ERASURE DYNAMICS IN WALL-E (2008): NAVIGATING VOID AND ABSENCE IN THE POSTMODERN PARADIGM

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Abstract

The present research delves into the intricate dynamics of erasure of boundaries in the movie WALL-E (2008) by Stanton and Reardon. The movie is set about 700 years from the present, depicting a time where life is abandoned and aliens come to refine the earth. The present study is qualitative in its nature and has adopted the model of Fredric Jameson (1984), in which he criticizes the tendency toward cultural homogenization and the dominance of capitalism, shaping the cultural landscape. This study explores the transformation of earth and human life under the influence of global capitalism and consumerism. The findings of the study reveal, through various examples from the film that human actions are not ideal in the present time. Moreover, it sheds light on the intentional acts of erasure that challenge traditional structures. The study suggests that there is a need to set certain boundaries in the consumption of materials; otherwise, the unchecked postmodern lifestyle may lead to the complete destruction of the earth.

Key Words: Boundaries, Erasure, Map and Remapping, Traditions, Postmodernism

Introduction

This study is the analysis of an American-animated movie WALL-E (2008) about a determined robot, also named as WALL-E. It is an animated science fiction romance film produced by Pixar Animation Studios for Walt Disney Pictures. The film has been directed by Andrew Stanton and written by (Stanton and Reardon) .

WALL-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class) finds a new purpose in life when he meets a sleek search robot named EVE after hundreds of lonely years of performing what he was designed for. When EVE realizes that WALL-E has unintentionally discovered the solution to the planet's future, she makes a mad dash back to space to inform the humans—who have been anxiously awaiting a world that is safe to go home—of her discovery. In the meantime, WALL-E pursues EVE throughout the galaxy and launches one of the most action-packed and creative comedic adventures to ever hit the big screen. The movie presents the theme of reformation and refining of the earth as it is filthy and dusty. The movie presents the post 700 years from the present time where a robot is working on garbage collection. The movie depicts the careless actions of the humans and their result.

In the movie, it has been exposed that the Earth has become a garbage-filled wasteland as a result of unbridled materialism and carelessness, which is highlighted in this cautionary tale.

The movie emphasizes how unsustainable the relationship between the economics of production, consumption, and waste management is, which leads to the dilemma of human consumerism. To enable the independent spread of the subject, the film removes human presence. The megacorporation is revealed to have evacuated humanity, and the one trash compactor left by Buyn Large is depicted to be progressing through a classic breakdown in recycling. The movie advances the theory that humans are space castaways who have emaciated into tubby, inert blobs who are thought to have lost their appetites for vicarious consumption and that the Earth is swamped with waste. WALL-E's daily routine consists of compacting waste and gathering fascinating items, which is a recycling technique used to mend the consumer-production connection breach. However, the entrance of an unmanned probe carrying an alien Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator (EVE) disrupts this cycle of compacting and picking objects. The goal of EVE is to search the Earth—which is represented as a field of trash—for any potential signs of plant life. The EVE mission seems to suggest that the natural ecosystem has been severely damaged due to the massive amount of littering. The movie seems to blame people for creating such an environment in the story. Due to lethargy and microgravity, the Axiom passengers are perceived as helpless corpulence. Microgravity and idleness are side effects of automation, where all human activity is replaced by machines, leaving man with little to do. The movie explores consumerism, the art of production and consumption, how they relate to waste management, and how that relationship breaks down.

Fredric Jameson (1984) presented the theory related to the Erasure of Boundaries which discusses the eco, human and the consumer aspect of life. The concept of "erasure of boundaries" is crucial to postmodern thought since it eliminates the divisions between good and evil or positive and negative. It displays commonplace items as being on par with expensive ones. Fredric Jameson—a well-known postmodern theorist—describes the erasing of borders as a key aspect of postmodernism. The traditional distinctions between profane and chaste, crude and refined, beautiful and ugly, etc. have diminished as a result of the erasing of boundaries. The methods that are often seen as impractical, offensive, and objectionable are now considered as legitimate, respectable, and acceptable (Jameson). The present research has been conducted to examine the existence of the elements which caused the "erasure of boundaries" in the movie WALL E.

