

## **Film as The Media of Social Critics About Environment, Structuralism in Film Wall-e**

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### **Abstract**

*Nowadays, the harmonization between man and nature is always being issues that never stop to be discussed. The human existence and development with the very rapid progress that they have experienced, oftentimes bringing the negative effects to the balance of nature. Then, this fact raises many anxieties that are realized by critics or protests. One of those critics are then visualized trough film which is more acceptable and easier to be understood by society from each social class. Wall-E is one of the movie titles that become a representation of that opinion. Using qualitative research with the structuralism approach, the author tries to find out about how the critics and messages delivered constructively to the world society. The result of this research can be concluded that Wall-E, a film that produced by Disney cooperate with Pixar and directed by Andrew Stanton, constructively tries to deliver the critics and messages to educate the society from all ages. Hopefully, peoples can be wiser in carrying out life in the world with the spirit of conservation.*

**Key Words:** *Structuralism, Conservation, Social Critic, Film*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of technology is always being an issue that never stopped to be discussed in its relation with the needs of human life. The existence is like a double edged knife which in a side giving advantages but in another side bringing up a distraction to the its society. If it is reviewed from its advantage, the development of technology is giving much positive impacts in industrial sector. While, industrial sector itself is an important thing in the development and the continuity of economic growth of an area. However, the industry itself is not the final destination, it is rather a strategy that have to be faced to support the process of economic development which is purposed to achieve the high level of income per capita.

Unfortunately, the progress which is impacted to the industry is also threatening the natural sustainability. Secretary General Executive Director UNEP noted in 2014 that around in the whole world every three seconds,  $\pm 1$  hectares of forest has lost from the earth. Total average of forest that has lost per year is  $\pm 13$  million hectares. With the nominal of economic service the ecosystem of tropical forest is estimated USD 6.120 per acre. This is a surprising nominal in many levels. Whether we realized it or not the ecosystem exploitation has been increasing the human prosperity. Nevertheless, the continuity of impact which will inflict upon the environment is very worrying (Zairin, 2016: 41). Not to mention if reviewed from health aspects, the data from United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 1998 as quoted by Firmansyah & Gunawan (2007: 107) said that air pollution from industrial emissions, motor vehicle exhaust gases, and the fuel that burned by citizens has been killing more of 2,7 million people per year, especially because the respiratory damaged, heart disease, lungs disease, and cancer. From them who effected and avowed die because those disease, 2,2 million of them is the rural poor that effected by air pollution indoor directly as the result of the burned of traditional fuel. Air pollution also decreases the economic outcomes because of the disappearance of productive days.

It still increases with the facts that global warming has been happened for the first time, which is identified by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in Geneva in 1996. The indication of the existence of global warming can be showed by the data of increase in world temperature average by  $0.3^{\circ}\text{C}$  until  $0.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ . where the data is based on measurement data in last 19<sup>th</sup> century with the measurement data in last 1980 and early 1990 (Suwedi, 2005: 397). Meanwhile National Wildlife Federation (dalam Surtani, 2015: 51) explains about global warming as a phenomena where the earth is hotter day by day, much more of heavy rain and flood, more intense of storm and drought in inland. Those phenomena are a real impact which happened as an effect of global warming in the earth. Global warming also changes the landscape of life in the earth and kills many species.

Of course it is a dilemma condition between choosing the continuity of economy or environment. but factually those data deliver that people have chosen their choices, which

tends to economic benefits over the environmental sustainability. So, the biggest risk insight shall ready to be faced by all humans if they don't want to do the fundamentals change. Actually the efforts to resolve the environmental crisis is not never done. Wijoyo & Prihatiningtyas (2016: 483) mentions that there are investigation for "international environmental legal instruments" which from the result is found that there are more of 500 international agreements of environment. the international agreements of atmosphere protection and air pollution cross border which qualified in a framework of law document "soft law" or "hard law" has developed so fast since 1919 till now. From those agreements which are inventoried known that how big the commitment of world community in the atmosphere protection problems and court of cross border air pollutions. However, those agreements are judged as over fragmental and hard to be implemented such as in case with the instrument of international environment law in general.

