

The cultural product essay

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Introduction

The movie industry can be characterized by so many trends. A movie, for example can be classified based on its gender. A movie, based on this type of classification could be romantic, comedy, horror, mystery, action, drama. There are also movies that are hybrid. Meaning, they can be a combination of two, three, or even more genres. As the movie industry evolved, we could see many movies of this type emerge. This paper will focus more on horror movies or films, particularly on the two films, *The Call of Cthulhu* and *28 Days Later*. The former, according to the Internet Movie Database (2013), can be classified under the Mystery, Fantasy and Horror genre, while the latter, according to the same source, can be classified under the Science Fiction, Thriller, and Horror genre. What is common among these two is their falling under the horror genre. At a glance or by simply reviewing the synopsis of these two films' plot, one could already get the idea that these two are horror films. Though we cannot neglect the fact that these two films have a different mixture of genres to begin with, they could still be compared because they are still technically horror films. The main objective of this paper is to successfully compare these two horror films, focusing on whether they violate the norms of their genres, their performances, social issues such as norms, social expectation for gender, race, class and other categories and a small wrap-up of our findings based on their performance and the norms that they violated, if any.

A Brief Comparison

First and foremost, these two are horror films. The one thing I have noticed when I was comparing the two movies was the fact that *28 Days Later* appeals more to the later generation of film enthusiasts. It has this modern twist and ambiance, though it presents with a typical and at some point, distinctive and unimaginative plot focused on zombie apocalypse. In general however, it can be said that the writers and directors made a good point in twisting some excessively uncreative parts of the story. Their decision of making the protagonist appear in an already handicapped situation wherein he had just awoken from an altered mental status state (a Coma), was good. Rarely do we see this type of twist in horror movies. Usually, we see the protagonist appearing immediately in the first 10 minutes of the film. That norm was broken in this film and I will give them good credit for that.

The film *The Call of Cthulhu* on the other hand has this cultural and historical ambiance. Nevertheless, we can still say that even the latest generations of film-lovers would not hesitate to watch this horror film, considering it has stunning reviews in online movie databases. But for the sake of comparison, this movie seems to appeal more to the older generations. The chronological cliché was a nice idea and adults who love to think and would love to spend the time figuring what has happened and what is currently happening in the movie would be delightfully stimulated. Adults' attention span in watching movies, especially those with moderately long introductory portions, is usually longer than teenagers'. In terms of twists and other unusual things that we encounter in horror movies, I would say that the writers and director of the movie did not do a good job and that is why we give our blessing to *28*

Days Later. Most, if not all, that we can see in this movie have already appeared for at least two, or even more times in other horror stories. If there is one thing that we could call unique in The Call of Cthulhu, that would be its plot. Using a classical and at the same time, historical plot in horror movies is actually slightly unique at best.

Do they violate the norms of their genres?

Horror films are typically made to scare, frighten, or startle readers by inducing emotions and feelings of horror and terror, or other emotions that could lead to these two. After viewing the two movies for at least two times, taking note of the different features and characteristics of their plots, storyline, and other parameters, I can say that they have not violated any norms of the genre where they are classified under. All of the parameters they used, starting from the plot, introductory scenes, down to the ending were so far frequently-used clichés in the horror genre. At some point, sticking to the norms of a certain genre can be considered a good idea because doing so makes it easier for the people to perceive what type of movie they are watching and what it could be all about. But on the other side of the equation, it limits the ability and the desire of the entire production team to think outside the box, which could later on be a threat to the quality of horror movies that will be produced in the future. Uniqueness is one of the major qualities that film-enthusiasts long for after all.

How do they perform a Social Norm or Social Expectation for Gender, Race, Class, or Other Social Categories?

Firstly, these two are horror movies and as mentioned before, they usually do not have any other major objective besides inducing emotions of fear,

horror and terror. Rarely do we see horror films that portray socially relevant scenes and on a grander scale, an entire plot. Historical and cultural horror movies are usually the ones with highest affinity with social relevance. In the case of *The Call of Cthulhu*, they feature, in the plot, an old document that contains an allegedly important set of information about a mythical or a fictional cosmic creature called the Cthulhu. Doing so makes this a historically relevant movie, yes. But even after a series of rechecking, I cannot seem to find any socially-relevant instances in the movie. In horror movies like these, it actually appears like the aim is to downgrade man's perception of life and are promoting the idea of the possibility of death and eventually, societal destruction.

Context of the Work: Performance, Violations of Norms, Wrap Up

The Call of Cthulhu and *28 Days Later* are two highly rated horror movies in the 21st century and as a person who has already watched these two films for several times, I can say that they do deserve their high ratings, even after several years have already passed since their premiere. Performance-wise, the production teams of both movies did a generally good job. The movies were flawless; they were able to tie almost all of the major loose ends properly; and most importantly, they met the most important objectives of a horror movie—to frighten or terrorize the emotions of the audience. Norms can and actually should be violated up to a certain extent. Producing a movie is a work of art after all and so if producers would keep on preventing themselves from straying away from the norms, people would get fed up and the whole industry may collapse.

References

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