

**Adopting Post-Apocalyptic Literature in Modern American Fiction: A
Critical Analysis of Stephen King's *The Stand***

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Abstract

Society is built on human harmonization among one another and with the nature around them. Therefore, any kind of flaw made by the members of the society can affect not only society but also the entire world. Many writers have adapted such kinds of flaws in their writings depending on the post-apocalyptic genre which is the narration of stories that start after the end of the world on earth to discuss its effects on the human's ways of living. Those writers further depend on human's innate instinct to survive in order to explore the possibilities of surviving in a world alien to the one they used to live in.

1. Introduction

The end of the world had originally emerged through apocalyptic literature in Judaism at the end of the Old Testament period, in The Book of Daniel precisely. The New Testament is also informed by an apocalyptic worldview in its final book The Book of Revelation also known as The Apocalypse of John. In such way, throughout The Book of Daniel and The Book of Revelation, people are introduced to the possible end of the past world and the emergence of a new world, as indicated in The Book of Revelation "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed way" (21:1). In the past, the reasons that may cause the end of the world were almost limited to volcanoes, tornadoes, floods, or flu. However, in modern times the perils that are threatening human lives are widened to include terrorism, nuclear weapons, viruses, technological wars, and atomic bombs. Therefore, within the context of the 20th and 21st centuries, writers begin to secularize the old prophecies being influenced by science, technology, or the modern anxieties represented by the many apocalypses that occurred during the passing years like World War I and II, cold War, and many others. Such catastrophes resulted in the emergence of post-apocalyptic fiction that explores "the new earth" or the aftermath of an apocalypse in a world inhabited by a small population represented by those who survived the apocalypse.

In America, the influence of apocalyptic literature existed since the coming of the puritans who were highly influenced by it. For example, *The Day of Doom: or, A Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment* (1662) by the clergyman Michael Wigglesworth.

Nowadays, post-apocalyptic narratives hold an important position in America especially after the events of 11th September that is regarded as the most devastating modern apocalypse that the country had passed through. Therefore,

the recent period has witnessed wide emergence of post-apocalyptic literature in relation to fiction and films, for example, *The City of Ember* (2003), *The Road* (2006), *World War Z* (2006), *Zombie Land* (2009), *The Passage* (2010), and many others.

2. Apocalypse: The Historical Background of the Genre

The term apocalypticism is derived from ‘apocalypse,’ which is derived from the Greek noun ἀποκάλυψις, which refers to an “unveiling” or “revelation” of some sort. In early Jewish and Christian literature, such revelation typically dealt with specific and detailed disclosures of allegedly future events that were thought to lie outside the grasp of unaided human intellect (Taylor 31). However, the origins of apocalypticism can be traced to the dualism of Zoroastrianism (an ancient monotheistic religion of Persia found by Zoroaster). Being influenced by Hellenism, apocalypticism began to develop into a distinctive Jewish literary genre during the late 3rd to early 2nd centuries B.C.E.

Apocalyptic literature takes its name from the Apocalypse of John (Rev. 1:1), also referred to as The Book of Revelation in The New Testament. It contains many narratives associated with apocalyptic beliefs as well as prophecies. It is introduced as the following:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near (Rev. 1:1–3).

In such way the main message and prophecy to be delivered in the Book is the coming of Jesus Christ, the rewarding of those who will follow him, and the punishment of those who will disobey.

Apart from Judaism and Christianity, apocalyptic genre also appears in Gnostic, Greek, Latin, and Persian literature. The genre can further be traced in Islamic cultures as well as in medieval Europe.

Apocalyptic literature was mainly flourished to direct people who were in trouble or hardships. The German scholar Otto Plöger (1910-1999) argues that apocalyptic literature developed out of groups who saw themselves as being marginalized by organized religion and those in power. Therefore, they longed for divine judgment which would come out of divine intervention (Taylor 39). As a result, by the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the sixth century B.C., an emphasis on apocalyptic motifs was developing within caused by the Babylonian exile. The Jewish people looked at the exile as God’s

punishment for their misdeeds as they were warned by Hosea (an Israelite prophet) for refusing to follow Yahweh. However, the flowering of apocalypticism mainly took place in Judaism in the Hellenistic period which was initiated by the conquest of Alexander the Great (333-323 BCE). The period resulted in a long period of conflicts between the Greek culture and local culture. Apocalypticism thus emerged as a response to the economic, religious, social, and cultural changes that had taken place.

