

Chapter 3

Planet of the Apes Series in the Context of Apocalyptic and Epidemic Movies

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ABSTRACT

Throughout human history, millions of people have lost their lives due to natural disasters and epidemics, and great civilizations and empires have collapsed after disasters and epidemics. Since epidemics affect the whole world, apocalypse and epidemic themes are popular in cinema. The fears and desires underlined in the apocalyptic and epidemic-themed movies are responded with movies that offer remedies for salvation from the apocalypse, such as the Planet of the Apes films. What is implied with apes, which are the subject of apocalyptic and epidemic-themed movies? What cultural codes do apes represent in apocalyptic and epidemic-themed movies? What do the changes in different versions of this myth mean in apocalyptic and epidemic-themed movies? The aim of the study is to answer these questions. Based on this idea, the Planet of the Apes series will be analyzed with the method of narrative analysis and the obtained data will be interpreted in the conclusion section.

INTRODUCTION

Cinema films can be seen as a mirror of the societies in which they were produced in a narrow context, and the universal conditions of the period in which they were produced in a wide context. There are many elements that make up the unique expression forms of cinema as an art. One of these elements is the expression of the emotions that individuals have for the present and the future. Within the scope of the study, it is assumed that Planet of the Apes films have most of the precaution and salvation propositions that the apocalyptic and epidemic-themed films offer to humanity. Although concepts such as natural

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disasters, human interventions, scientific developments etc. are the prominent features of these types of films, there may be differences in terms of expression styles periodically. Social conditions are among the main reasons for this kind of differences. While making the narrative analysis of the two separate series, the social conditions of the country in which they were produced and the world in general were taken into consideration. In the narrative structure in which allegorical narration is clearly felt, the constant shift of empathy between humans and apes has added dynamism to the story.

Within the scope of the study, Planet of the Apes films were analyzed within the framework of the themes of epidemic and apocalypse, and the changes of these methods in terms of two different series. The Planet of the Apes movies shot between 1968-1973 were analyzed as the first series, and the movies released between 2011-2017 were accepted as the second series. The movie, which was shot in 2001 and directed by Tim Burton, is seen to have a different structure in terms of both the sequels and the story. The second trilogy, in which the themes of epidemic and apocalypse come to the fore and the problems of the modern world as well as the topics in the previous series are covered, is determined as the focal point of the study. The difference between the focus of the films and the coding behind the messages is the reason why the narrative analysis is classified into two separate film groups.

In the study, the fears that cause the epidemic and apocalypse themes in movies are emphasized. The films, which are examined within the framework of epidemic and apocalypse themes, also have many side stories such as racial conflicts, pursuit of economic interests, different beliefs, colonial order and rebellion against, and the negativities that scientific studies may cause. Among the first five films examined within the scope of the study, there are subjects such as racism, minority issues and occupation. In the last trilogy, which started in 2011, in which the study focused, in addition to these issues, different and contemporary issues were also opened for discussion. One of the important elements evaluated in narrative analysis is the emergence and processing of the fears that the series focus on. It is seen that the first five films were created within the framework of the disaster theme, while the last trilogy was based on global epidemics. Among the effects of the human factor in the last trilogy, there are topics such as the individual's ambitions, the concepts of conscience and compassion, and the ignoring of the possibility of causing great disasters in order to achieve a goal.

The purpose of the narrative analysis is to emphasize how the fears of humanity from past to present have transformed, and at the same time to highlight the effects of social conditions on filmmaking practices. In this type of productions, the fears for the extinction of humanity are highlighted and how this extinction will take place in the film changes based on the period. It is known that the Covid-19 pandemic has created changes in many areas and in people's life practices since the end of 2019. Based on this situation, it is clear that it cannot be seen as a pure coincidence that the theme of the epidemic was brought to the fore within the scope of the last series that started in 2011. Predictions made on the lives of societies and on the progress of science allow making some inferences in cinema, as in different fields in art. It is predicted that the narrative analysis of the Planet of the Apes series, which started its adventure on the cinema screen in 1968 and continued with the last series that started shooting in 2011, made within the scope of this study will help to make inferences about the future course of such productions.

Epidemic Themed Movies in Cinema

The origins of epidemics are as old as the first human societies living in groups. Throughout human history, millions of people have lost their lives due to epidemics, and great civilizations and empires

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