

Apocalyptic Scenarios: The Role and Impact of Ecological Horror Films in the Context of Sustainability

Kıyamet Senaryoları: Sürdürülebilirlik Bağlamında Ekolojik Korku Filmlerinin Rolü ve Etkisi

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Abstract

Cinema works that deal with apocalyptic scenarios offer viewers the opportunity to question the human-nature relationship and draw attention to environmental problems in the context of sustainability. Ecological horror films aim to encourage viewers to develop environmental awareness and take action by revealing the dramatic consequences of humanity's irresponsible behavior towards nature and environmental destruction. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of ecological horror films in promoting environmental awareness and addressing sustainability issues and to explore the potential of these films to raise social awareness. In the study, the thematic elements of the genre were examined using a descriptive content analysis method through films such as "Them", "Happening", "Gaia" and "Honeydew". By depicting nature as a "force of revenge", the analyzed films remind viewers of human responsibilities towards nature and emphasize the importance of the concept of sustainability. In addition, it has been determined that these works represent nature as an entity seeking revenge and embody the negative consequences of human beings' irresponsible behavior towards the environment. The environmental awareness-raising potential of eco-horror films can be further strengthened by adopting sustainable practices in filmmaking processes. Such productions also have the potential to be used as educational materials in schools, universities and environmental organizations to understand environmental problems better.

Keywords:

ecological cinema,
horror cinema,
environmental
awareness,
sustainability

Öz

Kıyamet senaryolarını konu edinen sinema yapıtları, izleyicilere insan-doğa ilişkisini sorgulama imkânı sunarken, sürdürülebilirlik bağlamında çevresel sorunlara dikkat çekmektedir. Ekolojik korku filmleri, insanlığın doğaya yönelik sorumsuz davranışlarının ve çevresel tahribatın yol açtığı dramatik sonuçları gözler önüne sererek, izleyicileri çevresel farkındalık geliştirme ve harekete geçme yönünde teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, ekolojik korku filmlerinin çevresel bilinç ve sürdürülebilirlik konularındaki rolünü irdelemek ve bu filmlerin toplumsal farkındalık oluşturma potansiyelini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada, "Them", "Happening", "Gaia" ve "Honeydew" gibi filmler üzerinden türün tematik unsurları betimsel içerik analizi yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Analiz edilen filmler, doğayı bir "intikam gücü" olarak tasvir ederek izleyicilere insanın doğaya karşı sorumluluklarını hatırlatmakta ve sürdürülebilirlik kavramının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu yapıtların, doğayı intikam peşinde koşan bir varlık olarak temsil ettiği ve insanın çevreye yönelik sorumsuz davranışlarının olumsuz sonuçlar doğurduğunu somutlaştırdığı tespit edilmiştir. Ekolojik korku filmlerinin çevresel bilinç artırma potansiyeli, film yapım süreçlerinde sürdürülebilir uygulamaların benimsenmesiyle daha da güçlendirilebilir. Bu tür yapımlar, ayrıca, çevre sorunlarının daha iyi anlaşılması amacıyla okullarda, üniversitelerde ve çevre örgütlerinde eğitim materyali olarak kullanılma potansiyeline sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

ekolojik sinema, korku
sineması, çevre bilinci,
sürdürülebilirlik

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Introduction

Apocalyptic scenarios have played a significant role in the history of cinema, offering audiences not only an engaging and thrilling experience but also a reflection of broader societal concerns. Ecological horror films, in particular, serve a dual purpose: they evoke fear while simultaneously provoking critical thought by addressing contemporary environmental threats. Themes such as climate change, natural disasters, and ecosystem collapse are commonly explored in these films, presenting potential future scenarios through a compelling visual narrative.

The concept of sustainability was first articulated in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in its seminal report *Our Common Future*. Sustainability is defined as meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It advocates for the implementation of measures to mitigate the environmental impacts of resource consumption and underscores the importance of a forward-looking, proactive approach (Öksüz Karademir, 2023).