Therefore, the two biblical apocalypses, Daniel and Revelation, were written during times of great crises, such as a persecution or conquest. The Book of Daniel, which is the only apocalypse in the Jewish Bible, was written in response to the attempts of the Hellenistic king Antiochus IV to impose Hellenism and annihilate Judaism. The book encouraged the Jewish people to hold on to their faith in the light of the coming of Messiah. In the end, corrupt rulers will be judged and God's people will be rewarded (Montgomery 6). Similarly, The Book of Revelation shows the conflict between Christian and Roman social structures, cultural values, and ideology. The author of the text is the Apostle John, who records the message of God addressed to seven churches in Roman Asia. In a vision, the author John was translated through time and space from earth to Heaven. He was commanded to write "the things which thou hast seen," "the things which are" and "the things which shall be hereafter" (Revelation 1:19). The Book concluded with a glowing, final portrait of renewal and restoration: a new heaven and earth and the marriage between the Lamb and the church (7). Thus, both The Book of Daniel and The Book of Revelation were written to protest against the injustices that were taking place, an element that will also be adopted in post-apocalyptic literature.

As a genre, apocalyptic literature is not easy to define because it is used in many contradictory ways. Many definitions have been introduced to define the term as a literary genre. However, the best-known definition for the genre is the one given by The Society of Biblical Literature group who attempted it providing readers as well as researchers with definition that can serve as a touchstone for the genre. Therefore, an 'Apocalypse' was defined as:

A genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world. (Collins, *what is 2*)

The above definition apply to various sections of 1 Enoch, Daniel, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Apocalypse of Abraham, 3 Baruch, 2 Enoch, Testament of Levi 2-5, and the fragmentary Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

Apocalyptic literature has great influence on modern literature and many writers have adopted apocalyptic narratives, symbols as well as its themes. For example, J.G. Ballard's novel *Drowned World* (1962) echoed two fundamental narratives

in the Jewish Christian tradition. First Ballard's protagonist is portrayed as 'a second Adam' and second most sustained apocalyptic allusion is made is the story of great world-destroying flood and the salvation of Noah (Tate n. pag.). Apocalyptic literature highly re-emerged during the Protestant Reformation (1517) that was initiated by Martin Luther. Apocalyptic texts and beliefs were highly adopted by the reformers of the era in their plans of reformation to encourage people to return to the word of God as well as to bring back the spirituality of the Church.

During the twentieth century, researchers witness a growing interest in apocalyptic literature but as a secular concept that was emerged with Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) which described the aftermath of a global pandemic that carried off the greatest part of mankind. The rise of secular apocalypticism coincides with the secularization of the society during the era. Therefore, with the advance of technology and science in modern era an apocalyptic mood begins to be developed in relation to science and technology than to religions purposes. Many scholars have concentrated on twentieth-century trends as the source of secular apocalyptic. The political scientist Michael Barkun (1938), for example, argues that secular apocalypticism has emerged from scientists during the 1960s and 1970s due to the environmental movement, and the oil shortages of the 1970s. He asserts that scientists of the period became convinced of a pessimistic future: "The scientific world view, which had grown accustomed to increasingly effective future predictions, became the victim of its virtues as extrapolations of present trends pointed toward global calamity" (qtd. in Vox 8).

The historian Chris Lewis, on the other hand, responded to Barkun's analysis in a 1992 article. He placed the origin of secular apocalypticism in the 1930s, seeing it as a part of backlash against science. He considers this backlash to be a part of a long intellectual tradition in western society: "What Barkun calls secular apocalypticism, and I call ecological apocalypticism, grew out of the fear of sixteenth and seventeenth century Christian and cultural critics that human domination of nature would cause the decay and death of the natural world" (qtd. in Vox 8). Lewis further argued that the last man stories "are not really secular stories because it is almost impossible to determine whether the end of the nature for its sin and arrogance" (qtd. in Vox 8). The growing interest of secular apocalypticism has led to the emergence of post-apocalyptic literature. The later refers to narratives which take place after the occurring of an apocalypse that may be caused by natural disaster, unclear war, military/political forces, flu, or scientific experiment.

