is necessarily only a selection of an indeterminate of possible details that could be described. The choice and number of details described is dependent entirely on the author’s whim, and is frequently governed by the type of focalisation from which the description occurs. A party seen from the eyes of a child would be different than the same scene from the eyes of a sulky adolescent. The camera, however, is a mostly objective entity. It would depict the party as it is, perhaps highlighting some details to suggest a character’s focalisation, but further leaving it up the viewer which details are taken note of and which remain unnoticed. The details that are actually shown, thus, are as virtually infinite as the imaginary scene from which the literary author makes his or her limited selection.\(^{23}\) Here film has more freedom.

A final, but not unimportant, difficulty that is faced when adapting literature to the screen is the difficulty of depicting internal monologue. It is largely impossible to adapt internal monologue to film in another way than with a voice-over. Consider the following opening passage: “When a day that you

\(^{21}\) Seymour Chatman 1980, 128.
\(^{22}\) H. Porter Abbott 2002, 118.
\(^{23}\) Seymour Chatman 1980, 125.
happen to know is Wednesday starts off by sounding like Sunday, there is something seriously wrong
somewhere. I felt that from the moment I woke."

Such a passage cannot be transferred to the screen
directly, it has to be adapted. Which is not to say
that this cannot be done quite effectively, for instance
by showing images in a certain way or adding the right music. Still, internal thoughts and feelings are
simply less explicit in film, something which is compensated by the fact that sometimes an event makes
more of an impact when it is shown than when it is told. An example is I Am Legend. This is a novel with
only one character and his internal monologue for the largest part of the story. A single character
cannot easily talk to other characters in order to convey some of his inner thoughts and emotions.
This, then, is potentially a difficult situation to adapt to the screen. On the other hand, the impact of
the desolate overgrown metropolis is arguably greater when viewed on a screen than when described in
words in a book.

Thus, it is clear that film and literature have their own limitations and their freedoms, in addition to
some characteristics in which they closely resemble one another. At least a significant proportion of
a written narrative, then, cannot be directly transferred to the screen but has to be adapted in some way.
Linking this back to semiotics, Brian McFarlane summarises the difference by distinguishing between
two types of elements of the literary work. The first category is those that are not specifically tied to
the literary semiotic system, and are thus easily transferable to film. He considers these to be the
narrative elements of the work. The other type does have strong ties to the literary semiotic system,
and is therefore not transferable but has to go through a process of adaptation proper. This is the
essence of the problem of adaptation. It is important to keep this in mind when comparing the novels
and film adaptation in the final three chapters of this thesis.

2.3 Fidelity

Considering the importance of adaptation proper, it is clear that there is not one way of adapting a
novel to film. Perhaps the most common concept in this regard is ‘fidelity’. All viewers of a film
adaptation who are familiar with the word from which it is adapted, will be making comparisons and
judge the extent of fidelity. To what extent has the director remained ‘true’ to the novel, and to what
extent has he deviated from the familiar story? Is the director commenting on the source? Despite the
eminence of fidelity in discussions on film adaptation, other approaches have been sought, with
varying success.

In this thesis I am also interested in fidelity — more specifically in ideological fidelity
with regard to social cohesion.

Several academics have developed frameworks in which they identify different types of adaptations.
Conveniently, these frameworks typically correspond quite nicely to one another. Brian MacFarlane
emphasises the importance of being aware what kind of adaptation a film is attempting to be, since
“such an assessment would at least preclude the critical reflex that takes a film to task for being
something it does not aim to be.” Since these categories are based on fidelity, the frequently
overpowering emphasis on this concept is reduced and leaves more space for other approaches.

Typically, three types of adaptation are identified. Geoffrey Wagner names these ‘transposition’,
‘commentary’ and ‘analogy’ while Dudley Andrew elects the terms ‘fidelity of transformation’,
‘intersection’ and ‘borrowing’. A ‘transposition’ is an adaptation with a high level of fidelity, where
interference and alterations are kept to a minimum. This is the most common type of adaptation.
Popular 21st century examples of this category are the Lord of the Rings trilogy and the Harry Potter
series. In Jay David Bolter’s & Richard Grusin’s terms, this type of adaptation emulates immediacy
and transparency. They use these notions in their discussion on what they term remediation: “the

24 John Wyndham 1951, 1.
26 Ibid., 8.
27 Ibid., 10-11.
28 Ibid., 22.
29 Geoffrey Wagner 1975, 222.
representation of one medium in another.”

They define immediacy as dictating “that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented.”

Transparency is linked to this, in that it attempts to grant the viewer the same direct relationship to the thing represented as when the viewer were confronted with the original content, and does so by erasing the medium as much as possible. Hypermediacy, on the other hand, occurs when the viewer becomes aware of the medium as a medium. This is not frequently seen in cinema, with some exceptions such as some French New Wave films or the thoroughly meta-level television series Community (2009-present), which is constantly questioning, mocking and making obvious filmic conventions. In recent years the film industry is relying more and more on CGI, or computer generated images. Used in film, this is also a type of remediation. Even in these cases, however, the goal normally remains immediacy and transparency. The viewer is not supposed to take any notice the transition from film to CGI and back. It has to blend in entirely.

Wagner’s ‘commentary’ occurs “where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect. It could also be called a re-emphasis or re-structure.” This type is midway between transposition and analogy, as will be shown. A good example of a commentary type of adaptation is Baz Luhrmann’s Romeo + Juliet. In this film Shakespeare’s famous story has been transported to the modern suburbs of Verona, but retains its original, archaic dialogues. Here then, the original is taken and purposefully altered not in space but in time.

The ‘analogy’, finally, “must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art,” according to Wagner. Andrew calls this type of adaption ‘borrowing’, which indicates that there is no real replication of the written work, but that some elements are nonetheless taken and used for the new work. Staying with Shakespeare’s greatest love story, and example of an analogy would be West Side Story. Although the main premise of the film was borrowed from Romeo and Juliet, it is so different in execution that no one would consider it a replication of the original play.

Acknowledging the importance of recognising the type of adaptation a film wants to be, it is now time to briefly consider the three case studies of this thesis: The Day of the Triffids, I Am Legend and On the Beach. The analyses of these works will make clear exactly which type of adaptation they are, so for now I will only offer my prediction. I believe that all three works are ‘commentaries’ in Wagner’s terms, being neither faithful transpositions nor more casual borrowings. A good indication for this is the fact that each work is transposed to the past, something that is already immediately apparent from the DVD cases. This classification will be further investigated in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Although I would classify the films under discussion as ‘commentaries’ in Wagner’s terms, I do not find the term ‘commentary’ satisfactory in the context of this thesis. It suggests that the film adaptation is commenting on its source of origin — in this case the 1950s novel. However, while these films are indeed strong ideological commentaries, their commentary is exactly that: ideological. The films do not comment on the novels from which they sprang, they comment on the society in which they were created. These are two entirely different types of commentary that should be firmly separated. As such, Wagner’s term may give the wrong impression. Dudley Andrew uses the term ‘intersection’, which is a better term in my opinion, but also raises unnecessary questions: what is it that is intersecting? I would therefore like to propose a different term for this type of adaptation: ‘reconfiguration’. This term suggests that certain elements have been wired anew while keeping the base elements intact. In my opinion, it is a more suitable term than ‘commentary’ for the type of adaptation “where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect.”

In addition, however, I feel that the type of adaptation suggestion by the term ‘commentary’ — a film that explicitly comments on its source — perhaps needs to be added as a fourth category under that

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31 Ibid., 6.
32 Ibid., 45.
33 Ibid., 48.
34 Geoffrey Wagner 1975, 223.
36 Dudley Andrew 2000, 422.
37 Geoffrey Wagner 1975, 223.
name. Whether this type of adaptation does indeed occur and warrants a fourth category is something that might be investigated.

The ideological type of commentary that has nothing to do with film adaptation, is the subject of this thesis. It will be discussed at length in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Before moving on to these analyses of the novels and films, however, I will first create a sociological framework in the upcoming chapter 3.
Chapter 3: Being Social

From this day to the ending of the World,
But we in it shall be remembered;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers:
For he to day that sheds his blood with me,
Shall be my brother [...].
William Shakespeare, King Henry V

This chapter zeroes in on creating a theoretical framework serving the sociological component of this thesis. First a general introduction will outline some relevant definitions and basic insight in the structure and categorisation of human societies. The second part of this chapter deals with a brief exploration of human motivation. This is followed by the development of a practical framework — on the basis of human motivation — for making sense of the interactions between humans within the three novels and films that will be discussed in this thesis. The final part of this chapter will attempt to outline the differences in social ideals and social outlook of the 1950s and the 2000s, in support of the main hypothesis of this thesis.

Starting with the introductory part, the central notion as expressed in the research question is ‘social cohesion’. What does this concept entail? It is hard to find a single, universal definition, but the meaning of the two words is indicative. According to my dictionary, ‘social’ indicates “of or relating to society or its organization”\(^2\). The meaning of ‘cohesion’ in a physics context, which works well here, is described as “the sticking together of particles of the same substance.”\(^3\) In particular I will focus on the bonds that bring these ‘particles’ of society together. Thus, I understand social cohesion as the bonds or links that bring humans together in a given social group or society. This subject is best addressed by sociology, as this is “the scientific study of human social life, groups, and societies.”\(^4\) However, psychology also has a part in this, as it focuses on the individual and its many needs and motivations, including the need for social contact.

The concept of ‘society’ is equally broad, with no exact agreement on its precise definition. Generally however, it is simply used to denote a group of people living together in a more or less structured community.\(^5\) This concept will be used in its full expansion in this discussion. After all, in I Am Legend society consists of just a single person for the larger part of the novel. In The Day of the Triffids, on the other hand, the majority of the population is struck blind and doomed to die quickly, but with still a sizeable enough group of unscathed survivors roaming the lands. On the Beach, in contrast, features a number of individuals in a large, modern society who have just learned their own imminent expiration date. All of these will be considered socially, although technically a one-person society is not a society. However, this person was born, raised and lived his life in a modern society before becoming the (initially) sole survivor of a terrible plague. He is, without a doubt, a socialised and culturalised being, formed by the societal structure of his ‘first life’, and that is enough for the present investigation.

An important concept in sociology is the assertion that the social context in which humans live is to some extent structured. Events and actions are usually not random, but ordered by some underlying structure. At the same time, societies are constantly being reshaped through the process of structuration. Societies change as its human components change. This results from the dichotomy between the parts of humans that are structured by society, and those that are not. The social world shapes humans, and they shape it.\(^6\) If it is true that all human societies are more or less structured or organised, one might think it would be possible to create an overview of the different types of

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1. William Shakespeare, no date.
3. Ibid., 2005.
structures that exist. The creation of such a list has indeed been an endeavour that has been revisited throughout the history of sociology, but it is also one that — up to this date — remains unsuccessful. As it happens, human groups have a tendency to defy generalisation and categorisation. Even such seemingly straightforward and frequently employed notions such as the ‘feudal system’, have proven to be immune to any universal definition and description. A simple historical categorisation does remain, if only in sociological student handbooks, describing the types of human society from the earliest period to the modern age:

- Hunting and gathering societies
- Agrarian societies
- Pastoral societies
- Traditional states or civilisations
- Modern societies

However, once one starts listing specific characteristics of each type, great difficulties emerge, as Runciman fervently points out. And yet the historical order of these society types, at least, is a fact. It would be a rare case to find a society that developed from a bureaucratic, nation-state into an agrarian society governed by chiefs. On the other hand, what happens in the aftermath of an apocalypse?

3.1 Motivation & Culture

When it comes to the development of a framework that can be used to aid the investigation of social cohesion as described in fictional works, an index of types of societal structures will not be of much help. Firstly, as has been pointed out, because such an index does not really exist, and secondly because it may be helpful at a broader societal level, but will be inconvenient for the type of micro-investigation at the level of individuals and small groups that will be conducted. The practical research methods of the field of sociology — experiments and fieldwork — do not offer any help either. After all, the societies and communities under investigation are neither real nor can they be subjected to experiments or be observed in the field. What is described in the novels and shown in the films is only the data available about these societies.

What is needed for this thesis, then, is a practical framework that helps describe relationships at a more interpersonal level and is suitable to the analysis of fictional works. The question is: why do people behave the way they do, especially in relation to other people? This brings us to a discussion of human motivation. After all, our lives are governed by our needs and wants, from the most basic needs for water, food and shelter to our less basic desires such as to have power over or offer assistance to others. These govern our actions, since ‘motivation’ literally means ‘to set in motion’, as Peter Gray points out. Motivation, then, offers a more practical framework.

Being in a motivational state is also referred to as experiencing a ‘drive’. Gray defines this as denoting “an internal condition that orients an individual toward a specific category of goals and that can change over time in a reversible way”, pointing out that virtually the entire field of psychology is concerned with motivation in one way or another. The study of motivation, or ‘what people want’, is a popular field and has produced many lists and categories of motivation. One could for instance categorise drives on the basis of nature-nurture, animal-human, individual-group, etcetera. Starting at the most basic drives, Gray distinguishes the following five, which apply to all mammals:

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10 Ibid., 81.
11 Peter Gray 2007, 179.
12 Ibid., 179.
• **Regulatory drives**: maintain homeostasis in the body, or the “constancy of internal conditions that the body must actively maintain.”\(^{13}\) Examples: hunger, thirst.
• **Safety drives**: keep the animal safe from danger, such as predators. Examples: fear, anger.
• **Reproductive drives**: ensure the survival of the species. Examples: sexual drive, drive to care for offspring.
• **Social drives**: survive through cooperation with others. Examples: drive for friendship, drive for acceptance in a social group.
• **Educative drives**: acquiring information about life. Examples: drive to play, drive to explore.\(^{14}\)

It is important to take note of these most basic needs, because while some have become much less foregrounded in modern society — we no longer have to spend the majority of our time seeking out food — they can be expected to become more prominent in (post-)apocalyptic situations, when society collapses.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, 21st century man is generally quite concerned with personal goals and self-actualisation, perhaps more so than in any other era. Although this overt preoccupation with self-actualisation is relatively recent, people of all era’s, presumably, have had dreams and ambitions and were keen to realise them. Psychological theorist Abraham Maslow argued that humans can only work on fulfilling self-actualisation needs or drives (growth needs) when five other categories of needs (deficiency needs) are satisfied. The first needs that need to be satisfied, are physiological needs. These are followed by safety needs. The third category consists of belongingness and love needs, followed by esteem needs. Only then do self-actualisation needs come to the fore.\(^{15}\)

Although Maslow’s hierarchy of needs has been very influential in the field of psychology, Baumeister points out that it is now considered too simple.\(^{16}\) For instance, it does not explain people starving themselves to save the ones they love. Or the bohemian hungry artist, who puts aesthetic principle before a full stomach.

In a recent publication, Roy F. Baumeister agrees with Gray’s view, but elaborates by adding a cultural component. He argues not only that “human nature was designed in part to be capable of culture,”\(^{17}\) but defends the idea that culture has guided nature, too. Humans live in three different worlds, and thus the human psyche must be structured in such a way as the accommodate and promote life in each of these worlds. The first world is the physical environment, which constitutes regulatory drives,\(^{18}\) safety drives, reproductive drives and assumably educative drives. The second world is the social world, which came into being as cooperation was favoured as a better survival strategy. Social drives belong to this realm. The third realm is the cultural world. In Baumeister’s words:

> Few animals use this strategy and only the human species has begun to take advantage of the potential power of culture to make life better. Culture is a better way of being social. That is, culture emerged as a strategy for dealing with the social and the physical environments.\(^{19}\)

In this discussion, Baumeister defines culture as “an information-based system that allows people to live together and satisfy their needs.”\(^{20}\) This is a fairly vague definition, and not particularly useful for this thesis. Anthony Giddens & Mitchell Duneier offer a more workable definition: “Culture consists of the values the members of a given group hold, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create.”\(^{21}\) Values of course refer to abstract ideals, norms to explicit rules (often based on these values)

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\(^{13}\) Peter Gray 2007, 181.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 182.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 565.
\(^{16}\) Roy F. Baumeister 2005, 166-167.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{18}\) Baumeister favours the term ‘desires’, but for all intents and purposes this is the same as ‘drives’.
\(^{19}\) Roy F. Baumeister 2005, 9.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 12.
that members of the social group are expected to adhere to, and material goods are simply the physical objects created by the society, and which influence its members’ ways of life.\textsuperscript{22} Apart from physical and social drives, Baumeister thus distinguishes several human drives which are \textit{cultural} in nature. As values, norms and material goods are tied into the culture from which they spring, it would be interesting to see if they change in the post-apocalyptic worlds of the three novels and films under discussion. The post-apocalyptic survivors in these works grew up in a culture, but when its society is destroyed, how much remains of their values and norms, of their culture and the desires that it brings forth?

\textbf{3. 2 A motivation-based framework}

The study of human motivation thus seems to offer a framework useful to the analysis of social cohesion in \textit{I Am Legend}, \textit{On the Beach} and \textit{The Day of the Triffids}. The reason for this is that a list of all motivations experienced by humans is not only finite, but relatively short. Such a list, then, will make a good framework for interpreting interpersonal behaviour. Baumeister in particular presents a useful categorisation and overview of human motivations. As two of his three worlds are directly focussed towards the bonds between people, and even the first world has some such elements (reproduction), Baumeister’s overview is pleasantly relevant to a discussion of social cohesion. In his words: “It is vital to understand what people want, or else their behaviours make no sense.”\textsuperscript{23} I will thus proceed with outlining the different motivations/drives/desires experienced by humans.

Baumeister divides human desires into three categories, those inherited from the animal world, the desires of the social animal and cultural motivations. Although these correspond largely to the three worlds Baumeister distinguishes, some differences can be discerned. Sex, for instance, has moved to the social realm. This seems injudicious, as all animals have sex, be they social or not. However, this seems to be a problem of categorisation, not of content. Other motivations, such as power (control), face similar classification problems, especially when incorporating the three-fold typology of power that Runciman describes. It is therefore pertinent not to attribute too much importance to the categorisation of motivations, but rather to the individual motivations themselves.

The first group of motivations Baumeister discerns, those that are inherited from the animal world, overlap with the mammalian motivations as described by Gray. Regulatory drives (food), safety drives (self-preservation), educative drives (from curiosity to understanding) and reproductive drives (sex) need no further explanation. The social drives listed by Gray constitute in fact a large group of motivations, which Baumeister divides between his social and cultural categories. These will be explored in more detail further on. To this first group of animal desires, Baumeister adds and extra set of motivations, namely the desire to avoid pain and to increase pleasure.\textsuperscript{24} This, too, is rather self-explanatory. He also adds the motivation ‘control’, which is indeed a very important concept. Whether it belongs to the mammalian category or the social category remains doubtful, but it is a highly relevant concept that requires further elaboration, before continuing with other human drives.

People like to gain power and resist losing it. Our history books are one long account of people losing and gaining power and the usually accompanying bloodshed. Baumeister makes a distinction between power and control, but I do not see this distinction and will simply use the notion ‘power’. In fact, the dictionary definition of power is “the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events,”\textsuperscript{25} while control is “the power to influence or direct people’s behavior or the course of events.”\textsuperscript{26} As mentioned before, Runciman categorises power into three distinct types. Since this typology appears both logical and more useful to the upcoming discussion of social cohesion than Baumeister’s examination of this topic, I will follow Runciman.

\textsuperscript{22} Anthony Giddens & Mitchell Duneier 2000, 48.
\textsuperscript{23} Roy F. Baumeister 2005, 47.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 2005.
Runciman considers power the ability to make another person do something he would not otherwise do. This is a fairly common definition that does not just include power by force, but also by persuasion or enticement and other more subtle forms. Runciman argues that this power is attributed to people by virtue of their social role. People can have different roles in different groups, but they always are both performing and occupying a social role. Performing, because roles are made of practices or “units of reciprocal behaviour informed by mutual recognition of shared intentions and beliefs.” Roles, then, are culturally determined. Just as there are a more or less infinite number of roles, there are also a more or less infinite number of kind of power. However, all these different kinds of power exertion can be grouped in three main categories. Runciman states that this typology is derived from Max Weber.

The first type of power is economic. A person with economic power (or rather, a role with economic power), allows this person to give or take wealth from another person in the form of pecuniary units, goods or services. In a feudal system, the lord has this type of power over his fiefs. The second type of power is ideological. Ideological power enables a powerful person to give or take from another person ideological wealth in the form of honour, prestige or social esteem. A good example would be a religious institution, especially in earlier centuries, but could also constitute a famous writer commending or rejecting an unknown writer. The third and final type is coercive power. This is the most physical type of power. A person with coercive power can bring down upon or protect another person from physical force.

Runciman concludes that every society has its own ways of distributing and exercising these three types of power and its own balance between these types of power. Related to this is the idea of social differentiation, as described by Wanda & Warms, which denotes the relative access that groups and individuals of a given society have to basic resources, prestige and wealth. In an egalitarian society, every individual has access to basic resources. Individual differences are recognised, but everyone has access to these resources. There is no pre-determined number of social roles, everyone has a role based upon his or her individual skills. There is not one ‘good farmer’, everyone who is good at farming can have that role. A rank society, in contrast, is hierarchical. People are formally organised in roles with different ranks, but all individuals still have access to basic resources, although some might have easier access than others. Stratified societies, finally, do deny certain groups or individuals access to basic resources. They are “characterised by permanent and wide differences among groups and individuals in their standard of living, security, prestige, political power, and the opportunity to fulfil one’s potential.”

Power/control either concludes the list of mammalian motivations, or is the first of the social animal’s motivations, depending on the category to which one attributes it. Baumeister’s first social drive is ‘belongingness’, which he explains to be one of the most powerful and basic human desires. This desire is perhaps the primary reason for human to group together and bond with one another. Grouping together has many advantages when it comes to both individual and species survival, which explains why this motivation is born into humans in the first place. In fact, people with little attachment to others, have higher mortality rates than those that do. Belongingness promotes both physical and mental health, with social connectedness having a high correlation to the experience of happiness: “if you are alone in the world, your chances of being happy are statistically quite slim.” Generally, people find belongingness through social contacts, and on average people are or want to be in close relationships with four to six people. However people can also connect to groups as a whole, such as sports clubs. Belongingness consists of two components: the desire for frequent interactions, and the desire for a continuous context of reciprocal caring.

28 Ibid., 3.
29 Ibid., 65.
30 Ibid., 65-66.
31 Ibid., 66.
34 Ibid., 107-112.
Another desire Baumeister lists among the social desires is aggression. It has been long debated whether aggression is innate or learned behaviour. By now it has been established, generally, that aggression is at least for a significant portion innate, and that culture mostly teaches self-control rather than further aggression. It has also become fairly clear that aggression is a want, but not a need. People need to eat, but they also want to eat. Aggression (especially forms of vandalism) is something people can enjoy, but they are also perfectly able to live their life without any aggressive acts. The same is true of for instance the sex drive. Aggression, then, is not something that builds up until a release (catharsis) is achieved, after which aggressive tendencies drop. In fact, aggressive acts tend to increase aggression for some time.\(^{35}\)

In social animals, aggression is usually a means to move up in the rank hierarchy of a social group. However, in cultural animals aggression tends to be counter-productive. Aggression disturbs the structure and stability of a culture. Especially in larger societies, the cultural system depends on the complex, differentiated structure of people and their individual tasks. And yet in more ‘basic’ societies leadership or political power is quite frequently usurped by the strongest warriors, that is, the most aggressive members of society. Among cultural beings aggression thus tends to bring short-term benefits, but long-term failure. Culture, in allowing societies to look toward the future, provides the means to prevent such behaviour. Human evolution did not decrease the existing innate aggressive tendencies, but gave humans the ability to override such tendencies through self-control. And thus humans can live in large, cultural societies.\(^{36}\)

The final desire of the social animal according to Baumeister is quite the opposite of aggression: nurturance, helping and generativity. Nurturance is mostly directed towards infants and children, and is perhaps the most widespread type of aiding others. It is related to the reproductive drive, as mentioned before, but also to belonging. The care for offspring is present in all mammals, as it ensures the passing on of one’s own genes. However, on a scale unlike any other animal, humans are also willing to take care of offspring that is not their own. Step-parents and adoptive parents are the best example of this. Biologically this makes no sense. However, on a cultural level there is some explanation. Cultural nurture is quite important in a large society, almost as important as what is innate. A person can pass on his own cultural inheritance to a child, even if this is not his biological child. The biological component of the child is not his or hers then, but the cultural component is.\(^{37}\)

Generativity refers to the motivation of adults to pass on their specific type of work skills to the next generation. That is, older adults like to have pupils to whom they can teach the experience and skills they have acquired over the years. This way knowledge is preserved from one generation to the next, something only humans are capable of doing. Helping or aiding others is something that tends to bring people satisfaction or other positive feelings. It may be asked, then, to what extent helping is actually a selfish act. This question is amplified by the prevalence reciprocity; an act of help is generally expected to be repaid eventually. Our willingness to help others is also related to belongingness, in that people are much more likely to help relatives or friends than strangers. This is unsurprising, since belongingness and the grouping together of people as a result would not be quite so useful if people did not help one another. Whether helping, nurturance and generativity is innate or learned, is a question that cannot be readily answered. Most likely, it is a combination of both.\(^{38}\)

It it not always easy to differentiate between motivations created by culture, and those that are more basic. Often cultural motivations are linked to innate motivations. The desire for money, for instance, is entirely created by culture but is frequently linked to the drives for food, shelter, safety and social motivations. What is striking about the cultural realm is that it is characterised by the dichotomy between what the individual wants and what the culture wants. Nature has made us essentially selfish creatures, but culture ensures the survival of the species. In order to shape the individual’s desires toward the common goal, culture has the ability to change, alter and redirect these individual desires. The desire for money is again a good example.\(^{39}\)


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 125-128.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 128-130.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 130-135.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 135-138.
One of the most important and amazing differences between humans and other animals is our capacity to communicate through language, which Baumeister lists as a cultural desire. All human cultures have language, without exception, which suggests that the desire to learn language is innate. Children have an extraordinary capacity for learning language and all its rules, and will learn language without any incentive — they can even learn two or three languages at the same time. The learning of the actual language is culturally determined, but in the field of linguistics there has been a long discussion about Universal Grammar. At the most basic level, all languages share some similarities, suggesting that perhaps these result from some innate component. In any case, language is most useful to the cultural animal, promoting such motivations as belongingness, educative drives, power and cooperation, and allowing us to form larger societies in the first place. Language enables humans to communicate their motivations, and thus helps fulfill them.