The emergence of environmentalism in the latter half of 20th century led to a heightened awareness and concern for environmental issues. This movement found expression in the activities of environmental protection organizations, the policies of green political parties, and even in international political discourse. Environmental issues have increasingly gained prominence within national policy agendas, international agreements, and academic literature. Alongside movements such as deep ecology and eco-socialism, the film industry, particularly in the United States and Europe, began to embrace environmental consciousness. Hollywood, in particular, emerged as a trailblazer in the production of environmentally themed cinema. In its early phases, disaster films centered on the theme of "destruction" gained widespread popularity, often depicting catastrophic events such as earthquakes, floods, nuclear attacks, and viral outbreaks. However, the film industry's contributions to fostering environmental awareness remain underexplored within academic research (Yaslıkaya, 2015).

The film and audiovisual industries have increasingly prioritized environmental issues, with topics such as climate change becoming central to media narratives. This shift has contributed to the development of a genre known as eco-cinema, fostering the international and distribution of environmentally focused films. These works, often referred to as "ecological cinema," are not limited to addressing specific environmental issues but are characterized by their environmentally conscious practices throughout production and distribution processes. Additionally, these films frequently emphasize economic and political dimensions, reflecting the broader societal implications of ecological concerns. This transformation has been described as a "green turn" in the film industry, where environmental concerns such as climate change and other ecological issues are increasingly integrated into cinematic storytelling.

Ecological horror films, while incorporating elements of fear, delve into profound themes such as human nature, environmental responsibility, and human-animal relationships. These films aim to convey urgent messages to audiences, employing fear as a universal medium to enhance societal awareness. By tapping into subconscious fears, they possess the potential to significantly increase public consciousness about pressing environmental challenges.

This study examines the impact of apocalyptic scenarios and ecological horror films within the framework of sustainability, analyzing their roles in shaping social perceptions and fostering environmental awareness. It provides an in-depth exploration of how cinematic language and narrative techniques influence audiences' approaches to environmental issues and evaluates the place of such films in contemporary society. Understanding how ecological horror films function as not only sources of fear but also as tools for raising awareness and prompting action is crucial for advancing environmental consciousness.

Theoretical Framework

Sustainability in Cinema

Sustainability, often associated with the irreversible exploitation of finite resources, encompasses strategies aimed at minimizing the adverse effects of resource consumption. It is a multidimensional concept that integrates economic, social, and ecological dimensions. The term was first defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 in its seminal report, *Our Common Future*. This report highlighted the critical importance of sustainability for both development and the future. At its core, sustainability focuses on the responsible utilization of resources to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Achieving this balance necessitates a forward-looking approach to resource management. Broadly, sustainability extends beyond ecological considerations, incorporating economic and social dimensions into its framework (Öksüz Karademir, 2023).

The implementation of sustainable production practices across all stages of the filmmaking process-encompassing production offices, studios, outdoor locations, and facilities-is essential for minimizing environmental impact. This responsibility lies not only with major companies and studios but also with all individuals involved in the industry. Measures such as the use of reusable products, effective food waste management and the promotion of recycling initiatives can be adopted by both large and small production teams. Practical steps, including the digital distribution of materials, reducing vehicle idling during shoots, minimizing generator usage, and monitoring electricity consumption, are pivotal in reducing a production's ecological footprint. Additional practices, such as promoting the reuse of wastewater for landscaping, reusing equipment and costumes, and raising awareness among crew members through informational materials, can contribute significantly to sustainable production. Efficient utilization of natural daylight in post-production offices is another valuable consideration. Moreover, fostering a culture of sustainability requires regular planning to encourage resource conservation while recognizing that the most critical resource in the filmmaking process is people. By prioritizing intergenerational equity, stability, and the internalization of sustainable practices, a collaborative and positive work environment can be cultivated, thereby enhancing productivity and morale within the workplace (Eko Film Platformu, 2023).

Films consist of seven stages: concept and story development, financing, pre-production, shooting, post-production, marketing and distribution. The running time of feature films is usually 100-120 minutes and takes 45-60 days to shoot. However, film

production creates a carbon footprint and can contribute to climate change it isn't easy to reduce the environmental impact of film production because the tools and equipment used in feature film production contribute to increased CO2 emissions. The Day After Tomorrow is a commercially successful disaster film that shows how climate change can harm the world. The film is a good example of sustainable and environmentally friendly filmmaking, conveying an ecological message. Director Roland Emmerich explores ways of preventing filmmaking from contributing to global warming. It would be ironic to make a film about climate change and environmental problems without promoting solutions to these issues. Therefore, filmmakers need to work with more elastic resources to reduce their environmental footprint. The film industry is addressing environmental issues by implementing green production practices. To reduce the five key areas with the highest carbon footprint, it is necessary to reduce emissions and pay attention to energy and water use (Meilani, 2021).