In such a way, like the old Biblical apocalyptic texts, secular fictions of the apocalypse are the result and the product of an immediate respond to different crises that are occurring around the world. Professor James Berger in his book *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse* (1999) argues that apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic produce a total critique of any existing social order:

Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic representations serve varied psychological and political purposes. Most prevalently, they put forward a total critique of any existing social order. From the Book of Revelation's condemnation of Babylon, through the millenarian movements of the Middle Ages, to more recent apocalyptic thinking – both religious and secular – visions of the end and its aftermath emphasize that no social reform can cure the world's diseases. (7)

In describing the twentieth century, Martin Rees opened his book *Our Final Hour: A Scientist's Warning* (2003) with the following lines: 'the twentieth century brought us the bomb, and the unclear threat will never leave us; the short-term threat from terrorism is high on the public and political agenda; in equalities in wealth and welfare get ever wider' (n. pag.). Rees refers firstly to 'unclear threat,' which may be caused by war or natural disaster, secondly to 'terrorism' which becomes very widespread in the twentieth century, and third to 'inequalities in wealth and welfare' which presents social and economic dilemma. The twentieth century can be described as the age of catastrophes. After the end of World War I (1914-1918), people look forward for a better life but the coming of World War II put an end for any hope for a better world. World War I was followed by the Holocaust (1933-1945), World War II (1939-1945), Vietnam War (1955-1975), Cold War (1947 – 1991), Gulf War (1990-1991), and September 11 attack in 2001. Apart from wars, many natural disasters took place during the twentieth century from 1947 to 1997. About 400,000 people died out of earthquakes, 360,000 by floods and 30,000 by tsunamis. Further, since 1970, almost five billion people had been hit by natural disasters and over two million people had lost their lives because of disasters like draught, floods, or tornadoes.

However, the increasing emergence and popularity of post-apocalyptic narratives in modern era can be traced to the end of World War II and the dropping of the hydrogen bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. After 1945, the world was not only changed politically and economically but also symbolically. People were nostalgic for small- town life in America. Films like *The Day the World Ended* (1955) and *On the Beach* (1959) revealed cultural yearning for simplicity and safety (Gurr n. pag.).

In America, the religious myths and the doomsday prophecies emerged with concepts of the 'New World' being a 'Second Eden'. Essential to the United States formation is the Book of Exodus which is the second Book of the Law of Moss. The book takes its name from the Greek word for departure. It describes the departure of the Israelites out of the slavery and oppression they endured in Egypt and their journey led by Moses towards the Promised Land.

Within the context of the 17th century, a group of pilgrims known as 'the puritans' decided to leave Europe in search for religious liberty. Therefore, the puritans regarded themselves as God's chosen people who had fled oppression

in Europe (Egypt) and came to their Promised Land (America) to establish their own religion away from the evils of Old England. In such way, the foundation of the puritan community was based on The Book of Revelation. The Puritans believed that they had left the old world of Europe and came to the new one which is gifted to them by God. Therefore, one of the most fundamental beliefs of Puritanism was that by creating a society built on pure faith they could bring about Christ's Second Coming (Stannard 123).

In recent years, within the context of modern secular apocalypticism, the United States of America has undergone major challenges and trials in the area of foreign policy, domestic politics, and economy. Since the beginning of the 21st century, citizens have watched their nation become the subject of a terrorist attack on their own soil. To most Americans who used to live in what was ostensibly the safest country in the world, these threats seem to defy logic and comprehension. At the same time, Americans develop a fascination with apocalyptic scenarios (Manjikian1). The events of 9/11 September left approximately 3000 individuals dead and New York City's World Trade Center in ruins before its re-building. America also witnessed natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina (2005), and Superstorm Sandy (2012). So, people felt that they are really living in the end of the world.

After the event of 9/11, post-apocalyptic genre becomes wide spread and Hollywood profited from the release of several films like *I Am legend*, *The Road*, *28Days After*, *The Dark Knight*, *Star Wars: Episode III -The Revenge of the Sith*, *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, *Cloverfield*, *The Sum of All Fears*, and *2012*. The British novelist Martin Amis (1949) noted that, on some level, every novel written after September 11 became a "September 11" novel because it took place in a different new world.

However, in the twentieth century, writers are not usually interested in the apocalypse itself but rather in what will come after it as they feel that the catastrophe had already happened. Thus post- apocalypse combines both the judgment Day and the end of humanity but it offers the survivors a new beginning at the end because even though apocalyptic events are destructive but they leave some remains out of which the new world will be shaped.

However, the emergence of secular post-apocalyptic literature does not erase the link between apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic literature. In modern time, the writers may well use both genres in their writings. For example, in *The Stand* (1978) Stephen King combines both the post-apocalyptic as well as the apocalyptic genres in establishing secular apocalypse with religiously originated content.