As mentioned before, people sometimes have suppressed their own individual desires because they would not be beneficial to the society as a whole. Morality and guilt are means of inducing people to exercise self-control. Guilt functions primarily socially, promoting people’s desire to act in a way that does not harm the people around them and to remain accepted in their society and social group: “Guilt can thus be understood as a vital part of the system that enables people to live together.” Morality is a system in a given culture that dictates the rules concerning acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Guilt and morality thus aid self-control. However, it is mostly limited to smaller social groups, as people do not feel quite so guilty when the person they harm is a stranger. In large societies, then, an additional mechanism has evolved to constrain undesired behaviour outside the direct social group of individuals: laws. Related to the inhibition of selfish, undesired behaviour and the promotion of social behaviour is self-esteem. Humans want to think positively about themselves, and want others to do the same. Good behaviour will promote this, and thus society/culture has yet another means of guiding behaviour.

Another way in which society motivates its members to perform their social roles adequately, is by defining success in a way that benefits society. As Baumeister puts it: “by defining success in a way that includes effective performance of social roles, and linking this idea of success to the underlying innate motives (such as social acceptance and control), a culture can encourage people to perform their roles effectively.” In modern, western society success is mostly understood as wealth and social recognition, that is, we want to be rich and famous. Men tend to desire wealth and fame more than women, and for them it may be related to the sex drive. Rich, famous men generally have more success in that department than unknown men with an average income.

The final cultural desire mentioned by Baumeister is the desire for a meaningful life. It is an important component of happiness. This desire is useful to society, as “it can encourage them [people] to find their lives more or less meaningful as a function of whether their actions contribute to things that are valued in the culture.” According to Baumeister, there are four needs for meaning that people seek in their need for a meaningful life. The first is purpose, in that currently activities derive meaning from the fact that they will have value in the future. The second is a sense of efficacy. People like seeing their activities produce a desired goal. The third is the set of values in a society that allow people to find justification and value in their activities. The fourth is self-worth, which is related to self-esteem as described before. When it comes to practice, it can be observed that religion has been, and sometimes still is, a common source of meaning in people’s lives. However, in modern, western societies the prominence of religion is rapidly diminishing.

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42 Ibid., 148.
43 Ibid., 147-150.
44 Ibid., 141-146.
45 Ibid., 151.
46 Ibid., 151-153.
47 Ibid., 155.
This long list of drives and desires gives a general but arguably complete overview what it is that motivates humans to act the way they act. A great deal of our behaviour is (partly) innate, but some of it is fostered by the culture we live in. It is interesting to observe how much of our behaviour is intricately tied in with our culture. Humans are asked to exercise self-control over those desires that are beneficial to the individual but not the group, and are cultured to develop desires that will elicit behaviour beneficial to society. We are cultural beings. But what happens when this society and culture collapses? That is what post-apocalyptic stories explore.

3.3 The social between 1950 and 2000

Considering how much of our desires, ideas and behaviour is kindled by culture, it is not surprising that views on social cohesion differ between the 1950s and the 2000s. After all, life, and culture with it, has changed a fair deal in the fifty years between these two decades. I will give a very basic and brief history of these periods, assuming that it is general knowledge. More specific historical events may be addressed in the actual analyses of the three novels and films.

Generally, the twentieth century is divided into two eras, separated by World War II. This is a true turning point in many spheres, and can arguably be seen as the onset of modern society as we know it. This is well illustrated by the fact that around 1940 only in two European countries did fewer than twenty percent of the population work in agriculture. In the years following World War II, the percentage of people working in agriculture dropped extremely rapidly in western societies. This decline of agricultural society is an enormously influential transformation, as Eric Hobsbawn points out. This is only one example, but it may be clear that the 1950s thus stand at the beginning of a new era.

By the start of the 1950’s, the world, especially Europe, was recovering from the Second World War. This recovery was not just economically, but also politically, socially, industrially and morally, to name a few. The Second World War had shaken the world to its foundations while part of it was still coming to terms with the First World War. By the end of the 1950s, this recovery was largely completed. However, from the late 1940s a new threat had been growing in intensity: the Cold War with its ‘hot’ competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The end of the Second World War had shown the devastation caused by a single atomic bomb. This new conflict, backed by thousands of atomic bombs, would surely mean the end of all life if it were to erupt into a full-scale war. The decade was further dominated by clashes between capitalism and communism, such as McCarty’s government-supported crusade against the ‘Red Scare’ and the Korean War. This decade further marked the beginning of the ‘Space Race’ with the launch of the Russian Sputnik I and the first stirrings of decolonisation in Africa and Asia.

Although it is always questionable to practice historical analysis on recent events, the start of the 21st century is frequently considered another turning point, although many developments started in final decades of the twentieth century. It is certainly not such a well-defined break as the Second World War. For instance, globalisation, which was long-growing process, took an unprecedented leap with the advance of the internet, which became available to the majority of people in the western world in the ‘00s. The internet enabled people to connect with people of all sides of the planet, exchanging information, interacting socially, interacting commercially, and generally learning about any topic without having to leave the house. The benefits of globalisation and new technologies that came from the western world also benefitted countries outside the first world, such as China and India, giving rise to new industrial powers.

Perhaps the most significant date of the 2000s is September 11th 2001. The disastrous al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Centres in New York shook the almighty nation of the United States to its foundations, and ultimately led to the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, with cooperation from several western countries. It marked the beginning of the ‘war on terror’. Madrid

50 Ibid., 265-399.
and London also suffered Islamic terrorist attacks. Politically, the European Union expanded and introduced the euro currency. The decade is further marked by great affluence, despite a global financial crisis in the later 2000s. Environmentally, there was a growing awareness of global warming, diminishing energy resources and the need for cooperation on a global level to tackle these problems.

History, current events and predictions of the future all shape a society. Having established very briefly the main historical events and developments of the 1950s and 2000s, it is now time to turn to a discussion more related to social cohesion and related concepts. I will focus on social cohesion and changes therein as perceived in and about the early 21st century, as this will make clear by method of inversion the differences with the preceding period, and thus the 1950s. Edward J. Lawler, Shane R. Thye and Jeongkoo Yoon’s book *Social Commitment in a Depersonalized World* is based on twenty years worth of research and gives good insight in the social transformations that are at work in the 2000s.

Lawler, Thy & Yoon make a distinction between person-to-person ties and person-to-group ties, and focus especially on the latter in their investigation of social commitment in the 21st century, while recognising that they are closely related. They argue that all major social transformations that have taken place in the past have generally had a profound effect on the relationships of people to their social groups, and that this is currently taking place again. These relationships are being disturbed, unbalanced and destabilised. The authors distinguish seven major transformations in particular that influence person-to-group ties.\(^{51}\)

The first is the decline of traditional employment contracts and the stability and security that they used to provide. Secondly, more and more people are gaining access to more and more information, mostly through globalisation and the progression of technologies that enable this further. In addition, these technologies, especially the internet, allow people to connect to other people all over the world. As a result, people tend to develop more relationships, but these are also weaker relationships. Fourthly, people's daily lives are increasingly more individualised and personalised, as reflected in a decline in membership to associations, clubs and the like. People form and maintain fewer close relationships to others. Fifthly, it has become more difficult for nations to care for their citizens and mobilise them when needed, which may well be result of the increasing individualisation. Sixthly, social inequalities are becoming more prominent in societies, whereas inequalities between societies are somewhat declining through globalisation forces. Lastly, environmental problems, most specifically global warming, has become an acute problem requires cooperation between people at a global scale.\(^{52}\)

All of these transformations have influenced social life in the 21st century. Lawler, Thye & Yoon use the term 'narrative' to describe the two main interpretations of the changes and transformations that characterise 21st century life. Indeed, this is a useful term because narratives “are not truths or descriptions, but rather conceptual devices that allow one to interweave objective conditions with subjective interpretations.”\(^{53}\)

The first narrative is the ‘individualisation narrative’. In this view, relationships between people and groups in the 21st century are mainly transactional. That is, people participate in groups to achieve personal, individualised goals but not for social value. This means the social commitments between people and groups are instrumental or continuance commitments: they are rational, without emotional or normative aspects. When the group offers what the individual needs, he or she will be a member, but as soon as a better offer comes along, the individual moves to the new group. Generally, people are seen as independent, individualised and personalised entities, who act mainly from self-interest. Social contacts and relationships are widely available due to new technologies, but they remain largely shallow and short-term. In relation to groups, individuals experience great freedom to move from one to others. Relational ties that are not instrumental are seen as a threat to efficiency.\(^{54}\)

The second narrative is the ‘social-relational narrative’. This approach is more in line with the sociological framework discussed before, emphasising the inherently social nature of humans. In this view, relationships and people are valued in themselves, also in the 21st century. This goes against the market-oriented, individualising trend of the 21st century, but is in fact not incompatible with it. The

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., 14-15.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 16.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 17-19.
social-relational narrative sees the transactional world as problematic and against human instinct. Social relationships therefore take place more on a micro level than a macro level, which also increases individual freedom as traditional large groups have less influence on people’s social lives.\textsuperscript{55} The forms of commitment in the social-relational narrative are affective and normative commitments. The latter refers to commitments formed or maintained from a sense of rightness or properness. Motivation comes from a sense of obligation or duty to belong to a group and serve its collective interests. Membership itself is valued, not the transactions that take place. Affective commitment, on the other hand, indicates an emotional tie to the group. Being a member makes one experience positive feelings and is a positive statement about one’s identity and status. This social-relational narrative considers normative and affective social commitments as most effective.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus, there are two main narratives at play in the 21st century, one appearing to be at variance with the other. This, perhaps, is not so unusual in periods of change and instability. Both, however, comment on a world that is more transactional, individualised and market-oriented than before. We may thus conclude that life in the 1950s was more social, more focused on community and collective interests, and more affective and normative in its commitments.

In conclusion, this chapter has made a journey from general sociological insights to motivational insights to a motivational framework to some indication of the differences between the 1950s and 2000s. A broad framework has been established that will aid in the investigation of social cohesion in \textit{I am Legend}, \textit{The Day of the Triffids} and \textit{On the Beach} and the three film version of the same titles. This framework consists of all human motivations or drives: regulatory, safety, reproductive, educative, power, belongingness, aggression, nurturance/helping/generativity, language, morality and guilt, self-esteem, success and a meaningful life. It will allow me to label and interpret the social behaviour in the primary works. The following three chapters each discuss a novel-film pair and apply the insights of the past three chapters in their analyses.

\textsuperscript{55} Edward, J. Lawler, Shane R. Thye, & Jeongkoo Yoon 2009, 19-23.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 23-27.
Chapter 4: *The Day of the Triffids*

It's the end of the world as we know it.  
It's the end of the world as we know it.  
It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine.  
R.E.M.¹

This chapter will comprise of three parts. In the first part, the novel *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham will be analysed on the topic of social cohesion, using the framework set out in chapter 3. In addition, insights from chapter 1 will be used to complement the analysis. This first part will commence with a brief summary of the story, followed by an analysis of each of the four main elements of the post-apocalyptic story as I identified them in the first chapter of this thesis: 1) pre-apocalyptic society, 2) the apocalyptic event, 3) the survivor(s) and 4) the threat. The third element is most relevant to the topic of social cohesion, but the first, second and fourth elements both can influence the behaviour of the survivor and tell us something about the ideologies the story is attacking and endorsing, thus giving more insight in the narrative as a whole and the representation of social cohesion in particular.

The second part of this chapter is structured exactly the same, but analyses the 2007 BBC miniseries of *The Day of the Triffids*. Here, insight of chapters 1 and 2 may be used to complement the framework set out in chapter 3. The third part constitutes an overview and comparison of the novel and the miniseries on the basis of ideology and social cohesion. An interpretation of the findings will be presented in the conclusion after the analysis of the other two primary works, *I Am Legend* and *On the Beach*, in chapters 5 and 6.

### 4.1 *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) - written by John Wyndham

John Wyndham’s novel is frequently referred to as the leading exemplar of what is termed the ‘cosy catastrophe’.² What this type of post-apocalyptic novel entails is perhaps best described in the world of R.E.M. in the motto to this chapter. While the world has found its end and most people are dead, the main characters suffer relatively few hardships and are in fact able to live quite happily. This will be explored in more detail further on, but is a good way of describing the general tone of the novel.

Plot-wise, the novel starts in the near future. The protagonist, Bill Masen, wakes up in a hospital in London after being stung in the eyes by a Triffid, to find that the majority of people has been struck blind, presumably by the extraordinary and unexpected comet rain that illuminated the skies the night before. Bill leaves the hospital to explore and get some stiff drinks, and before too long rescues a young, sighted woman called Josella Playton. They find that her blind father has been killed by Triffids, and join an already well-organised mostly sighted group led by Michael Beadley. This group stresses the need to abandon some of the old principles, values and morals.

Before Beadley’s group can leave, Bill, Josella and others are abducted by Coker’s group, who separate them and force each sighted person to take care of a large group of blinded people. A deadly plague kills most blind people within days, and Bill returns to find the Beadley group gone. Together with a now practically minded Coker, he follows their trail to Tynsham Manor, where a smaller, female group has split off to form a struggling community based on ‘christian principles’, led by Miss Durrant. They quickly move on, searching for Josella, but are unable to find her. They return to Tynsham, but Bill sets out to find Josella at a place she briefly mentioned on their first day: Shirning. Along the route he picks up a ten years old girl, Susan, and together they find Josella happily settled at a farm with three blind people.

In the next part of the novel, about four years pass. Bill starts cultivating the farm grounds and has a child with Josella. A problem of increasing importance pertains the Triffids, who congregate en

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² Andy Sawyer & Peter Wright 2011, 31.
masse around the farm, waiting for their chance. Around the fourth year they are visited by a helicopter and its pilot, who belongs to the Beadley group. Coker has also joined this group. They have settled on the Isle of Wight, which they rid entirely of Triffids. The Masens decide to join this group after the summer. Before that, however, they are visited by Torrence, who claims to be part of a nationalistic militant group and wants Bill to reform into a unit of their feudal system. That same night the Masens and their blind cohabitants escape and start their way to the Isle of Wight, where Bill is determined to find a way to rid the world of Triffids altogether.

With regard to form, *The Day of the Triffids* is fairly unremarkable. The story is told from Bill Masen's perspective in the first person as direct discourse. There is a fair deal of description, giving the impression that Bill is an observant, practical man. Many of these descriptions include an explicit or implicit judgement as perceived by Bill. Bill is also the narrator and the story has been framed as his personal account, written after the events of the main story, but with very few remarks that betray hints of hindsight. Focalisation is mostly restricted to Bill, too. This allows for a personalised experience of the (post-)apocalypse. Some broadening of the perspective is offered when Bill retells stories of others he encounters. With regard to psychological development it can be observed there is a rather abrupt development in the final part of the book, when the story leaps several years into the future. In this final part, Bill and Josella have completely adapted to agrarian life. Within the bulk of the story, however, there is very little psychological development. Bill and Josella need hardly adapt to the apocalypse, and immediately adopt a mindset suitable to the new situation.

Moving from form to content, it may be observed that not much is said about pre-apocalyptic society in *The Day of the Triffids*. The precise years in which the novel is set remains unclear, but some deductions can be made from the world described by the narrator and the mention of the 8th of May as being a Wednesday. Mostly likely, considering that date, the book starts in either 1974 or 1985. We learn that this near-future society is highly modern, with global travel and excellent welfare. However, the novel also stresses a global food problem that has emerged as a result, and in particular a cynical view on the human spirit:

> The human spirit continued much as before — ninety-five percent of it wanting to live in peace; and the other five percent considering its chances if it should risk anything. It was chiefly because no one's chances look too good that the lull continued.

We get an English perspective of pre-apocalyptic society from Coker, who is able to switch rapidly from one accent to another, depending on the societal class of the person he is addressing. He stresses the enormous influence of speaking the right (or wrong) accent. Interestingly, he refers to the English class system as a caste system, suggesting that its rigidity resembles the Indian caste system and giving it a negative flavour. Further, pre-apocalyptic life is described as fairly lonely. Bill ponders: “I suppose that had I had any relatives or close attachments to mourn I should have felt suicidally derelict at that moment. What had seemed at times a rather empty existence turned out now to be lucky.” And yet, no other person is displaying any sign of feeling ‘suicidally derelict’. The only suicides occur in reaction to being struck blind. Pre-apocalyptic humanity, then, appears oddly detached. In general, pre-apocalyptic society, the modern society of the near future, is thus not depicted as particularly utopian. However, by the end of the novel, when the main characters have had the chance to sample pre-modern society (in a small agrarian unit) and ponder the apocalyptic event, pre-apocalyptic modern society is demoted to the status of a true dystopia.

Another aspect of pre-apocalyptic society that is given some attention is related to the apocalyptic event itself. Bill describes the sudden popularity of launching satellites into an orbit around the earth, and the strong suspicion that these contain weapons. Not just ordinary weapons, but nuclear weapons and biochemical weapons containing viruses and other diseases. However, after some initial concern, the human population simply “became used to the idea perforce.” The apocalypse that blinds the

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3 John Wyndham 1951, 19.
4 Ibid., 47.
5 Ibid., 20.
The vast majority of the human population in the novel is attributed to debris from a comet passing through the atmosphere. Bill, however, points out the unlikelihood of such debris arriving completely unexpectedly, without astronomers seeing it coming. It is his belief that the blinding green flashes are the result of one of the weaponised satellites. In other words, the apocalypse is man-made, and clearly reflects the Cold War anxieties of death at the push of a button, as Barry Langford rightly points out.9

This influence is also found in the fourth post-apocalyptic element — the threat. In a chapter describing the origins of the Triffids, it is strongly suggested that they originate from Soviet experiments in genetic engineering. In fact, reference is made to real-world Trofim Lysenko: “Later, however, a cleavage of methods and views had caused biology there, under a man names Lysenko, to take a different course.”7 This pseudoscientist was the Soviet head of biology under Stalin. His research was mostly agricultural and anti-Mendelian in nature, and this was the accepted theory in the Soviet Union until 1964. What is interesting about the Triffids is that the novel depicts them as having an alternative type of intelligence and social behaviour that is frequently seen in insects such as bees. Together, they form a kind of collective intelligence, and, most strikingly, Wyndham has endowed them a form of communication which one character deems as evolved as actual ‘talk’.

In contrast to the Triffids, who converge in hundreds and thousands around human dwellings, the survivors in *The Day of the Triffids* tend to band together in much smaller groups. The apocalyptic event effectively casts them from the modern age into the prehistoric age. The survivors initially form small hunter-gatherer societies, gathering from supermarkets rather than nature, and quickly develop into agrarian and pastoral societies. Considering the most basic drives as identified in chapter 3, it can be seen that regulatory drives — hunger, thirst, warmth — remain easily satisfied. Therefore, there is a concern mostly with safety drives, reproductive drives and different types of social drives. There is in fact a concern with preserving the knowledge and culture of the society in which the survivors grew up. Different behaviour by different survivors can be identified as being driven by different motivations. I will now list the most prominent examples of post-apocalyptic behaviour and motivations and their effects on social cohesion.

At the beginning of the novel, Bill Masen encounters Josella Playton, and they immediately form a strong bond. While Bill wonders about the fact that no other people appear to have formed new bonds quickly, their relationship is simultaneously depicted as natural, and a result of the inherently social nature of humans: “She came like a child for comfort. I’m not sure that her need of it was much greater than mine.”8 This is even more emphasised by Bill’s experience of being alone:

> Until then I had always thought of loneliness as something negative — an absence of company, and of course, something temporary... That day I had learned that it was much more. It was something which could press and oppress, could distort the ordinary, and play tricks with the mind.9

The drive of belongingness is thus very prominent. As described in chapter 3, this drive consists of the need for frequent interactions with a person or persons and a mutual concern for one another. It should, however, be noted that Bill is not so much craving for human company as for Josella’s company. This seems to run counter against the novel’s comments on loneliness, and would suggest the precedence of romantic belongingness over general belongingness. In other words, the belongingness component of the desire for a continuous context of reciprocal caring — the bond between Bill and Josella — is stronger than the component of the desire for frequent interactions, which Coker and other would have provided. Belongingness is presented as essential to Bill’s happiness. The third member of their family is Susan, who Bill and Josella come to consider as their daughter. Here the drive for nurturance thus plays a role, and possibly the drive for generativity as Susan learns a lot from Bill and Josella and Bill seems keen to pass on his skills to the younger generation.

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8 Barry Langford 1999, viii.
7 John Wyndham 1951, 23.
8 Ibid., 79.
9 Ibid., 177.
On the first day of the apocalypse, Bill and Josella encounter two organised groups. The first is led by Coker, and is driven by the desire for nurturance and helping. Coker wants to organise a structure in which care is provided for the blind. Coker first attempts to gain followers by exercising a type of ideological power—one of the three types of power identified in chapter 3. By persuasion and playing on people’s sense of morality, virtue and values, he defends the ‘correctness’ of helping the blind. When this fails, he resorts to coercive power, using violence and force to have sighted people take care of the blind. The drives for nurturance and helping are soon discredited, however, when the arrival of a plague renders it oppositional to the more basic regulatory and safety drives. Some space does remain for this empathic drive, but this is predominately reserved for relationships between sighted people. Thus it is made very clear that the only practical option is for the sighted minority to continue without the blind, as Langford points out.\(^\text{10}\)

The second organised group has already grasped this from day one. Later referred to as ‘Beadley’s lot’ and eventually settling on the Isle of Wight, this group is already preparing for an evacuation from London. The group is distinctive in its general philosophy, which originates from a sociology professor among the group. This professor argues that the human race is worthy of saving, and that they should subordinate to that goal. The means of doing so are simple: “The men must work—the women must have babies.”\(^\text{11}\) In this group, then, reproductive drives are brought to the fore as a means of preserving the race. Old values and morals will have to be set aside, polygamy has to be the norm. It is surprising that Josella is quicker to accept these new standards than Bill. After all, in pre-apocalyptic she was a career woman—having written a bestseller novel—and she expresses some concern about the number of babies they expect her to have. The fact that the number of babies is her only concern about the idea betrays a certain ideology about the position of women. It is indicative of the longstanding view of women as being more childlike than men and needing guidance. Having babies and taking care of them is their work. Men take care of everything else.