Eco-Cinema

Eco-cinema is a genre of film criticism that examines ecological themes, the universal impact of films, and issues related to the use of natural resources and sustainability. It emerged as a response to ecological crises, incorporating ecocritical perspectives into discussions on cinema. Eco-cinema highlights the significance of nature and the environment, concepts frequently overlooked within the human-society-media nexus. Although eco-cinema has been a critical aspect of film theory and practice since the 1950s, its theoretical framework, as proposed by Jhan Hochman in his 1998 book *Green Cultural Studies*, remains underdeveloped. Ongoing debates persist regarding how audiovisual media should represent and engage with the natural world. While these debates raise significant points, they can occasionally be overstated or unwarranted (Orta, 2024).

Eco-cinema is a film genre that addresses environmental issues and seeks to raise awareness about them. It encompasses a broad range of topics, including the global climate crisis, the irresponsible use of natural resources, damage to ecosystems and living organisms, environmental pollution, and sustainable living. The concept of Eco-cinema includes films that explore the relationship between humans and nature, the protection of ecosystems, and potential solutions to environmental challenges. These films aim to highlight critical issues, including the conservation of natural resources, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, sustainability, and environmental consciousness. Beyond their artistic value, ecocinema also serves an educational function by raising awareness of environmental concerns, providing knowledge, and fostering a deeper understanding of the world. It strives to influence policymakers and contribute to the development and implementation of environmental policies. Ultimately, ecocinema plays a significant role in promoting a sustainable future by enhancing individuals' understanding of their connection to nature and the environment (Çan, 2024).

Although the concept of ecocinema, which refers to films analyzed from an ecological perspective, remains relatively recent, it has garnered increasing attention due to the growing body of research on the subject. The term "ecocinema" was first introduced by Roger C. Anderson in his 1975 study *Ecocinema: A Plan for Nature Preserving*. Since then, the field of ecocinema has evolved, with scholars examining films that may or may

not be classified as ecocinema based on their ecological themes. This emerging field highlights the role of films in promoting environmental awareness and addressing ecological issues (Chu, 2016).

Ecocinema emphasizes the environmental perspective in cinema and encompasses analyses of environmentally relevant films dating back to the 1970s. These studies are approached from various disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, feminism, socioeconomics, science, and activism. Research frameworks address issues such as space and landscape, ecological analyses of both mainstream and independent fiction films, posthuman representations in cinema, and the transformative potential of film. Ecocinema studies aim to raise awareness about environmental concerns and portray ecological issues through cinematic narratives. These studies serve as a crucial tool for understanding human relationships with the environment and the significance of nature (Lavin & Kaplan, 2017).

Eco-cinema is a concept that emerged from ecocriticism in literature and has developed its own distinct definition within the field of cinema. According to Bianco, eco-cinema is an interpretive framework that enables the reinterpretation of cinematic history in light of evolving perceptions of the world. It emphasizes awareness of the destruction and social inequalities resulting from industrialization and harmful environmental practices. Eco-cinema places the relationship between humans, non-humans, and the environment at the center of film narratives. Adopting a world-centered approach rather than an anthropocentric one, it presents a worldview that rejects the moral superiority of humans and promotes a "bioegalitarian" perspective. Bianco also argues that eco-cinema should incorporate environmentally friendly practices in the filmmaking process, particularly in the production of films that address environmentally sensitive topics. In general, eco-cinema is both ethical and political, focusing on environmental issues and advocating for a balanced relationship between humanity and nature (Temel, 2021).

The examination of films from an ecological perspective yields various interpretations and viewpoints. To conduct environmental criticism from a cinematic perspective, it is essential to analyze films that are clearly centered on ecological themes. The absence of the female figure in certain films is often analyzed in a manner similar to the examination of ecological themes in feminist criticism. Developing an ecological perspective requires not only identifying explicit ecological messages within films but also the examining ecological elements in a manner that aligns with 21st-century critical thinking. This methodology broadens ecological interest to include categories such as social class, poverty, inequality, infectious diseases, war, and injustice (Jacobson, 2017).