Structurally, post-apocalyptic fiction usually describes an individual survivor or groups of survivors surviving the ruins of the old world after being destroyed by disaster. Post-apocalyptic novels describe how those survivors struggle to satisfy their primary needs like food, water, oxygen, shelter, as well as avoiding dangerous situations with hostile survivors or with the new threats. Usually, the survivor are forced to leave their houses either to search for food and water or

because their houses are in effected and dangerous areas. For example, in the post-apocalyptic movie *Resident Evil: Extinction* (2007), Alice (the film protagonist) and the other characters (a group of survivors from Raccoon City), attempt to travel across the Mojave desert wilderness to escape from zombies and to reach Alaska which is supposed to be clear from zombies and people there have begun a new life. In post-apocalyptic novels or movies, readers/viewers can notice the destruction as well as the empty landscapes which are very common in post-apocalyptic setting as the characters move from one place to another. For example, empty cities, abandoned houses, cars, shops, and ruins instead of skyscrapers. What is left in these cities are the remains of the past life which present a comparison between the old life and the post-apocalyptic life.

Psychologically, the apocalyptic novel is about a loss of status and control. In their article *From Disaster Event to Political Crisis: A "5C+A" Framework for Analysis*, Professors Richard Stuart Olson and Vincent T. Gawronski have noticed that disaster often represents a sort of "back-siding" to an area. Disaster thus represents a loss of modernity as well as a kind of time travelling because instead of progression, civilization is driven backward (n. pag.). However, despite its depiction of catastrophe and disaster, apocalyptic fiction is often reassuring in quality. Warren Wagar argues "the end of the world enables us, for example, to project in our imaginations a time when all our enemies, all the sources of our current distress and feelings of powerlessness, are removed, and we have survived" (qtd. in Hermann 6). Thus, the ability to overcome obstacles, to outrival the rest of humanity, and to defy the powers of nature is a functional characteristic of apocalyptic fiction. The idea of beginning all over again and the feeling of empowerment may explain to some extent why post-apocalyptic genre is so wide spread nowadays. Readers begin to think of what they will do if they were placed in similar situations or how they will defend themselves if they are attacked by zombies or aliens.

3. Critical Analysis of *The Stand*

3.1. The Professional Career of Stephen King

An important post-apocalyptic novel is Stephen King's *The Stand* which the current study will analyze for its influential place in the early stream of apocalyptic fiction. As a writer, King is basically known as a horror fiction writer. His literary career began while he was still in high school. At the beginning, he wrote works for his brother's vanity newspaper, *Dave's Rag*, and his high school newspaper. Then he continued writing and tried his best to publish his works. After many rejections, his first novel *Carrie* was published in 1974. *Carrie* was followed by many novels like *Salem's Lot* (1975) and *The Shining* (1977). The later was his first novel to become a hardcover bestseller. By the end of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century, he has continued to highlight the bestsellers lists and has become a familiar name to

most American people. Nowadays, he becomes one of the most popular and widely recognized novelists of all time in that some estimate the total number of his books worldwide to be 300 million copies. Commenters have speculated that the only writers more popular than him were those who authored the biblical gospels. In the 1980s, he wrote seven of the top twenty-five fiction bestsellers in America, while his books had been translated into nearly every language (Magistrale, Stephen 1). Moreover, many of his works were adopted into successful Hollywood films.

Throughout his career, King has received multiple awards and nominations for his works like the Bram Stoker Award for Best Novel for *Misery*, *The Green Mile*, *Bag of Bones*, *Lisey's Story*, and *Duma Key*, Best Fiction Collection for *Four Past Midnight* and *Just After Sunset*, and in 2003, he received the association's Lifetime Achievement Award, and many others. Moreover, his greater recognition was granted in September 2003, when the National Book Foundation awarded him its 2003 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters at the National Book Foundation awards

3.2. An Introduction to *The Stand*

As a horror writer, one of King's favorite forms of horror is apocalypse. For him, it is appropriately awe-inspiring. Approximately, half of his novels have apocalyptic qualities like *Carrie* (1974), *The Stand* (1978), *Cell* (2006), and *Under the Dome* (2009). Therefore exploring his apocalypticism will enable readers to understand and appreciate a fundamental concept to his fiction.