Rationale of the Study

The study helps to understand the issues of earth and the living aspects which could be refined and rearranged according to the forthcoming circumstances. With an implication of Jameson's theoretical concepts, the study will explore the aspects of human actions and its effects and how the director of the movie has intended to give an important message to humans.

Jameson's (1984) theory focuses on the alienated city, which is a place where people are primarily unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves. The most obvious examples are grids like those in Jersey City, where none of the traditional markers (monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives) apply. The practical reconquest of a sense of place and the creation or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble that can be stored in memory and that the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories are therefore necessary for alienation in the traditional city. Lynch's personal work is constrained by his purposeful focus on the issues with

the city form as a whole; nevertheless, when extrapolated outside onto some of the bigger national and international locations has to touch on here, it becomes incredibly evocative. It shouldn't be assumed too quickly that his model, which undoubtedly presents important representational concerns as such, is in any way susceptible to the usual post structuralism critiques of the "ideology of representation" or mimesis. In that earlier sense, the cognitive map is not quite mimetic; in fact, the theoretical problems it raises allow us to reevaluate the study of representation on a higher, much more complicated level. Therefore, the study aims to explore the existing situation of the world depicted in the movie WALL E. The core elements of the boundaries between good and bad as the theory on the erasure of boundaries by Jameson (1984) presents have disappeared. The study has been conducted to examine the situation of earth as depicted in the movie and presents its analysis to explore the core meanings of boundaries and limits which are intended to be explored in the movie.

Literature Review

Bina et al. (2017) emphasize on the need of extensive research on how literary and filmic representations can provide foresights and warning signals related to the policies of science to uncover how nature and human have become central to and inseparable from the technological innovations. Therefore, a significant amount of research highlights the issue of ecological crisis or eco-catastrophe that has been represented in the Wall E (Putri et al., 2023; Pradsmadji & Imanjaya, 2023; Puspitasari, 2021; Caraway & Caraway, 2020; Anderson, 2012). Chaudhary and Zahid (2021) in their research on Hamid's fiction also demonstrate the negative effects of technology and media in the lives of main characters in selected novels which eventually lead them into a state of chaos and loss of their own identity. Likewise, Edubirdie (2023) elaborates that technology is a recurring element in "WALL-E," and it serves as a metaphor for what Smith views as innate talent. The film emphasizes more on the environmental side as a consequence of humanity's idleness. The failure to break free from all this is an indirect cause of the negative events that are harmful to both the environment and humans. According to Smith, robots eliminate the need for humans to work, which also eliminates the necessity for people to invest time and energy in relationships. Since education and experience are no longer considered important to advance interpersonal and commercial connections, their sources become out of date in such a situation. The similarities and differences of characters come more from habit, education, and custom than from nature. Habits, norms, and knowledge cannot accumulate when humans no longer need to form relationships. However, different innate traits and passions give rise to different kinds of passion. The artificial lifestyle of humans on the Axiom has cut them off from the natural world. They have lost what really makes them human as a result of becoming technology's slaves. This depicts them as being under the yoke of their cravings and the technology. Since people, not robots, make themselves obsolete through automation, this causes people to lose what makes them human. Technology has been abused, but if it were used ethically, it could help people develop their actual selves or gain stable sense of identity (Edubirdie).

Moreover, Baker (2021) in his research explores the urge to erase one's identity as a recurrent topic in Fadia Faqir's Pillars of Salt, My Name is Salma, and Leila Aboulela's Minaret. Implying ideas from Postcolonial Theory, Freudian Psychoanalysis, Jungian Archetypal Criticism, and Derrida's Deconstruction, it also analyzes the process of rethinking and remaking

identity, its concurrent process of labeling, and the desire for identity erasure in the target novels. Textual analysis reveals that Faqir and Aboulela want to draw attention to the plight of women in Arab societies and in England, where they experience patriarchy, alienation, trauma, and PTSD that make them want to forget their pasts and their identities and create thanatos to get out of the existential situations they find themselves in (Abu Baker).