Ecological cinema encompasses various sub-genres, one of which is ecological horror cinema. The core elements of horror cinema include themes, plot structures, setting, and characters such as the monster, hero, and victim (Yurdigül & Yurdigül, 2022). Ecological horror cinema, however, combines themes of environmental issues, the relationship between humans and nature, and ecological awareness with the conventions of horror and suspense. This fusion encourages the audience to both worry and reflect on these issues. Ecological horror films serve as a platform to expose the terrifying aspects of environmental disasters, the conflicts between humanity and nature, and the

detrimental effects of human actions on the environment. Simultaneously, they aim to raise environmental consciousness among viewers and prompt them to take action. Ecological horror cinema, which serves two main purposes-artistic expression and social impact-seeks to foster a deeper understanding and empathy toward ecological issues.

Ecological Horror Cinema

Before analyzing what ecological horror cinema is, we think it is necessary to examine the concept of fear.

Fear

Fear is an emotion that arises from our thoughts, and our response to fear is triggered by the perceived "danger" within those thoughts. Different individuals may react differently to the same situation, depending on their unique thought patterns. However, many people fail to recognize that their fears are a product of their own thoughts, which prevents them from finding practical solutions. This lack of awareness often leads to helplessness and the escalation of fear to crisis levels. Such crises encourage avoidance behaviors, preventing individuals from thoroughly enjoying life. In contrast, individuals who examine their thoughts and confront their fears in fear-inducing situations not only develop essential coping skills but also gain self-confidence and a sense of competence. Fear is not a direct reaction to our environment, but rather a reaction to our perceptions of that environment. To overcome fear, we must recognize that we are in control and critically assess the validity of our fearful thoughts. By doing so, we can confront the situations we fear, overcome our anxieties, and cultivate new skills, increased self-confidence, and a more resilient personality (Gençöz, 1998).

Fear is a specific emotional response to an immediate threat or danger. It focuses on the present and differs from anxiety, which is more concerned with future situations. For example, if a person encounters a wild animal in the forest or experiences an explosion, they will probably feel fear. Fear is a reaction to the concrete danger that exists at that moment (Şahin, 2019).

Fear is considered one of the most natural and common emotions experienced by humans. It triggers the activation of the nervous system and mobilizes energy within the body. As a result, the heartbeat accelerates, the pupils dilate, and overall bodily activity slows down. Simultaneously, the endocrine glands release adrenaline, causing blood vessels to constrict and redirect blood flow away from the skin. This physiological response leads to changes in the nervous system and blood pressure, typically occurring in response to a perceived threat. The most common threats involve fears related to death or the potential jeopardization of life ideals. Fear is an experience that induces discomfort, detaches individuals from life, and can contribute to psychosomatic disorders. Additionally, fear can provoke other physical reflexes such as trembling, dry mouth, weight loss, and confusion. Despite our advanced cognitive abilities, fear can stimulate the instinct to flee and have a detrimental impact on one's mental health (Dodhy, 2017).

In the last few years, the relationship between ecocriticism and the horror genre has been increasing academically. It has been emphasised that this genre has a deep connection with ecological thinking. Nature's revenge narratives make ongoing contributions to the persistent fears of environmental destruction (Bronson, 2018).

Planetary transformation and cultural concerns are central themes in eco-horror films. These films position ecological threats as dangers to human life and nature, highlighting the damaging effects of human activities on the environment. By dramatizing issues such as environmental pollution, resource depletion, and the exploitation of natural resources, eco-horror cinema prompts audiences to confront potential ecological crises and raises awareness about environmental issues. In such films, supernatural beings and events often serve to challenge the efforts of those advocating for human rights and environmental protection. The primary objective of eco-horror is to prompt the audience to recognize the consequences of human actions on nature and encourage a reevaluation of our customary way of life. This awareness can evolve into an ecological consciousness movement that addresses critical issues such as the exploitation of natural resources, consumer culture, and the destructive effects of industrialization (Wallin and Sandlin, 2022).

