



The Epidemic Discourse in Japanese Movie Entitled “I Am a Hero”

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Abstract

Using the idea of discourse as the main method of data analysis, this essay seeks to examine how epidemic discourse is presented in the Japanese movie “I Am a Hero”. According to the findings, there is 1) epidemic discourse opposing the construction of a dystopian and eco-utopian future, 2) epidemic discourse presenting human affects, and 3) epidemic discourse opposing the collection of heroic images in contemporary society. Populism does not play a special function in contemporary tales or cultural productions that are solely intended to provide enjoyment. The way epidemic discourse is portrayed, however, hides society ideology by giving diseases meaning through language.

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Introduction

Epidemics are significant phenomena that have a negative impact on people's bodily and mental health when it comes to the dilemma facing humanity. Because of this, people of different eras have varied perspectives on the epidemic. In contrast to how the plague was understood in the 19th century, current technology has made it possible to see pathogens, which has led people to believe that germs are to blame for illness. These things consume our lives in order to survive (Niti Pawakapa, 2020). As a result, when considering the

epidemic from a historical perspective, it becomes clear that plagues, such as the cholera, tuberculosis, and plague, have killed millions of people throughout human history. Therefore, the outbreak is not brand-new. The new thing is germs.

Three population shifts were discussed by Omran Abdel (1971) in relation to epidemiologic transitions: Emergence of new cases of recurring diseases, including cross-epidemics between humans and animals, as well as epidemics of this kind that have become a worldwide issue in the context of globalization, such as SARS, Ebola, bird



flu, or numerous strains of influenza in the era of epidemics and conditions of food shortages. However, the epidemic phenomena has also developed into a significant source of raw material utilized by people to weave stories about dreadful moments in history when such viruses threatened human civilization.

Movies in particular are effective modern narratives to reach the audience, and according to filmmaker Kamjohn Louiyapong (2013), movies don't just serve aesthetic purposes, but it also helps to put together social ideology and meaning formation. Landsberg (2004) has made a case for the influence of historical media on cultural memory. The dissemination of cultural memory through media technology significantly contributes to the growth of the memory community. Furthermore, mass culture is linked to both cultural memory and relay because it uses technology to make these memories available to everyone, regardless of their skin colour, ethnicity, or biology.

The outbreak is a crisis when there is a condition of crisis dysfunction according to Komatra Chuengsatiansup's (2020) presentation of the epidemic study with the world of narratives in the context of medical anthropology. One of the things that spreads quickly is the idea that "viral" and "narrative" refer to viral outbreaks of viruses that are described through pre-written narratives that show us how to control epidemiological disease. However, just like all tales, they have concealed something inside a pre-made story in terms of both class inequality.

A tale of epidemics and hatred of mercy, such as the plague outbreak in Europe despite millions of casualties, is one side of the social memory narrative presented through society's response to the devastating epidemic, according to economic structures and global political powers. The other side is a tale of epidemics and tolerance of suffering. As opposed to stories of criticism or hostility which have become more prevalent throughout time, there are numerous memoirs that are written about love, generosity, and humanitarian assistance.

The movie "I am a Hero" (2015), which was adapted from a Japanese manga comic, is one of the screenplays that the authors will choose for this study because it focuses on depicting the disease. Shinsuke Sato is the director, The movie also took home the Grand Audience Award and the Best Special Effects Award at the 48th Sitge, the world festival of fantasy and horror movies. It describes an outbreak of the ZQN virus that started in dogs and spread to people through dog bites. The pathogen then started to evolve to the point that it could infect humans by bites, forcing mankind to flee to Mt. Fuji, a highland region.

The protagonist of the story is portrayed in the script as Hideo, a cartoonist. He exercised bravery to defend a high school student who had been bitten by a gang of infected individuals and transformed into a hybrid zombie. It is feasible to represent the extreme cruelty of the plague crisis in addition to displaying the extreme cruelty of the plague crisis. The movie interweaves initiatives to coexist between people and germs and inspires and gives hope that regular people can rise to the level of protected heroes. The meaning of the government-created epidemic—that the infected are a group of physically abnormal people who should be exterminated—in the screenplay results from a segregation between the dominant discourses.