The notion of exploration is prominent in "WALL-E," which encourages the viewer to explore the entire planet Earth and its surroundings. The movie extends time to create a post-apocalyptic perspective of both time and space. Even though WALL-E and EVE spend their days searching, they never anticipate running into one another. The dedication to exploration is comparable to the alienation experienced at the workday. Marx claimed that once a worker crosses the boundaries of the job, their employment ceases to be voluntary and instead becomes coercive, amounting to forced labor. Lifting this type of pressure results in avoiding the responsibilities because working actually becomes a form of self-sacrifice. This is because pressure is placed on working. The people involved in the production chain do not comprehend the combined product's total impact. This gap is caused by workers' misunderstanding of the overall trash producing process. A worker, for instance, would not be aware of how their production has an impact on the production of the total enormous amount of waste (Edubirdie).

Furthermore, Khalid (2014) conducted a study on "The Road" and explored the elements of good and bad. The study revealed that "The Road" takes place in a post-apocalyptic world where a catastrophe has already occurred and the hardships of people in such society have been depicted. Instantly following the catastrophe, the post-apocalyptic world of civilization concentrates on the psychology of the survivors in a world where nothing is left for them. In "The Road," too, it is discovered that a society has collapsed owing to an unidentified catastrophe, and the survivors are compelled to kill and consume other people in order to survive. The majority of the survivors are dead or have fled the area. The stronger ones have used the weaker ones as slaves and food. Crops have perished, and there is no greenery. Through a succession of distinct flashbacks, it is learned about a woman's pregnancy, delivery, suicide, and how the father and the kid were left behind. The entire film demonstrates that people are worthless; people are dying, but nobody seems to care. Everyone is only concerned about himself, robbing others of their possessions and worsening their circumstances. They don't consider if their actions are right or wrong, or even how they might affect other people. They only worry about their own survival in this world where they have no hope and no food, and the few good individuals who are still living are aware that their own terrible survival will not change because they will all die one day (Khalid).

Besides, Ramzan et al. (2023) state that the writing style of any writer is the core element of any author as it fluctuates from place to place under cultural representation. Similarly, Noor's (2020) research on the movie Blade Runner (1980) explores the erasure of boundaries. In order to challenge the conventions of traditional storytelling, the film "Blade Runner" created a fusion of two different genres. The study discovers that the blurring of borders is a key component of postmodernist films. The boundaries at which the phenomena of boundary erasure come into play in the movie under study include the merging of the past and the future, the erasure of the line separating good and evil, the blurring of the line separating reality from simulation, and the representation of many cultures as homogeneous mixtures (Noor). Nyman's (2018) dissertation

also examines how overt textual erasure affects literary and philosophical meaning, particularly in light of the poststructuralist phenomenological tradition that culminated in Jacques Derrida's work. The researcher concentrates on twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary and philosophical works in which visible evidence of erasure is an intended component of the finished (i.e., printed and disseminated) document in response to both the emergence of "erasure poetry" as a recognizable genre of experimental literature and the relative paucity of serious scholarship on Derrida's "writing under erasure." According to two asymmetrically activated features of the text, textual thickness and responsibility, Erasure, achieves a complicated doubling or double/crossing of meaning. On the one hand, erasure makes sure that texts are multiplied both within and across all of their contexts; as a result, textual meaning is spread out, branched out, or thickened over numerous dimensions as texts are constructed in space and time. On the other hand, the fact that specific people are accountable for the actual texts they create is frequently contrasted with this wide, decentralized thickness. In the course of developing the argument, the researcher analyzes Heidegger's striking out of "Being" in The Question of Being, Derrida's use of strikethroughs in his early philosophical works, John Cage and Jackson Mac Low's incorporation of erasure into their poetry of "chance operations," Jean-Luc Marion's negative theology, William S. Burroughs's cut-up method, Tom Phillips's erasure-based artist's book A Humument, and contemporary erasures including Ronald Johnson's Radi (Nyman).