Academic studies on eco-horror have primarily focused on film, recognizing the significant role which cinema plays in addressing environmental issues. The financial power of the film industry and its broad audience reach suggest that cinema has the potential to engage with environmental concerns effectively. Previous research has highlighted the capacity of films to influence viewers' attitudes, emotions, and understanding of ecological matters. While challenges remain in developing a consistent metric to assess the impact of environmentally themed films, there is a consensus that films serve as a powerful medium for communicating with large audiences who may not be reached by other forms of environmental messaging (Bulfin, 2017).

Eco-horror is a concept situated at the intersection of media and artifacts, often used to describe works of literature and film. The term refers to narratives in which human characters are attacked by natural forces, or in which plants and other elements of nature are altered or angered by human actions. Over the past six years, the term "eco-horror" has gained popularity in mainstream media to describe a recurring cycle of films that address environmental concerns. Notable examples include *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006), followed by eco-horror films such as *The Last Winter* (Fessenden, 2006), *The Happening* (Shyamalan, 2008), and *Take Shelter* (Nichols, 2011). The term has also been discussed in academic discourse, with film scholars like John Kenneth Muir and Catherine Simpson contributing to the conversation. One of the most comprehensive studies on eco-fear and cultural fears is Bernice M. Murphy's 2013 book *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Fear and Terror in the Backwoods Wilderness*. These studies emphasize the influence of perceptions of environmental apocalypse and ecological disaster on both readers and viewers (Rust and Soles, 2014).

Bernice M. Murphy argues that American eco-horror is particularly represented in films such as *The Last Winter* (Fessenden, 2006) and *The Happening* (Shyamalan, 2008), where human-nature relations are disrupted, and nature is portrayed as a deliberate antagonist targeting humans. In these films, nature is not depicted merely as an extreme weather event, but as an "invisible monster" that triggers mass suicides in retaliation for human environmental destruction. In Larry Fessenden's film, the Alaskan wilderness responds to a group of scientists and oil company employees working on fossil fuel reduction. One by one, the group members experience a series of events that lead to their self-destruction. The film presents eerie images of ghostly caribou and unsettling deaths,

attributing the cause to a poisonous gas released by the melting of permafrost. This narrative underscores humanity's responsibility toward nature, suggesting that nature is intentional and acts with consciousness (Fitzpatrick, 2023).

Purpose and Method

This paper examines the role of ecological horror films in fostering environmental awareness and promoting sustainability. These films, which address contemporary environmental challenges, aim to evoke fear in audiences, thereby encouraging them to take action and raise their environmental consciousness. The study is centered around three primary objectives:

To analyze the role of apocalyptic scenarios and ecological horror films in enhancing environmental awareness.

To assess the potential of films in fostering a more profound social understanding of the relationship between humans and nature.

To examine how storytelling techniques employed in these films influence the audience's perception of environmental issues and responsibilities.

Through these objectives, the paper aims to shed light on the social impact of ecological horror films and their potential to promote environmental awareness and sustainability.

In this study, the descriptive analysis method was employed to examine the thematic elements of ecological horror films and their messages regarding environmental issues. Several steps were followed in the descriptive analysis process. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, exploring academic studies and key films related to ecological horror cinema, sustainability, and apocalyptic scenarios. Next, ecological horror films such as *Them*, *The Happening*, *Gaia*, and *Honeydew* were analyzed in terms of their environmental themes, characters' relationships with nature, and messages related to sustainability. Thematic analysis was then carried out, evaluating the horror elements, social messages, and sustainability-related themes within the films under relevant headings. Finally, the data obtained were interpreted to assess the impact of ecological horror films on audiences and their potential to raise environmental awareness. This method provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the artistic and social impacts of ecological horror cinema.

Findings

Ecological horror films, which are a sub-branch of cinema, mostly center on subjects punished by nature because of the damage caused by humans to the environment. The impact of apocalyptic scenarios and ecological horror films on sustainability, their role in shaping social perception and environmental consciousness will be examined through sample films.