The protagonist of the story's sub-discourse attempts to paint a picture of the traces of coexistence between diseases and humans in the meantime. It also searches for approaches to treat and stop such infections. The movie is notable for its dystopian presentation of scenes that show a dreadful version of the world and people trying to flee it. As a result, this study may serve as a model for other story studies that focus on the epidemic discourse of members of other ethnic groups.

1) Epidemic discourse with the construction of dystopian and eco-utopian worlds

Epidemic can be regarded as a phenomenon that has had a significant negative impact on world society. A dystopian society or world's introduction of human society is of particular note. According to



Suradech Chotiudompant (2015), the term "dystopia" is equivalent with the opposing meaning of "utopia," creating the utopia that conceals the negative implications of doubting the ideal world, a world in a bad way, both post-falling worlds of humanity. Claeys (2010) covered genre literature as well. Dystopia that disapproves of perfection and doesn't think that humans can progress to become flawless. As a result, the portrayal of society in such genre fiction is the antithesis of utopian literature. It is a society with no future and many undesirable aspects. In other words, the primary objective of this type of fiction is to assist the reader understand that, in the absence of the ability to construct an ideal society, they should accept this reality and work to better society as a whole, without necessarily adhering to idealistic principles.

1.1) Epidemic discourse and the construction of dystopian world

Scenes from Japan's urban society are used in the movie to show the construction of a dystopian society. Urbanization not only serves as a hub for human habitation but also as a symbol of the well-being of various socioeconomic classes. Cities are also described negatively in dystopian literature as being complicated, dangerous, chaotic, unorganized, and secretive places for class ideas. The alteration of the spatial landscape from a city that communicates progress in creating the starkly evident image of a dystopian society in the aftermath of an epidemic, is the center of commerce and the economy, providing employment, industrial sites, and destroying urban areas while people attempt to survive plague outbreaks by hiding on high ground, damage to buildings, houses, and other structures and crime problems result. Food and other necessities of life, such as medications and self-defense firearms, are in short supply.

However, the movie's depiction of food shortages also suggests that Japan's economy is experiencing a crisis. In his discussion of the issues that have arisen in Japan, Balmain (2008) claims that the country's difficulties, which range from personal to societal issues including stress issues

brought on by a competitive educational system, are increasingly likely to become chronic issues in the country's crises. One of the main sources of issues in Japanese society is the entrance of individual ideals from the West, which influences the issue of alienation with people around them into modernity. Additionally, the script's use of imagery of sick people continuously acting in the same way to critique capitalism in Japanese urban life. The rush in an urban society where people were active in everything to live a better lifestyle and be able to survive in unusual circumstances was conveyed by company employees who displayed their behavior by hanging out in the morning when you were a human by walking to open the doors of department stores and buy discounted clothing.

1.2) Epidemic discourse and the construction of eco-utopian world

Eco-utopia Overpopulation has destroyed the ecosystem. When the environment is unbalanced, society develops. This leads to natural disasters. People's perceptions of nature and the environment undergo a paradigm shift as a result of this negative situation. When viewed as an integral part of the ecosystem, the harmony of nature also promotes human pleasure (Pepper, 2005). Through eco-utopian thought, humanity can survive, the highest mountain in Japan, Mt. Fuji Mountain, is the safest highland since the virus cannot develop and spread there. It is regarded as a sacred mountain by the Japanese. It is now among the most significant and recognizable tourist destinations in Japan.

During the protagonist's trek through a lush forest, Mt. Fuji is described as the last place of mankind to maintain the security and protection of the epidemic problem. The characters can drink and eat from a clear river for the rest of their lives. Because of this, nature in the movie aids and safeguards humanity. This is seen from a traditional Japanese viewpoint on nature, where people are seen as a part of it. People love, respect, and dread nature (Saito, 1983), yet modern Japan has absorbed western science and technology.

People start to distance themselves from nature as a result because they can only understand



its value through its advantages (Hayashi, 2002). The movie then suggests that in order to rebuild this destroyed world, humans with an eco-consciousness are turning to environmental and natural resource preservation.

2. Epidemic discourse with presentation of human affects

The fact that the company has been working on the prevention of such diseases in addition to combat efforts and the search for ways to prevent such diseases is one thing that helps everyone comprehend the common meaning when it comes to the phenomena of epidemics. The movie also intends to highlight the necessity for cooperation between sterile and infected people and efforts to cohabit with germs, highlighting the fact that in the absence of modern medicine, we still need to be able to accomplish this. To attempt and learn to coexist with diseases and individuals who are infected with them is a crucial step in surviving an epidemic.