This quick acceptance of new morals and values is only one example of the general sense of rationality and practicality throughout the novel. Extremely little panicking, mourning or other emotional outbursts feature in the novel. People do express doubt about abandoning old morals now and again, although they are quick to agree that they need to be abandoned: “But you can’t change and turn brutal all at once—at least, I can’t.”\(^\text{12}\) Coker, having been cured of his initial drive for nurturance and helping through his early failure, later voices a very rational and practical viewpoint: “Decent intentions seem to be the most dangerous things around just now.”\(^\text{13}\)

Coker voices some of his strongest rants at the community at Tynsham Manor. Here, a group of women have split from the Beadley Group to uphold the old Christian morals and values, including the traditional differences between women and men. They consider technical issues men’s work, and therefore forego some luxuries otherwise available. Clearly, they are driven by motivations rooted in morality and guilt as described in chapter 3. Coker lectures on the foolishness of such an approach, simultaneously arguing for an immediate women’s emancipation: “And here I have been explaining that women have all the capacities if they only take the trouble to use them.”\(^\text{14}\) As proof, he points at the women who took over men’s work when the men were taken away for the war effort in World War II. With this remark Coker inadvertently betrays the time of origin of the novel by both suggesting that World War II is still a recent memory that easily comes to the fore, and by showing that the novel’s society has not been touched by the women’s emancipation wave of the sixties.

Tynsham Manor runs badly on old morals and values, and collapses within months, accelerated by the arrival of the plague from London. A community founded on outdated (Christian) values, then, has no place in the post-apocalyptic landscape of The Day of the Triffids. Nonetheless, many people in the novel do appear to be driven by morality, and, when not acting upon it due to its diminished validity, experience a sense of guilt. And yet these emotions do not evoke drives, as most people are quick to

\(^{10}\) Barry Langford 1999, xiv.

\(^{11}\) John Wyndham 1951, 100.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 55.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 155.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 150.
dismiss the old values by rationally considering that they are not adapted and mostly unsuitable to the post-apocalyptic landscape.

The final larger community in the novel is presented to the protagonists by the violent Mr. Torrence, who introduces himself as “the Chief Executive Officer of the Emergency Council for the South-Eastern Region of Britain.” As the string of titles indicates, this group is highly militarised and bent on creating a society which “combines neo-feudal seignury with the concentration camp,” as Langford describes it. The people in charge of this society possess and desire coercive power through their weapons, but also economic power by determining the amount of land each unit is allowed to cultivate, and thus the amount of food they have at their disposal. The ‘feudal lord’ at the head of such a unit also has a level of economic power, as it is strongly suggested he will be the one dividing the food on the table.

What is contradictory in Torrence’s society, is the fact that blind people are such a large part of the structure. Focussed on surviving at the bare minimum and the exercise of power, preferably on a worldwide scale, the desire to help blind people survive seems oddly contradictory. It may, however, be dictated by the fear of the leaders of this society of losing power; a man overburdened by the task of feeding so many people has no time to question the authorities. In any case, this society, too, is doomed to fail as the last page of the novel predicts. Responsible for this are the undiscriminating Triffids. Returning to the Triffids (the threat), the last page further predicts their end. Genetically engineered, the means to their demise is, ironically, again genetical engineering. Thus Bill, previously idealising the simple, self-dependent farming life, returns to a job similar to the one he had in pre-apocalyptic society. Science is left with an ambivalent status, being both the downfall and the salvation of mankind.

Generally, the novel depicts the post-apocalyptic survivor as being predisposed to band together in small groups, living in such a way until the principle of safety in numbers compels them to join forces and create larger societies. The novel suggests that only such larger groups are the key to the survival of the human race. While people initially prefer smaller groups, only larger groups permit species survival. It is also suggested that humans easily fall into tribalism or barbarism, becoming highly aggressive to any outsiders, suggesting that for some this is the natural result of the collapse of society:

‘There are some lots in South Wales that have made sorts of tribal communities, and resent the idea of any organization except the minimum they’ve set up for themselves.’ [...] ‘Some of them so definitely don’t want to be interfered with that they shoot at the aircraft.’

Looking at the whole of The Day of the Triffids, it can be concluded that the main apocalyptic event, the disease that follows it and the ‘wrath’ of the Triffids can and must be read allegorically. As Els Jongeneel states in her investigation of allegory in Saramago’s Blindness: “Whereas the apocalyptic utopia focuses on death and the forging of a new society, the postapocalyptic dystopia allegorises a social system permanently in need of investigation and reform.” The Day of the Triffids uses elements of both scenarios. Indeed, the pre-apocalyptic society is described in such terms that the blindness can be read as a metaphor for a blindness of rationality, of reason. Pre-apocalyptic society was living under constant threat of dangerous new inventions and experimentation (bio-chemical war, genetic engineering, global loneliness), but its inhabitants were quick to get used to it. In the immortal words of The Beatles, what the novel is saying is: “Living is easy with eyes closed.” Being struck blind is a literal translation of this social state, and makes it clear that this is not the way to approach life.

If the metaphor of blindness is not yet explicit enough, the merciless and presumably (again) man-made typhoid-like disease that follows makes the point entirely obvious. Initially, this disease with a mortality rate of one-hundred percent only kills those that had already been struck blind. The sighted remain curiously unaffected while simultaneously being freed from the moral dilemma of what to do with the helpless blind masses. The new garbagemen are the Triffids, who take care of any blind

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15 John Wyndham 1951, 225.
16 Barry Langford 1999, xv.
19 The Beatles “Strawberry Field Forever” 1967.
people who escape the disease. The very few blind people who survive even the Triffids only do so because they are assisted by sighted people — the true inheritors of the world. The disease also affect those at Tynsham Manor, who are depicted as attempting to hold on to outdated, unrealistic and eventually self-destructive values and morals. Clearly, then, these values and morals are also meant to be seen as ‘diseased’.

As Langford points out, the literary trope of blindness is a very old one. Traditionally, he writes, “physical blindness begets spiritual and moral insight.”¹²⁰ In The Day of the Triffids, this is clearly not the case as the blind are completely written off. However, it is true for some of the survivors. While some groups — Torrence, Miss Durrant — are depicted in a more negative light (doomed to fail), Bill Masen and his group, Coker, and the Beadley group are shown as creating some kind of small utopia in the rubbles of the old world. They become self-dependent, live in peace in family-like units and are happy. Bill and Josella, having had the allegorical shells of blindness completely removed from their eyes after a couple of years, voice their new-found happiness in what may be read as the gist of the entire novel: “You see, I — I’ve been happier here than ever in my life before, in spite of everything.” As for me, my sweet, I wasn’t even alive before.”¹²¹ Thus, the story both allegorises the social system of modern society and describes the erection of a new, presumably better, society.

When it comes to the social cohesion in The Day of the Triffids, the novel thus explicitly shows the failure of many, and the success of some forms of social groups. Modern society is a definite failure, proven by its destruction of itself. Smaller, but not too small, societies are the future, as long as they are able to adapt to the new circumstances in terms of values, norms and morals. Using the framework of motivations set out in chapter 3, it may be observed that generativity becomes important as a means of preserving culture and preventing a lapse into ‘primitivism’. Otherwise, basic survival drives are foregrounded, especially reproductive drives as a means of preserving the species. Aggression and the exercise of power are brought to the fore by some, but failing, societies. The desire for a meaningful life gets some attention, exemplified by Dennis Brent’s frustration at being useless due to his blindness, and his insistence on learning to be useful again. More personal self-actualisation drives, such as self-esteem and success, play no role. The novel thus enforces and rejects various ideologies, which will be summarised further on in part 4.3.

4. 2 The Day of the Triffids (2009) - directed by Nick Copus

The 2009 BBC series The Day of the Triffids²² is set in the near future, or an alternative version of the present. Its society closely resembles the 2009 society of Britain, with one exception: the Triffids. Their oil is used as a clean, CO₂ free fuel, that has made an end to global warming. The Triffids are highly dangerous, but this is unknown to the general public. The protagonist, Bill Masen, is a distinguished Triffid researcher and retains his sight, again, by being hospitalised as a result of a Triffid sting. Throughout the story he is haunted by the death of his mother in Zaire and the estrangement from his father, both of whom were also Triffid researchers. Two other protagonists are followed besides Bill: Jo Playton, a radio host, and ‘Torrence’, a dangerously clever man of unknown origins.

After a general introduction into this world, the apocalyptic event takes places. Rather than a comet, it is caused by a solar eruption. The spectacular views this produces are a result of the ‘global cooling’. After the blinding flash, chaos breaks out. Sighted radio host Jo is accosted by a blind policeman who wants her to see for him, until Bill saves her. Bill worries about the Triffids, and they drive to his Triffid farm to find it deserted. The Triffids were set loose by an ignorant environmental activist. Bill collects his research, including a tape of Triffid sounds which he is sure are a means of communication. After this, they drive to Jo’s father to find him killed by Triffids.

Back in London, Jo and Bill join a group led by Michelle Beadley. Worried about the Triffids reproducing, Bill wants to visit his father in Shirning, but then he and Jo are kidnapped by Coker and

²⁰ Barry Langford 1999, x.
²¹ John Wyndham 1951, 222.
²² Although it is a 2-episode series, I will refer to it as a ‘film’ because the two episodes constitute a single story and cannot stand alone.
his group, who want to provide help for the blind in London. Torrence, initially acting subordinate to Coker, takes over power in London. Bill and Coker are taken into the woods to be fed to the Triffids, but escape. Torrence tells Jo that Bill was killed, and has her operate the radio to draw people to London to join his militarised group. Coker and Bill arrive at a religious abbey led by Mother Superior Durrant. The Triffids are outside, but do not attack the abbey. When Bill leaves for Shirning, he discovers a site in the woods where abbey members have been ‘sacrificed’ to the Triffids. Durrant is discredited, and Coker is left in charge as Bill heads to Shirning again.

Along the route, Bill picks up two sighted sisters, Susan and Imogen, of about nine and thirteen years old. Together they arrive at Shirning, where Bill’s father remains, sighted. They also find Jo there, having escaped from Torrence’s militant society the day before. Bill’s father has found a solution to make the Triffids infertile, namely by creating a new, de-fertilising Triffid. He only still needs a male Triffid head, which Bill finds for him. Meanwhile, Torrence is having a hard time fighting the Triffids, who have started sporing. Coker flies over in a plane, dropping leaflets explaining about a new colony on the Isle of Wight. Bill’s father is attacked by the female Triffid he has in captivity, and dies. Unable to finish his father’s work in time, Bill, Jo and the two girls decide to head for the Isle of Wight in the morning. However, Torrence arrives and demands that Bill find a solution for the Triffids. Bill lures in the Triffids, and Torrence and his men are killed. Remembering his childhood in Zaire and a local tribe’s rituals, Bill pours Triffid poison in his own and the others’ eyes, and they can pass the Triffids freely. They set out for the Isle of Wight.

With regard to form, it can first be observed that the film has essentially three main characters who take turns as the focal point of the camera: Bill, Jo and Torrence. This allows for a more omniscient depiction. The narrator is Bill Masen, who frames the story with some extradiegetic23 voice-over narration at the beginning and end of the film. The film is further endowed with an almost uninterrupted extradiegetic soundtrack, and a few short instances of diegetic music when an instrument or record is played. Sound effects — both diegetic and extradiegetic — are used to create and enhance suspense. The camerawork is fairly traditional: somewhat flexible, moving with the characters and often showing a scene as the character(s) would see it, thus temporarily relinquishing focalisation to that character. In other shots it provides a more omniscient view. With some goodwill, it gives the impression that the camera, too, is a survivor of the apocalypse, witnessing others organise themselves and behave in certain ways. The dark atmosphere of the film is created by the use of a predominantly grey and brown palette of colours. Overall, it is clear that the form of the film is subordinate to the content of the film, rendering a closer investigation unnecessary.

Moving on to a content analysis, it can be observed that the pre-apocalyptic society of the 2009 BBC series is in fact more positive than ‘real’ society, because one of the main issues of the 21st century, global warming,24 has been solved. However, the series does not approve of the means. The Triffids are too dangerous: “How did the world get swallowed up so quickly? It is because we had our eyes closed, even when we could see. [...] And we let them get too close.”25 Pre-apocalyptic society in the series thus constitutes a highly modern, globalised society, which keeps its enemy too close. It also gives the appearance of being highly individualised. Bill and Jo both have good careers, but neither have any close ties. Bill has a father he has not seen in years. Jo does presumably have a good relationship with her father, but after finding him dead she does not refer to him ever again. Neither Bill nor Jo appear to have any friends, although Bill did have a colleague-friend. Torrence appears to have no one in the world at all.

Interestingly, the apocalyptic event is not man-made in the series, even though Bills comment about having “our eyes closed” does suggest that mankind has brought the disaster upon itself. And yet it seems highly unlikely that even without the Triffids, mankind would have been able to restore its old society. Nonetheless, Bill keeps insisting that the apocalypse was society’s own fault: “It [the past] was

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23 Diegetic elements are elements that are observed by the audience and characters in the story alike, whereas extradiegetic elements are only observed by the audience.


25 The Day of the Triffids part 1, 00:00:45.
beautiful. But we didn’t take care of it.”

In the series, then, the true apocalypse is considered to be the Triffids, not the blinding. The blinding may thus be read allegorically again, as a physical manifestation of the symbolic state of society. The one redeeming character outside of modern society is the tribal native that taught Bill how to use the Triffid poison. It is his non-scientific wisdom that saves the protagonists. It is peculiar how this ‘science of the occult’ is hailed as the solution, even though it does nothing against the Triffids in the long run.

Science takes an ambivalent position in the series. On the one hand, it created the Triffids, thus planting the seeds the end of modern society. On the other hand, the Triffids averted the other looming end of modern society: global warming. Global cooling, in turn, caused the solar flares to be overly visible and blind the population. And finally, the solution to the Triffids — which are both part of the apocalyptic event and constitute the threat — is once again science, although initially Bill can only laugh incredulously at the suggestion of creating a new Triffids. Bill’s father effectively embodies pre-apocalyptic society’s standpoint: “There are always unintended consequences, Bill, to everything we do.”

He practices science not for the sake of knowledge, but for (presumably) money. Bill is the opposite: “Mother Nature is finally taking revenge and reclaiming the planet.” It is rather ironic that mother nature does so through the means of a man-made plant, even if the message is clear: do not meddle with nature. The tribal solution that Bill learned in Zaire could be read as confirming this. This solution allows humans to pass safely between the Triffids, but does not harm the Triffids in any way. If this, then, is the best solution according to the film — accepting that the Triffids are now a part of natural life, too, and that they must be treated with respect — it casts the ending in a rather negative light. After all, Bill presumably still intends to find a ‘permanent’ solution to the Triffids. Has humanity learned nothing at all from Mother Nature’s Revenge?

On a more social level, the rejection of science as the solution to everything may indicate the faulty ways of concentrating only on one’s work, rather than on family. Bill’s father lost all contact with his son, while Bill himself lived a lonely life. Jo’s work as a radio host, too, has made her live an unbound life. Moreover, her work is discredited as an inherently ‘good’ job when she discovers that she has inadvertently been inciting people to come to a corrupt, militant and eventually doomed new society, making things worse rather than better. Instead, she is better off with Bill and the two girls, forming a family of sorts and joining a new, peaceful society. The series is clearly suggesting that the drive for belongingness — the importance of which was also highlighted in chapter 3 — is important, and certainly more important than personal success at a job or pecuniary wealth. The one person with no ties whatsoever, Torrence, fails to develop a bond with Jo and then dies an unpleasant death.

Torrence’s society is one of two significant post-apocalyptic societies that are shown in some detail in the series. Power, which has been set out in chapter 3 as constituting coercive, ideological and economic forms, is prominent in this society. Torrence assumes the place of leader of this society through a ‘military’ coup, and continues to exert his power through coercive means. In addition, Torrence claims to have economic power — food and water — as a means of drawing other people into his society. Ideological power appears to play no role in this society. Torrence’s group also claims they have to take care of the blind, but it is clear that for Torrence himself this is simply a means of satisfying his hunger for power, rather than a desire for helping and nurturing. Indeed, Torrence appears to be driven primarily by his lust for power. As he exclaims excitedly: “It’s a new world, Jo. We can be anything we want, do anything we want.”

Torrence is also interested in Jo, but whether this is the result of the sociological desire for belongingness, sex, power again, or something else, remains unclear while he remains unsuccessful. When the Triffids are overrunning London, Torrence seeks out Bill for a solution. This could be interpreted as the drive for safety taking preeminence, but may in fact be incited by the fear of losing power. Aggression — another motivation from the list in chapter 3 — also plays a role in Torrence’s behaviour, although generally he is quite self-controlled. However, when he finds that Jo has escaped

26 The Day of the Triffids part 1, 00:46:26.
27 The Day of the Triffids part 2, 00:46:00.
28 Ibid., 00:46:50.
29 Ibid., 00:23:30.
he is so infuriated that he shoots the blind man that was supposed to ‘watch’ her, and with more than the necessary number of bullets. Primarily, then, Torrence is driven by power and not much else.

Ideological power, absent in Torrence’s group, does play a part in the other post-apocalyptic society, the abbey led by Mother Superior Durrant. The people she sacrifices to the Triffids in a Cretan bloodritual are happy to leave, because they are told they have been chosen by God to spread the word about the abbey. Thus, Durrant has people abide her will by the exercise of ideological power, by bestowing certain ‘honours’ on them. The symbolic ‘cold’ atmosphere of the abbey is emphasised by the literally cold, snowy weather that prevails while Coker and Bill stay there. Durrant even refuses to get the generator going, insisting they do not need heating and lighting.

Durrant displays a strange combination of cold-blooded rationality and a deep-rooted sense of christian morals and values. She acts primarily from the drive for safety, going as far as abandoning some of her old morals to achieve this. Although she has power, she does not appear to be predominantly driven by a desire for it. Durrant herself claims to act on the will of God: “I did what God wanted me to do, what he told me to do!” She compares the abbey community to a beehive, “the perfect harmonious society.” Every bee works for the good of the beehive until he can do so no longer, and is then replaced. Durrant, then, seems to be driven by a motivation that has not as such been included in the sociological framework described in chapter 3 — she is driven by the desire to obey ‘God’s will’. Of course this could be considered as a drive related to ideological power. Not Durrant has this power, but her God. If she obeys or disobeys his will, this will have consequences in the afterlife. Thus, by obeying ‘God’s will’, Durrant hopes to gain God’s favour. Although this is what Durrant claims, Bill does not believe her and implies she might be suffering from a god-complex: “No one has the right to choose who lives, and who dies.” He further believes that Durrant is only pretending to follow divine orders, driven by the motivation to save herself above everyone else. Whether Durrant is in fact sincere or Bills accusation are true, remains unanswered in The Day of the Triffids.

In the remainder of the confrontation between Bill and Durrant, Bill betrays a sociological motivation of his own, expressing disgust over the practice of abandoning ‘the weak and the helpless’ for the good of the congregation. Here the drive for helping, which is closely related to nurturance and generativity as explained in chapter 3, comes to the fore again. Coker, too, expresses such a motivation, presumably speaking for the whole congregation: “I don't think they want it to be easy. They want it to be right.” Thus, Coker once again promotes the morality of helping which he had earlier found to be unworkable in London. There is a constant ambivalence between the morality of helping the weak and the rationality of survival.

The final post-apocalyptic society is the Isle of Wight society, which Coker has joined. It is presented as a (relative) utopia in the post-apocalyptic landscape: “There’s people on the Isle of Wight. [...] They’ve got families, doctors, schools. Where there’s life, there’s hope. At least we have somewhere safe to go.” Although little else is shown about this society, these utterances betray that ‘families, schools and doctors’ are apparently considered to be the three most basic values in life. Schools provide a type of generativity and satisfy educative drives, whereas doctors allow for helping and nurturance. The family is normally a strong social unit, with a high level of belongingness among its members. Finally, the fact that the colony is on an island provides safety from the Triffids. These, then, are the drives associated with utopia in the series.

The importance of family is also stressed by the unit formed by Bill, Jo, Susan and Imogen. Within a day, Imogen is referring to Bill and Jo as ‘mum and dad’, and although Susan is against this, her objections quickly grow weaker. Bill and Jo fall in love, and are happy to adopt the two girls as their daughters. They appear predisposed to nurturance. That being said, the sense of belongingness between Jo and Bill is weaker in the series than it is in the novel. Bill’s first priority, after being separated from Jo, is to find his father and find a way to dispose of the Triffids, presumably for the

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30 The Day of the Triffids part 2, 00:19:14.
31 Ibid., 00:18:30.
32 Ibid., 00:19:46.
33 Ibid., 00:20:30.
34 Ibid., 01:01:10.
good of all mankind. Jo already being at Shirning is a happy coincidence, but she was clearly not his first priority. For Jo, this is different. She does actively search for Bill, craving a sense of belongingness.

Overall, then, modern society is highly criticised for its creation of and then dependence on a highly dangerous plant. By extension, modern society is criticised for its abuse of nature and the earth in general, and the apocalyptic event is presented as a ‘punishment’ or ‘revenge’ for this behaviour. The blindness is an overt allegory for this. What we do not see, is a strong desire to save ‘the species’. There is little long-term consideration. Instead the series show individuals surviving, and this is simply easiest in groups. Although modern society was the cause of the apocalypse, there is very little indication of a (desire for) change in worldview and lifestyle. The Isle of Wight is considered attractive by some features that modern society provided, too. Although Bill is determined to destroy the Triffids somehow, he proposes no philosophies for coexisting with nature in a more harmonious manner. In my opinion, the reason for this is that no one in the series truly considers the old society to have ended — with the exception of Torrence. The others, without a second thought, assume they can continue in much the same way as before, just in smaller numbers and with the addition of having to battle the Triffids.

With regard to social cohesion and using the framework of chapter 3, it is clear that the social unit of family receives some promotion, focussing on the drives for nurturance and belongingness. The desire for power is strongly rejected, as is emphasised by the fact that the two societies that have a strong power structure are shown as doomed. Aggression, too, is not promoted. Helping remains ambivalent, just like the upkeep of morality and guilt and the practice of science. These issues are advocated and attacked several times, giving no clear-cut answer to what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’. There is a focus on career, and meaningful work, as both Jo and Bill remain at work in their old jobs, while too strong a focus on career is shown to lead to isolation. Regulatory drives play a role initially in Coker’s failed enterprise. More prominently, however, features the drive for safety. This appears to be perhaps the main drive in the series. Success and self-esteem are drives not explicitly found in the series.

4. 3 Comparison

Having analysed both the novel and the film version, it is time to compare the two works and draw some conclusions. First I will draw some conclusions on the ideological messages in each work, since the representation of social cohesion is one of the factors influencing ideology — the two are interrelated. This influence has already been shown, to some extent, in the two analyses. I will continue with a comparison between the representation of social cohesion in the works using the framework set out in chapter 3. Finally I will draw some conclusions on the type of adaptation the film constitutes.

There are some clear ideologies to be found in both works. For one thing, there is an overt ecological layer in the story. In this sense the novel is ahead of its time, since ecological tendencies came to the fore especially in the 1970s. Nonetheless, the novel’s nostalgic idealisation of the rural, natural life represents a recurrent desire that has in fact existed since Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s eighteenth century and grew in strength with the advent of the industrial revolution, as can be traced for instance in utopian fiction. The novel rejects modern society in favour of a self-dependent life in harmony with nature — cultivating but not manipulating, reaping but not destroying.

The film is focussing even more strongly on the ecological component, but in a different manner. Rather than pointing out what is wrong and then showing what is right, the film merely points at what is wrong, thus showing a stronger dystopian current than the novel. Abusing and meddling with nature is clearly wrong, and the Triffid threat is revenge for this. Although the film shows a world no longer suffering from (and causing) global warming owing to the Triffids, the Triffids are presented as too easy a solution. These genetically modified plants allowed mankind to just keep on living as it always did, without any change in its abusive attitude towards nature. The message here is clear, then, too: manipulating and abusing nature is wrong, and humanity currently has the wrong attitude. Unlike the novel, the film does not present an example of what mankind’s attitude should be, or exactly how they
ought to live in relation to nature instead. There is less hope for a better future in the film adaptation than in the novel, then, again reinforcing a stronger dystopian feel.

More precisely, the film shows a post-apocalyptic landscape that has no intention to revert back to a pre-modern society. Whereas all characters in the novel are quick to adopt a pre-modern lifestyle — be it agrarian, neo-feudal or tribal — not one character in the film even suggests setting up a farm community or pastoral society. The film’s characters appear to be under the impression that if only they can get rid of the Triffids, modern life will resume. They do not look toward the future, but remain focussed on the present. In fact, only Bill seems acutely aware of the fact that ‘mother nature is taking revenge’ for meddling with her, and that something is structurally wrong with modern society.

In congruence with the ecological layer, morally grey activities in the novel, such as genetic engineering, bio-chemical warfare and other scientific and technological ‘meddling’, are strongly criticised and rejected in favour of the simple life. Nonetheless, the status of science remains ambivalent, as has already been pointed out. First science is rejected as the hubristic cause of all trouble, but later it is hailed as the solution to the Triffids. The novel is clearly struggling ideologically with this topic. Interestingly, the film reveals a similar struggle with the ideology of science and technology as humanity’s doom and its salvation. The novel and the film thus both endorse science and technology when it is used ‘properly’ and reject its use for ‘bad’ intentions. Science and technology are ‘bad’, according to the novel, when used for warfare, when they are harming nature and when the consequences are not considered. In the film, they are ‘bad’ when they embrace one danger to avert another, when they harm nature and when science is conducted from motivations of greed rather than for knowledge only. There is little difference between the novel and the film here, then.

