

A Psychological Analysis of the Doomsday Literature, Film and Television Works

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Abstract: The film and television works of doomsday theme literature are very popular topics in recent years, but the analysis conducted by academics on them still has great limitations. This paper adopts the method of literature research and case analysis, and from the perspective of the spectators, puts forward the root of psychological demand for the concept of “doom”. First of all, starting with the concepts of “doomsday theory” and “doomsday complex”, it is concluded that the psychological connection between man and “doomsday” has not only a long history, but also has the commonality of different regional cultures. Furthermore, by putting forward the different psychological needs and case analysis of people’s active viewing of the doomsday works, and combining the philosophical roots of Kant and Heidegger’s doomsday theory, it is concluded that people’s attention to doomsday works is not only another form of human group’s concern about death, but also the need for people to rethink the value of life in a more macro historical environment. It also puts forward some ideas on the relationship between collective unconsciousness and the reality of social development in the study of literary and television works.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, doomsday theme, film and television, doomsday theory, philosophy

1. Introduction

In the history of the development of novels and films, the theme of doomsday is very popular as soon as it appears, and with the progress of science and technology and the development of the times, it becomes more and more vibrant. Just like the science fiction world outlook and political fantasy presented in many science fiction works, doomsday works, as a kind of fantasy works, are also a reasonable inference and analysis of the cultural development of the real world and the construction of media symbols, social structures and other aspects [1]. The enduring motive force of the doomsday theme is that it is closely connected with any era and the development of any kind of ideology and culture.

But the analysis conducted by the academics on them still has great limitations. The first is to focus on the construction of the work itself, while ignoring the psychological needs and feelings of people as the subject of appreciation. The second is to put too much attention on the content narrative and phenomenon, and lack of in-depth analysis of the relationship between this psychological state and philosophical issues such as “doomsday theory”.

In order to explore the mentality of the audiences to actively respond to the creation of such literary, film and television works and find the source of the audiences' pleasure, this paper has made philosophical thinking from the source of the "doomsday complex", explores what psychological needs of the audiences are met by the doomsday theme literary and artistic works, and tries to analyze the root cause of the subconscious people's concern about the doomsday.

In addition, a relevant assumption about the relationship between the collective subconscious and the future development of human society is also been put forward. This paper can provide an important reference for the study of the future development of human society and the study of the public psychological trend caused by doomsday.

2. Doomsday Feeling and Doomsday Argument

People have a natural fear of uncontrollable dangers. This psychological effect is called the "derivative of potential dangers" effect. The unknown time and form of the doomsday breed people's fear and fantasy of the doomsday, and then people tend to pay attention to such information and works, and then enter a cycle of thinking and verification.

Doomsday feeling originates from this kind of "unpredictable" psychological panic. The reason for that is the arrival of "doomsday" will inevitably be accompanied by a series of disasters, such as the collapse of social order, the collapse of the pursuit of life, the complexity of human relations, and even the extinction of human beings. With the invention of nuclear weapons, the tension of international relations, the deterioration of the natural environment, the discovery of hidden dangers in science and technology, the threat of economic crisis and a series of social and natural problems that cannot be ignored, people find that such "doom" seems to come at any time[2]. This fear of doom is as difficult to eliminate as people's fear of death, but it is easier to accept than facing the death of an individual alone. Therefore, the doom theme has become the outlet of many psychological factors, which is also one of the sources of the doom complex.

Eschatology is a philosophical theory that studies the end of history and its related aspects [2]. In the narrow sense, eschatology refers to the total destruction of the material and spiritual world, while in the broad sense, eschatology refers to the end of certain individual things, such as the disappearance of a certain spirit, culture, nation, and country. In modern society, people mainly explore doomsday in different directions from the three fields of science, religion and philosophy. Scientific eschatology focuses on the threat of the universe and the disappearance of life. Theological eschatology generally focuses on the religious significance of the end of human society and how to end it, while philosophical eschatology focuses on the end of human society, and may also focus on the philosophical significance of the end of nature [3].

When appreciating works on the theme of doomsday, people will not only want to continue living, but also pay attention to the degree of development of science and technology or social forms in human society during the doomsday period. For example, in the novel *Three Bodies*, to deal with the extraterrestrial crisis, cutting-edge technology has quickly broken through the restrictions, and to facilitate communication, the global language has also become a "terrestrial language" integrating English and Chinese. This shows that people put aside trivial competition and cooperate efficiently to cope with the crisis, and also provides the audience with the development picture of the doomsday era.