The coexistence of sterile and infected individuals in the movie medium is thus a "aesthetic of coexistence," with such occurrences frequently taking place when the medical discourse has not yet been able to adequately address or deal with the pandemic. The phenomenon has also given rise to a concept known as "affect" among the sterile, which raises issues regarding the distinction between the body and the mind or between external and internal circumstances. These issues are crucial to understand what constitutes a person's identity as well as the nuanced interactions that people have with their environment (Chairat Polmuk, 2019).

Emotions are not something that occurs inside the mind and manifests itself externally, nor are they the result of outside stimulation to the inside; rather, they are the result of psychic and social situations that collide, causing emotions to circulate in a web of relationships between things, the body, and socio-cultural operations. This issue's analysis of the screenplay stresses the substance that happens when a sterile person is subjected to the important phenomena of the epidemic as a result. In areas like social hardship, disease experience,

fear, love, loneliness, caring, and moral experience, this trait leads to the character's experiences, emotions, and sentiments.

2.1 Epidemic discourse with negative presentation of human affects

The movie demonstrates how a virus may convert people into zombies when it spreads violently and widely, and how these zombies end up being the main reasons why human society eventually collapses. When faced with a crisis, people suffer social distress, which includes unpleasant emotions like anxiety, phobia, and loneliness when they must fend for themselves and avoid spreading disease, on a social level.

When a cartoonist hero's coworker contracts an infection after being bitten by a zombie, the episode dramatically displays the public phenomena of horror and anxiety. "Who is the diseased person who exhibits no symptoms?", This spreads paranoia across society. In addition, his wife abruptly transforms into a zombie with strange behavior and a deformed body that exudes abhorrent ugliness. Horror places a strong emphasis on feelings that eloquently depict the protagonist's hopeless sorrow. The movie also concentrates on the disgusting feelings that create a barrier between "us" and "them," masking the unexpectedly empathetic identification that fellow humans feel in such circumstances through depictions of zombies being rendered non-human and degraded.

The character's fearful images keep popping up as the infection gets worse. Like the main character, who seeks to flee the zombies without bothering the group of kids, all humans try to survive without giving much thought to aid others around them. Women in labor and elderly persons with authority in society are more likely to survive than the average person, people with disabilities who can't protect themselves are being mistreated by zombies. The epidemic phenomena has evolved into a tool for revealing the primal impulses of people to survive catastrophes without assistance or consideration for others. Negative writing Pubs are a place where a group of individuals who are



affected by abrupt situations, like the plague, can socialize.

2.2 Epidemic discourse with positive presentation of human affects

The high school girl character, Hiromi, in the movie presents a resolution to the manipulation or coexistence with such virtues. She was bitten by a baby zombie, which caused her body to change into a hybrid, or a zombie with just one eye. It is not vicious and doesn't hurt people, but it possesses the same power as zombies. Additionally, she prevents Hideo, the protagonist of the narrative, from getting bitten when they travel to Mt. Fuji. First, as soon as Hideo finds out that Hiromi has been bitten, he plans to kill her to prevent her from changing and from spreading the disease to other people. Instead, he decided to assist her after all. As a representation of human optimism that perceived the issue as having a resolution, Hiromi was put together to imply construction. Specifically, it suggests a strategy for attempting to live between viruses and people.

The visual representation of assistance amongst people also appears in the Hiromi and Hideo episodes. Hiromi is shot in the forehead by a gang of male commanders with a crossbow after the hero fails to conceal her zombie status by covering her eyes with a white cloth. Yabu, a former nurse, helps Hiromi by giving her a second chance at life. This shows that different people can survive even if the epidemic-related crises causes conflict. On the other hand, these circumstances have been made. The awareness of peaceful cohabitation is increased by the visual representation of people cooperating to overcome obstacles and discover solutions for one another.

The phenomena is also an indictment of governmental management's failure to take action against serious issues like the virus. As a result, the infection quickly spreads and gets worse, because humans assisted in the virus' survival. The movie also generates a collective memory that will serve as a horrific reminder of the dangers the virus poses. It depicts a period in which individuals who have not adjusted have grown so frightened about

fast changing circumstances that they lack the means to deal with the crisis. At the same time, it is a condemnation of humans as the source of such dangers like the widespread pandemic phenomena that has claimed so many lives.