Also in both film and novel, intellectual or artistic tendencies are present only through absence. Despite his scientific and presumably intellectual background, Bill shows not the slightest inclination towards reading a good book, studying for pleasure or pursuing artistic activities. The same applies to Josella — in the novel a high-class, best-selling author and in the film a successful radio host. At the beginning and the end of the novel, the story is presented as written by Bill, thus potentially constituting an artistic activity. However, after having laid down the facts and first four years after the apocalypse, Bill seems to believe his task completed: “And there my personal story joins up with the rest.” His motive for writing down his history thus seems to be driven perhaps by generativity, rather than artistic desires.

In addition to artistic and intellectual activities, the people that were struck blind are also abandoned without hesitation or concern in both book and novel. It is hard to believe that not one of the characters in the novel has any blind children, parents, brothers, sisters or close friend for whom they are caring. Yet Coker does not carry his old mother on his back, nor does Durrant take care of a blind daughter or son. Inadvertently, then, both stories are showing that living a detached, unbound life is rather convenient in case of an apocalypse. At the same time, however, both film and novel are explicitly advocating family values and the importance of belongingness. The focus on these values is stronger in the novel than in the film, as Bill and Josella are remarkably quick in abandoning their old occupations and assuming family life in an agricultural, self-dependent way. However, the lesser emphasis in the film may at least in part be a result of the time constrictions of film versus literature. In both versions family is presented as an ideal social unit, although in the novel it is also emphasised that the protagonists will have to join a larger community if they want to survive at the longer term. The characters in the film join the larger community mostly because they want to.

In the film, family-life and belongingness are emphasised less than the novel only by a small degree. The pamphlet from the Isle of Wight makes clear once and for all that schools, families and doctors are the cornerstones of society. Bill, Jo, Susan and Imogen form a family within days, as Jo and Bill start to realise that their work is not the most important thing in the world anymore and it perhaps never was. At the end of the film, Bill is determined to continue his work, but as a member of a community rather than as the isolated scientist of the pre-apocalyptic world. The love-angle between him and Jo suggests that he is finally firmly rooted in a family unit.

35 John Wyndham 1951, 233.
Finally, a significant difference between the novel and the film lies in their ideologies with regard to procreation. The novel is very practical, and through Beadley’s society it suggests that polygamy and a focus on having as many babies as possible, are the only way to keep the human race alive. The main characters, although a little hesitant, understand this ideology and agree to accept it. Although later they are living in a monogamic relationship, it is suggested that after the end of the novel, they may start living in polygamy, too, as they join the community at the Isle of Wight. None of these ideologies feature in the film adaptation. In fact, although Bill’s father proclaims that the species is worth saving, no one appears overly concerned with humanity’s survival, nor are there any practical plans or ideas for achieving this other than surviving the Triffids.

The ideologies so far listed are the most overt ideologies in the works, but there are some less significant ideologies, too. The novel, for one, criticises the English class system. This is done explicitly through Coker’s lectures, but also by the fact that there is no class in the post-apocalyptic landscape. Josella is upper class while Bill is middle class, but they have an instant connection nonetheless. Class appears to play no role in the film version, which would tie in with the diminishing influence of this system since the 1950s but could also be a result of the different means of information distribution of film. The film, on the other hand, very strongly condemns the lust for power, be it coercive, ideological or economic. This condemnation, although present, is less prominent in the novel.

Further the pamphlet dropped by Coker in the film is very explicit about the core values of human society: families, doctors and schools. Curiously, neither doctors nor schools are mentioned anywhere else in the film. Finally, both the film and the novel condemn Christianity and its values. The novel mostly rejects these values as no longer suitable to the post-apocalyptic landscape, and Miss Durrant as naive for favouring destructive Christian methods over practical methods. The film is harsher in its condemnation, showing Durrant not as naive but as cunning and ice-cold. On the other hand, the film is condemning Durrant as a person more than Christianity an sich, while the novel considers the Christian value system as a whole as one of many systems not adapted to post-apocalyptic circumstances. The novel promotes values as important, but not carved in stone. They must fit the situation and be abandoned if necessary.

Moving on to the representation of social cohesion, things have both stayed very much the same and been changed significantly in the film. The novel very clearly shows that people initially choose to band together in smaller social groups, constituting perhaps ten people and children, thereby reinforcing the idea of the family as the core social unit. It also shows that these units are too small to be viable in the long term, and that smaller units must come together to form a community and survive as a species. Belongingness is highly important, as is procreation and self-dependence. People need to live with nature rather than parasitically from nature. The novel further advocates communities that are egalitarian, and rejects power-based and aggressive social structures.

The film does not so much show people grouping together in small social units, although it does promote the nuclear family. From the beginning, the film promotes larger groups of people coming together, but also shows how these groups often fail. This ties in with the fact that in the novel the characters have accepted that they have been cast back into the dark ages, whereas the film characters seems fully convinced that modern society is not over. Procreation plays no role in the film, nor is there much concern with the survival of the human species in general. In the film, humanity has so little doubt about its own survival that it does not even consider the other option. Very much like the novel, on the other hand, the film does consider belongingness highly important. The societies that fail are not only corrupted by power, they are also headed by a lone leader. Moreover, these corrupt societies are much more dangerous to the protagonists in the film, than they are to the novel’s protagonists. Man seems more aggressive, more dangerous and less tolerant of one another in the film.

In general, it may be observed that while both novel and film emphasise family life and belongingness, there is less sacrifice in the film to achieve this goal. In the novel, Bill searches incessantly for Josella until he finds her. The film version of Bill, on the other hand, is more concerned with his research and finding a solution for the Triffids, than with finding Jo. The happiness of their reunion, however, is so strong that it almost seems as if Bill simply did not realise the importance of Jo to his happiness. The same is true of Jo, who continues with her radio work rather than attempting to make new connections after she is told Bill is dead. Only when she discovers that Bill is still alive, does
she abandon everything to find him. Thus, there is more emphasis on career and skills in the film. Bill does not immediately retrain to become a farmer — the thought does not even occur to him. Jo, too, continues her job rather than eagerly accepting a role of mother and wife. In the film, Bill and Jo are more concerned with themselves as individuals than they are in the novel, where they frequently contemplate their roles in the survival of the species as a whole.

Having thoroughly analysed *The Day of the Triffids* as a novel and as a film, it is time to consider the type of film adaptation the series constitute. It may be observed that considerable alterations have been made to the original story line from the novel. For one thing, the story has been transposed to the present day, has a shorter timespan, and there is a stronger focus on action and suspense. The visually enlarged Triffids are more dangerous, and so are humans, allowing for more action scenes. Especially the shorter timespan may well be due to the medial difference. The general tone is darker and more dystopian in the film than it is in the novel, in part achieved by the grey and brown palette of colours used in the film. However, the series has also more or less retained the original cast of characters — who still bear their original names —, uses the same title as the novel and stays relatively close to the original plot. In addition, similar themes and ideologies are addressed, as has been shown at length. The film clearly aspires immediacy and transparency. The viewer is meant to be immersed in the story and be as little aware of the medium as possible. The film comments on contemporary society, but not on the novel on which it is based. For these reasons, I will classify this work as the type of adaptation I have dubbed ‘reconfiguration’ in chapter 2.

This thesis will now continue with a discussion of the other primary works in the next two chapters. An analysis and interpretation of the findings of all three chapters will be set out in the conclusion.
Chapter 5: I Am Legend

Now I stand alone through the memories
That haunts me, that haunt
Yeah, and I walk alone through the rhapsodies
That taunts me, that taunts me, me
Bob Marley “Stand Alone”

5.1 I Am Legend (1954) - written by Richard Matheson

Richard Matheson’s science-fiction masterwork I Am Legend was published in 1954 and was the author’s debut novel. Its premise and plot are simple but highly effective, transforming the Dracula myth into a scientific story. The novel’s plot spans a period of approximately three years, starting in 1976 and ending in 1979. Some flashbacks take the protagonist and reader back to the apocalyptic event, which must have taken place around 1974-1975. At the centre of the novel is Robert Neville, its lone protagonist. Living in an American city as the sole survivor of a devastating pandemic, Neville fights loneliness and isolation as much as the hungry ‘vampires’ that converge around his house every night.

The apocalyptic event constitutes a highly contagious pandemic that turns its victims into blood-craving vampires. The disease is spread by the dust storms that are the result of some unnamed war in the near past. Neville himself is revealed to have fought in Panama, presumably in the same war. He has a wife (Virginia) and a young daughter (Kathy) when the apocalypse begins, and both fall victim to the disease. Eventually everyone around him dies or becomes a vampire, and Neville alone is immune.

Neville fortifies his house and adapts it to his survival. The vampires, while having great strength in numbers, are unintelligent and slow, and can be kept at bay. Some tricks, such as a garlic and mirrors, further help to repel them. At day, when the photophobic vampires are lying comatose in their hiding places, Neville comes out and works. One of his self-assigned jobs is to kill as many vampires as he can. Harmless in their coma, a wooden stake to the heart kills them quickly. Struggling with his loneliness, Neville eventually decides to research the vampire disease out of curiosity. He wants to understand the vampire.

Three years later Neville has adapted mentally to the world around him, and has adopted the hunting of a co-worker-turned-vampire as a hobby. It is during such a hunt that he sees a woman in the daylight and catches her. Her name is Ruth and Neville quickly becomes suspicious about whether she is infected or not. When he finally takes her blood and finds out that she is in fact infected, she knocks him unconscious and disappears. In a note she explains that she is one of a community of ‘people’ who are infected but keep the bacteria at bay with a special pill. This community see him as a threat, a monster, because he kills their kind and true vampires alike. Ruth, having learnt to understand Neville, warns him to flee.

Neville ignores her warning and stays. When they come to take him, he defends himself and wakes up in a prison, seriously injured. Ruth visits him before the execution and gives him suicide pills to make it easier. He asks her to keep this new society civilised. She leaves, and Neville takes the pills, accepting that he is the last human and the future lies in the hands of this new society. He resigns to become ‘legend’.

The form of I Am Legend is perhaps peculiar for a story based on the premise that its protagonist is the only man still alive in the world. It is not written in the first person, but in the third person, implicitly suggesting that there is still a narrator somewhere observing Robert Neville. A significant portion of the narrative is written as indirect discourse and free indirect discourse, somewhat blurring the line between the focaliser (Neville) and the narrator (unknown). It further allows the reader to be very close to Neville despite the third person perspective and follow his every thought and action. Only on very
rare occasions, as will be shown, does the narrator betray himself as a separate entity. Description of spaces and object is not very prominent, but Neville’s action are described quite detailedly. Neville’s psychological development is not unlike Bill’s development in *The Day of the Triffids*. A break near the end of the novel marks a leap in time, during which Neville has transformed radically from a nervous, frustrated man into a relaxed hunter-scientist.

Returning to the plot of the novel, it may be observed that information about pre-apocalyptic society is scarce in *I Am Legend* and is shared only because of its relevancy to the apocalyptic event. Neville, for instance, was a soldier in the war in Panama. What war this is or who was involved remains unclear, but we do learn that Neville was bitten by a vampire-bat there, and that this is probably the reason he is immune to the vampire bacteria. Considering that Neville is 36 years old in 1976, the Panama war is likely to have taken place in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Matheson’s choice of a war in Panama is not so illogical. Due to the Panama Canal being under US government, there was always a significant US military presence in Panama. In the 1950s the Panama government was facing a slowly growing internal military threat. Matheson may have extrapolated this threat into a war in his novel. In fact, he was not so wrong. The US did invade Panama eventually, but this was not until 1989.

Whether this Panama war is the same as ‘the war’ spoken of, remains unclear. What is clear, is that the United States were bombed at some point, at that these bombs were likely nuclear. This is indicated in a conversation Neville has with his wife about the significantly increased insect population. Neville is afraid the insects may be mutating:

‘Oh, it means they’re... changing. Suddenly. Jumping over dozens of small evolutionary steps, maybe developing along lines the might not have followed at all if it weren’t for...’

Silence.

‘The bombings?’ she said.

‘Maybe,’ he said.

‘Well, they’re causing the dust storms. They’re probably causing a lot of things.’ [...] ‘And they say we won the war,’ she said.

‘Nobody won it.’

‘The mosquitos won it.’

This passage interconnects several factors while simultaneously betraying a thoroughly pessimistic view on war. It seems nuclear bombs were dropped in the war. The aftermath of these bombings left Neville’s area affected by regular dust storms and increased insect activity. And these dust storms, in turn, spread the vampire disease. The apocalyptic event, then, is at least in part the result of human action. Its spread is caused by a war, and nothing else. However, Virginia is even more pessimistic. She believes the disease is the result of germ warfare. If this is true, the vampire apocalypse is man-made on all fronts.

Although Neville neither refutes Virginia’s theory nor agrees with it, his own thoughts years later reveal a different option: “He thought of the fall of Athens. That had been very much like the plague of 1975. Historians wrote of the bubonic plague. Robert Neville was inclined to believe that the vampire had caused it.” If the vampire bacteria had indeed wandered the earth for so long already, the theory of germ warfare is no longer necessary. The nuclear bombings may simply have reinvigorated the dormant bacteria and helped it to finally spread to an all-compassing pandemic scale. Nonetheless, whatever the origin of the bacteria, the apocalypse is essentially man-made.

Continuing in the same cynical breath, the novel makes it clear that virtuous qualities such as integrity

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3 Richard Matheson 1954, 44.
4 Ibid., 78.
5 Ibid., 105.
and honesty are useless in the face of the apocalypse: “Not that all newspapers had done that. Those papers that had lived in honesty and integrity died the same way.”

The apocalyptic event and the threat are closely related in *I Am Legend*. It is not entirely clear whether everyone infected with the disease returns as a vampire or only a certain percentage changes while the rest dies. In any case, significant numbers of bodies were burned by the authorities before they had a chance to come back as vampires. In Neville’s city a deep pit was created to serve as a fiery mass-grave. Six months later, it is still alight: “The fire was always burning.”

The vampires do not pose a significant threat, but do significantly limit Neville in his movements and actions. They are relatively slow and have a low intelligence: “Luckily the generator had not been ruined. The vampires apparently had no idea of its importance to him.” In this sense, then, the vampires in *I Am Legend* resemble zombies more than vampires. On the other hand, the vampires’ single drive, the only motivation by which all their actions are guided is their bloodlust. It is so great, that they often resort to cannibalism, as Neville observes from his stronghold.

After doing research, Neville discovers that the vampire disease is caused by a bacteria. This bacteria cannot bear sunlight, causing the vampires to hibernate during the day. The bacteria also displays an allergic reaction to the smell of garlic, making this an effective repellent. The vampires further cannot stand mirrors and crosses. The effects of those, however, are psychological. As Neville explains his test on vampire Ben Cortman to Ruth: “‘When I showed him the cross,’ he said, ‘he laughed in my face. [...] But when I held a torah before his eyes, I got the reaction I wanted. [...] when he saw the torah he broke loose and attacked me.’”

In Neville’s own life, religion plays very little part. The idea that the vampire’s fear of religious symbols is purely psychological, already rejects religion as a less than ‘real’ phenomenon. This is further emphasised by the passage in which Neville, walking along a street while the vampire virus is spreading through the general population, is taken into a tent full of fanatic, frantic Christians. Only when he attempts to first sees the dog and realises how much he craves companionship, does he resort to prayer, and even then it is hesitantly: “It was a moment in which he felt a desperate need to believe in a God that shepherded his own creations. But, even praying, he felt a twinge of self-reproach, and knew he might start mocking his own prayer at any second.” The fact that the dog dies almost the second Neville has gained its trust, may in itself be read as mocking Neville’s prayers.

Moving on to a more ideological reading, it can be said that the most prominent and significant element of the novels is perhaps the vampires themselves. Generally, it is thought that liminal monsters such as vampires and zombies are frequently employed as vehicles for the projection of fears in society. Especially fears relating to race, immigration and the multi-cultural society are easily reflected in stories about the undead. This seems to be case in *I Am Legend* to a certain extent, too, as Kathy Davis Patterson argues. In American society of the 1950s, one of the ‘minority elements’ was the African American. This is reflected in Neville’s thought: “It was no use; they’d beaten him, the black bastards had beaten him.” The use of the term *black bastards* is particularly striking because there is no indication whatsoever that the vampires are coloured black in any way. Matheson, however, appears to have been aware of this easy connection between the vampire and the real life liminal group, as Neville’s drunken ramblings betray:

Friends, I come before you to discuss the vampire; a minority element if there ever was one, and there was one. But to concision: I will sketch out the basis for my thesis, which thesis is this: Vampires are prejudiced against. The keynote of minority prejudice is: They are loathed because they are feared. Thus...
This is a highly interesting and keen passage and part of its meaning is at the basis of the final argument of the novel, as I will explain further on. Not only is the novel making a comparison between real life minorities and the vampire in this passage, the novel is also mocking intellectuals and their empty words. This is interesting because Neville — a factory worker — is somewhat of an intellectual himself. Throughout the novel, he frequently listens to classical music, reads literature, studies, watches films and puts murals on the wall. And when Ruth selects a record to listen to, his reaction is: “Her taste isn’t remarkably advanced, he thought.” Clearly, Neville has taking advantage of the situation by surrounding himself with art.

Apart from immersing himself in art, Neville also immerses himself in alcohol. His greatest enemy is not the vampires, but the loneliness of his life. He cannot think of the future, because he does not see one. He can also not think of the past, because it hurts too much: “It tore his heart out to go back.” The only option is to focus on the present, but the present is monotonous and hopeless. As a result, Neville turns to alcohol and occasionally has a ‘crazy fit’ in which he incessantly laughs, cries or talks to himself. Apart from the loneliness, it is his sex drive that makes life unbearable for him. Somehow the vampire women are aware of this, because they taunt him with their flesh. Although it is an interesting statement that the male sex drive is so strong, Neville eventually overcomes his desires: “His sex drive had diminished, virtually disappeared.” In terms of the sociological framework of chapter 3, the reproductive drive comes to the fore for Neville.

What helps Neville overcome his sex drive and the oppression loneliness, is investigation and scientific study. The capacity of scientific research on the vampire disease to distract him from life is so potent, that it captivates him completely and almost entirely overcomes his desire for alcohol and sex. Of course his desire for alcohol stems from the desire to forget his pain, and the immersion in science has in essence the same effect. The original desire has not changed.

Science is thus generally portrayed as a valuable hobby, one that has virtue and is more potent than alcohol or sex. And yet science does not appear to have any value beyond that of satisfying curiosity or distracting one from one’s pain. Neville studies the bacteria intensively and methodically, but has very little hope of finding a cure: “Cure her? Curing was unlikely.” If anything, his newfound knowledge helps him kill the vampires more efficiently. Thus, the novel strongly advocates the practice of science, but for no other goal than to gain knowledge and be distracted. Especially with regard to curiosity, it is emphasised that science is ‘the way to go’: “Things should be done the right way, the scientific way.”

Essentially, it is the educative drive of the sociological framework that helps Neville forget about other pressing drives, such as the reproductive drive and the desire for belongingness. Although the war and bombings are the cause of the apocalypse, there is no strong connection made with science or technology.

Neville’s loneliness is especially characterised by a desire for belongingness, which consists of the need for frequent interactions with others and a sense of reciprocal caring for one another. The importance of this drive in the novel is illustrated well by Neville discovery of a dog who has not yet been infected with the disease. From that moment he spends the majority of his time thinking about the dog or working on befriending the dog. And at this encounter it becomes clear that while science triumphs over alcohol and sex, belongingness is more important than anything: “The eagerness he’d felt upon seeing the germ in his microscope was nothing compared with what he felt about the dog.” The dog also incites a first critique on ‘meddling with nature’ as Neville imagines how difficult living ‘wild’ must have been for an animal that has been made dependent on man by man. The death of the dog just when Neville is close to befriending it, is a breaking point in Neville’s life. This is the moment he learns to stop caring and to bury himself in (scientific) work, giving him “a sort of quiet peace.”

15 Ibid., 39.
16 Ibid., 125.
17 Ibid., 125.
18 Ibid., 15.
19 Ibid., 88.
20 Ibid., 101.
After the dog’s death Neville no longer contemplates the possibility of suicide, something he
frequently does before that time. Interestingly, Neville does not so much contemplate killing himself, as
wonder why he does not so: “He found himself wondering again why he chose to go on living. Probably, he though, there’s no real reason. I’m just too dumb to end it all.”21 Only when he is crushed
by the realisation that he did something that might mean the death of the dog, does he seriously think
about committing suicide. However, the dog lives and so his reason for suicide disappears. It is
interesting that the death of the dog from natural causes is still bearable for Neville — even if it breaks
him —, but the idea that he might have caused the dog’s death is enough to resolve him to commit
suicide. Thus, the sensation of guilt is even stronger than the feeling of loneliness.

The arrival of Ruth makes it clear that Neville himself is acutely aware of his desire for
belongingness. Seeing her walking in the distance, he first thinks she is a hallucination: “The man who
died of thirst saw mirages of lakes. Why shouldn’t a man who thirsted for companionship see a woman
walking in the sun?”22 It also comes clear that he has been dreaming about finally meeting a woman
when he expresses regret that the fight it took to take Ruth home with him does not in the least
resemble the “Hollywood production”23 scenario he had imagined. In fact, the predominant emotion
Neville experiences as soon as he takes Ruth home, is suspicion. He suspects that she may be infected
with the virus and is therefore less than nice to her. At the same time, he fears even more what would
happen if she is not infected: “But if she stayed, if they had to establish a relationship, perhaps become
husband and wife, have children... Yes, that was more terrifying.”24

While Ruth thus initially evokes suspicion and distrust in Neville — no doubt a result of spending
three years alone without any companionship —, her presence brings emotional unbalance to Neville’s
life, too. For the very first time, he questions the morality of killing vampires. For the first time, he
wonders if it is wrong what he does, if it is murder. Before Ruth’s arrival the world was divided in two
clear area’s for Neville: he, human, walking in the light; and them, vampires, walking in the dark. They
want to kill him, so why would he not kill them? Ruth, however, makes him doubt these clear divisions.
Here, then, the motivations of guilt and morality — important motivators for certain behaviour, as
explained in chapter 3 — come to the fore for the first time.

It is interesting that when Neville learns the truth about Ruth and her kind, he accepts this new
society almost without question. At the same time, Ruth has accepted that Neville was not acting from
malevolence, but as a result of the situation into which the apocalypse had forced him. Ironically, this
moment of mutual understand can lead to only one thing: Neville’s death. Having realised the new
order of the world in an epiphany, Neville dies willingly. This epiphany harks back to the paragraph in
which Neville describes the vampires as a ‘minority element’. This passage is rather ironic, because it is
Neville who is the minority element, while the vampires constitute the majority. Neville, however, is so
used to human supremacy and so immersed in the memories of a world of several billion humans, that
he can only view himself as the majority element. The human race, as the majority, is the standard of
‘normal’ against which every minority element is measured ‘abnormal’. At the end of the novel,
Neville suddenly realises that he is the minority element now, and from that he can only conclude that it
is he who is abnormal:

And suddenly he thought, I’m the abnormal one now. Normalcy was a majority concept, the
standard of many and not the standard of just one man. [...] And he understood what they felt
and did not hate them. [...] Robert Neville looked out over the new people of the earth. He
knew he did not belong to them; [...] Full circle. A new terror born in death, a new superstition
entering the unassailable fortress of forever. I am legend.25

Interestingly, the novel considers ‘normalcy’ to be desirable. When Neville realises that he is now the
abnormal one, the consequence he attaches to this realisation is death. Thus, being mainstream is the

22 Ibid., 110-111.
23 Ibid., 115.
24 Ibid., 128.
25 Ibid., 159-160.
norm and adhering to the norm is considered good. This can be considered a rather disconcerting statement when viewed from a 21st century viewpoint, in which individuality and uniqueness are highly valued. The novel, however, maintains that ‘sticking out’ is undesirable.

Interestingly, the narrator of the story appears to be aware of Neville’s status as ‘last of his race’ from the very start of the novel, unlike Neville himself. This awareness is shown in his consistent use of Neville’s complete name, Robert Neville, throughout the novel. In a world where there is only one man, the difference between first names and surnames has lost its meaning. There is no reason to refer to Robert by his first name because we are well-acquainted with him, or by his surname because we are not, because as the only man on earth we know Robert Neville both better than anyone and less than anyone in the world. Using his full name thus emphasises his lonely status as a last survivor. Moreover, when Neville and Ruth meet, it is described as follows: “The two of them, the man and the woman, stood facing each other in the great, hot field.”26 They are simply the man and the woman, because there are, supposedly, no other humans left alive. This lifts the novel to a warped kind of mythical or religious level, which is further reinforced by the ending of the novel.