In 1978, King published his first post-apocalyptic novel, *The Stand* which is his longest, most famous, and readable novel since 1973 to the present time. During this period, he wrote 58 novels and about 200 short stories. However, it remains the favorite novel to King's American fans specifically. For its sense of realism, simple ordinary characters, and the way the writer reminds his readers of their identity through directing the characters to reestablish a new society the same way their pioneers did many years ago.

The Stand is divided into three books. The books are further subdivided into seventy-eight chapters of varying lengths and periods. In it, King's emphasis shifts from the equivocal and cataclysmic aspects of apocalypse developed in *Carrie* to an extensive series of literal and allegorical contrasts as it subplots all point toward the final confrontation.

On his website, King remarks that for a long time of ten years, he had wanted to write a fantasy epic similar to *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) by R. R. Tolkien in which a small band sets out on a search which results in a confrontation with evil but with an American setting (King, *Inspiration* n. pag.). Therefore, the epic quest structure of *The Stand* is similar to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* but instead of fictional characters, he created middle-class American characters. Furthermore, King's epic is not set in an imaginary Efland, but rather in real places in America as indicated in the author's note to the novel "Many of the events occur in real places—such as Ogunquit, Maine; Las Vegas, Nevada; and

Boulder, Colorado—and with these places I have taken the liberty of changing them to whatever degree best suited the course of my fiction” (*The Stand* 1).

In a book written by King entitled *Danse Macabre*, King tells the story of how *The Stand* came to be written as well as the chain of thoughts that shaped it and the reasons that pushed him to choose a plague to end the world. Firstly, he was mainly inspired to write the novel by a real accident that took place in Utah in 1968 where a CBW accidently spill in Utah and caused the death of the sheep of that area instead of citizens because the wind had blown it the other way. The accident consequently reminded King of George R. Stewart’s *Earth Abides* (1949) in which a plague wipes out most of mankind (234).

Secondly, it was written during a troubled political period. Explaining the author’s attitude towards the government and its system, he argued:

Its writing came during a troubled period for the world in general and America in particular; we were suffering from our first gas pains in history, we had just witnessed the sorry end of the Nixon administration and the first presidential resignation in history, we had been resoundingly defeated in Southeast Asia, and we were grappling with a host of domestic problems, from the troubling question of abortion-on-demand to an inflation rate that was beginning to spiral upward in a positively scary way (*The Stand* 235).

Moreover, the writing of the novel coincided with King’s rising fame at the beginning of his career and the pressure that accompanied it. Therefore, King found a way to stand against such pressures by writing a post-apocalyptic novel about the end of the world through which he could create new America out of the past pressures and problems.

The novel begins with Specialist Charles D. Champion escaping with his wife and their child from the military complex he is monitoring where a deadly super flu spreads and kills everyone in the laboratory. Charles manages to escape and reach Texas but he causes the super flu to spread outside its containment area. Gradually, the flu begins to spread all over the world and eventually kills over 99.4% of the world’s population. As a result, civilization collapses and the few remaining survivors who are immune to the flu struggle to live in a post-apocalyptic world in which they divide into good and evil groups.

Being inspired by the background of the novel, King directed his writing to establish his criticism towards both government and technology.

3.3. *The Stand* as Anti-governmental Novel

As mentioned earlier, the post-apocalyptic literature usually functions as critical genre of the period in which it is written. The author Andrew Keller Estes believes that the symbolization of post-apocalyptic literature to the

anxieties of Western societies is the essence of and the reason behind the popular appeal of the genre. It affords readers a glimpse of future based on fears and fantasies derived from the sociopolitical context (Estes 191). In *The Stand*, Stephen King employs these fears to express his anger towards the government as well as any kind of ruling organization and their misuse of power. The main reason for the occurrence of the apocalypse in it is the government of the United States itself. The government develops a super flu as a defensive weapon to use against their enemies despite the 99.4 % killing factor it has. Thus, it is just like nuclear weapons and atomic bombs. Due to the government's poor security, the flu spreads and causes the destruction of the country. The idea of the government being responsible for the destruction of its nation is not only presented in *The Stand* but also in King's other works like the novella *The Mist* (1980). In it, King presents a group of ordinary people being trapped in a grocery store located in Maine after the occurring of mysterious thunderstorm being followed by a very thick unnatural mist. It spreads across the small town reducing visibility to near-zero accompanied by strange creatures that start attacking anyone and anything that dare to go out into the open. The reason behind the spread of the mist is not anonymous. Rather it occurs because of the government making a mistake while working on an "Arrowhead Project," which is a secret government installation engaged in specialized atomic research.