This no seriousness at the end provokes critics from many sides, such as the sharp critic from the winner of Nobel Ilmu Ekonomi, Amartya Sen. He criticizes hardly to the economic growth (which is followed with shed blood and tears) still doesn't make the suffering of many people subsided. Similarly with the empiric fact, that infiltration in the field development in the last three decades have brought in the damage in many kinds of local cultural values, which in its turn is being a main cause of the continuity of environmental damaged (Pranadji, 2017: 315). The same critics then began to bloom in many sectors of sciences and arts. Their purpose in delivering the critic is an effort which is at least able to knock public awareness of environmental sustainability. It's tough against the corporations that are rooted in various of lives, of course make them only can hope on the people awareness itself. So then, the message which is delivered also adjusted with the appetite of citizens in general.

In this level, film becomes one of media that considered able to deliver those all critics persuasively even packed with a load of entertainment. Especially in film, many kinds of conflicts as the social reality of society can be made an idea in making story of film. In fact film has proven that it can be able to be a representation of the problem that

exists in society. A film not only shows the experience happened in a group of society but also as the form of description in explaining what problems that exist in this time. Moreover, the power and strengths in reaching many social segments, makes the film has many potentials to influence its audiences (Adipradana, 2016: 2). This is then becomes a basis of how film becomes the chosen media in delivering critics. One of many films that implements that function is a film entitled “Wall-E” a work of Hollywood director Andrew Stanton and produced by the biggest of production house Walt Disney Pictures. Raising environmental issue, this film has achieved the great success. Beside the financial benefits achieved \$533 around the world, Wall-E is also welcomed very well, with with a 96% approval rating on review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes and was rewarded with an "Academy Award" in the Best Animated Film category of 2009 (Bandyk, 2009). Public enthusiasm of this film shows that the effort of filmmakers to participate in pay attention to the environment through the field that they deserve appreciation and worth to be an example. The purpose is only once, it is revive the society about the importance of environment sustainability for the sake of the continuity of human life.

Bronagh Doherty (2014) analyses the narrative structure and intertextuality of Wall-E, film by Pixar Studio and Disney. Using Levi-Strauss theory and folklore studies of Propp, film narrative is a construction of binary opposites which help us make sense of our social world. The aim of this study is to examine the narratives binary oppositions in relation to other film narratives and explain how they naturalize contemporary societal norms. The binaries that he found trough his analysis are: (1) Good vs Bad, (2) Wall-E vs Auto (the robot that blocking the captain when he want to back to earth.), (3) Environment vs Pollution, (4) Anti consumerism vs Consumerism, and (5) Nature vs Technology. In this analysis the author focusing on the characters of the film.

Beside Binary oppositions that have found in this film, the author also found the form of narrative: (1) Villain= Auto, (2) The donor/ provider= Wall-E, (3) Helper =Axiom's captain, (4) Princess= EVE, (5) Dispatcher= EVE, (6) Hero/victim= Wall-E, and (7)The false hero= Auto. The author analyses by comparing Wall-E with other films

that show about the elements of binaries and form narratives that are found in Wall-E such as Snow White, Beauty and The Beast, Finding Nemo, Blade Runner, and Chaplin.

As the result of the analysis, the author found that both Levi-Strauss theory and folklore studies of Propp are useful be applied to many different texts from variety of cultures, which can help the audience to understand the meaning as they address the cultural issue within contemporary society.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is uses qualitative descriptive method by focusing on the characters of the film. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened (Nassaji, 2015). The data were collected by watching and observing the film, and identifying the binary oppositions. This study also uses Levi-Strauss theory about Structuralism approach. Structuralism is a method that human use to make sense of the world. The structuralist theory is categorized in many ways. Binary oppositions are used in order to separate two precise categories that are absolute on each side. Binary oppositions are tools that can be used to analyzed characters and massages found within the film. The characters or categories that do not fit within the binaries are known as anomalous.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMWORK**

### **Film as A Media of Social Critics**

Film and social critics are two aspects that often intersect, cohere even sometimes contradict each other in reality aspect. This because object or subject of both are at the same point, which is human – individually – and society – communally -. Then it isn't over when Sobur (2004: 127) declares that film cannot be separated from society as a entertainment media, because of it film becomes a media of representation. Film always influencing and creating society based on the values behinds it, without ever been the opposite. Moreover according to Siregar (1985: 29) film has four capacities of basic

functions, which are information, instructional, persuasive, and entertainment. Which means the position of film as a tool in delivering message will be very potential if it based on those four basic functions. While soasial critics, which incidentally loaded messages tend to be heavy and serious. Of course the existence of film becomes alternative which can be used so the purpose of the social critics can be conveyed to the target object.