Returning to the ending, it can be said that it shows Robert Neville as a distorted type of Christ figure, sacrificing himself so that a new society may emerge. And despite his own frequent violence and murder of vampires, his only wish is that this new society does not become too cruel, too brutal. Ruth, however, has a different idea about this: “New societies are always primitive,” she answered. ‘You should know that. In a way we’re like a revolutionary group repossessing society by violence. It’s inevitable.”27 The apocalypse has thus effectively cast ‘humanity’ back into ‘primitivism’, which the novel equates which violent and aggressive. Even Neville, in his intellectual civilised bubble, frequently resorts to violence and aggression. Violence is thus considered not only inevitable, but insuperable. In chapter 3 I mentioned that sociologists have long debated whether aggression is innate or learned behaviour. It is clear that I Am Legend firmly believes that it is innate.

I Am Legend thus tells the story of the birth of a new society from the ashes of the previous one, and the struggle of one left-over element of that old society to accept that the age of man is over. Several of the motivations listed in the framework of chapter 3 are found in the novel, whereas others are significantly absent. Apart from regulatory drives, perhaps the most important drive in the novel is the desire for belongingness. In addition, the reproductive drive receives a fair amount of attention, as does guilt and morality, the educative drive and the desire for aggression. The desire for a meaningful life receives covert attention in the depiction of science as a virtuous activity for keeping busy. In addition, a desire for what I would like to call the ‘aesthetic experience’ — by lack of a better term —, may well have informed Neville’s drive to obtain murals, books, films and music. Human motivations that play absolutely no role are the drives for power, success, and self-esteem.

5. 2 I Am Legend (2007) - directed by Francis Lawrence

Made on a budget of $150 million, the 2007 film I Am Legend is set in the period 2009-2012. Dr. Alice Krippin has found a cure for cancer in the form a genetically modified virus. However, somehow this cure mutates into a vampire virus, developing both airborne and contact strains, and rapidly turns into a pandemic. Three years later, dr. Robert Neville is the only human still alive in New York. The city is crawling with vampires: photophobic, strong, fast and intelligent creatures craving nothing but human blood. Neville’s only companion is a dog, Sam(antha).

In flashbacks it is shown that Neville lost his wife Zoe and little daughter Marley in a helicopter crash during the chaotic quarantine of the island of Manhattan. Neville, a military virologist, was to stay behind at his ‘ground zero’ and work on finding a cure. Three years later he is no closer to finding a cure for the Krippin virus, but is nonetheless continuing his research and experimentation tirelessly. When he is not working, Neville and his dog hunt the overgrown streets for deer, play golf from the wing of a plane on a stranded aircraft carrier, search houses for food, catch fish in a pond in the

27 Ibid., 156.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, visit a video store, catch vampires to experiment on and wait at a pier every day at midday, as Neville promised in a radio broadcast he set up. Before sunset Neville returns home, so that the vampires cannot follow him there and remain unaware of his hiding place.

One day he is driving home when he notices one of the mannequin dolls he placed in the video store, at a completely different location. Heavily unsettled by the displacement, Neville shouts at the doll, shoots it and eventually approaches it. That moment he is caught in a trap, which is apparently set up by the vampires, and loses consciousness. When he comes to, the sun is very close to setting. He frees himself, but cannot walk due to a wound to his leg and has to drag himself to his car in a race against the sun. Neville escapes in the nick of time, but not before his dog Sam has had to protect him from the vampiric dogs. As she is now infected with the contact strain, Neville has to kill his own dog as she turns into a vicious monster.

Unable to cope with the death of his dog, Neville returns to the video store one last time, trying to coax a response out of the mannequin dolls. Failing that, he remains on the pier after sunset in a suicide attempt. Just before he is torn apart, he is saved by a woman and a boy, Anna and Ethan, who take him home. The next day the woman explains that there is a survivors colony, and that God has a plan. Neville believes neither statement, and refuses to leave with them since his work is not yet finished. As the sun sets, the house is suddenly under attack from the vampires — they followed them home the previous night. As the three of them retreat into Neville’s research basement, they find that his latest vaccine has been successful. Neville gives Anna and Ethan a vial with the cure and sacrifices himself to save them. The film ends as Anna and Ethan reach the survivor’s colony, which does exist, and hand over the cure that will effect the “restoration of humanity.”

In form the film I Am Legend does not deviate from the standard Hollywood model. The shots are fitting for the post-apocalyptic genre, frequently showing a series of wide, static shots of the deserted city that zoom in on Neville’s location from shot to shot. As explained in the second chapter, this kind of imagery, which are frequently used in the (post-)apocalyptic genre, allow cinema to achieve the kind of ‘spectacular’ awe that has no exact equivalent in literature. The shots are entirely stable, more so than those in The Day of the Triffids, indicating that not a steadicam but a tripod was used. In a way the static position of the camera mimics the unmoving position from which the slowly crumbling infrastructure of New York views the world. It is as if Neville is watched by the city, rather than another person or entity, thereby retaining Neville’s lonely status. Extradiegetic music is used exceptionally sparsely in the film and is reserved only for intense action scenes. Diegetic music, however, plays a bigger role as Neville displays his love for Bob Marley. This will be discussed in more detail further on. This relative silence again enhances the feeling of desolation and loneliness befitting Neville’s situation. The colour palette of the films appears fairly unaltered. The film has no voice-over narration and the necessary information is conveyed through television broadcasts, Neville’s ‘conversations’ with his dog, and of course the cinematic images. The camera occasionally takes omniscient trips to view the scenery, but otherwise remains close to Neville. The form of the film is clearly designed to support the content to the fullest, but not to distract from it.

Continuing with a content analysis, I will start with pre-apocalyptic society. The pre-apocalyptic society of the film I Am Legend is depicted as identical to the 2007 modern American society in which the film was released. Very little is shown about it, as the flashbacks experiences by Neville all take place in the middle of the outbreak of the Krippin virus. A television broadcast at the beginning of the film, a filmic device to make the story more ‘real’, explains about the discovery of the cure for cancer — an as yet utopian ideal. The flashbacks of the quarantine of Manhattan show an organised military presence in contrast to a hysterical crowd attempting to leave the island. The flashbacks also show that Neville’s family, by virtue of his rank in the military, are given priority in the evacuation. In the middle of the crowd, a woman begs Neville to take her baby, but he ignores her. His daughter Marley, however, questions this decision: “Daddy, why can’t the little girl come too?” She receives no answer.

28 I Am Legend, 01:27:34.  
29 Ibid., 00:40:25.
One of the first scenes in the post-apocalyptic landscape mirrors this situation to some extent. While hunting a deer, Neville is beaten to the task by a lion. Neville lifts his rifle, apparently to shoot the lion, when another lion appears, followed by several lion cubs. After some moments of hesitation, Neville lowers his rifle and leaves. In this scene, then, Neville does succumb to compassion, perhaps as a result of seeing a nuclear family together, a family he himself has lost. Three years later, in the post-apocalyptic landscape, Neville has thus not become more ruthless, but rather more compassionate. This might be interpreted as originating from the social drive of morality and an inhibition of the drive for aggression. As I explained in chapter 3, society has several ways of repressing socially destructive behaviour such as aggression, and in this case morality or empathy is at play.

What becomes immediately apparent in the film, is Neville's craving for belongingness — the one element from the framework set out in chapter 3 that keeps returning in the films and novels. Neville talks to his dog as if she is a friend and a person, and spends all his time with her. Moreover, he talks to the mannequin dolls he has placed in the video store he frequents. This is clearly a man so desperate for companionship, for belongingness, that he has resolved to interact with inanimate objects. This threshold insanity stands in strong contrast to the methodic rhythm of Neville's life. He appears to be highly organised, programming his watch alarm clock each morning after looking up the time of sun set for that particular day. This may well be a leftover from Neville's life in the military before the apocalyptic event. Another explanation is that this is the only part of life that Neville can still control. Strictly regulating his own movements may be his way of coping with a world that is entirely beyond his control, giving him the feeling that he has at least some measure of control.

The reason for Neville's highly organised life is further to be found in the lethal vampires who roam Manhattan at night. Only by living carefully and planning ahead, is Neville able to keep his nightly hiding place hidden from the vampires. The film's vampires are incredibly fast, highly lethal, intelligent, incapable of emerging in the sunlight and completely inhuman. The vampires, then, are the threat that jeopardises all life in the post-apocalyptic landscape. They are the product of the apocalyptic event, of the pandemic that brought down civilisation. The origin of the apocalypse is, unsurprisingly, mankind itself. In a typical bout of hubris, man created the cure for cancer. Or more precisely, Alice Krippin created the cure for cancer. And in another bout of hubris, mankind started using the cure before it was entirely clear that the cure had no side-effects. When Anna suggests that God had something to with it, he is furious:

OK, let me tell you about your god's plan. There were 6 billion people on Earth when the infection hit. KB had a 90 percent kill rate. That is 5.4 billion people dead. Crashed and bled out, dead. Less than 1 percent immunity. That left 12 million healthy people like you, me and Ethan. The other 588 million turned into your Darkseekers. And then they got hungry. And they killed and fed on everybody. Everybody! [...] There is no God. There is no God.30

And for all of that, in Neville’s mind, mankind alone is responsible: “God didn't do this, Anna. We did.”31 This passage also clearly illustrates the christian undertones of the film, which will be discussed further on.

The most obvious deficit in Neville’s life is human companionship/belongingness, as previously mentioned. His only companion is his dog, Samantha. He talks to her as if she is a person, and generally shares his life with her. How extremely important she is to him becomes clear when she dies. It is not the absence of success in his work that destroys him, it is the death of his only companion. Sam’s death is so devastating that Neville sees only one solution: suicide. Thus, the film shows that a man cannot live without a sense of belongingness. A dog is apparently enough to keep him alive for some time, but it is the bare minimum. In the absence of humans, Neville’s social skills rapidly diminish. When Neville is saved by Anna and Ethan, he has trouble trying to cope with their presence at first. Anna says: “You’re not so good with people anymore, are you?”32 And that makes sense, for he spent the last three years talking only to a dog and mannequins.

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30 I Am Legend, 01:16:05.
31 Ibid., 01:10:50.
32 Ibid., 01:08:26.
Neville is alone for most of the film, but the ideal social unit is clearly the nuclear family. His memories of the past all centre around his family, and he has not disturbed Marley’s room in any way. Photo’s of his family decorate his house. Furthermore, the last thing Neville looks at before he sacrifices himself, is a photo of his family. Family is the most important thing.

A craving for companionship and belongingness is what drives Neville to interact with animals and inanimate objects. However, there are other drives that dictate his life. One very strong motivation is fear, which causes him to be meticulously careful and considerate in his safety drive. One very striking image in the film is Neville lying in the bathtub with his dog and a gun, terrified of the savage sounds coming from the outside world. It would make more sense for Neville to leave New York and find a less populated place to live, but another drive is much stronger. This is Neville’s desire to find a cure for the Krippin virus. Which exact motivation underlies this desire remains unclear, but it is certainly related to the desires for a meaningful life, guilt and (personal) success. As he puts it himself: “I’m not leaving. This is ground zero. This is my site. I’m not gonna let this happen. I can still fix this.” Neville thus also appears to be driven by his own self-esteem and a strange sense of guilt — more motivations from the sociological framework of chapter 3. Neville will not let himself down, because this would hurt his self-esteem. The guilt is peculiar, as Neville is not responsible for the Krippin virus, but it nonetheless appears to be an important factor, too. On a side note, the use of the term ‘ground zero’ to refer to Manhattan is of course an echo of the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001. Just like the Americans are adamant in their resolution not to be intimidated by terrorists, Neville refuses to leave his research site because vampires endanger it. A final motivation behind Neville’s continuing work may well be the desire to help. When Neville discovers that his final test subject has been cured, he faces the attacking vampires and shouts: “No! Stop! Stop! Look, look, look, I can save you! I can help you. You are sick and I can help you.”

Neville conducts his research rationally, methodically and organised. He develops possible cures, administers them to rats, and then tests the strains with a positive outcome on humans. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, Neville must be working in much the same way as doctor Alice Krippin was when she developed the virus in the first place. The film, however, does not detect this irony and rewards Neville’s methodical work by having him discover the cure eventually. Hard work, rational thought and scientific research are the uncontested cornerstones that lead to the salvation of humanity. Interestingly, this discovery explains the title in an entirely different way than the novel. Neville becomes legend as the discoverer of the cure that restores humanity, not as the last member of his species. It should be noted that the factory worker of the novel has morphed into a high-ranking military virologist in the film. While this transformation makes his research activities plausible, it is simultaneously rather unlikely that the virologist who might save the human race, happens to be immune to the virus.

Neville does not spend all of his time working. Neville gratifies the consumerist viewer’s excitement over all the things one could do when humanity is gone; all the things one could get for free, all the boundaries one could transgress. Thus, we see Neville play golf on the wing of a fighter plane, which is stood on an enormous aircraft carrier. We see him catch fish in the pond of a museum and drive around in an expensive sports car. And, most significantly, we see a great many paintings in his house, some of them wrapped up in the hallways, others hanging on the wall. The paintings on the walls — suggested to be originals since they are now readily available to Neville — make the heart of any art lover beat a little faster. Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night*, indeed found in New York in the Museum of Modern Art, hangs above Neville’s mantlepiece. Next to it a surrealist painting is not entirely visible. In the hallway an Impressionist painting is seen. Another Van Gogh hangs on the first floor, but a little research shows that this painting is in fact in the collection of the Dutch Kröller Müller museum. In any case, these paintings clearly show that being the only man in New York has its advantages. One can simply take one’s favourite multi-million paintings and hang them one’s living room.

Apart from painting, Neville also has an interest in film and music. It is apparent that he frequents the video store perhaps on a daily basis form the fact that he tells the mannequin cashier that he is

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33 *I Am Legend*, 01:09:20.  
34 Ibid., 01:23:01.
midway through the G’s. Clearly, Neville is approaching all facets of his life highly methodically. In music, Bob Marley is Neville’s biggest joy. His daughter Marley was named after him, and on several occasions Neville plays or hums the song “Three Little Birds”. Ironically, the chorus of this song is: “Don’t worry about a thing | Cause every little things is gonna be alright.” When Anna indicates that she does not know Bob Marley, he immediately sets out to educate her:

He had this idea, it was kind of a virologist’s idea. He believed that you could cure racism and hate. Literally cure it by injecting music and love into people’s lives. [...] Light up the darkness.

Here, then, a link is made to race issues. It is perhaps striking that the vampires, all of them, are pale in complexion. They do not in any sense resemble the image evoked by the term ‘black bastards’ from the novel. In that regard they resemble their maker, Dr. Alice Krippin, who is one of the rare white characters in the film, as Crayton points out. Dr. Robert Neville, on the other hand, is an African American who holds the key to the survival of humanity. Moreover, in order to achieve this feat, he gets help from Anna, a woman of hispanic origins.

Returning to the issue of religion and Neville’s previously quoted rant against ‘God’s plan’, it is clear that Neville is not only thoroughly convinced of the human cause of the apocalypse, he is also very dismissive of Anna’s christian beliefs. This contrasts with the prayer he recited with his wife and daughter as they are leaving in the helicopter. Neville, then, lost his religion as a result of the devastation of the apocalyptic event. However, by the end of the film he regains his faith as he realises the meaning of the recurrent symbol of a butterfly. During the evacuation of Manhattan, his daughter Marley tries to point out a butterfly to her parents, but they do not listen. She then dies together with her mother. As Neville is collecting corn, a butterfly flies around the dog Sam’s head. Sam later dies. And when the house is under attack and they are in the lab, Neville hears his daughter’s voice again, pointing out two more butterflies to him. One in the cracks in the glass made by the vampire leader, and another in the tattoo Anna has on her neck. Giving Anna the virus and preparing to sacrifice himself, Neville says: “I think this is why you’re here.” Clearly, then, Neville has regained his faith at the last moment.

Overall, in terms of the third chapter’s sociological framework, it is clear that Neville’s number one priority constitutes belongingness. Having enough to eat and a relatively safe place to stay, it is companionship that Neville craves more than anything. The fear of the vampires and the desire for safety is also very strong, but is overruled by belongingness nonetheless, as illustrated by the suicide scene. Neville is further driven by his desire for meaningful work, success in this work and his own self-esteem. The desire for helping the vampires also plays a part there. Power plays no part in the film at all, nor is there much place for morality or guilt. Neville experiments on vampires, most of which die, but he is doing it to save them. He does not to feel any scruples about his experiments. Finally, a desire for what have termed the aesthetic experience, may well have informed Neville’s drive to obtain paintings, films and music.

5. 3 Comparison

Like The Day of the Triffids, I Am Legend has several ideological layers. What made the 1954 novel a breakthrough in both the horror and the vampire genre, is the fact that it attempts to explain the undead scientifically. While the scientific explanation is not entirely convincing, Matheson was the first to refrain from resorting to supernatural explanations and attempt to provide a rational story instead. This, perhaps, is a reason why the novel is advocating scientific enquiry so strongly. If only one thinks rationally and conducts research methodically and scientifically, answers will come. Again like The Day of the Triffids, however, the novel simultaneously present an ideological view that clashes with the pro-

36 I Am Legend, 01:13:25.
37 Sean Brayton 2011, 69.
38 I Am Legend, 01:24:48.
scientific view. All types of warfare, be they regular, nuclear or biological, are strongly rejected: ‘And they say we won the war,’ she said. ‘Nobody won it.’” 39 Although warfare does not equate science literally, there is no doubt that no bomb exist without scientific research to develop it.

The status of science is further complicated by the use to which Neville puts the answers he finds through his research. Rather than continuing the attempt to find a cure, Neville is predominantly pleased to find that he can now kill vampires much easier as he no longer has to spend a lot of time creating sharp wooden stakes. Thus, on the one hand, science is a great way to pass the time that allows Neville to forget about his pain, alcohol and sexual frustration, but on the other hand it is shown that, in the first place, man is predisposed to use science for murdering his neighbours.

In the film I Am Legend science remains equally ambivalent. It is science that causes the vampire virus to come into existence, and it is science that brings an end to it. The reason for Neville to conduct research is different in the film than it is in the novel. In the film Neville is working from a mix of the desires to help his vampire neighbours mixed with guilt, and to achieve personal success and maintain his own self-esteem. In the novel, Neville is primarily driven by the curiosity of the educative drive and to some extent by a desire to boost his self-esteem — perhaps as a way of proving to himself that he is different from the vampires. Both the film and the novel, however, emphasise the virtues of science and its deplorability simultaneously, without being aware of the paradox it constitutes. In the realm of ideologies this is not unusual — a single society, social group or person often promotes and rejects contradictory ideologies without experiencing difficulties from that contradiction.

Moving on to the threat, it may be observed that, like the Triffids, the vampires have become more dangerous and more distinctive in the film. While they still resembled humans in the novel, they have a less than human appearance in the film. Furthermore, the film vampires are no longer the slow, dumb creatures of the novel. They are inhumanly fast, very strong, intelligent and highly dangerous, whatever their numbers. Again like the Triffids, it is likely that these ‘upgrades’ are better suited to the medium of film than the novel versions. On the other hand, it may be a simple result of the general intensification of cinema, in which films have become more spectacular throughout the years. This is especially true of those films which use a great deal of computer generated images, such as the vampires in I Am Legend.

With regard to life as the last human, both the novel and the film emphasise the immense difficulties of man to survive without companionship or belongingness. Both works thus clearly state that man is essentially a social animal, and depriving him of a social group severely cripples his functioning as a human being. Like science, the emphasis is different in both works. The novel shows a man predominantly suffering from the fact that he cannot satisfy his sexual drive. In addition, he is haunted by the death of his wife and daughter, which he suppresses first with alcohol and later with research. The film, on the other hand, shows a man being kept from full-blown insanity only by the companionship of a dog. A man who is not completely certain the mannequin dolls he talks to are not real: “Fred, if you’re real, you better tell me right now!” 40 Only in his scientific research is Neville still able to retain his sanity completely. Both works emphasise the nuclear family as the ideal social unit.

The craving for companionship is stronger in the film than it is in the novel, which is best illustrated by the dog that features in both works. The arrival of the dog completely unsettles Neville’s life in the novel. From the first sighting, all his energy is directed at befriending the dog. When he eventually succeeds in doing so and the dog dies, Neville breaks. However, this break effects the start of a better life for Neville. It allows him to finally let go of the past and keep his mind occupied only by science and the everyday activities in his life. In the film, the dog’s death also breaks Neville. It breaks him so deeply, though, that the only solution left to him is suicide. Thus, for the novel the dog constitutes a learning epiphany, whereas for the film it constitutes the real end of the world. The novel argues that a man can live alone for three years even if it costs him a small part of his sanity, but the film states that living life completely alone is simply impossible for humans.

Another difference between film and novel concerns the topic of aggression and violence. The novel seems to suggest that aggression is innate to man, and that it is the cradle of society. Both Neville

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39 Richard Matheson 1954, 44.
40 I Am Legend, 00:45:07.
and the new society that Ruth belongs to, are essentially aggressive and violent. Ruth even argues that all new societies are primitive, and that primitivism includes violence. In the film, in a 180 degrees turn, we see a Neville who has become more compassionate as a result of the apocalypse. Sparing the life of a lion because she has a family, tirelessly continuing the attempt to cure the vampires who want to murder him and sacrificing himself to save Ethan and Anna, Neville has become much more compassionate than the man who ignored the woman asking him to save her baby.

Related to this is the issue of morality and guilt. Stronger than the desire for belongingness is the feeling of guilt that Neville experiences in the novel when he believes he may have killed the dog. And yet he has very little sense of guilt or morality when he spends his days killing vampires in their sleep. Only Ruth’s arrival makes him doubt his actions. At the same time, Ruth understands that Neville is only acting aggressively because the circumstances in which he lives promote such behaviour. Neville has only adapted to the environment. The novel thus questions morality and shows that morality, like normalcy, is entirely relative and dependent on one’s position.

The film is less concerned with morality, but instead has a stronger focus on religion. Whereas the Neville in the novel rejects the existence of God entirely, the film version of Neville loses his faith as a result of the apocalypse but regains it at the last moment as he finally sees ‘God’s plan’. Again, the film is more hopeful than the novel. The novel sees the apocalypse as perhaps inevitable, but essentially meaningless. The film refuses to consider the end of humanity and instead finds meaning — religious meaning — in the end of the world scenario.

One thing both film and novel explicitly consider to have ended, is the supremacy of the caucasian man. Although novel and film present the issue of race in opposite ways — the novel presents a white man fighting a crowd of ‘black’ vampires while the film has a black man fighting pale vampires —, the outcome, curiously enough, is exactly the same. In the novel, humanity and its society is represented by a single human: a white man, symbolising white, male supremacy. This man eventually realises his day is over and dies to the new society of hybrid creatures. In the film, the only white, male human is Ethan, the little boy who travels with Anna. However, all other humans are coloured. Neville, Anna and even the guards who open the doors of the colony for Anna and Ethan. Thus, the film, too, shows a world no longer ruled by white, male supremacy, but by a multi-coloured group of people. This may well reflect the tensions around the multi-cultural society of the 21st century. Specifically, it reflects the fear that the white ‘race’ is becoming a minority and will loose it supremacy, and questions whether this is a bad thing at all.

Generally, the film shows a Neville who is more focussed on work, success and keeping up his own self-esteem through this work. At the same time, he is more than ever haunted by loneliness, and is a dog the only thing standing between life and death. Neville has also become more compassionate and is more focussed on helping. In addition, Neville remains confident that humanity can still be restored, and this confidence becomes reality at the end of the film. Humanity always survives. The novel is not so optimistic, but shows that the end of society really means the end of society. It argues that societies, like organisms, mutate and evolve. Thus, Neville has to accept that the society of humanity is over and that the ball is now in the court of a hybrid race. Humanity no longer posses supremacy, and apparently this is not such a bad thing.

Having thoroughly analysed *I Am Legend* as a novel and as a film, it is possible to determine the type of adaptation the film constitutes. It is immediately obvious that some alterations have been made to the original storyline of the novel. The story has been transposed to the present, its timespan is a little shorter; the hybrid human-vampires no longer exist, Ruth has become Anna and Ethan, Robert Neville is a black virologist, the dog has been given a much bigger part, and certain ideological topics have been given more or less attention.