In King's works like *The Mist* and *The Stand*, the American government is portrayed as divorced from its citizens and caused the country to pass through an apocalypse that takes the lives of many people. In relation to *The Stand*, the government does not only fail to contain the flu but its action to deal with what comes after the disaster is even worse. When the society begins to break down due to the spread of the flu, the martial law does little to stem the destruction as they fail to contain the outbreak of the flu. In an interview (1985), King was asked whether *The Stand* is anti-governmental and whether those are his personal feelings? He answers: "Oh I think the government stinks! . . . I believe what I wrote in *The Stand*. It always ends in one way. It's like taking dope or booze. You take enough government, and it's going to kill you. That's the end. Sooner or later it always goes down" (qtd in Underwood, 88).

In *The Stand*, King expresses his anger and dissatisfaction towards the governmental through exploring on the role of traditional organizations that control people's lives, like the government and the military. Therefore, the entire first section of *The Stand* focuses on the government's response to the occurrence of the apocalypse represented by the flu. Further, King also presents his criticism of the military force through the character of General Bill Starkey who is the first military man to appear in the novel. He is described as a high-expedited man with many medals. He has been serving his country for thirty-six years and whose advices are taken by presidents.

As the commanding officer of Project Blue, Starkey is the one who decides to cover up the accident and commits horrible decisions to prevent people from knowing the truth. He uses the command "Troy" to suppress media from

spreading the news of the spread of the flu even if this demand requires the use of violence. King shows that this attitude is doomed to failure because the military force is not the correct response and the secrecy the military maintains only creates a greater desire to know the truth (Russell 74). Therefore, Starkey's efforts go in vain, as the news of the plague begins to spread out. *The Los Angeles Times*, for example, ran about 26,000 copies. Though the FBI tried to prevent these copies from publishing causing twenty-eight workers to die, yet 10,000 copies get out. Later one an army unit gathers for Ray Flower, an announcer in a popular radio talk show who decides to speak publically about the flu and starts taking calls from different people who may have some information about the accident. Ray Flowers takes a call from a doctor who says that people are dying like "flies" and "the bodies were being removed from Kansas City hospitals by the truckload" (*The Stand* 158). During these calls, the soldiers interfere and execute the announcer.

The government's insistence on covering up the spread of the flu and the efforts to control the chaos that took place after the spread of the flu leads only to violence and instead of saving people's lives, the military's violent actions only resulted in more death cases. In addition, Starkey's failure to contain the virus results in his dismissal from his job by the President of the United States: "The President, yes. I've been relieved . . . relieved me, Len. Of course I knew it was coming. But it still hurts. Hurts like hell" (*The Stand* 127). Before committing suicide, Starkey quotes Yeats's poem *The Second Coming* "The beast is on its way," "It's on its way" (*The Stand* 128). The beast here refers to Captain Trips and what is left for Starkey is to hold the center "as much as we can for as long as we can" (*The Stand* 128). Therefore, Starkey gives Len a final plan to put into action. According to the plan, the American government will release the virus to several other continents to be out of responsibility. In this way, there will be no doubt that the United States has created the plague "if things do go from bad to ... to worse, no one will ever know. Project Blue was infiltrated to the very end, we're sure of that. A new virus, a mutation... our opposite numbers may suspect, but there won't be time enough. Share and share alike, Len" (*The Stand* 128).

Starkey's decision represents his attempt to control the center even if it costs the death of 99.4% of humanity. This shows that until the end all what the government cares about is their benefits. Therefore, they obfuscate the plague to get rid of responsibility rather than saving people's lives by sharing the news of the plague.

While *The Stand*, King presents the government reactions towards the spread of the flu but in *The Mist*, there are not even any bureaucratic or scientific representatives left to confront the consequences of their meddling and incompetence leaving the ordinary to face their fates alone (Magistrale, *Landscape* 33). Whether in *The Stand* or in *The Mist*, the innocent citizens are obliged to face the dangers of different apocalypses caused by their government.

The first book of *The Stand* ends on July 4 for two reasons: First the 4th of July holiday is an ironic contrast to the current condition of the United States. Second, the date is also important because by now only those who are immune are left alive. Furthermore, the dates help readers to follow the progress of the fatal flu as it makes its way across the country (Russell 65).

