

## Interpretations of Disaster: A Comparative Study on Disaster Film Cycles

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**Abstract :** In real life, the occurrence of disasters is always dreadful and heartbreaking, yet paradoxically, disaster film is a genre that has been popular at periodic intervals in motion picture history. This study attempts to compare the disaster film cycles of the 1970s, 1990s, and the early 21st century. Two research questions are addressed: First, how this genre has responded to the existing conditions of society in different periods in terms of the disaster proposition? Second, how this genre reflects a certain eternal substance of the human mind in light of its lasting appeal? Through cinematic textual analysis and literature review, this study finds that the emergence of disaster films in the 1970s reflected the turmoil in international relations and domestic politics situation in contemporary American society, and cinema screens showed such disaster stories as shipwrecks, air accidents, and skyscraper blazes due to human negligence. The 1990s saw the fervor of millennial apocalypse legends, and the awakening of environmental consciousness, which, together with the rapid advances in digital technology, once again gave rise to a frenzy of disaster films, with natural disasters and threats from aliens as the major themes of disasters. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the 911 Incident and natural disasters around the world have generated a consciousness of imminent crisis. Cinematic images simulated actual disasters, while aesthetic techniques focused on creating a kind of 'empathetic' experience in their exploration of the essence of the disaster experience. At the same time, post-apocalypse films that focus on post-disaster reconstruction have become an even more popular theme. Taking the approach of Jungian/post-Jungian film study, this study also reviews and interprets the commonly exhibited subliminal feelings in the disaster films of the three different periods. The imagination of disaster seems to serve as an underlying state of the human mind.

**Keywords :** disaster film, Jungian/post-Jungian film studies, stimulation, sublime

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