Moreover, Herhuth (2014) in his study on Wall E unveils that the space that has been presented in this animated movie "poses as free for the essence of technology and the human to emerge, but it simultaneously functions as a space for precise control, or algocratic programming" (p. 75). In addition, Nugroho and Lapasau's (2022) research on Wall E is a postmodern critique of the movie, highlighting the socio-psychological and socio-cultural issues. In this sense, the present research will be an addition to existing research on Wall E. However, the uniqueness of the study lies in the fact that no studies have been found as of the present where the human life issues and the issues of the consumers' attitude have been discussed with reference to the selected movie. This research therefore examines the target movie by employing the postmodern theoretical concepts as presented by Jameson (1984) whereby it analyzes the effects of consumerism on human life and earth. Also, it highlights those aspects that are necessary for a life to exist on earth and how the absence of those aspects can lead to the complete erosion of life on earth.

Research Questions

1. How has the situation of the earth been presented in the movie WALL E?

2. Which boundaries are intended to be highlighted in the movie WALL E?

3. What type of messages does the director of the movie intend to convey to the humans?

Research Method and Theoretical Framework

The present study is qualitative in its nature which is based on textual analysis. Gay, et al. (2011) mention that textual analysis involves examining and interpreting the details within a text to understand its meaning, structure and underlying themes (Gay, Miles and Airsasian).

Besides, Jameson's (1984) theory of erasure of boundaries serves as a theoretical lens to analyze the selected movie. In his theory, he criticizes the tendency toward cultural homogenization and the dominance of capitalism, shaping the cultural landscape. The theory discusses the stretches of traditions vs modernism, mapping of minds vs remapping of minds, nods and boundaries of life vs survival, construction vs reconstructions of living aspects, sense of time, place and ideology of representations. These core aspects and the stretches of ideology are presented in the movie and these are intended to be explored and analyzed by converting the oral utterances of the characters into text (Jameson). Jameson (1984) presented the concept of "Erasure of Boundaries'' in his theory of postmodernism. He warns that human growth can be demolished as a consequence of negligence of humans. The stretches between the consumer and the capitalists lead humans towards the destruction and man might be alienated from other aspects of life (Jameson).

The theory focuses on the alienated city, which is a place where people are primarily unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves. The most obvious examples are grids like those in Jersey City, where none of the traditional markers (monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives) apply. The practical reconquest of a sense of place and the creation or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble that can be stored in memory and that the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories are therefore necessary for alienation in the traditional city. Lynch's personal work is constrained by his purposeful focus on the issues with the city form as a whole; nevertheless, when extrapolated outside onto some of the bigger national and international locations has to touch on here, it becomes incredibly evocative. It shouldn't be assumed too quickly that his model, which undoubtedly presents important representational concerns as such, is in any way susceptible to the usual post structuralism critiques of the "ideology of representation" or mimesis. In that earlier sense, the cognitive map is not quite mimetic; in fact, the theoretical problems it raises allow us to reevaluate the study of representation on a higher, much more complicated level(Jameson).

Data Analysis

"Captain: Wait, that doesn't look like Earth. Where's the blue sky? Where's the-the grass?"

Analysis

The lines above have been uttered by the captain as he intends to give instruction to the robot and about the performance of the robot. The task is about the refining the earth and making it able to live. Jameson (1984) has pointed out many of the aspects in his theory of postmodernism. He has talked about the erasure of boundaries where there are contradictory aspects of life and living standards. Through the erasure of boundaries, Jameson (1984) has pointed out the two ways of relationships in the good and the bad way. Here the lines represent the different tenets of Jameson's postulated boundaries where the traditional view and the modern view is elaborated. These aspects are intended to present the aspects that the "shape of the earth" has no longer remained traditional. As the story of the movie is post 700 years from