The written proof of the doomsday theory can be traced back to the prediction of the end of the world by the Maya civilization. In the 16th century, astrology was prevalent in Europe, the prediction of the "second great flood" has also been circulating. More than that, the prediction or worry about the coming of "doomsday" in many ancient cultural relics and many religions have also found [4].

Concerning the coming of the end is the inevitable result of the development of civilization's wisdom. A self-conscious "living" civilization will naturally associate with the "death" of civilization

[5]. The unpredictable and sudden fear of "death" will naturally lead to fear, which is also an important reason for the birth of many religions, and also an important reason why many civilizations have developed various unique cultures for "death".

Doomsday Theory has enriched the content of the doomsday theme from different angles while developing with the progress of the times.

3. The Audiences' Psychological Needs for Works of the Doomsday Theme

3.1. Worries about Doomsday

First of all, the most common psychological need is to worry about and solve doomsday. The audiences with this demand usually hope that the work can have a relatively satisfactory ending, and expects that they can see the methods and means to solve the doomsday crisis in the work, or as a guiding suggestion for ordinary people to deal with the crisis when it comes. For example, in the novel *Three Bodies*, they want to see the perfect closed-loop of the generation and solution to the crisis, so that they can gain a sense of security to overcome doomsday psychologically.

The group of "doomsday panics" will be constantly attracted by the doomsday background of different themes, because they are worried about any kind of doomsday and have the desire to survive.

For example, the development of science and technology has led to thinking about the relationship between man and machine, the science fiction film *AI*, as well as the apocalyptic films with the theme of nuclear war (such as *Hiroshima Nagasaki*), and even most of the natural disaster films (*Jaws* and 2012), and the emergence of the disease and plague disaster films (*Plague*) can be explained by the psychology of "potential danger derivation".

Whether it is the "doomsday theory" that is concerned about "ending in the world" or asking "what kind of power is driving the world to end", or "What can we do to prevent this kind of thing from happening?" or "How to turn the tide and leave the seeds of civilization after such a thing has happened", it is rooted in the reality of worrying about the doomsday and trying to actively solve the problem [6].

3.2. The Reconstruction of Social Identity

The second psychological need is to destroy and reconstruct the current social identity and status quo. This kind of psychology originates from people who are dissatisfied with real life. They hope to break the daily routine in an unexpected way, so that everyone's identity can undergo a "shuffle" and occupy a different position in the new social relationship. These audiences will generally pursue the contrast of the protagonist's identity, or the growth of the protagonist brought about by the doomsday crisis.

For example, in some literary and television works, the protagonist is only a minor role in the original society, but has become a hero to save the world because of a crisis. There are such plots in many Hollywood best-selling films. The reason is that the small role identity of the protagonist can give the audiences a strong sense of substitution, and the crisis has broken the interpersonal or working relationship that previously bound them, thus the social status and self-satisfaction can be promoted.

In addition to changing social status, this need also applies to other people. They hope to use the doomsday to get rid of the role given to them by the existing society. For example, people who are forced to work in jobs they don't like because of debt or other economic pressures, or they are bound by social status and can't freely control their lives. Because the shackles disappear after the doomsday crisis, it is no longer necessary to shape its social value for the role needed by society. This is because the sense of suffocation brought by the rapid pace of life in the current society has given birth to this mentality. They pursue simpler but happier social welfare and life rhythm [7].

The former represents the positive demand for social competition, and the latter represents the negative negation of social competition. In either case, it is an illusion on the condition of destroying the foundation of existing social relations. In essence, it is to take doomsday as a refuge for perfectionism and romanticism to meet the needs of individual fantasy.

3.3. Questions about Universal Values

The third psychological need stems from the question of universal values. From the beginning of mankind to the end, artist always regretted that the era is indifferent to art, scientists regretted that the development of science and technology is not rapid enough, government officials regretted that human society has not yet become a utopia. Everyone has different views on value, and their social outlook is also different. So the doomsday crisis has sounded an alarm for these people, which may change their original thinking mode and development direction.