Social critics itself actually is a kind of communication in society which aims or serves as a control to the course of a social system. Social critics consists of two terms which are from words “critics” and “social”. In the sense of *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* is explained that critics is a censure or response and also description and consideration of good and bad of a work, opinion, and etc. (KBBI, 1996: 359). Social understanding has meaning be friend, together, unified, which means to understand the incidents in society which is human fellowship, to can be attempted to bring in improvement in life together. While according to (Abar, 1997: 47) is a kind of communication in society which aims or serves as a control to the course of a social system or a process of socialize. In this context, social critic is an important part in maintaining social system. Many social acts or individual that deviates from social or moral values in society can be prevented by put into function of social critics. In the other word, social critics in this perception have function as a mode to conservation and reproduction of a social system. In this understanding social critics should be done based on norms or rules that are in the system.

As a result social critics exist to sue a consequence of social transformation. While to be on it, at least there are three factors that influence it, there are social factor, psychology, and cultural. Social factor is encouraged by the existence of social organization aspect in society. Such as social institutions, family, organizations, and etc. Then psychological factor is related to individual that has a role in society. When the each individual is creative and innovative automatically will be impacted to the transformation of the society itself. As for cultural factor or culture is related to the behaviors of its society. The wider or more open a society to cultural or culture, then it will be effected to social

transformation in social life (Indraddin & Irwan, 2016: 5). In short social transformation is impossible to be happened without any of those three factors being fulfilled. While, film has a power to speed up deliver the message with persuasiveness through socially, psychologically, and cultural. It is made clear by (Arsyad, 2002) that film is able to describe the depiction of life and voice gives its own charm. The power of film is on the presentation of information, exposure of the process, explanation of complicated concepts, educating skills, shorten or lengthen the time and influencing the attitude. Something which becomes the final purpose of social critics, change of attitude that which lead to social transformation.

### **Konservasi (conservation)**

In general, conservation has meaning preservation which is preserving/conserving the carrying capacity, quality, function, and capability of environment in a balanced manner. The purposes of conservation (1) preservation of living natural resources and the balance of their ecosystems, so that can be more supporting the efforts to improve the welfare and quality of human life. (2) Conserve the ability and utilization of living natural resources and their ecosystems in harmony and balance. Moreover, conservation is once of efforts to maintain animal preservation. Without conservation will cause the damage of natural habitat of animals. The conflict between human and animals will be detrimental to both of them; human loss because they will lost the animals even life, while animals will be detrimental because will be the target of human revenge (Siregar dalam Rachman, 2012).

Meanwhile (Bracker & Richmond, 2009: xiv) interprets conservation as a complex and process and continuously process that involves determinations regarding what is considered as as inheritance, how it is preserved, how it is used, by whom, and for whom. The inheritance which is mentioned in the definition is not only about physics, but also about cultural. Therefore, the definition of conservation is not only concerns about treatment, preserve, and the protection of nature, but also concerns about preservation of cultural heritage and human civilization. Conservation is also born in order to build harmony in the universe. Juanda, (2019: 3) explains that harmonization will be well

preserved if mortal, especially human which have mind can preserve nature properly and correctly. Some of them try to preserve and conserve nature as an effort to prevent natural disaster and to the generation in the future. But, because the natural wealth is very abundant and diverse sometimes those make people crazy and greedy to take the products of nature in a big way (exploitation) without doing reforestation and without thinking about how the risk that well be happened in the future.

According to Ratna, (2011: 2-3) at this point conservation is being very urgent that moved by human in reducing the activity of natural exploitation. The exploitation of natural wealth regardless of the impacts that arise thoroughly, will give the future threats. Forest, sea, mountain, river, agricultural area, historical heritage, holy places, and many kinds of natural and cultural wealth that actually is aimed to conserve the balance of universe while providing spiritual security. Nowadays those are poorly maintained, even tends to experience constant destruction.