Some of these changes may well be attributed to the change in medium. For instance, adding the dog from the start allows Neville to talk to it and thereby relay information to the viewer. As has been discussed in chapter 2, interior monologues cannot be directly transposed from novel to film. The film has adapted to this problem by the addition of the dog, although other methods would have been possible. The more dangerous nature of the vampire may also be attributed to the medial change, at least in part. The slow, dumb vampires of the novel will not excite much fear in a cinema audience. Fast, intelligent and strong vampires, on the other hand, will work much better to evoke fear.
Finally, it should be noted that the film clearly aims for transparency and immediacy. Thus, the film both digresses from the original novel, but also leaves the premise of the story, some of the main development and the name of its main character intact. The film does not comment on the novel or refer to it in any way. It only comments on contemporary society. For these reasons, like *The Day of the Triffids*, I will classify *I Am Legend* as the type of adaptation I term ‘reconfiguration’.

This concludes chapter 5. The following chapter will proceed with an analysis of the novel and 2000 film adaptation of *On the Beach*, before embarking on an interpretation of the findings in the conclusion.
Chapter 6: *On the Beach*

Change everything you are  
And everything you were  
Your number has been called  
Fights and battles have begun  
Revenge will surely come  
Your hard times are ahead  
Muse “Butterflies and Hurricanes”

6.1 *On the Beach* (1957) - written by Nevil Shute

As the previous chapters have shown, the end of the world very rarely means the end of the world at all. As Claire P. Curtis points out, the underlying assumption of most post-apocalyptic works is that somehow humans will find a way to survive. However, on rare occasions a post-apocalyptic narrative refuses to allow humans another attempt at society. Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach* from 1957 is one of such accounts.²

*On the Beach*, set in 1963, tells the story of several characters living in Melbourne, Australia. The apocalyptic event already took place almost two years ago in 1961 and was limited to the northern hemisphere. A thirty-seven days long war involving the NATO countries, Russia, China and others left the northern hemisphere completely destroyed. Over 4000 nuclear bombs wiped out all civilisation there and left nothing but a seemingly undisturbed world without any humans or animals. The southern hemisphere, entirely uninvolved in the conflict, soon finds out that the radioactive fallout from the northern half of the planet is slowly, inevitably moving southwards. When the novel commences, the inhabitants of Melbourne have approximately six months left to live. Life continues much as before, with the exception of the halted influx of motor fuels from the northern hemisphere which renders most motorised vehicles inoperable and brings the return of horse carriages, bullock carts and bicycles.

Lieutenant-Commander Peter Holmes, a man in his twenties with a wife and young baby, is assigned to the American nuclear submarine *Scorpion* that escaped the nuclear catastrophe and placed itself under Australian command. Its thirty-three years old captain, Dwight Towers, soon befriends Peters family and is introduced to Moira, a girl of twenty-four years old who is determined to face the end with as much alcohol in her system as possible. Moira and Dwight are soon attracted to each other, but Dwight remains faithful to his wife and children, who remain alive in his imagination.

In the meantime, the Australian navy picks up a garbled radio signal coming from Seattle, and a single professor, Jorgensen, has the theory that radiation levels may be dropping faster than calculated in the northern hemisphere. For these reasons, the US submarine is sent on a trip along the west-coast of America to gather data and investigate the radio signal. A young scientist, John Osborne, joins the crew to take radiation readings. The radio signal turns out to be the result of a Coca Cola-bottle on a radio broadcast panel being set in motion by the wind, and Jorgensen’s theory is soon disproved. The submarine, with Dwight and Peter on board, thus returns empty-handed and leaves its occupants with nothing more to do than attempt to enjoy the last two months of life in Melbourne.

Peter and his wife Mary spend their remaining time working on their future garden, Moira starts taking lessons in shorthand and typing, Dwight and Moira go fishing together and Osborne takes up Grand Prix racing. When the radiation arrives, the government issues suicide pills and lethal injections for children and pets. Osborne takes his pill in his ferrari. Peter, Mary and their little girl take their pills together in bed. Dwight and some of his crew take out the submarine to sink it outside of territorial waters. Moira watched the submarine disappear from her car, and takes her pill there.

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¹ Muse 2003.  
² Claire P. Curtis 2010, 18.
Of the three novels discussed in this thesis, *On the Beach* has to most detached writing style. The narrator observes events and describes them in considerable detail, but does not usually venture very far in describing the characters’ thoughts. Only their more practical thoughts are occasionally related, and their emotions are left to the imagination. Large portions of the novel consist of conversations only sparsely complemented with descriptions of facial expressions. It is written in the third person, with more distance being created by the narrator’s naming of the characters. While following Peter in the first chapter, the narrator first refers to him as ‘he’, but later refers to him as ‘the lieutenant-commander’ and ‘the younger man’. This gives the impressions of the narrator as a formal observer who is not emotionally involved in the events. In terms of psychological development, *On the Beach* differs from the previous two novels in that there is no drastic break near the end. Peter and Mary do not undergo any development, but Dwight slowly learns where his priorities and loyalties lie, whereas Moira learns to accept these priorities and the consequences they have for her.

In narrative structure, too, *On the Beach* is somewhat different from the previous two works discussed in chapters 4 and 5. The threat — the nuclear fallout — is not so much a result of the apocalyptic event, but the apocalyptic event itself postponed. Similarly, pre-apocalyptic society does not differ all that much from post-apocalyptic society. However, it becomes clear that this society was at least very dependent on motor fuels, all of which came from the northern hemisphere. Pre-apocalyptic is further described as fast-paced, consumerist, highly organised and combining hard work with leisure time at the beach. The sudden disappearance of one half of the planet and the fuel that came with it effectively casts the nation back into the 19th century, bringing electric trams, steam trains, horse carriages and bullock cars back into fashion. Bicycles, too, have risen to popularity. Life, in general, has slowed down.

The cause of this 100-year setback is discussed in quite some detail at the beginning of the novel. The war of the northern hemisphere starts with the Israeli-Arab war that is initiated by Albania. In this war, the Egyptians fly Russian planes to London and Washington and bomb those cities to the ground. Mistakenly thinking the Russians must be behind the attacks, the NATO then bombs Russia, and China takes advantage of the opportunity to do the same, initiating the Russo-Chinese war. China is after Russia’s empty lands, whereas Russia is eager to obtain the seaport of Shanghai. More than 4000 bombs later none of the countries involved exist anymore.

These are the facts, but the characters in the novel cannot help but wonder why no one stopped dropping bombs. Several explanations are offered. John Osborne argues:

‘The trouble is, the damn things got too cheap. The original uranium bomb only cost about fifty thousand quid towards the end. Every little pipsqueak country like Albania could have a stockpile of them, and every little country that had that thought it could defeat the major countries in a surprise attack. That was the real trouble.’

Another explanation argues that countries like Britain and Russia had been supplying countries like Egypt and Israel with aeroplanes for years, thus giving them the means to drop their nuclear bombs at a much longer range. A final explanation betrays an ideology of great confidence in country leaders: “London and Washington were out — right out. Decisions has to be made by the military commanders at dispersal in the field, and they had to be made quick before another lot of bombs arrived. [...] All we know is that the command came down to quite junior officers, in most countries.”

Dwight Towers concludes the discussion of how the war could have gone so out of hand by speculating: “Maybe we’ve been too silly to deserve a world like this.” Peter Holmes agrees with this when his wife asks him if the war could not have stopped before it was too late:

‘I don’t know... Some kinds of silliness you just can’t stop,’ he said. ‘I mean, if a couple of hundred million people all decide that their national honour requires them to drop cobalt

\[^3\] Neville Shute 1957, 86.
\[^4\] Ibid., 86.
\[^5\] Ibid., 89.
bombs on their neighbour, well, there’s not so much that you or I can do about it. The only possible hope would have been to educate them out of their silliness.\(^6\)

The essence of the trouble can be thus be said to be a combination of ignorance, the military and nationalism. However, especially the military is to be blamed for their incapacity to review the situation at a wider perspective. This is interesting, because the military in the post-apocalyptic landscape is shown in a very positive light, linking it to virtues such as national pride, a sense of duty and hard work. The major difference is that the Australian military is still under the control of the Australian civilian government. The novel thus appears to argue that a military in itself is not a bad thing, it just needs to be tightly controlled by people who are not trigger-happy. Decision-making on a national or global scale cannot be trusted to the military.

The importance of keeping on working and fulfilling one’s duty is perhaps exemplified in the person of Peter Holmes. Throughout the novel, he is trying to balance his duties as a naval officer to his duties as a father and husband. He wants to be with his family during the final moments, but up to that time he wants nothing more than to be given a seagoing job. As Peter thinks when he is offered exactly such a job: “Mary would be furious if he turned down this job and sacrificed his career.”\(^7\) Interestingly, it is Mary’s considerations that dictate Peter’s life more than his own. Everything he does is justified by Mary’s opinion. The decision to take the job, but also the decision to be home at the end. The latter revolves around Peter’s mind as his duty to be there for Mary and his daughter Jennifer at the end. Peter never wants to be there at the end for his own comfort, but always to take care of his wife and daughter.

A similar situation is found in the relationship between Dwight Towers and Moira. Dwight is torn between three factors: his attraction to Moira, the memory of his family and the duty towards his country as a naval officer. Between Moira and his dead family, the clear winner is his dead family. He kisses Moira once or twice at the end, but only as a thank you from himself and his wife. He never has sex with Moira. Similarly, Moira loses from Dwight’s sense of duty. Although she asks to be with Dwight at the end, he refuses and sails his submarine away to sink it together with some of his crew, leaving Moira to die alone. For Dwight, then, his first duty is towards his country, his second duty is towards his family and Moira is his third duty. As his family is dead, his first and second duties are easily combined, and he does not have to choose. Peter, on the other hand, cannot do both and puts his family first. That being at home is the right choice, is confirmed by his senior officer: “But that’s where your place is now, fellow.”\(^8\)

In terms of ideology, the emphasis on Mary’s dependence on Peter and Moira’s pitiful third place are only two examples of the position women in general take in the novel. Especially Mary is depicted as naive, childlike and unable to face reality. Neither Moira nor Mary have any work or careers. Although it is mentioned once that Moira studied history at the university, it is her own and her mother’s greatest wish to see her settled down with a husband and a couple of children. In the meantime she is studying shorthand and typing so that she can find a job as a secretary. This focus on the role of the woman as a wife and mother ties in with the emphasis on the family as the ideal social unit.

The family as the ideal social unit is presented through the choices made by characters such as Peter and Dwight, whose loyalty to their families is described above. In addition, it is further emphasised by the refusal of Dwight and the captain of another US submarine stationed in South America to leave their new home ports to more southern places as the radiation approaches. This refusal originates from their reluctance to separate their men from the women they have found on shore, many of whom have married. Similarly, the captain of an American ship in Brisbane who has no female ties on shore remains on board because the ship is his family. As Dwight puts it: “No, the real point is that he was captain of his ship and the ship couldn’t move. He wouldn’t want to run out on his ship’s company.”\(^9\) The notion of duty is highly important in the novel, and applies as much to

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\(^6\) Neville Shute 1957, 301.
\(^7\) Ibid., 14.
\(^8\) Ibid., 284.
\(^9\) Ibid., 210.
one’s family as one’s country. The novel clearly sees the doing of one’s duty as the highest good, and the duty towards one’s family as especially virtuous. Although it is formulated as duty and loyalty, it is essentially the desire for belongingness that drives these characters. As mentioned in chapter 3, belongingness is normally understood as the bond between a person and an average of six close friends, but can also apply to a group. Thus, Dwight for instance receives a sense of belongingness from his crew as much as from Moira. Considering the emphasis on duty and loyalty in the novel, it is clear that the desire for belongingness is considered very important.

Overall, what is most striking in *On the Beach* is the quiet compliancy with which the Australians accept their fate. There is very little immigration, neither from other countries into Australia or from the north of Australia to the south. People accept that there is no escape from the apocalypse — not being fooled by hopeful but ultimately false signs such as Jorgensen’s theory or the Seattle radio signal — and are contented to die at home instead of living a month longer somewhere else. In essence the novel is about dying with dignity. Several elements of the novel point in this direction.

First of all, there is absolutely no chaos as a result of the apocalyptic event. There is no aggression or violence, suggesting that the novel does not consider aggression to be innate, or at least entirely repressed by modern society. After the apocalypse, life continues the same way it always has, people keep going to work, they keep doing their ‘duty’ towards the country. Only in the last week or two do they abandon their duties toward their country and focus instead on their duties towards their family. This seems like a peculiar way to react to the impending end of the world. Building a career and making other long-term plans no longer matter, and money quickly becomes obsolete: “In the butcher’s shop the cash desk would accept money trust at them, but didn’t grieve much if it wasn’t, and if the meat was there you took it.”

Clearly, there is no reason for people not to simply spend their last months on the beach doing absolutely nothing. The people in *On the Beach*, however, remain curiously civilised, pleasant and hard-working to the last.

A second element that promotes the idea that one should die with dignity, constitutes the suicide pills issued by the government. Like its population, the government remains operational until the end, issuing the pills from pharmacies in a perfectly organised manner. Unlike what many religions, especially Christianity preach, *On the Beach* not only condones but positively promotes suicide in this situation. Dying of radiation poisoning is a messy affair that can last for weeks. It is not a dignified way to die. Committing suicide with a painless pill is a better alternative. Claire P. Curtis argues that the novel shows suicide as a form of love. Mary and Peter help their baby commit suicide out of love, and John Osborne’s mother kills herself so that she is no longer a burden to her son in his last days. Thus, suicide is dignified and allows the Australians to keep control over one last thing, compensating for the powerlessness with which they have had to watch the end of the world approach.

The novel further promotes dignity by rejecting overly emotional responses. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the writing style of the novel is such that the story is told rationally, without going into characters’ emotions. Instead of emotionality, the novel promotes the adoption of fantasies that border on insanity but which are quiet and allow for a stable emotional climate. Especially Dwight and Mary represent this strategy, although all characters adopt it to some extent at the end. Dwight refuses to consider his family as dead, even though he is perfectly aware that they are dead: “Helen’s birthday was April the 17th; she would be six then. Again, he’d miss her birthday unless something happened to Scorpion. He must remember to tell her he was sorry, and he must think of something to take her between now and September.” He continues to focus on September, when the radiation is expected to reach Melbourne and at which time he expects to ‘go home’ at last.

A stable, relatively unemotional reaction such as Dwight’s is much preferred over the emotional one, as Mary betrays when Peter tells her he has invited Dwight over:

‘They’re never all right. It’s much too painful for them, coming into people’s homes.’ […]

‘Honestly, he’ll be quite all right.’

10 Neville Shute 1957, 232.
12 Neville Shute 1957, 45.
‘That’s what you thought about that R.A.F. squadron leader,’ she retorted. ‘You know — I forget his name. The one who cried.’

Mary has fantasies similar to Dwight’s, continuing to plan ahead far beyond the arrival of the nuclear fallout. Especially the garden is her concern, in which she not only plants flower bulbs she will never see emerge from the ground, but even trees that will not flower until five years later. This behaviour is presented as quite acceptable, which is not surprising since it brings Mary closer to nature and its inherent ‘goodness’, as will be explained further on. Mary’s reaction, like Dwight’s, is understandable. Sometimes it is easier to ignore reality until the end. Like The Day of the Triffids, then, On the Beach argues that “living is easy with eyes closed”[14], but unlike the six years older novel which condemns this attitude, it argues that sometimes it is perfectly alright to close your eyes to reality and make life a little easier.

Although the majority of the Australian population in the novel is fully determined to die with dignity, some people have more trouble with this. A very common reaction is to meet the end in a drunken state: “the bars were shut, but the streets were full of drunks.”[15] Similarly, an older family member of John Osborne spends his time at an upper class club attempting to drink all the expensive liquor so as not to waste it. And Moira, too, long sees no other occupation than to drink incessantly. It is significant, however, that this desire for alcohol decreases the more time passes. Moira is the best example of this. Eventually she goes back to school and her drinking significantly decreases as a result.

Education, then, is advocated as a better way to spend one’s last months than alcohol. Following courses and satisfying her innate educative drive — to acquire information and knowledge and explore life — gives stability and purpose to Moira’s life, even if it is entirely futile in the end. Generally, the novel promotes working of all kinds as a virtuous way of passing the time. The educative drive, however, receives special attention through three different examples. The first example is Moira and her shorthand courses, as has just been discussed. The second example of the importance of education is found in the citation at the bottom of page 54. In this citation Peter argues that ‘silliness’ can only be cured by education. The final example is John Osborne, the scientist who joins Scorpion on its trip to America:

> ‘Even if we don’t discover anything that’s good, it’s still discovering things. I don’t think we shall discover anything that’s good, or very hopeful. But even so, it’s fun just finding out.’
> ‘You call finding out the bad things fun?’
> ‘Yes, I do,’ he said firmly. ‘Some games are fun even when you lose. Even you know you’re going to lose before you start. It’s fun just playing them.’[16]

In this passage, Osborne very explicitly advocates the acquisition of knowledge and information as goal an sich. Gaining knowledge is enough, it does not have to be a means towards an end. Moreover, for Osborne it also linked to a different manifestation of the educative drive: the drive to play. A similar attitude is found in the project of preserving as much information about the world as possible in glass bricks in a secured bunker. It is interesting that Osborne, some time later, first rejects the idea of writing down a history because “there doesn’t seem to be much point in writing stuff that nobody will read.”[17] The same could be said of his scientific data. Overall, it appears that there is enough ‘fun’ in the deeds themselves to justify their execution.

Continuing with the subject of ‘fun’, it may be observed that the arts play a certain role in the novel. While water sports and parties are considered good leisure activities and Osborne realises his dream as a Grand Prix racer, art activities are equally popular. Dwight and his men frequently go to the cinema, and entertainment in the form of music plays a significant part in keeping the men sane during long submersion of the submarine. Dwight further reads books on occasion, and together with

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13 Neville Shute 1957, 23.
14 The Beatles “Strawberry Field Forever”1967.
15 Neville Shute 1957, 67.
16 Ibid., 65.
17 Ibid., 81.
Moira he attends an art museum. It is the impressionist paintings that he likes most. Clearly, the people in the novel have a desire for art as a form of entertainment.

A final point I would like to make in this section is the representation of the position of humans on the planet. Peter certainly considers humans the core element of the planet: “‘It’s — it’s the end of the world. I’ve never had to imagine anything like that before.’” Osborne, however, considers humans to be just one small element in this world: “John Osborne laughed. ‘It’s not the end of the world at all,’ he said. ‘It’s only the end of us. The world will go on just the same, only we shan’t be in it.’” And this is indeed what the submarine observes in the nuclear areas they visit: a world still existing like it always did, just without people. On the other hand, the novel is certain that all animal-life will die with humanity, although many species will have some more time. Ironically, the longest reprise is allotted to Australia’s greatest enemy, the rabbit. And yet science and history have shown that some species show remarkable resistance to radioactive radiation and are likely to survive at the long term, as Claire P. Curtis points out. Reversely, it is peculiar that plant-life is unaffected in the novel, whereas science and history show that flora can be killed by radioactive fallout, too. This disparity may be attributed to the underlying ideology that nature is the highest good on this planet with a position well above humans and animals alike. Thus, the world is purged from everything but nature in its purest form.

Thus, in terms of my sociological framework, On the Beach shows a post-apocalyptic landscape in which different forms of duty/belongingness are considered the highest good. First and foremost, the duty or loyalty towards one’s family. However, duty or loyalty towards one’s country, one’s society is also highly regarded. The way this is represented resembles a type of much broader belongingness tied to a societal rather than an interpersonal level. The desire to live a meaningful life may also be tied to this desire to do one’s duty. Educatve drives also receive some promotion, as does the drive to help. Civilised and pleasant as the Australians remain, they are happy to help one another right until the end. Morality receives some attention as the ‘silliness’ of the those in the northern hemisphere is considered. Success in the meaning of career also plays a small part in Peter’s acceptance of the seagoing job, and in John Osborne’s desire to win the Australian Grand Prix. Regulatory drives play little part because they are easily satisfied throughout the novel. The drives for power, aggression and self-esteem play no role in the novel.

6.2 On the Beach (2000) - directed by Russell Mulcahy

The film On the Beach from 2000 is an Australian production with a length of 198 minutes. It transports the early sixties story of the novel to the year 2006. The film starts with television news broadcasts which give an overview of the war between the United States and China, which was initiated by China’s occupation of Taiwan. The film then shifts to the crew of an American submarine under the command of captain Dwight Towers. Near Australia they finally find surface radiation levels acceptable and burst out cheering in relief. They reach Melbourne — having first picked up unwilling scientist Julian Osborne from a small island at Australian request — and put themselves under Australian command. In a meeting with Dwight, Julian and young naval officer Peter Holmes, it becomes clear that radioactive fallout is closing in on Australia. However, an older scientist, Nordström, thinks radiation levels may be becoming liveable again in the far north. Osborne strongly disagrees, but it is agreed that the submarine must investigate the matter.

In the meantime Peter invites Dwight to his home, where his sister-in-law Moira is also visiting. Moira is being pestered by ‘Jules’ Osborne, who ran out on her at the altar years before, but still claims to love her. Julian accuses Dwight of being part of the war that is killing the world, because his submarine was carrying nuclear warheads. Dwight talks about his family as if they are still alive. Moira and Dwight spend more time together in the days afterwards, including at Moira’s out-of-town cabin where they have sex. On the way back, they see a family committing suicide by driving their car off the

18 Neville Shute 1957, 89.
19 Ibid., 89.
20 Claire P. Curtis 2010, 34.
cliffs. In preparation for the submarine voyage, Peter collects a suicide package from the pharmacy. He tells Mary how to use it, but she panics and blames Peter for wanting to believe the worst. It is made clear that there is a lot of talk on the internet and the radio from scientists who believe the fallout may not reach Australia at all.

Just before the submarine sails off, naval headquarters receive a transmission with video attachment coming from the vicinity of Anchorage, Alaska. Only two words are decipherable: ‘don’t despair’. The submarine leaves and reaches Alaska, where Dwight and his second in command go on shore in radiation suits. They find the source of the transmission to be a laptop with solar panel, which receives some short moments of activity whenever the sun bounces off a Coca Cola bottle and reaches the solar panel. Returning to the submarine, Dwight enters a house and is overwhelmed by grief and memories of his own family. Due to this delay, they return to the submarine hurriedly, and Dwight’s second in command cuts his leg through the radiation suit, but hides it.

On the way back to Melbourne, the submarine stops at San Francisco, the home of most of its occupants. The Golden Gate bridge is destroyed. Sonarman Swain leaves the ship to spend his last week at home rather than in Melbourne. The rest of the crew want to stay too, but Julian points out that Peter has the right to die with his family in Melbourne. They return to Australia, where Dwight’s second in command dies from radiation poisoning. The streets are ruled by anarchy. Julian kills himself driving his ferrari on a racing track. Peter, Mary and their daughter Jennifer die together in bed. Dwight plans to commit suicide together with his crew in the submarine, which symbolises America and thus home for them. At the last moment he returns to Moira and they die together.

Starting with the form of the film, the most striking element is perhaps the length of the film, which is over three hours. During those three hours, the films builds an emotional tension that is created not by special effects, but simply by the story, the dialogues and the acting. The camera frequently shows close-ups of faces, but never goes as close as an extreme close-up. Music is used very sparsely and is in part diegetic — the characters seem to enjoy music quite a lot, as will be discussed further on. The film strives for immediacy — the viewer is not meant to be aware of the medium as a medium — but fails on this account in shots of the submerged submarine and Julian’s suicide crash. The former are clearly older stock shots that do not match the clarity of image of the rest of the film, while the latter is clearly computer-generated at a lower budget. The camera is omniscient, being able to view for instance the wreck of the Golden Gate Bridge at a better angle that the submarine. It follows the main characters intermittently. No colour filters appear to have been used. The camerawork is unremarkable, appearing to be a combination of tripod and steadicam shots. Like The Day of the Triffids, then, the form of the film is entirely subordinate to the content and needs no further investigation.

Continuing with the content analysis, it can be said that the pre-apocalyptic society of the film On the Beach is designed to exactly match the real society of the early 21st century. It is highly modern, partly dependent on motor fuels and up to date with the world at a global scale. Although the absence of motor fuels renders most motor vehicles unusable after the apocalypse, post-apocalyptic society does not differ very much from pre-apocalyptic society. A steam train replaces the regular train and horses and especially bicycles dominate the streets, but it does not cast society back into the 19th century altogether. Electricity remains readily available, rendering modern equipment such as computers as operable as before the apocalyptic event. Society still considers itself modern.