3.4. Morality vs. Technology

Apocalyptic fiction usually invokes the “dual life” or “dual landscape,” in order to borrow beneath surface illusions to reach the inevitability dark reality below. Similar to the duality that King felt between his success and how he was really feeling and between the modern great America being built upon ravished landscape of catastrophe (Winter 57). Therefore, the American nation described in his fiction knows defeat and sin; similar to the disillusionment the expatriates of Hemingway and Eliot’s generation felt after World War I, the idealism of a mere decade earlier is no more suffice (Magistrale, *Landscape* 32). Douglas Winter accurately summarizes the precise fears that King dramatizes in *The Stand* as follows:

We pursue happiness, believe in progress, materialism, and the infallibility of science, but we doubt our success, our power, ourselves. As we watch the evening news, if we reflect even momentarily upon our social fabric, we begin to question the validity of the engine of progress. Our position as a society is a precarious one – and principally because of our misguided belief in the divinity of civilization and technology. (Winter 58)

The uncertainty, insecurity, and fear make people think about the end of their own world. People know very well that this progress may also cause the end of their lives especially when it comes with the entrusts and fears of 1979s biological and chemical weapons. The novel’s characters share the same kinds of fears. For example, in a conversation with Stu Redman, Glen Bateman speaks about a scary dream he recently has. In the dream, he sees a man with red eyes and feels that the man is looking for him and that sooner or later he will find him and if this meet occurs it will be like death to him. Though Glen’s dream can be analyzed as a nightmare, Bateman believes that his dream reflects his inner fears:

If I were being psychoanalyzed, I suppose the shrink would say the dream expresses my unconscious fear of some leader or leaders who will start the whole thing going again. Maybe a fear of technology in general. Because I do believe that all the new societies which arise, at least in the Western world, will have technology as their cornerstone. It’s a pity, and it needn’t

be, but it w Maybe a fear of technology in general because I do believe that all the new societies which arise, at least in the Western world, will have technology as their cornerstone. (*The Stand* 247)

In the 20th century, Bateman's fears become more general as a result of government's obsession with power and the glamour of technology that causes the death of millions people.

King argues that though technology may become a fatal weapon but at the same time, it functions as a motive for many people to chase due to their ego and lust for power. After the occurrence of the apocalypse in *The Stand*, Stu remarks, "Everything is lying around waiting to be picked up again" (*The Stand* 376). Cars, weapons, shops, corpses, and building are everywhere and as Glen fears maybe "Someone will come along who remembers the game and teaches it to the rest again" (*The Stand* 375-376).

After the apocalypse, the first character to make use of what is left of technology is Flagg who is already introduced as the embodiment of evil and whom many characters believe is the main reason behind the spread of the flu. In terms of technology, Flagg is described as the "last magician of rational thought" (*The Stand* 528). He is a phantom-like in that he wanders in corridors of the haunted castle of the American landscape, symbolizing the inexplicable fear of the return of by gone powers (Winter 60). Flagg further takes special interest in the Trashcan Man for his brilliant skills with technology.

Donald Merwin Elbert, known as the Trashcan Man, was born in Powtanville, Indiana. His father was mentally unstable and killed his two older brothers and his sister. Mentally, like a father like a son, Trashcan Man suffered from mental problems. After his family death within a year or two, he "started lighting fires in people's trashcans and running away" (*The Stand* 205); therefore, he got the nickname "Trashcan Man". Physically, after the plague Trashcan Man gets the complete freedom to burn buildings. First, he sets fire to oil tanks in Powtanville and then he destroys the city of Gary, Indiana, due to which he suffers permanent injuries. Later on, he further suffers from radiation sickness for his work with a nuclear warhead which he plans to hand to Flagg.

After the apocalypse, both Flagg and Trashcan Man start searching for technological remains to fulfill their desires. Flagg tries to enhance the technological remains of the past technology to gain full control of the post-world while Trashcan Man finds in the post-world a satisfaction for his psychological disorder. Therefore, they gravitate towards each other, because both are fascinated with the potential destruction available in America's technological remains

Trashcan Man physical and mental scars are directed to suggest the same spiritual desolation that is at the heart of T.S. Eliot's critique of modern man in *The Waste Land*:

Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water. (I 20-24)

Tony Magistrale argues that with no love for someone or something other than themselves, Flagg and Trashcan Man are like the "broken images" of technology (Magistrale, *Landscape* 44-45).