Them (Douglas, 1954) is a 1954 ecological horror film that explores the dangers posed by mutated giant ants. The film begins with the abnormal growth and mutation of ants exposed to radiation from nuclear tests. Set in the New Mexico desert, the plot follows a group of people who become victims of the ants' attacks. A police officer and a scientist team up to stop the assaults and investigate the origin of these terrifying

creatures. The film depicts the panic and chaos that ensue when ants target human settlements. Reflecting the widespread fear of nuclear technology at the time, *Them* emphasizes humanity's helplessness in the face of such a threat. It also raises concerns about human vulnerability to nature and the consequences of scientific experimentation. *Them* is regarded as an iconic ecological horror film, known for its striking visuals and intense sequences.

Ecological horror cinema is a film genre that explores the effects of human activities on the natural world and the consequences of environmental issues. The 1954 film *Them* addresses the relationship between humans and nature, as well as the concept of sustainability. While the film generates fear based on the damage humans have inflicted on the natural environment, it also prompts viewers to reflect on environmental problems. The film examines humanity's responsibilities toward the natural world and the principles of sustainability. In *Them*, human activities are depicted as causing harm to the environment, with an emphasis on the potential irreversibility of this damage. The disruption of the natural balance by human impact leads to a natural reaction, which forms the basis of the fear depicted in the film.

The film highlights humanity's responsibility toward nature and the necessity of collective action to protect it. By depicting human helplessness in the face of giant ants, *Them* underscores the importance of sustainability as both an individual and social responsibility. The themes of ecological horror cinema, such as nature's revenge, the consequences of scientific intervention, and human vulnerability in the face of environmental threats, are effectively explored. Ultimately, films like *Them* have the potential to raise significant awareness about the importance of protecting nature and striving for a sustainable future.



Figure-1: An image related to the movie *Them*

Source: (<https://www.kaijubattle.net/kaiju-movie-database/them-1954>).

The 2008 film *The Happening*, directed by M. Night Shyamalan, falls within the genre of ecological horror. The film addresses various environmental concerns, including the impact of human activities on agriculture and forests, and the transformation of plant life through genetic modification research. In the film, rebellious plants release a toxic substance into the atmosphere that drives people to suicide. The

main characters, teacher Elliot Moore (Mark Wahlberg) and his wife Alma (Zooey Deschanel), flee to Pennsylvania in an attempt to escape the area where the suicides are occurring. The toxic substance contaminates the atmosphere, affecting the human mind and increasing suicidal tendencies. As Elliot and Alma struggle to survive in this chaotic environment, they begin to reflect on the potential for rapid societal disintegration and the evolving relationship between humans and nature. *The Happening* explores the consequences of environmental degradation and the imbalance between humanity and nature, aiming to evoke fear and uncertainty in the viewer. As such, the film can be classified both as a horror film and an ecological cautionary tale.

The Happening explores the theme of sustainability by depicting nature's response to human activities. The film highlights the detrimental effects of human activities on the environment, suggesting that humanity may ultimately face the consequences of ecological degradation. The concept of nature resorting to the unconscious suicide of humans serves as an allegory, provoking reflection on how nature might react if sustainability is neglected. The film moves beyond an anthropocentric perspective, examining the balance of ecosystems and the intricate relationship between humans and nature. *The Happening* highlights the importance of awareness and respect for nature in promoting a sustainable lifestyle. Rather than restoring the disrupted balance of nature, individuals are forced to confront the consequences of their actions. The film serves as a reminder to protect and preserve the natural world while encouraging a reassessment of humanity's connection to nature. Ultimately, it emphasizes the urgent need to safeguard ecosystems.



Figure-2: An image related to the movie Happening

Source: (<https://www.amazon.de/The-Happening/dp/B001IKYRK0>).

Devereux Milburn's film centers on the strange, frightening, and terrifying events that unfold in the lives of a young couple. Samuel, an aspiring actor, and Rylie, a PhD candidate studying botany, are researching a type of fungus called *sordico*, which is secreted by wheat. However, when their GPS device malfunctions, the couple loses their way and becomes disoriented. Deciding to spend the night in the field, they set up a tent to sleep in. As night falls, they are suddenly startled by a loud noise and are warned by the landowner to leave. Consequently, the couple is forced to wander through the woods

throughout the night. They encounter an elderly woman and her son living in a house, and decide to stay with them for a while. However, the events that follow mark the beginning of a series of increasingly complex and terrifying occurrences.