The apocalyptic event of the film is shown through fragments of television news reports from all over the world. After a blockade and invasion of Taiwan, the US felt the need to intervene, eventually culminating in a nuclear war that resulted not only in mutual destruction of China and the US, but of the entire northern hemisphere. The southern hemisphere has a couple of months’ reprieve, but is calculated to be slated for the same fate. It is clear that the film was made before 11 September 2001, as ‘the war on terror’ and the related fear of Muslims play no role in the apocalyptic war of On the Beach — issues that have strongly influenced the film industry after 9/11.21

Like the novel characters, the characters in the film are preoccupied with the questions of cause and meaning in relation to the apocalyptic event. Several causes are suggested to be at the base of the

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21 Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula & Karen Randell 2010, 2.
war and the fact that it continued long after it should have stopped. Moira, in a conversation with Dwight, says: "Hey, I'm not blaming you. If it was one of your politicians or your military with their bloody warrior mentality, I would be. We're protecting your freedom!" [sarcastically] It really worked...Moira is clearly blaming America’s lust for war in addition to its libertarian mindset, both of which she strongly rejects. Moira’s ex-partner Julian is equally cynical concerning the cause of the war: “It’s taken 3 billion years of evolution to create a species with a brain big enough to crack the deep codes of the universe, and what do we do with that knowledge? We blow ourselves up.”

Moira is clearly blaming America’s lust for war in addition to its libertarian mindset, both of which she strongly rejects. Moira’s ex-partner Julian is equally cynical concerning the cause of the war: “It’s taken 3 billion years of evolution to create a species with a brain big enough to crack the deep codes of the universe, and what do we do with that knowledge? We blow ourselves up.”

Later he adds to that: “The problem is that the world has listened to Americans for far too bloody long.”

The characters of the film clearly consider the US to be at least partly guilty in the destruction of the world. This anti-American vibe receive further emphasis elsewhere in the film. The newspaper Dwight is reading in the train has a burning American flag on the front cover with the header ‘US Damned’. Moreover, when the submarine first enters the harbour of Melbourne, people in small boats shout and throw garbage at the people on the submarine. Dwight’s second in command remarks: “The natives are definitely not friendly, sir,” to which Julian replies: “Are you surprised? You blokes blew up the world.”

It is interesting to observe this anti-American attitude in a film made in a world where America is, arguably, the most powerful country on the planet.

The film is further concerned with the fact that ‘someone should have stopped’ pulling the trigger. Moira, watching Mary and Jennifer working in the garden together, remarks: “If there was a picture of that above every nuclear trigger, this would never have happened.” Significant further is that the one American military submarine to survive the initial apocalypse, is the one submarine whose captain refused to fire his nuclear warheads. Thus, pacifism is rewarded and violence is condemned. In sociological terms, it is thus suggested that the desire for aggression has always been hidden just below the surface, and when it finally burst to the fore it spread like an unstoppable epidemic. Humans are considered to be aggressive by birth.

In contrast to the Australian’s anger with the Americans for ‘blowing up the world’ stands their own violence and aggression in the face of impending death, further emphasising the aggressive nature of humanity. The streets of Melbourne are dirty and people are looting stores everywhere. Nearer the end, people are seen killing one another in a state of complete anarchy. Generally Melbourne displays a desolate, desperate scene. At the very end, however, people seem to have lost all life force. Driving through the streets Julian encounters person after person just standing still, doing nothing at all. The idea of impending death clearly causes many people to lose all control. Laws, rules and decorum is no longer upheld.

In addition, the Australian government — while still operational and maintaining a state of relative peace — is doing its very best to repel the many immigrants coming from the northern parts of Australia to the southern parts, because aid organisations cannot keep up with the influx of refugees. The military is used to stop the refugees, and television images show rather brutal and violent scenes. Clearly the desire to save oneself is stronger than the desire to help others. In the 21st century immigration from the third world to the first world is an issue growing in importance, and the film reflects this in an ironic sense: here the refugees are Australians being kept away by other Australians.

This cynical view on the reaction of humans in the face of death is not the only view presented in the film. Mary and Peter Holmes especially show a completely different attitude. Whereas in the novel Mary does not want Dwight to visit because he might cry, in the film she wholeheartedly invites him to stay as long as he wants after learning that he has lost his family. Helping and nurturance are important desires for Mary and Peter. Dwight has a similar nature, refusing to leave the bed of his second in command who is dying from radiation poisoning. Being close to his second in command, he refuses to let his friend die alone and even administers the injection that kills him at the end. The lethal injection is clearly an act of love, in the words of Claire P. Curtis.

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22 On the Beach, 00:41:08.
23 Ibid., 00:19:55
24 Ibid., 00:54:17.
25 Ibid., 00:14:00
26 Ibid., 02:56:58.
The anarchy and chaos of the streets of Melbourne also has its opposite. The military remains highly organised until the end. A good example is the case of two American sailors who are late for duty because they were with two Australian girls. They are dishonourably dismissed at the spot. Fallout or no fallout, the military operates as it always did. Despite the critique that is directed at the Americans in general, the Americans of the submarine are generally depicted as honourable. They are shown as loyal to each other, America and their boat. They are connected by a strong bond of comradeship. In other words, they provide one another with a sense of belongingness. For Dwight the only type of belongingness that is stronger, is the belongingness of romantic love. Even so, he does not choose Moira over his crew lightly.

Overall, the film is a very emotional one. Unlike the novel, the characters in the film do not channel their emotions in fantasies of denial so much, but instead allow their emotions to run free. As such, Peter is rather tearful when he tries to buy a suicide kit for his wife and child and Dwight completely breaks down in the house in Alaska. Mary especially is subject to strong emotions. She refuses to believe the apocalypse will really happen until the last moment. She is not the only one, it seems there are a lot of theories of hope going around on the internet and other media. Even the military starts hoping as a result of the video message reading ‘don’t despair’. The Australians of the film find it very difficult indeed to accept that there is no hope, that it really is the end of the world, the end of humanity.

This obstinate belief that there is still hope brings an interesting moral dilemma to the table. The military, assuming that life is possible again in the far north, believe they can ship approximately one thousand people there before it is too late. It is Peter Holmes who asks the obvious question: “Who’d choose?” He does not get an answer, but he is told the criteria in a later meeting: “Young, fit, intelligent, resourceful, fertile.” These, then, are the qualities that are thought to be the salvation of humanity, not unlike the criteria dictated by Beadley’s group in the novel *The Day of the Triffids*. The plan fails entirely, but it gives some insight in the qualities appreciated by society.

Religion plays a small role with regard to hope, too. In the city centre a banner is seen with the words ‘There is still time’, suggesting that it is not too late to be ‘saved’ religiously. Ironically, the banner survives much longer than the people who hung it there. Further, Dwight, claiming not to be a very religious man, says goodbye to his men by praying with them. Here the need for the end to have some ‘meaning’ comes to the fore again: “Let’s just say, dear God, [...] we hope there’s been a point... to this, and we ask that all the lives that have ever been lived, have not been lived in vain. That would be too cruel a joke.”

This craving for meaning is linked to the refusal to believe that humanity is really coming to an end. The southern hemisphere had no part in the war, making it difficult to understand why these countries have to suffer the consequences, too. The fact that the nuclear fallout is entirely invisible is thus fitting. The killing substance is as invisible as the reasons for it to arrive in the first place. Although the desire for a meaningful life as discussed in chapter 3 is perhaps not exactly the same drive, it is certainly strongly related to the desire for a meaningful *death* depicted here.

The love of art also comes to the fore in *On the Beach*. Trying to cheer up his crew, Dwight plays a cheerful song with a good beat over the submarine’s intercom system. This works remarkably well, and the marines are soon dancing on the tables and singing along. This type of diegetic music is used on various occasions, as has been mentioned earlier. On shore, Dwight is found to be reading Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, one of his favourite books. This novel tells the story of the orphan Pip and his mishaps. In the original ending, Pip and his love Estella do not form a pair but part ways. However, Dickens later revised the ending to be more positive, suggesting that Pip and Estella will marry. This could be read as a hint to the film’s ending. After all, in the novel Dwight and Moira do not come together at the end, but in the film they do. Like Dickens, the director has rewritten the original story to have a slightly more ‘positive’ end.

The greatest art moment of the film is when Julian presents a gift to Moira. It is a genuine Van Gogh, which he stole from a museum. The guards objected at first, but then realised he was absolutely
right and started collecting their own favourites. For himself, Julian took a Renoir. Clearly, art plays a significant role in the protagonists’ lives.

The depiction of women in the film is not remarkable in itself, but is significant in relation to the depiction of women in the novel, which was described in section 6.1. All characters in the film are significantly older than the corresponding characters in the film, and this applies to the women as well. Mary, now in her early thirties, is no longer a housewife but has a career as an architect, although she is not working the film. Her only project is their own house, on which she is actively working. Her sister Moira, twenty-four in the novel but now in her forties, owns a small travel agency that has inevitably gone out of business with the apocalypse. The same is most likely the case with Mary’s work. Thus, both female protagonists are independent career women.

Despite their independence, both Moira and Mary are still depicted as dependent on men. Mary, despite her intelligence, has difficulties accepting that they are all going to die. This troubles Peter and he confides in Moira. Moira answers: “She’ll be fine. She’s got you.” And it is indeed Peter who helps Mary accept the inevitable at the last moment. Moira herself, too, feels she needs a man. When Dwight remains in the hospital with his dying second in command and Moira thinks he will not return to her, she sleeps with Julian. Not because she loves him, but because “I just don’t want to die alone.”

And Moira does not die alone, but Julian does. All characters commit suicide in the end, which is presented as the right and loving way of dying. This is interesting in comparison to an incident earlier in the film, before the submarine leaves for Alaska. Coming back from a trip at the coast, Moira and Dwight find a man and his family in a car in the middle of the road. As they watch, the man drives the car of the cliffs, killing himself and his family. This shocks and upsets Dwight terribly, because there is still a slight chance of survival. Later Osborne kills himself in much the same way, but this is presented as his own preferred manner of dying in a world devoid of hope. Suicide is thus the preferred method of dying, but only when there is no hope whatsoever of surviving any other way.

The end of the world further makes it clear that dying alone is the worst option. People should die together, and preferably with their family. Even Osborne, who dies alone himself, is thoroughly convinced of this: “We might not have many rights left, but I would have thought the right to die with your family is about... up there with the best of them.” And Peter, listening to the last radio broadcast, says: “The streets are almost deserted. People are going back to their families.” Those who cannot die with their families, the Americans in particular, automatically finds the next best thing. For Dwight, this is to die with Moira. For his crew, it is to die together on their way to San Francisco. Strangers in Australia, they want to die at home, and ‘home’ is America. The closest bit of America is the submarine. For the Americans, then, nationalist feelings in addition to comradeship also play a role in providing a sense of belongingness.

Overall, in sociological terms, the film shows a particularly strong desire for belongingness. This belongingness is preferably found in the nuclear family, but may also be found among friends or lovers. The protagonists further struggle to find meaning in their death, and consequently in their life, thus displaying the drive for a meaningful life. The drive and nurture further receives some attention particularly in relation to Peter and his family. Regulatory drives play a role in the sense that people want nothing more than to keep on breathing and eating, but they cannot stop the inevitable. In opposition to helping, aggression also plays a role. Some people react to the impending apocalypse with anarchical, violent behaviour. The desire for aesthetic experience is found in Julian’s paintings, the music in the submarine and Dwight’s novel. Power plays no part at all, nor does morality and guilt have a big part to play. Self-esteem and success receive little attention, too.

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31 On the Beach, 02:56:29.
32 Ibid., 02:43:20.
33 Ibid., 02:17:35
34 Ibid., 02:56:08.
6.3 Comparison

Overall, the storyline of the novel has remained more or less the same in the film. In terms of ideologies, however, some changes can be observed in addition to several similarities. Starting with the apocalyptic war, it is clear that the involved countries have drastically changed. The novel shows a world war, starting as a war between the Israelis and the Arabs and culminating in a war between the capitalist and communist world, as well as between the two communist strongholds, China and Russia. In world history, the first Israeli-Arab war took place less than ten years before the novel was written, and in the period since that war the Jewish population in Israel was growing significantly. The cold war of the fifties further caused very high-strung nerves between the US and Russia. At the same time, China under Mao Zedong was attempting to reform the country significantly. The novel’s description of the war is thus a fairly logical scenario. The film’s war, in contrast, has been simplified to a single conflict between what may be considered the world’s two most influential nations of the 21st century. The likelihood of this scenario is perhaps not quite as convincing as the story presented in the novel.

The causes behind the war are different for each work. The novel’s characters blame it on the low cost of nuclear weapons, the sponsoring of smaller nations with materials that allow them to develop long-range weapons, a misplaced sense of nationalism and a lack of civilian leaders. The war got out of hand when it was reduced to ignorant populations being led by junior military officers. No one specific country is blamed for the disaster. The film, on the other hand, is much quicker to point a finger. America is to blame, and all Americans with it. Specifically, America’s ‘warrior mentality’ and its libertarian sentiments are mocked viciously. In both works nationalism is shown to have a dark side.

The result of both wars on Australia is the same. After a short, devastating nuclear war, motor fuels are no longer available and a lethal cloud of fallout is heading towards the south. This casts the novel’s society back into the 19th century: “The general effects was one of boisterous and uninhibited lightheartedness, more in the style of 1890 than of 1963.” The same is not true of the film, This society remains comfortably surrounded by televisions, laptops and alternative transportation with no inclination towards a nostalgic comparison with the past. This betrays a type of complete confidence in modern society and a refusal to believe in social degeneration. The novel, on the other hand, betrays a rather positive, nostalgic view of the 19th century, suggesting that perhaps a slower life is not a bad thing at all and criticising modern society at the same time.

Another issue which film and novel essentially present in a similar manner but where some differences may be found too, concerns women. As described in section 6.1, the women in the novel are entirely dependent on men and do not work or have a career. Moira does go back to school with the intention of finding a job later, but essentially wants nothing more than a husband and children. In the film, both Moira and Mary have morphed into career women with an education and independent mind. However, they are still dependent on men. They do not want to die alone, and need a man to help them accept the situation. Especially Mary is still essentially childlike, needing guidance from a man — a proper adult. In the face of the apocalypse, then, women turn into the traditional damsels in distress and men into knights in shining armour.

In terms of career with regard to men, it may be observed that this receives more emphasis in the novel than the film. Mary is anxious for Peter to accept the final assignment, because she does not want him to give up his career. Peter, too, feels strongly inclined to continue his career although for him it mostly from a sense of duty towards the military. In the film, on the other hand, the women have found careers of their own. Overall, then, the emphasis on career and success therein has stayed largely unchanged between both versions.

Equally similar is the treatment of the military. The novel shows a highly organised, hierarchical military still operating as fully as it can without more than a handful of operational vehicles. This is not surprising, because the same is true for society at large. In the film, in contrast, society is chaotic and anarchical, but the military forms a strong disparity with this in its invariably strict organisation. The American submarine, for instance, is welcomed with a rigid display of military prowess. In both works,
the order and discipline of the military is shown in a fairly positive light, providing an ironic paradox to the military origins of the apocalyptic event that ends the world.

In both novel and film, art receives some attention. It receives more attention in the film than it does in the novel, but its use is essentially the same. In spite of the bleak prospect of the end of the world, music, visuals arts and films provide some distraction from the inevitable. Especially in the film, the different art expressions are presented as the best means of changing a pessimistic mood into a positive one. In essence, the film shows that art and the aesthetic experience triumphs over the apocalypse by temporarily removing all thought of the end from people’s minds.

As has been mentioned, the novel *On the Beach* is essentially about dying with dignity. One way in which this is achieved by society remaining calm and accepting their fate without question. Society continues much as before, only slower and more like the 19th century. There is no immigration, no chaos and no aggression or violence. The film shows a darker vision, displaying a country in chaos and anarchy ruling the streets. Most people no longer go to work and simply loot the stores for supplies. They are also aggressive and violent towards each other, culminating in bloodbaths. Immigrants from the north are violently repelled by the military. The novel thus has a rather positive view on human nature, believing humanity to be innately civilised. The film, however, shows a significant portion of the population being driven primarily by aggression, greed and self-interest.

In contrast to this negative view on human nature, the film also shows that some people are not driven by negative desires. This is represented by Peter and Mary’s hospitality and their readiness to help and nurture. This suggests that the film does not adopt one universal view on human nature, but shows that it differs from individual to individual, unlike the novel. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that in cinema values are often exaggerated in order to better convey a message. Mary and Peter’s inherent hospitality is emphasised the more because others are so explicitly not hospitable. Still, the novel also shows different reactions. Rather, it shows two different reactions. There are those people who continue life as before and keep going to work, and there are those who (initially) drown their anxiety in alcohol. It is striking that alcohol consumption comes so strongly to the fore, even though the novel reluctantly prefers work and education as ways of passing one’s time. In the film, alcohol plays very little part.

The novel’s emphasis on the virtue of continuing to go to work and keeping busy, ties in with its promotion of adopting fantasies over emotionality. Going to work when the world is ending within months seems rather pointless and is a type of self-delusion as it suggest a belief that work and money still have meaning. A more pronounced delusion constitutes the fantasies of almost all characters, but Mary and Dwight in particular. Their obstinate belief in a death family and a non-existent future keeps them busy without allowing too much space for emotional outbursts. The novel clearly argues that self-delusion is preferable over emotionality, because the latter is not dignified.

The film does not reject emotionality at all, which may be a result of the fact that it is not about dying with dignity. The film is more about dying without suffering and about dying together. As has been discussed, the film *On the Beach* very strongly emphasises the importance of belongingness. It is interesting that the film expands the fulfilment of this desire not only to lovers and families, but also to comradeship and even a sense of nationalistic belongingness. The film makes it clear that dying alone is by the worst option. Even Julian Osborne, the only character to die alone, turns to the next best thing — his car — for his death.

Sex also plays a role in the film with regard to belongingness. Moira sleeps with Julian because she is afraid of dying alone. Thus, by having sex with Julian Moira attempts to create a sense of belongingness. However, Dwight fervently rejects this as a reason to have sex. When he and Moira have sex, it is because they love each other. Thus, sex is firmly linked to love as the only valid reason for sleeping with a person. In general, sex is given more space in the film than in the novel, where sex plays no role at all.

Belongingness is essential in the novel, too, but takes a different tone. It is intricately linked to a sense of duty. The men in the story must do their duty, and their first duty is towards their family. In the absence of family, their duty is primarily towards their country. And so they must either die with their family or while serving their country. The only characters who have neither option, Moira and Osborne, settle for the nearest thing. Osborne dies with his new family — his car — and Moira dies at
the seaside while watching the submarine sail away — in thought together with Dwight. The key drive these men are acting upon, however, is not so much belongingness but loyalty. Of course the two are intricately related, as acting on loyalty frequently ensures fulfilment of the desire for belongingness, but I find it important to make a distinction as I believe that there is definitely a qualitative difference.

In addition to belongingness, the film displays a desire for meaning in the apocalypse. The characters are frustrated by the lack of meaning in their deaths, and consequently their lives. This may be related to the increasingly atheistic nature of western societies. Where religion provides meaning through life after death, it is harder to find meaning in premature death for an atheist. The novel also has potential for this issue, but does not explore it as much. This fits in with the general attitude of complacency and acceptance displayed by the novel's Australian society. Both works may well be making a statement that there simply is no point to the apocalypse. It happens and nothing can change that. This is enforced by the stories' deviation from the usual post-apocalyptic narrative in that the film and novel refuse to allow humanity another try at society. For this reason, perhaps, the exact faults in society that are the cause of the apocalypse are less pronounced in On the Beach than they were in I Am Legend and The Day of the Triffids. There is no lesson to be learnt, humanity simply failed (or will fail).

Overall, this is a rather cynical view.

After the analysis of On the Beach as a novel and a film and making a comparison between them, it is possible to determine the type of adaptation the film constitutes. It is immediately obvious that some alterations have been made to the original storyline of the novel. The story has been transposed to the present, its timespan is a little shorter, the characters are a bit older, some scenes have been removed and others have been added and certain ideological topics have been given more or less attention. Some of these changes can be attributed to the change in medium, for instance the shorter timespan. Although the film is exceptionally long with 198 minutes, the amount of action had to be limited in comparison to the 300-page novel. Overall, however, most elements of the novel are written in such a way that they could easily be directly transposed or adapted to film. Most differences between the film and the novel, then, may be attributed to sources other than medial change. Nonetheless, it must always be kept in mind that there is a difference in medium, and that this dictates a certain degree of adaptation.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the film, like the previously discussed cinematic works, clearly aims for transparency and immediacy. Thus, there are some differences between the film and the novel, but the essence of the storyline has most certainly been left intact, including the selection of main characters and their names, the title of the film and the essential developments of the plot. For these reasons, like The Day of the Triffids and I Am Legend, I will classify On the Beach as the type of adaptation which Wagner terms 'commentary'.

Chapter 6 concludes the analytical chapters. It is now time to continue with an interpretation of the results, which will be done in the upcoming section of the conclusion.
In the past six chapters a theoretical framework has been described and three novels and three films have been analysed. In the first chapter, I determined the position of post-apocalyptic fiction within the literary field, showing how it fits within utopian studies and science fiction in general. In chapter 2, I continued with a discussion of film adaptation and the consequences of medial change from the written word to the cinema screen. In this chapter it became clear that not all elements of a novel can be transferred directly into the visual medium, but that some elements must go through a process of adaptation to find an equivalent position within the visual communication system.

The third chapter ventured into the field of sociology, creating a framework for mapping social cohesion and other human behaviour on the basis of human motivations. The most basic drives identified were regulatory drives (hunger, thirst etcetera), safety drives, reproductive drives and educative drives. In addition, some more ‘human’ motivations were listed: the desire for power (economic, ideological or coercive), the desire for belongingness (humans are social animals), the drive for aggression, the drives for nurturance, helping and generativity, the sensations of morality and guilt, the desire for self-esteem and success, and the desire for a meaningful life. Together, these motivations provided a way of mapping the motivations driving the characters in each of the six works.

In chapter 4, the novel and two-part television series The Day of the Triffids were discussed. The novel shows the failure of modern society and the (ecological) hubris that caused it to end itself. It further shows the need to abandon old values and morals in the face of a new situation, the importance of generativity and reproduction and presents the family as the ideal social unit. It rejects the lust for power and aggression very strongly, and gives no attention to art and the aesthetic experience, success and self-esteem. The television series also has a strong ecological layer and blames humanity for choosing the easy option while ignoring the dangers of that option. Power and aggression are rejected here too, while helping, morality and science are presented in an ambivalent light. Unlike the novel, the film shows a strong focus on career, success and meaningful work, but it also shows that these values should not interfere with the ideal social unit of the family.

Chapter 5 considered the novel and film I Am Legend. The novel’s protagonist lives as the sole surviving human in a city full of ‘vampires’. The novel emphasises the difficulties of living alone, focussing on sexual frustration and the need to keep oneself occupied. It strongly promotes science as a virtuous occupation and shows that morality is simply a matter of perspective. It ends with the self-sacrifice of Robert Neville in favour of a new society of hybrid human-vampires. The film focusses more strongly on the sheer impossibility of surviving alone, since humans are so essentially social in nature. It also has a stronger emphasis on never giving up, continuing to do research and wanting to help the vampires. In addition, the film has an important religious component.

Finally, chapter 6 discussed the original and film adaptation of On the Beach. The central theme of the novel concerns dying with dignity. In line with that theme, the novel presents the importance of belongingness in the sense of duty and loyalty. It shows a surprisingly calm society, still placing importance on scientific inquiry, success and career. The film version is no longer so concerned with dying with dignity, but instead emphasises the importance of dying with one’s loved ones, displaying a strong focus on belongingness. It also shows that the impending apocalypse evokes feelings of aggression and anarchy in many people, but simultaneously shows others remaining happy to help and nurture. The film further emphasises the desire for people to find meaning in a meaningless end.

After this brief recapitulation, it is time to analyse the differences and similarities than can be found between the three different works and, in particular, between the three novels on the one hand and the

1 Douglas Adams 1979, 18.
three films on the other hand. This analysis will attempt to give an answer to the main question of this thesis, namely:

What is it that remains and what develops anew — after the end — in the area of social cohesion as represented in The Day of the Triffids (1951), I Am Legend (1954) and On the Beach (1957) and recent film adaptations (2000; 2007; 2009) of these novels, and in what ways, if any, are these remainders and new developments of social cohesion evolving in the post-apocalyptic landscape both within and between the different versions of the same story?