At the end of the novel, Trashcan Man comes with a nuclear warhead as a gift to Flagg but the Hand of God interferes and "the righteous and unrighteous alike were consumed in that holy fire" (*The Stand* 774). In such way, Flagg's effort to make benefit of the Trashcan Man's skills in manipulating technology causes him to lose his aircraft at first and finally his entire kingdom.

Importantly, the much Flagg attracts towards technology the much Mother Abigail stays away from. The Free Zone people survive because its inhabitants refuse to recreate another version similar to the pre-plague world which causes the destruction of the world. In this way, King is theorizing that human survival will be possible only when the technological demons will no longer be there; leaving man to begin again from his primitive origin (Magistrale, *Landscape* 35-36).

Therefore, the best beginning is the one in which humans have erased all the past dangers and sources of evils. Towards the conclusion of *The Stand*, Stu Redman decides to go with Fannie towards Maine to start a new beginning and hopes that the Free Zone members will do the same. He further wonders whether people will ever learn from their mistakes and hops that the new generation will not repeat the same mistakes of the old generations "These toys are dangerous; the devil in men's brains guided the hands of God when they were made. Don't play with these toys, dear children, please, not ever. Not ever again" (*The Stand* 819).

After *The Stand*, King remains haunted by the possible occurring of an apocalyptic accident as when he states:

The thing that I come back to since *The Stand* is that all of those things are laying around waiting for somebody to pick them up you know, the gadgetry, and I get haunted by the idea of gadgetry . . . every day, when I wake up and turn on the news, I wait for someone to say that Paris was

obliterated last night . . . by a gadget. It's only the grace of God that had kept it from happening so far. (Winter n. pag.)

Therefore the sense of worry that accompanied him becomes a source of inspiration for many coming works like *The Mist* and for many other post-apocalyptic novels and films that follow the same possibility. For example, *Resident Evil* (2002) film traces the lives of characters and their struggles to survive after the spread of the T-Virus in a facility while working on a secret genetic research. Due to the spread of the virus, The Red Queen that controls the Hive kills everyone in the facility but unlikely instead of death they all transform into zombies.

Conclusions

The different apocalypses that are occurring around the world may affect directly or indirectly the social life of the place in which they occur. Many families are affected by the different apocalypses that may happen and this in turn affects the whole society. Therefore, at the end of *The Stand*, the character Stu Redman expresses his intentions to teach baby Peter and his child the right way of living for he knows that the hope for a better tomorrow lies in the coming generation. Therefore, good families are like the backbones for the societies and the destruction of families will lead to the destruction of the coming generations as a matter of consequences.

Moreover, the political atmosphere usually has a direct effect on post-apocalyptic fiction. In many novels, the reasons of the apocalypses are politically originated. Wars, terrorist attacks, and governments' mistakes have led many writers to write about the end of their countries. Therefore, throughout literature, generally and post-apocalyptic fiction specifically, writers can freely and directly explain their indignation towards governments and how their decisions are affecting their countries. For example, King has been inspired to write *The Stand* due to governmental mistake that he well applied in the novel.

From what have been concluded above, it becomes clear that post-apocalyptic genre functions as a critique of the present and a guide for the future. Since the Babylon exile, people have turned towards apocalyptic genre for comfort and consolation, through the Middle Ages as a guide toward revolution, and in the present to reflect people's fears and anxieties in the modern world. Further, the genre directs people's attentions towards man-made crises that are influencing whole nations by affecting negatively their social structures and resulting in new generations with distorted values and perceptions.

تبنى ادب مابعد المروع في الرواية الامريكية الحديثة: دراسة نقدية لرواية الموقف لستيفن كنج

الكلمات المفتاحية: التنبؤ، مابعد التنبؤ، الموقف لستيفن كنج

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الملخص

يبني المجتمع على إنسجام البشر مع بعضهم البعض ومع طبيعته المحيطة بهم، لذلك اي نوع من الاخفاق يقوم به افراد المجتمع لا يؤثر على المجتمع فحسب بل على العالم ايضاً. العديد من الكتاب والروائيين تبني هذا النوع من الاخفاق في كتاباتهم معتمدين على ادب مابعد التنبؤ والذي يتناول روائية قصص التي تبدأ مابعد نهاية الحياة على الارض لتناقش اثرها على طرق المعيشة البشرية. اعتمد هؤلاء الكتاب ايضاً على الطبيعة البشرية للبقاء لاستكشاف احتماليات النجاة في عالم مغاير للعالم الذي اعتادوا على العيش فيه.

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