Honeydew is notable for bringing ecological concerns to the forefront by addressing the complex dynamics of the natural world and the relationship between humans and the environment. The film highlights the impact of modern agricultural practices on human life, confronting the audience with the harsh realities of nature through a story set in a rural area. It depicts the conflict between humans and nature, exploring the fears that arise from this conflict and showing that nature is not only a source of sustenance but also a powerful and frightening force. The film also addresses issues such as the sustainability of agriculture, food security, and the preservation of ecosystems. These themes trigger the characters' basic survival instincts in an isolated environment, creating a pervasive atmosphere of fear. In addition to raising ecological concerns, *Honeydew* offers a thought-provoking portrayal of the complex relationship between humanity and nature.

Honeydew presents an intriguing example of the ecological horror genre when viewed in the context of sustainability. The film also questions the complex balance between human relationships and nature. Its themes center on the effects of agriculture on nature, human nature and environmental consequences.



Figure-3: An image related to the movie Honeydew

Source: (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/11/movies/honeydew-review.html>).

Inspired by Greek mythology and told in an imaginative and compelling narrative, the film follows Gabi's extraordinary experiences. Gabi, a forest ranger living in a remote and secluded forest, is attempting to understand the strange events occurring in the forest. She consults with her supervisor, Winston, to inquire about the status of the cameras installed in the forest and embarks on an expedition with a drone. However, when the drone malfunctions, Gabi finds herself stranded alone in the forest. As she searches for the drone, she becomes trapped in a man-made snare and breaks her ankle. Unable to reach her supervisor for help, Gabi ventures deeper into the forest in search of shelter. Meanwhile, her supervisor decides to abandon her to pursue the other cameras. Gabi's journey unfolds with elements of fantasy and horror, adding complexity and tension to her survival story.

Gaia stands out as a film that explores the relationship between humanity and nature, focusing on the consequences of deteriorating ecosystems. The film emphasizes the interdependence of nature and humanity, advocating for the recognition of nature as a living entity. It illustrates nature's response to human actions, a key aspect of ecological fear. Additionally, the film addresses pressing issues such as climate change, habitat loss, and biodiversity. By highlighting the threats posed by human intervention in the natural environment, *Gaia* engages the viewer through visual and auditory elements, evoking a constant sense of anxiety and unease. The film encourages reflection on the complex relationship between nature and humanity, offering a contemporary interpretation of ecological fear.

Gaia is a thought-provoking ecological horror film that challenges the human-nature relationship within the context of sustainability. The film explores the concept of nature as a distinct entity and its response to human intervention. By emphasizing the power of nature and its reaction to human actions, the film addresses critical sustainability issues, including the exploitation of natural resources, climate change, and the decline of biodiversity. The notion of nature seeking revenge symbolizes the consequences of human neglect and environmental degradation. *Gaia* serves as a reminder of the importance of protecting nature and adopting sustainable practices. It highlights humanity's responsibility to coexist harmoniously with the natural world, encouraging reflection on this relationship. In this way, the film combines elements of horror with a deeper exploration of sustainability.

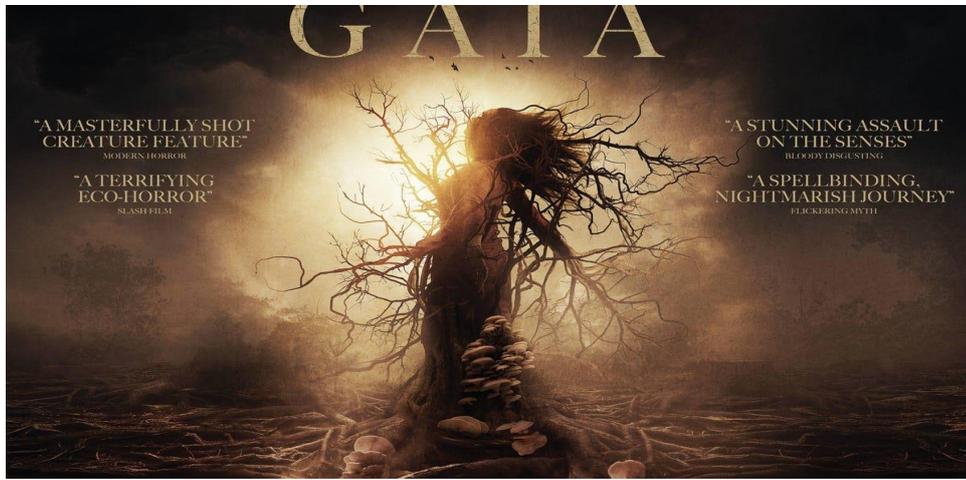


Figure-4: An image related to the Gaia Movie

Source: (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/gaia/>).