First of all, it should be clear that the three works under discussion, while all post-apocalyptic narratives, are in fact very different works. For one thing, I Am Legend shows a world centring around a single lone survivor, while The Day of the Triffids shows a small percentage of the population as survivors and On the Beach presents us with a complete society of survivors. However, there are also similarities. All three novels centre more around the apocalypse and consequent developments in society than on the psychological development of the main characters. This is in line with the strong emphasis on the ideological message in the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres. A similar trend is found in the film adaptations, which are all three focussed on immersion. The form of the films is entirely subordinate to the content and is designed primarily not to distract in any way from the plot, although in some instances, especially in I Am Legend, form is designed to emphasise the content. This purely immersive, subordinated form is fairly conventional but is by no means the only option. There are dystopian films that do have a strong focus on form, such as Godard's Alphaville (1965).

In addition to significant differences in the storylines of the three post-apocalyptic works, it should be noted that some differences that were found to exist between the novel-film pairs are the result of the medial change. Several examples have been discussed in previous chapters. Finally, it should be noted that while the fifty years time difference between the novels and films is likely to have had some influence on the changes made to the story, it is not possible to pinpoint this as the (sole) origin of the developments. The following analysis is thus a presentation of the differences and similarities in the representation of social cohesion found between the novels and the films, in which those elements that can be attributed to medial change have been filtered out as much as possible.

Overall, I have detected five different trends of change in the representation of social cohesion between the novels and the films. Three of those trends are minor, although intriguing, and two are more significant. I will start with the two major trends with regard to social cohesion and then discuss the three minor trends. This will be followed by an analysis and interpretation of these trends.

**Belongingness**

The first trend is a stronger emphasis on the importance of need for belongingness. While this drive is prevalent in all six works — suggesting that the authors believe man to be an essentially social creature — it is emphasised more vigorously in the films. This trend is particularly visible in I Am Legend. In the novel, the foremost problem faced by Robert Neville is the sexual frustration he faces. Although the death of the dog causes a mental breakdown, it is essentially a learning moment that makes life easier for him in the end. In the film, however, Robert Neville is a man bordering on insanity as a result of the absence of other humans with which he can interact. The death of his dog leads to a suicide attempt.

The film On the Beach, too, emphasises the need for belongingness more than the novel. The novel shows belongingness predominantly in the form of loyalty or duty, which is directed more at a group than at an individual. In addition, the protagonists are primarily driven to be there for the other party, be it their family, their country or their colleagues. They are giving no sign that the other party also needs to be there for them. In the film, characters simply do not want to die alone, they need each other's support, even if the men are still the ones comforting the women. The film promotes the idea that it is a right to die with one's family. Dying together with someone, then, is considered perhaps the most basic need for humanity. In The Day of the Triffids, finally, the strength of the need for belongingness does not differ significantly between the novel and the film. Both works stress this desire equally strongly.
It is perhaps no surprise that the desire for belongingness is depicted as so important in each of the six works. As Baumeister puts it: “Satisfying the need to belong is more crucial and decisive than any other need.” Furthermore, sociological research has shown that the strongest predictor for happiness — a predictor stronger than any other external circumstance — is the sense of belongingness experienced by a person. Without a sense of belongingness, people are hard-pressed to be happy. Emphasising this effect even more, is the fact that belongingness has a significant effect on both physical and mental health. In the film version, Robert Neville borders on insanity. In this sense, the film version of *I Am Legend* provides a more accurate representation than the novel of what sociologists would consider the implications of living in isolation.

The ideal social unit in all six works is the family. This, too, ties in with sociological findings, which show that people all over the world are predisposed to live in families — however broad or narrow the concept is understood. In modern society, the nuclear family has become the paradigm rather than the extended family. The latter is especially suited to agricultural life, where each family member plays its part. The novel *The Day of the Triffids* keenly exemplifies this in the extended farming unit headed by Bill and Josella. In modern society, the economic advantage of a family has diminished and has shifted to emotional satisfaction. Indeed, the Bill and Jo of the film stay together for emotional rather than economic advantage. Although the same is true of the novel characters, they have extended their family to include other people, abandoning the small nuclear family.

The importance of belongingness is further emphasised by its relationship to love. In the novels, it must be concluded that love trumps belongingness. While belongingness is important, the type of belongingness associated with romantic love is clearly the highest good. In the films, on the other hand, belongingness in general is more important than love. This is an interesting development that questions the importance of romantic love in general. Overall, it is clear that all six work put high value on belongingness, but that this importance has grown in strength in two of the three films. This is in congruence with the social-relational narrative which Lawler, Thye & Yoon identify as one of two major narratives in the 21st century. This will be further explored after my analysis of the other trends.

**Individuality**

The second significant trend I distinguish is a stronger emphasis on the individual and individual desires and motives. This trend is apparent in several elements of the works. The first element constitutes the growing fame of the scientist. As Kumar points out, the scientist was a popular hero in science fiction throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century — being well-suited to his period’s optimistic view on technology — and paradoxically remained popular also after World War II, when the nuclear age added great pessimism to the view on technology. As has been shown especially with regard to *The Day of the Triffids* and *I Am Legend*, the relationship of these novels to science and technology is ambivalent, receiving praise as the salvation of humanity and criticism as its downfall, simultaneously. The figure of the scientist-protagonist, however, is always depicted positively.

Considering Bill Masen, John/Julian Osborne and Robert Neville, there appears to have been some change in the popularity of the scientist-hero between the 1950s novels and the 21st century films. Namely, the scientist-hero has become more popular. Bill Masen is ‘upgraded’ from a mediocre to an expert scientist; Robert Neville rises from a simple factory worker to a world-class virologist; and John Osborne is promoted from a young, ambitious scientist to a veteran award-winning scientist. The result of these ‘promotions’ is that they give the protagonists a more individualistic sense of identity. They are no longer one of a crowd, but people who stand out because of individual thinking and achievement. They stand out from the crowd not only because of their survival in the face of the

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4 Ibid., 350-353.
5 Kumar 1987, 388-389.
apocalypse, but because of their individual achievements in pre-apocalyptic society as much as in post-
apocalyptic society: “You are the Robert Neville, aren’t you?”

A second element that promotes the individuality of the characters in the three post-apocalyptic films, is closely related to the promotion of the scientist-hero. Career and work in general have become more important to the characters. This includes the women in the novels, who have all risen on the career ladder. In The Day of the Triffids, Josella, bestseller author of a single book, is promoted to famous radio host Jo. In On the Beach, housewife Mary has become architect Mary and bachelorette Moira has become the owner of a travel agency. In I Am Legend, wife Ruth has transformed into Anna, a strong-willed, independent woman of unknown occupation. These careers have the effect of depicting the women more as individuals and less as blank entities borrowing their identities from their husbands, thus indicating a stronger emphasis on individuality in general.

The men, too, are more focussed on their work and careers in the films than they are in the novels. In I Am Legend, Robert Neville is bent on finishing his work on his ground zero. Similarly, Bill Masen believes that the answer to the Triffids is to be found in his research, and sees it as his job to do something about them. And Peter Homes says to Mary he has to go away on this final mission because there is still a chance. He has to go, not someone else. In the novel Peter also feels obliged to go on this mission, but there is is because it is his duty to his country and a chance to further his career according to Mary’s wishes. In On the Beach, then, the emphasis on career and work has not become more pronounced — although it has shifted in emphasis — but in the other two works there is certainly a stronger focus on work and career. As work and career are an important component of a person’s personal identity, the greater emphasis on this element in the films also contributes to a greater individuality.

The final element that contributes to a greater sense of individuality in the post-apocalyptic films, constitutes the diminished focus on humanity as a race. The novels each show that the protagonists are aware of the perspective for humanity as a whole. In The Day of the Triffids, the Beadle group draws up a plan to save humanity within 24 hours of the apocalyptic event; in I Am Legend, Robert Neville sacrifices himself because he knows there is no hope for humanity as such anymore, but there is hope for the long-term survival of a hybrid race; and in On the Beach, John and Peter wonder about the end of all humanity and the fate of the rest of the world. Such explicit concern for the fate of humanity as a whole is almost entirely absent from the films. Even a scientist such as Bill Masen — while attempting to find a solution to the Triffids — never once considers the deadly plants as a threat to the survival of humanity as a species. He is definitely concerned that they will make many victims, but it does not explicitly cross his mind that humanity is now an endangered species. He is not thinking about having a lot of babies, in other words. Similarly, the protagonists of the film version of On the Beach are personally only concerned with when, how and with whom they will die. They are not frantically building bunkers in the hope of saving some specimens of the human species, or wondering what will happen to the flora and fauna. And Robert Neville, having come into contact with Anna and Ethan, refuses to come with them to the survivors’ colony. Neither Anna nor Robert considers the fact that such a colony might be the last hope of humanity surviving and that every person with a new strand of DNA will be essential.

The diminished focus on the survival of humanity is related to the fact that in all three films modern society is not exactly considered to be destroyed. In the face of each disaster, it does not appear to cross people’s mind that there is no longer a modern society, and they do not adapt to a new life as for instance Josella and Bill do in the novel The Day of the Triffids. The increased attention of the characters for especially themselves, may be the cause of this. They simply do not look much further than their own prospects. It further reeks of a kind of superiority complex, where the faith in modern society is so great that its termination is deemed impossible, or at the very least, unthinkable. This superiority complex fits in well with the scenario of the man-made apocalypse that features in all six works and the hubris that lies at the basis of it especially in the films The Day of the Triffids and I Am Legend. The films’ faith in humanity is enormous, and strongly tied to the great faith in individuality and individual accomplishments that they further display.

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6 I Am Legend 01:09:07.
These three elements work together to recreate the three stories cinematically with a greater emphasis on the individual, his or her talents and accomplishments in terms of career and work. In addition, while the characters have more knowledge and skills than their predecessors, the scope of their post-apocalyptic worldview has diminished to include predominantly their own skins. They are far more concerned with themselves than their literary counterparts. Belongingness at the level of the group — including as a member of the genus homo sapiens sapiens — has taken much less eminence, but belongingness at an interpersonal level has received much more attention instead. More will be said about this further on.

Alcohol

As mentioned before, I also found three less significant but unmistakable trends between the novels and the films. The first concerns alcohol. Without exception, exuberant amounts of alcohol are consumed in the novels, frequently in combination with cigarettes. Although drinking and drunkenness is generally mildly discarded, it is not a strong rejection and sometimes it is even shown fairly positively, as in the case of John Osborne’s great-uncle and his friends in *On the Beach*, who have made it their mission to finish the club’s alcohol stocks before the end. Although the dangers of smoking were not yet widely known in the fifties — explaining the wide-spread habit of smoking in the novels — the same is not true of alcohol. A scientific report from 2007 shows that the consumption of alcohol in the United Kingdom has more than doubled over the past fifty years. One would thus expect more alcohol to be consumed in the films than in the novels in a direct reflection of society, but the opposite is true. An explanation might possibly be found in a change in alcoholic culture over the past fifty years and in the medial change as film production companies do not want to be accused of promoting bad habits. With the increase in alcohol intake, there has also been an increase in anti-alcohol campaigns. The films may be a reflection of these campaigns, and thus an indirect reflection of the increased alcohol use in most western countries.

On the other hand, the decrease in alcohol consumption may also be a sign of the highly ideological nature of these films. As explained in the first chapter, the utopian genre is highly ideologically charged. The absence of alcohol from the films may be a type of overreaction caused by the already ideological nature of most elements of the films, which might trigger stronger ideological messages on all fronts. It may further be the result of the increasing individuality and enormous faith in humanity present in the films. No alcoholic will find the cure for the Krippin virus, discover a solution against the Triffids or make the end as bearable as possible for his family. When comparing them to the novels, what the films are saying, in my opinion, is that a single, rational man can save the world. If this man were a heavy drinker, this would go against the supremacy of mental abilities that is so important in the films. After all, alcohol impairs these mental abilities, if only temporary. It should however be noted that the films do not provide a contrasting example of values considering alcohol, which would make the message crystal clear. The contrast discussed here exists entirely in comparison to the alcoholism of the novels.

Religion

The second less significant trend concerns the position of religion in the stories. The novels all firmly reject Christianity by showing it as irrational and its values and norms as unsuited to post-apocalyptic life. Only *On the Beach* is mildly positive as Dwight Towers attends church twice. Curiously, none of the protagonists of the three novels is religious in any way, whereas approximately three quarters of the first world population considers themselves Christians. The films are more positive about religion, with the exception of *The Day of the Triffids*, which shows little difference in comparison to the novel version. Especially *I Am Legend* incorporates Christianity firmly in the story by means of

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7 The Chief Medical Officer 2008, 24.
the recurrent symbol of the butterfly, which causes Robert Neville to regain his faith at the end. Again, this reinforces the idea of the supremacy of human individuality, as it indicates that Neville and his scientific work are special enough to warrant special, personal attention from God. The film On the Beach, too, pays more (positive) attention to religion than the original. It is striking that the book On the Beach shows religion as a communal, congregating activity, whereas the films show religion as a highly individualised concept. The characters in the film do not go to church, they have a personal type of faith. This, too, contributes to a greater individuality in the films in comparison to the novels.

Like the issue of alcohol, I can only speculate about the reason behind the absence of religion in the novels and the greater attention in the films. For one thing, the absence of religion makes a clear division between secular and religious apocalyptic works. An issue that is characteristic of 20th century secular (post-)apocalyptic works is the fact that the end of the world is man-made. The religious apocalypse constitutes a punishment from God, a lesson for humanity to be learnt. The secular apocalypse is more ambiguous due to its man-made origins and frequently contains existential debate over the meaning of the apocalyptic event, as illustrated in all works but in the film version of On the Beach in particular. In other words, a Christian post-apocalyptic narrative would make all frustration over the meaning of the apocalypse obsolete, thus foregoing the opportunity to emphasise those features of society that will lead to its doom. And this is exactly what characterises secular post-apocalyptic fiction.

This does not yet, however, explain the greater role of religion in the 21st century films. This new type of religion is more personal, but it is also more sceptical. None of the religious characters have an irrevocable faith in God. They question God’s actions and motives, as befits the general emphasis on individuality and personal achievement. This may be a reflection of the emerging struggle of 21st century modern society with the issue of religion. In a world that so thoroughly believes in the power of the individual, what role has God left to play? This may be what the films are exploring, too.

Sex

The third minor trend concerns the depiction of sex. Although there is not so much more or less of it, the meaning attributed to sex has shifted. In I Am Legend, sex plays a role in the novel purely as a biological drive. This drive is activated by the vampire women Neville sees outside. Sex is thus linked to the body only and not to love. Neville still loves his wife Virginia deeply, but her memory does not arouse him sexually. The film does not feature sex at all. In The Day of the Triffids the role of sex remains unchanged in the novel and film, but in On the Beach there are some changes. Most significantly, Dwight sleeps with Moira and Moira sleeps with Julian in the film, whereas sex is absent from the novel. The meaning of sex in the film is closely related to love and belongingness. Moira sleeps with Julian because she does not want to die alone, not because she loves him. In this scene sex thus provides a sense of belongingness. However, Moira and Dwight sleep together purely because they love each other, and this is shown as legitimising the act. Moira’s adventure with Julian, however, is strongly rejected by Dwight, suggesting that belongingness is not good enough as a reason for sex, whereas love is perfectly legitimate.

Thus, between the novels and the films, sex has shifted from a biological drive to an act of love. Again, this puts more emphasis on the individual as a biological drive is common to all, whereas love pertains to two people alone. On the other hand, the symbolic importance of sex is diminished in the films. It is an expression of either romantic love or a desire for belongingness and while the first type is legitimised and the other is not, it does not nearly have as symbolic a meaning as sex has in the novels. In the novels, curiously, the drive for sex is purely biological, but having sex constitutes a kind of binding contract. This is why Dwight cannot sleep with Moira, Neville is so frustrated by his sexual arousal and Bill and Josella’s relationship immediately results in a child. The changed status of sex is likely to be, at least in part, a result of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, which had not yet taken place when they novels were written.
Returning to the two main trends, which both pertain to the concept of social cohesion, it may be observed that these correspond to the hypothesis that I formulated at the beginning of this thesis:

As we come closer to the 21st century, there is a stronger focus on the survivor as an individual and less as a member of a society — thus being less burdened by a sense of duty or debt to his society, humanity or some other higher goal —, but there is simultaneously a stronger focus on man as an essentially social being, craving meaningful human contact at all costs.

The two trends may seem strangely paradoxical, but I do not think this is quite the case. From a sociological viewpoint, it seems that a shift in the shape of belongingness as represented in the narratives is at the basis of the developments, making them appear antithetical when they are in fact not quite so contradictory. As I explained in chapter 3, belongingness may pertain to one or more individuals, but also to a group. One could gain a sense of belongingness from, say, a sports club, or from one or more good friends. In the same chapter I explained the individualisation narrative and the social-relational narrative of the 21st century as outlined by Lawler, Thye and Yoon. The former is characterised by instrumental commitments, the latter by normative and affective commitments that take place on a micro rather than a macro level.

What we see in the films, is that belongingness at the micro level becomes more important than belongingness at the macro level. In the novel *On the Beach*, for instance, Dwight is the only member of his crew with a distinct identity. The others all part of one loyal group, to which Dwight also belongs. The commitment between these men is of a normative nature. They value membership intrinsically, and not for the economic or transactional value it provides. The marines feel a sense of duty and obligation to their group. The type of belongingness within this group, then, takes place on a macro level rather than a micro level. It is this normative commitment that provides belongingness at a macro level that Dwight chooses over the micro-level, affective commitment and sense of belongingness that his relationship with Moira constitutes. In the film, the opposite is true. Dwight chooses Moira (micro) over his crew (macro), and within the crew he is especially close to his second in command (micro). Peter, too, clearly places his family (micro) over his work and country (macro).

Similarly, in the novel *The Day of the Triffids*, Bill Masen is very aware of his identity as one of few surviving members of the species homo sapiens sapiens, while Torrence and his group are primarily aware of themselves as British citizens. In the film, Torrence identifies very little with his own group, but is only interested in the fact that he is the man wielding the power. Over whom he exercises this power is not his concern. And Bill is mostly busy trying to continue his research, trying to locate his father from the desire for a instrumental commitment rather than an affective or even a normative commitment. Bill and Torrence have no group identity. Both, however, do form ties at a micro level. Torrence attempts to bond with Jo and Bill actually succeeds in bonding with her. Bill and Jo further quickly develop ties with the two girls, forming a family and finding a new sense of belongingness.

In the novel *I Am Legend*, Robert Neville encounters a group to which he simply cannot belong. Accepting that their group-belongingness is more important than his own lonely belongingness which is tied to a dead past, he agrees to die. In the film Robert Neville hears of a group to which he does belong, but refuses to join it. Instead, his interactions with his dog and a few select mannequins are paramount. Overall, macro level commitments can be considered to have lost prominence in the films, while micro-level commitments have grown in importance.

The reason that this makes sense with regard to the representation of increased individuality, is that people no longer derive their identity primarily from their membership to a group. They do not have to, because they derive identity primarily from their work and career. It is their personal accomplishments that stand them out from the crowd, being members of a group would only diminish their individuality as a unique person. However, despite all their individuality, 21st century people are still thoroughly social animals, as the films argue. They do not want human interaction, they need it if they want to stay physically and mentally healthy. The solution is thus to form relationships on a micro level, to gain a sense of belongingness from their relationships to a few close individuals.
At the broadest level, I feel there is a trend visible between the novels and the films which I feel is very close to a type of egomania. The novels show characters that are thoroughly human. They have faults, they have weaknesses and are very much aware of the fact that they cannot save the human race — or at least they never feel that they can save it alone. The films, on the other hand, show a collection of accomplished individuals who believe in their own abilities. They are confident that the human race will persist. They are further confident that they, as individuals, can make a significant contribution to the restoration of modern society, if not save it completely. And here we do see a paradox. If every individual is such a great specimen, if every individual has a unique skill set that will save the world, then why do they need belongingness so desperately?

The answer to this question, and this is purely my own speculation, may perhaps be found in the increasing focus on mental abilities in the 21st century in general, and the representation thereof in films and other media in particular. The majority of people in western countries no longer perform manual labour. People use their brains to constantly invent new machines to take over manual tasks. Most people now work primarily with their brains, and they spend a lifetime developing, training and nurturing this brain. Consequently the body receives fewer and fewer training, with all kinds of problems as a result, which in turn leads to a great deal of attention to the body and keeping it in shape in order for the brain to continue performing its mental tasks. In essence, it is the brain that matters, not the body. A similar process is at work with regard to belongingness. However much we can achieve individually, we are ‘programmed’ to always crave social interactions. Thus, these three films essentially show mentally powerful individuals that nonetheless have little control over the desires of their own bodies, and the most prominent physical desire is belongingness. Even though it is the brain that counts, the body becomes problematic in its desire for belongingness, which evokes increasing attention to this problem. Thus, there is a greater emphasis on both individuality and belongingness.

Disregarding On the Beach for the moment, it is interesting that the characters in the films are in fact truly capable of saving modern society, much more than they are in the novel. As has been shown at length, the films place the individual and individual initiative at the highest pedestal. Especially when supported by another individual to satisfy their need for belongingness, the individual can achieve anything. And this anything is the rebuilding of modern society. The novels are focussed on a continuation of the human race in some way, while the films are more preoccupied with rebuilding society as it was, to undo the wrong and let life return to normal. Unlike the novels, then, the films have a greater faith in modern society and are not keen to condemn it. Certain elements are condemned, but as a whole modern society is still considered a great good.

Considering these celebrations of the individual, humanity and modern society I have to disagree in part with Teresa Heffernan on her claim that the post-apocalyptic genre no longer conjures meaning since the beginning of the twentieth century. More specifically, I feel that perhaps the 21st century is another turning point. Indeed, the 1950s novels are fairly pessimistic. I Am Legend and On the Beach certainly leave no hope for the human race. They show that hubris will lead to humanity’s doom, they show that the apocalypse is man-made and that humanity is not the centre of the universe. Life continues even without humanity. The Day of the Triffids is more positive, leaving hope that a new society will emerge but also showing that other, negative societies will have to be overcome. The films, however, are even more positive, with the exception of On the Beach. Both other films show an intellectual protagonist who saves the world and end with the expectation that modern society will be rebuilt. Clearly, meaning is derived from these apocalyptic events. It is shown that humanity made certain mistakes, opening up the possibility of correcting these mistakes for the next round.

The 21st century, as represented in these three cinematic examples, appears to have returned to the ‘classic’ post-apocalyptic story in which the apocalypse gives birth to a new understanding, a new start. It is not the God of the original religious post-apocalyptic stories that brings the apocalypse and allows a select few to survive, it is Man who brings the end and it is Man who allows humanity to continue existing. Moreover, Man prefers not to survive with a select few but with everyone, if possible, as Neville’s cure in I Am Legend suggests. Man further has no desire to start again from scratch. Humanity intends to return to modern society, not to an agrarian society. Thus, the great faith in individuality in 21st century has restored humanity’s faith in the face of the narrative apocalypse.
I personally expect that this rather positive movement in post-apocalyptic narrative as it appears to have emerged in the early 21st century will continue to exist indefinitely. It is my belief that it requires a real-world apocalyptic event such as the two World Wars to shake the representation of humanity’s faith in itself in narrative works, and that this lapse is only temporary. In that sense I concur with James Berger’s assumption that such world-altering historical events may be considered apocalyptic events in themselves. The Second World War, which so clearly influenced the post-apocalyptic narratives of the 1950s, is now distant enough in collective memory that it no longer influences the post-apocalyptic genre directly. The world which these narratives present, has regained faith in itself. On the other hand, I also expect that a second counter-trend will develop in the post-apocalyptic genre. This will be a much darker trend, possibly the darkest trend up to date. This movement will acknowledge that there is ‘goodness’ in the world, but it will present this goodness as futile in the light of the apocalypse. *On the Beach* is an example of this. While the novel shows an entire nation dying with dignity, the film shows a nation where a large proportion of the population does *not* die with dignity, but everyone dies all the same. Another example is *The Road*, where a man and a boy do not live but barely survive in a dead world inhabited by people who eat babies to stay alive.

Of course all of these speculations and trends have been extrapolated from only three novels and three film adaptations. It would be interesting to expand this research to other novels and films and to also consider other film adaptations of the three novels discussed in this thesis. Such expansive research would allow to test the conclusions drawn in this thesis and consider whether they can be upheld within a wider perspective. Only the future can prove whether my predictions for the development of the post-apocalyptic genre hold true.

With regard to the impending end of the world in December 21st 2012, it seems reasonable that we need not despair too much. The end of the world rarely means the end the world. We would perhaps do well to learn a thing or two about agriculture for the early days, to pay close heed to the source of the apocalypse so as not to make the same mistake again and to keep our friends, and preferably a loyal pet, close at hand. Moreover, if we are not the right kind of scientist ourselves, we would do well to find and develop a relationship with one, but otherwise we should be alright. Someone will save the world eventually, it is inevitable.
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