TRAUMA NARRATIVES IN THE IMPOSSIBLE

INTRODUCTION
Disaster films are processes in sense-making and, ultimately, healing (Tomashov, 2014). Trauma narratives accelerate the healing process for both orator and listener, and are instrumental in making sense of events that defy meaning and logic (Cohen, Mamarina, & Deblinger, 2006). Disaster movies as a trauma narrative are cultural artifacts that first transmit discomfort followed by sensemaking attributes that ultimately inspire healing.

METHODS

- Rhetorical Analysis
  - Coding scheme:
    - Coherence: The ability to maintain a sense of continuity (Omer and Alon 1994).
    - Finding Meaning: An active search for meaning to the events, on the side of the survivor. (Crossley 2000; Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Larson 1998).
    - Self-Evaluation: Different aspects of self-evaluation related to the traumatic event have been shown to correlate to efficacy of coping: degree of control (Foa, Zinbarg, and Deblinger 1992), feeling guilty or responsible, and being active or passive.
- Constructed argument was discerned from the coding scheme.

FACTS ABOUT THE 2004 INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI

The earthquake registered at a magnitude of 9.1.

- The tsunami killed an estimated 227,898 people and left 130,000 injured.
- Over $10 billion in damage was recorded in the Indian Ocean region.
- Waves were recorded being as high as 190 feet, twice the size of a 13-story building.
- The earthquake that triggered the 2004 tsunami had the energy of 13,000 atomic bombs.

ABSTRACT

Disaster can beget healing and healing can beget change, and the contemporary inclination to dismantle borders and fictionalize the trauma of a community for a transnational audience is a realm of both narrative and trauma worth exploring. The Impossible is an effective trauma narrative, potentially satisfying the three narrative criteria: coherence, finding meaning, and self-evaluation. Wirt large, the Impossible’s linear narrative finds meaning in the mystery of destructive forces, the beauty and resilience of the human spirit, and the evaluation that, in sharing a singular yet no less universal story, a community can heal.

RESULTS

Coherence: Linear narrative, high fidelity

Finding Meaning: Disaster movies as sensemaking, relics of the disaster event, and artifacts as tangible testimony of the crisis

Self-Evaluation: Disaster movies as sensemaking, relics of the disaster event, and artifacts as tangible testimony of the crisis

RQ 1

The Impossible is an effective trauma narrative. The film is a coherent attempt to synthesize disparate crisis responses into a coalesced whole with the potential to heal a broken world.

RQ 2

The Impossible endeavors to heal. As a trauma narrative, the film conceptualizes a disaster that claimed 227,000 lives as part of a larger mystery we may never understand, though it nonetheless makes sense of the devastation as an opportunity to explore the resilience of the human spirit, the interconnectedness and benevolence of mankind, and a profound love for neighbor and family that transcends borders. There is meaning in tragedy, and in exploring that meaning in filmic form, a community can confront their trauma, make sense of their cognitions, and spiritually heal.

REFERENCES


DESTRUCTIVE, OCEAN-WIDE TSUNAMIS OCCUR APPROXIMATELY ONCE EVERY 15 YEARS

FUTURE RESEARCH

The Impossible is grounded in realism. Future research would be well-considered to evaluate more commercial, and veritably less realistic, disaster films. Moreover, as borders dissipate and film becomes less defined by arbitrary boundaries, scholars should interrogate the meaning behind disaster films not in the English language (e.g. Norway’s The Wave and The Quake). Several other theories, such as cultivation theory, would also be appropriate to apply, particularly with regard to pre-disaster preparation and post-disaster response and their relationship with fictionalized disasters. Included below is a preview of disaster films and their respective box office revenue for reference.