Unearth is a thought-provoking ecological horror film that revolves around two families caught in the conflict over the exploitation of natural resources. The story delves into the deep-rooted human-nature relationship and the clash of interests when a mining company targets the land where one of the families resides. This not only threatens their living space but also leads to significant environmental degradation. The film explores both personal conflicts and broader environmental issues, weaving the theme of revenge into the struggle. Through its horror elements, *Unearth* raises awareness of the consequences of irresponsible human behavior and the resulting ecological imbalance.

Additionally, it explores themes of sustainability and environmental justice, encouraging viewers to become more ecologically conscious and engaged in protecting the environment.

The film stands out as a thought-provoking production, blending elements of ecological horror with a strong emphasis on environmental justice and sustainability. It conveys the crucial message that nature must be protected, urging individuals to reassess their relationship with the natural world. Overall, *Unearth* encourages viewers to reflect on the consequences of their actions and highlights the urgent need to respect and coexist with nature.



Figure-5: An image related to the movie *Unearth*

Source: (<https://www.heavenofhorror.com/reviews/unearth-fracking-horror/>).

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

Ecological horror films play a significant role in the context of sustainability, opportunity to examine the complex relationship between nature and humanity critically. These films expose the irresponsibility of human actions toward the environment and depict the terrifying consequences of environmental degradation. At the same time, they encourage viewers to develop greater awareness of these issues. The themes explored through apocalyptic scenarios not only generate fear and suspense but also provoke reflection on humanity's connection with nature, ultimately fostering a more proactive attitude toward sustainability.

Ecological horror films serve as a powerful reminder of humanity's responsibility toward nature by portraying nature as a vengeful force. Through the use of apocalyptic scenarios, these films highlight the severity of environmental issues and the urgent need for action. Consequently, they have a significant impact not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a means of raising social awareness. In the future, the role and influence of ecological horror cinema in promoting sustainability will likely become even more pronounced, both in the art world and in public discourse. In this regard, the impact of these films on audiences and the awareness they generate are expected to make a substantial contribution to environmental consciousness.

Research has shown that ecological horror films can have a significant impact on raising environmental awareness and promoting sustainability. These films serve to remind viewers of their responsibilities towards the environment by portraying nature as

a vengeful force. Productions such as *Them* and *Happening*, in particular, dramatize the relationship between humans and nature, revealing the direct consequences of this interaction and encouraging individuals to take action. The use of strong visual and auditory narratives, as well as horror elements, increases the impact of these films' messages on viewers. However, the impact of these films in raising individual and social awareness is largely shaped by marketing strategies and the way audiences perceive the messages. The audience's level of environmental awareness, cultural context, and personal values are critical factors that determine the impact of these films. However, consuming these productions solely for entertainment purposes carries the risk of overshadowing the environmental messages they carry and desensitizing viewers to these messages. Therefore, it is essential that ecological horror cinema not only raises individual awareness but also develops strategies that can have an impact on environmental policies and practices.

The potential of eco-horror films to raise environmental awareness can be maximized by adopting sustainable practices in the filmmaking process. This ensures that the films set an environmentally friendly example in terms of both content and production. These films can also be used as educational tools in schools, universities and environmental organizations to provide a better understanding of environmental issues. Adapting the environmental themes of these films to local contexts increases their impact and resonance with audiences. It is essential to amplify the messages of ecological horror films beyond the films themselves by supporting them through social media, documentary projects and other media outlets. Additionally, academic research on ecological horror cinema and collaborations with environmental policies can further encourage environmental change and action.

Etik Beyanı: Yazarlar çalışmanın, etik kurul izni gerektirmeyen çalışmalar arasında yer aldığını beyan eder. Aksi bir durumda tüm sorumluluk çalışmanın yazarlarına aittir.

Yazar Katkıları: Yazarların katkı oranı %50-%50'dir.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı: Yazarlar, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedir.

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