3) Epidemic discourse and the construction of heroic images in the modern world

There are numerous circumstances in which the term "hero" is defined and interpreted, including some including supernatural traits (Campbell, 1973). Sukanya Sujachaya (1999) also lists two characteristics of heroes: one is a cultural hero who establishes the foundation of some cultures for the community, such as teaching fire, the how to be rice, weave, dance, and play music; and the other is a well-known and remembered person in history. It is clear when someone is claimed to be a hero in a variety of contexts, particularly when he comes to battle.

The names of these heroes, who frequently have a history filled of marvels that led them to become semi-deities, are not found in history but are frequently found in myth, legendary tales, or special ceremonies. However, this is in the context of a contemporary world where information technology and scientific advancement have revolutionized society. The way modern heroes are portrayed differs greatly from how historical heroes are portrayed. The movie creates a new kind of hero, one who doesn't possess any special skills or abilities and is simply a person who wants to protect the people and things he cares about.

3.1 Epidemic discourse and male heroic imagery construction

As seen by the character Hideo, Japanese society is patriarchal and frequently prioritizes men. The protagonist of the tale is a man who, before to the QZN virus breakout, was just an unknown cartoonist. He also lacked leadership qualities, a weak character, and self-assurance in his ability to live well at work and with his family. He was not well-liked by readers due to his meager income and the comics he created. He had to argue with his wife about his job and income during a time of



economic recession and the outbreak of the flu. His wife contracted the illness and transformed into a zombie, becoming one herself.

The story's hero, however, loses everything at this point. With a long rifle that he uses to practice shooting flying targets, he has discovered a method to survive. The movie emphasizes Hideo's frailty and frailty, both of which are terrifying emotions. After losing a loved one, he continues to experience pain until he meets Hiromi, a high school student. Especially towards the conclusion of a story where Hideo valiantly battles a horde of zombies, she has become a motivating force for Hideo to develop the confidence and fortitude to stand up and defend what he loves and values.

The employment of firearms in the movie then serves as a coded symbolic message connecting the penis and the character's grasp of power. He transitioned from a weak cartoonist to a strong hero in the world to combat the disease, as well as a struggle with Japan's economic depression, through the expert use of guns to shoot zombies.

3.2 Epidemic discourse and female heroic imagery construction

In the Japanese societal structure, men often rule over women, however in the movie, it seems that the ensemble presents a picture of a female character as a hero whose bravery is: Yabu, a former nurse who was harmed by a zombie invasion and virus epidemic that left a sick patient in the hospital, passed away. He was forced to reside in a migrant camp on the structure's rooftop. She won't have to do it unless she needs to utilize her skills to care for people in refugee camps. In order to go to Mount Fuji, a sterile location, she also joins the battle against the story's protagonist and Hiromi, who contracts the virus after being bitten by a baby zombie.

Therefore, showing strong women in the modern world deconstructs the stereotype of

traditional Japanese women subject to patriarchal rule. Instead, strong women are shown fighting with men against zombies and the virus pandemic. As contemporary narratives, movies thus produce heroic images that are appropriate for social circumstances. It is a hero who is just an ordinary person and can be one in this way, that is, by having a brave heart, making a sacrifice, and being prepared to defend the beloved people. Heroes in this way are the heroes that modern society needs, the heroes who constantly resolve the crisis faced by people in modern times.

Conclusion

The movie as contemporary media not only amuses audiences, but they also contributes to that entertainment. Additionally, it has proven crucial in explaining the problem brought on by the virus that destroyed civilization as we know it. A solution is offered by an eco-utopian world where nature plays a role in protecting human care, which leads to the development of eco-consciousness through the movie medium. Both the epidemic discourse and the composition of dystopian and eco-utopian worlds present a glimpse into the world in a way that is bad from the perils of epidemic. In the depiction of human feeling and epidemic discourse, it has been put up as a societal idea for those going through an immediate crisis due to the epidemic. Negative consequences like anxiety, panic, and solitude are a result of this. The movie provides a means via which people might attempt to assist one another and discover a solution for typical challenges. The movie also makes the argument that a new sort of heroism has emerged in the wake of the virus epidemic that is not just reserved for strong and dominant males. Regular individuals or women can also be heroes if they have a strong heart and the ability to give their all. This is also consistent with the manner of life of modern-day Japanese people, who struggle with capitalism.

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