### **SEKILAS TENTANG FILM WALL-E**

Wall-E is an animation film that tells about the story of a future where humans have left the earth because it has been covered by trash from products sold by multinational company “Buy N Large”. Wall-E is a trash collection robot that has to clean up the mess on Earth. One day WALL-E's routine changes when a reconnaissance robot, EVE, is sent to Earth to find plants which prove that there is still hope for humans to return to Earth. And it causes them to have an exciting experience in a spaceship named Axiom. It is a place where people can live easily with the help of robot and technology. This film is chosen because it brings the issue that related to our daily life. It is about the relation between human and nature. This film has been very successful in presenting the issue and challenging the viewer to examine the world around them.

Social critic is a criticism, input, rebuttal, satire, response, or even an assessment of something that is deemed deviant or violates the values that exist in society. Social criticism can be conveyed through various means, starting from the most traditional ways,



satirical expressions through interpersonal communication and social communication, through various social and artistic performances in public communication, literary arts, and through mass media. Film as media of social critic means a study of the states of society which is reflected to the film which examine the messages of the film. The purposes of the study are to analyze how the implementation of Wall-E as the media of social critics about environment in the perspective of structuralism and how the messages and critics delivered constructively to the world society.

## **FINDING AND RESULT**

By watching and analyzing the film, can be found some of binary oppositions through the film:

### **Humanity vs Inhumanity**

Humanity is a form of various kinds of values that will be adhered by human, where in connections there will be relationship with fellow humans are on this earth. The example of humanity can be seen as social interaction between one to another such as tolerance, mutual help, mutual cooperation, loving each other, and compassionate. Humanity in Wall-E is represented by the character of Wall-e itself. The behavior of Wall-E shows the human-like attitude. Wall-E shows the viewer about the behavior and attitude that should be human habit. As examples, how Wall-E cares with earth by saving the plant. How Wall-E builds the relationship with Eve, and the daily activities such as watching TV and dancing that show the kinds of human behavior.

The opposite of humanity is inhumanity. Inhumanity is the quality or state of being inhuman. Binary of Inhumanity is defined as all characters that life but it doesn't look like Human-like. Inhumanity shows by the individualist of people who leave in the Axiom with high technologies. They would not care about what happened around them as long as what they need has already available. Another depiction of inhumanity is shown by the character of Auto. The robot which is commanding the captain of Axiom tried to thwart

the plan of the captain that wants to back to earth by trying to destroy the plant.

### **Old Technology vs New Technology**

Old technology in society nowadays is known something that is barely used anymore because of its weaknesses. Old technology requires more power while something that is produced is very minimal. It is considered not enough to help facilitate human activities. Old technology in this film is defined as something that more acceptable to keep the earth safe. Old technology in this film is represented by the character of Wall-E itself which is assessed as something that can repair the damaged earth by destroying the trash.

Nowadays new technology is becoming more complex and dominant. Why? Because technology that we know and we use now, can makes human activities easier and more effective. New technology in this film is depicted by all facilities and technology in the Axiom. Where there is everything to be had just by sitting in a chair and talking with the tab in front of the chair. Then, the robots will serve all the people. The new technology also represented by the company Buy N Large which with its sophistication actually damages the condition of the earth with its garbage.

From the binary oppositions that be found in the film, it can be seen that film Wall-E trying to deliver to the viewer social critics about environment. Humanity that represented by Wall-E is a critic to people that sometimes, humanity is doesn't have by human itself. Inhumanity that represented by people that leave in the Axiom shows us that human selfishness is very often we find in society around us. They don't care with nature, earth, and environment and just care with their happiness.

The binaries about technology show us the critics and massages about technology are not always profitable. Actually technology is used to easier the people's activities. But when it is used not well it can cause the bad effect to the earth as the condition that depicted in the film Wall-E. The condition where is the earth cannot be a place for human life. By the New technology which is used inappropriately and is full of greed can cause

the relation between human and nature are become not balanced.

The condition of the earth in film Wall-E and the two binaries that have found in the film represent the critics to people around the world to be more concerned with environment. It is a human responsibility to keep the earth safe and comfortable as a place where human leaved.

## **CONCLUTION**

The result of this research can be concluded that Wall-E, a film that produced by Disney cooperate with Pixar and directed by Andrew Stanton, constructively tries to deliver the critics and messages to educate the society about the awareness to the earth from all ages. The binary shows the fictional but possible outcome of humanity if people just care with their happiness and easy life without concern to the earth's condition. In an attempt to preserve a naturally healthy way of life humans must be responsible for technology and should to be smart in using technology.

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