the present time, the earth is presented as filthy and dusty where the norms of life and the signs of life are abandoned. The lines uttered by the Captain intend to point out that the "beauty" of the earth has vanished while the filth and the dust is everywhere. Captain is from the other planet and his map of mind was that the earth would be very neat, clean and worth living in the past. The line "Where's the blue sky?" reveals that the weather is not worth living anymore and the standards of the living have been forsaken just as the signs of the life have been abandoned. Jameson (1984) views that there are boundaries between construction and the reconstruction of the living aspects while the lines mentioned above manifest that the aliens seem to be worried about the construction while the natives are seemingly helpless, so life is abandoned. On the other side, it can be said that a reconstruction of the earth is necessary to make it worth living. Sense of place, construction and reconstruction have been observed to be abandoned and the life depicted is not worth living in view of the living beings of the earth. Moreover, Captain's words "Where's the-the grass?" disclose the fact that the flourish of capitalism destroyed the traditional aspects of life on the earth and people started living on the machine-made things rather than the natural. In this regard, the natural aspects and natural living creatures, birds, grass and the trees have been demolished on the earth because the earth lost its identity completely.

> "Captain: This is called farming! You kids are gonna grow all kinds of plants! Vegetable plants, pizza plants. [laughs] Oh, it's good to be home!"

Analysis

Captain is an alien and is on a visit to the earth and is contemplating on the aspects of living and creation. Robot is working while the signs of people and living things are not there on the earth. Jameson (1984) differentiates between the traditions and the modern aspects of life. Similarly, the writer of the movie intends to depict that the humans (which have been demolished from earth) are not worth living now and they do not have existence on the earth. There is a great reason for their elimination as they started relying and believing in the machine elements and the technological tools more than the natural objects and elements. There seems no tendency in the recent generation for the natural objects, instead they love to eat pizza etc. in place of the natural things. Jameson (1984) believes that the ideology of the representation of things has been changed by the media and the media is in the hands of the capitalists which changes the minds of the public and remaps their thinking. The urge of capitalism and capitalistic thinking flourished. The depiction of similar view can be observed in the lines, as the captain is laughing at the standards of the people because they love to eat pizza rather than the natural foods. This aspect reinforces their thinking and how the power of their thinking was seized by the capitalists. Construction of the aspects needed for life to exist was based on the natural objects and the natural way of living but the media and the capitalists reconstructed it and remapped the minds of the people by making them believe that it is the machines rather than the natural objects that make life worth living.

> "I don't want to survive! I want to live!" (Captain)

Analysis

These lines indicate that human life on the earth is about survival where only materials and the objects are considered enough which can be supportive for living. Present study is of the movie which presents the post 700 years from present time of the earth where the earth is not worth living anymore and all the traditional structures have been destroyed. James (1984) tells that the boundaries between the good and bad have been diminished. What dominates now are the capitalists and the consumerist thinking. These are the stretches where the capitalists intend to gain much money and they assure the people and the consumers through different illustrations that life is not as the traditional ways depict it to be, instead the brand-new ways introduced by them make life worth living. According to the capitalists, through these standards' life could be made more progressive and more attractive in the minds of the people. This is what has been criticized here where the movie is unfolding the elements of the survival, not of living. The term survival refers to the limited aspects and the tendencies while the aspects for living encompass various facets that contribute to a person's well-being and lifestyle. It is also worth mentioning that human cognition was to build the earth for living. Jameson (1984) says that the ideology of representation and presentation was different before the flourishing of the media. The movie presents that the destruction of the earth happened only because of a shift from the traditional ways to modern. As a consequence, the living standards were not kept in concern since the standards of the living were not assured by the social administrators (capitalists).