This kind of audience is more complex. They don't necessarily want to see the ending of the story to the end of the crisis, but rather want to see the serious consequences caused by the excessive pursuit of something. Such works make the audiences realize that other more important things are being ignored by society. The audiences and the authors reach a resonance, which is the source of their satisfaction.

Then the audiences wants to see that society pays more attention to those things "destroyed by the doomsday", rather than indulging in wealth or pleasure. This has educational significance for them.

4. Interaction Between Doomsday Literature, Film and Television Works and Reality

It is difficult to prove whether the worry about the coming of doomsday has led to the doomsday works, or whether the birth of doomsday works has caused the audiences to worry about the survival of the future human society. However, it is undeniable that all the setting roots in the doomsday works can not be separated from reality, and the impact on audiences that goes beyond thinking.

In recent years, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the term "doomsday preppers" has moved from the edge into the mainstream cultural vision. The "doomsday preppers" are a group of people who are prepared in advance to survive in a sudden world disaster. They may store materials that can be stored for a long time or do well in escape training, or they may build expensive bunkers or shelters by themselves to be ready to live in the extreme environment caused by disasters [8]. This is not a negative view of the future. On the contrary, they are seriously preparing for the future [9]. After such a catastrophic event, the group's sustained attention to the world-class crisis will also guide the trend of literary and television themes to a certain extent.

The instability of the external environment also makes the creators of literature, film and television pay more attention to the fact that they should make plans for various unimaginable crises by injecting revolutionary thinking into the future and vision. Science fiction works are very imaginative and forward-looking, but in practice, learned from them the foresight methods have not been learned from them [10]. For example, in *Mad Max 4*, the crisis of doomsday wasteland caused by the lack of some kind of energy, scholars pay more attention to social class, ideology or violence aesthetics and other factors, while serious studies on the source of doomsday itself, response measures are limited.

In imaginative doomsday literature or movies, there may be hidden human collective unconscious wisdom, which can reveal the potential crisis that current society is not aware of. Collective fantasy may be a way for individuals to communicate with the collective unconsciously, so positive imagination is the potential hidden danger and potential power for people to actively explore human development [11]. We should attach importance to the serious discussion of fantasy proposed in literary films and television

5. The Concept of “Doom”

With the progress of society and the change of the focus, various doomsday topics emerge endlessly, such as alien organisms, natural disasters, nuclear weapons, biochemical viruses, resource crises, and so on, each doomsday theme is people’s “prophetic” thinking about the crisis.

But unlike the death of individuals, the end of civilization cannot be predicted by any individual. After the death of man as an individual, the spirit of the individual will sink into the collective unconsciousness and continue to develop, while man as a group is still developing civilization. When the end of civilization comes, it seems that for human civilization, the values built up by all societies will disappear, and human civilization has ushered in “death”. Therefore, it can be said that the focus on doomsday works is the focus on the death and outcome of human civilization.

The concern about the death of civilization is not only the fear of death, but also the concern for the development process of civilization when the end of civilization comes. In the face of the inevitable arrival of the end of the day, as a member of human civilization, every individual will have a sense of responsibility for the outcome of civilization. This is not only an obligation to future generations, but also an obligation to preserve and develop the achievements of human civilization [12]. How to make civilization continue to exist is the primary task, and what kind of attitude to continue to exist is the focus of attention. So people will care about the history created in the past and the future direction, which is related to the heritage of human civilization [13].

So people reflect on the real life through the doomsday works, and better create the value of life satisfaction, which is also the fun of appreciating the doomsday works.

6. Conclusion

This paper draws several conclusions from the psychology of the audiences enjoying the film and television works of doomsday literature.

Firstly, Human’s exploration of death and doom not only has a long history, but also has the commonality of breaking the geographical separation and time span.

Secondly, The eschatology literature, film and television works imply the collective unconscious communication relationship with human beings, which has special reference, guidance and warning significance for the future development of human civilization.

Thirdly, the fundamental concern of people about the concept of “doom”, which is not only another form of human group’s concern about death, but also the need of people to protect and create the value of civilization in a macro-historical environment.

However, this paper lacks professional research and the social investigation of the “doomsday” crisis and the analysis of the existing potential crisis. Whether people’s collective subconscious plays a potential role in promoting social development and guiding people to develop in a predictable direction needs more documents or surveys to sort out and infer. Future research can start from the above two directions.

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