
Why Do We Crave Calamity?

By ERICH FROMM

The Times asked Erich Fromm, the psychoanalyst and author, to comment on the rash of "disaster" films. Mr. Fromm's response follows.

THE new wave of destructive films is catering to the ever more rapidly increasing passion to destroy (necrophilia) which has manifested itself in acts of irrational individual and group violence, as well as in certain types of modern art and literature. (Marinetti, in his "Futurist Manifesto" of 1909 was the first to give poetic expression to the beauty of destructiveness.)

Necrophilia is the outcome of the increase of a certain socially conditioned and shared pathology of cybernetic man. He becomes ever more alienated from himself and others, suffers from a chronic low grade depression, feels powerless and caught; he has no faith in or vision of a meaningful life; he has created a lifeless world of total technicalization and bureaucratization in which man be-

comes an appendage to the machine; he has become a self-acting commodity, monocerebral and with little feeling. He is afraid of rapid social change and of the danger of an atomic holocaust.

Most important, perhaps, he suffers from boredom, thinly disguised by obsessional consumption which is losing some of its attraction; he senses that in spite of the many things he has done, life, joy and genuine interest in life elude him. As I stated in "The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness," "If man cannot create anything or make a dent in anything or anybody, if he cannot break out of the prison of his total narcissism, he can escape the unbearable sense of powerlessness and nothingness only by affirming himself in the act of destruction of the life that he is unable to create."

Destruction is the creative, self-transcending act of the hopeless and crippled, the revenge of un-lived life upon itself.