> "As always, the weather is a balmy 72 degrees and sunny, and, uh—oh, I see the ship's log is showing that today is the 700th anniversary of our five-year cruise. Well, I'm sure our forefathers would be proud to know that 700 years later, we'd be doing the exact same thing they were doing." — Captain

Analysis

Jameson (1984) criticizes the elements of the stretches of capitalism and the consumer behavior. He believes that the life on the earth has been remapped and the new stream of modernism has put the humans away from the natural life. Humans are losing their constructive abilities and the reconstructions and the remapping by the media and the capitalists is taking place. These lines from the movie point out the same elements as the captain of the spaceship wants to clean the earth where the aspects of living have been demolished. Living standards have been changed and consequently, in post 700 years from the present time, there is no existence of human life or any other living being on earth. Sun is about 72 degrees while the life of the humans, grass, trees and the birds have no signs. The lines present the idea that the conditions of the living were abandoned due to the remapping of the minds and this remapping of the mind was done by the stretches of capitalism. As a result, the aspects of the life were changed. People forgot about such basic aspects of living as cleanliness. On the other hand, the aliens understood the meaning of living well as they made their planet worth living. As there was a huge amount of the filth and the deposits, the narrator is disclosing that the seven more centuries are required to clean the earth. James (1984) is of the view that boundaries should be maintained between the modernist and traditional way of living a life. Life can only exist by following and valuing the traditions and the traditional approach rather than entirely depending on the capitalism and the consumerist approach to life.

"Go to full autopilot, take control of everything, and do not return to Earth. I repeat, do not return to Earth." — Shelby Forthright

Analysis

Aliens and their spaceship are here to visit and refine the earth in the movie where the alien has also understood that the earth requires more and more concern for refining the aspects and tendencies for living in the truest sense of the word. As the movie presents the issues of the earth and the living scenario of the earth, there should be a tendency to reconstruct the assets of living. Though the aliens came to reshape the earth, they are frightened that the earth is not worth living anymore. However, the director of the movie seems to suggest that if the standards of living on the earth are changed and refined then it could be worth living. Jameson (1984) believes that the stretches of capitalism and the consumer behavior, mapping and remapping of the minds, construction and the reconstruction of the infrastructure can lead towards the demolishing of the traditional aspects. Only the natural elements such as the growing grass and the trees seemed to be worth seeing and valid and those were the traditional structures in which the human was supposed to live. Modern approach to living has devastated the traditional ways of living as minds of the people have been remapped by the consumerist standards of living. Once worth living earth has gone missing and the lines above indicate that even the aliens themselves do not intend to live on the earth due to the filth and dust spread everywhere.

"After 700 years of doing what he was built for – he'll discover what he's meant for." Tagline

Analysis

The character of Tagline is presenting the standards of the living where the earth and the conditions of the earth are criticized by the aliens. The lines above indicate that the movie is suggesting that it requires more than 700 years to make the earth clean and worth living. Moreover, it emphasizes that the earth can be more peaceful and an ideal abode for living if boundaries are set between the machines and natural things. The erasure of the boundaries as presented by Jameson (1984) can be observed in the lines as the they are depicting the scenario that the sense of living needs to be reconstructed by the inhabitants and the refinement in the ways of living seems necessary in this regard. The life of the humans requires the construction and the reconstruction of the natural objects to improve the standards of living. In other words, balancing the progress in machines or technology with the environmental stewardship is crucial to create a more livable earth in this era.

Conclusion

To sum up, the movie "WALL-E" is about consumerism, the art of production and consumption, how they relate to waste management, and how that relationship breaks down. It depicts how the enormous rise in trash is primarily because of the consumer's appetite. Human artifacts, which are built on the new standard of unsustainability, serve as a visual representation of how the environment has adapted to sentimental nostalgia. The movie exhorts people to

resume sensible consumption rather than consumption driven by wants that are unneeded and are placed above the basic hierarchy of requirements.

Since Jameson's (1984) theory on the Erasure of Boundaries elaborates on the life standards and the living aspects of life, similarly the movie WALL E (2008) also portrays the living conditions and the living aspects of life. Hence, the movie seems to convey this message that the ethical and responsible use of technology, machines and material things and staying connected to nature can contribute to a more harmonious and refined life in this machine-driven world. Certain of human actions and excessive use of machines are causing more heat and destruction on earth. Therefore, limiting the impact of machine-driven world on life and earth is crucial and this can be made possible if the human consume only those things that enhance their life without overwhelming or replacing it, so that 'presence' cold fill the 'void' and eradicate the 'absence' in this postmodern era.

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