



5. Towards a Humble Vision in the Anthropocene: Critique of Anthropocentrism in *I Am Legend*

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Abstract

Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer's introduction of the term 'Anthropocene' as a new geological epoch in 2000 marks the evolution of humankind into a geological force that threatens the well-being of the planet. Translated as the 'recent age of humankind,' Anthropocene seems to strengthen the anthropocentric legacy of the human since it underlines the destructive capacities of the *anthropos* who has gradually impaired the ecological balance and triggered environmental disasters. Nevertheless, it would be a short-sighted vision to consider the human as the sole denominator of all these calamities because, living in a 'posthuman space of becoming,' all human and nonhuman entities are bound by an intra-active set of relations. Thus, without ignoring the negative contribution of humankind in harming the ecological system, it is crucial to develop a more encompassing perspective that takes a critical note of the agential capacities of all human and nonhuman matter. Relatedly, cultural modes of representation, such as cinema and literature, are effective mediums to explore the imaginary projections of human-nonhuman continuum and to lay bare the need to dissolve the anthropocentric mindset. Within this perspective, the purpose of this study is to analyze the American movie, *I Am Legend* (2007), which is considered as a post-apocalyptic action thriller. Based on Richard Matheson's novel (1954) of the same title, *I Am Legend* is about the struggles of a virologist, Robert Neville, who is left defenseless amid a large group of people infected by a virus that has the agential power to turn them into vampiric mutants. Hence, Neville devotes his life to find an effective treatment to cure the disease, and he turns into a 'legend' by risking his own life to save humanity. Juxtaposing the representation of the *anthropos* in two different modes of cultural production i.e., the textual and the cinematic, that are separated by a fifty-three-year gap, it is intended to trace the way in which the Anthropocene functions as an alarm clock that verifies the need to re-evaluate the so-called 'unshakeable' status of humankind – especially considering how the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in drastic socio-economic and political changes all around the globe.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Post-plague, Cinematographic narration, Speculative fiction, Human-Nonhuman entanglement.

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of the
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ISSN 2011-3171

IL Sileno
Edizioni

Cinema, Disasters and the Anthropocene
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