

Exploration of Human Degradation as Depicted in Wall-E 2008

Moh. Faidurrohman^a

^a Universitas Negeri Surabaya

*Corresponding author. E-mail address: moh.faidurrohman.17020154004@mhs.unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses about the exploration of human degradation depicted in film Wall-E (2008). As humans, human dignity will be better for the society but in this film, humans already loss their dignity which make them become downgrade. The story of Wall-E and Eve will help humans to regain their humanity. This article use representation theory by Michael O'Connor (1985) which symbolic representation in literature. The writer collects the data from watch movie critically and takes notes for the important message that implied on that film. This study will use qualitative method to reveal theme and symbolism from symbolic representation theory ease the writer to analyze key scenes and story events in that film. Aims of this study to reveal kinds of human degradation that happened in that story such as environmental, physical, social, and psychological decline. The film serves as a critique of modern consumer culture and technological dependence, offering a powerful message about the importance of environmental responsibility and human connection.

Keywords: Human degradation, representation, themes and symbolism.

ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini membahas tentang eksplorasi degradasi manusia yang digambarkan dalam film Wall-E (2008). Sebagai manusia, harkat dan martabat manusia akan menjadi lebih baik bagi masyarakat, namun dalam film ini manusia sudah kehilangan harkat dan martabatnya sehingga membuat dirinya terpuruk. Kisah Wall-E dan Hawa akan membantu manusia mendapatkan kembali rasa kemanusiaannya. Artikel ini menggunakan teori representasi Michael O'Connor (1985) yang merupakan representasi simbolik dalam karya sastra. Penulis mengumpulkan data dari menonton film secara kritis dan mencatat pesan penting yang tersirat dalam film tersebut. Penelitian ini akan menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mengungkap tema dan simbolisme dari teori representasi simbolik yang memudahkan penulis menganalisis adegan-adegan kunci dan peristiwa cerita dalam film tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap macam-macam degradasi manusia yang terjadi dalam cerita tersebut seperti kemerosotan lingkungan, fisik, sosial, dan psikologis. Film ini berfungsi sebagai kritik terhadap budaya konsumen modern dan ketergantungan teknologi, menawarkan pesan yang kuat tentang pentingnya tanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan dan hubungan antarmanusia.

Kata kunci: Degradasi manusia, representasi, tema dan simbolisme.

INTRODUCTION

"Wall-E," a Pixar Animation Studios film released in 2008 and directed by Andrew Stanton, offers a poignant exploration of environmental destruction and human degradation. The film, set in a dystopian future, follows the story of a small waste-collecting robot named Wall-E who inadvertently embarks on a space journey that ultimately decides the fate of humanity. At its core, "Wall-E" is a love story between Wall-E and EVE, another robot. Wall – E film already have a lot nominations and awards. In June 2008, Wall-E gained 521.3 million worldwide. On December in Los Angeles Critics Association, Wall-E won for the best picture of the year, it first time for 34 year from animation film which got that honor. On February 2009, Wall-E got five nominations, including original screenplay and won for the best animated featured in Academy Awards. For total gained by Wall-E from Pixar film are six Oscar nominations and won one best animated feature(Dresden 2023). However, the backdrop of their story presents a grim commentary on human degradation, showcasing the physical, social, cultural, and environmental consequences of unchecked consumerism and technological dependency.

In the universe of "Wall-E," Earth has been abandoned by humans who have fled to space aboard the Axiom, a luxurious spaceship run by the Buy n Large Corporation. Earth has become an uninhabitable wasteland filled with mountains of garbage. Humans in the film Wall-E have experienced decline, even to the point of losing human and moral values. Humans only think about their own pleasure without caring about the things around them. In the end, humans continue to exploit nature to fulfill consumer needs and change people's lives in the film. The Earth was exposed to radiation and experienced drastic climate changes due to human degradation so that humans fled to outer space using the ship they prepared, namely Axiom. Wall-E, short for Waste Allocation Load Lifter: Earth-Class, is the last functioning robot of his kind, left to clean up the mess left behind by humanity. Wall-e implies the robot was living in the earth, for this situation, the state of the earth is truly obliterated, full inclusion of the contamination and synthetic contamination, the air as well as the outer layer of the earth covers with the trash. In reality, in this film, there is so many wall-e robots on the earth, they are additionally variation sizes. The primary person wall-e in this story is the little robot classification. The capability of this robot is cleaning the waste, molding the garbage into a block, and dealing with the block of junk all neat and tidy. His mundane existence is interrupted by the arrival of EVE (Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator), a robot sent to find signs of sustainable life on Earth. Wall-E's discovery of a small plant sets off a chain of events that leads him and EVE to the Axiom, where humans live in a state of physical and cultural decline. The film then follows their efforts to return the plant to Earth, igniting hope for the planet's restoration.

Representation theory would use to analyze the exploration of human degradation as depicted on the film Wall-E. O'Connor(1985) stated the idea of representation might be applied to an expansive and profoundly different scope of peculiarities. Portrayal happens in discourse and composing, in pictures and guides. At the point when an article or occasion is utilized as an image it addresses something. At the point when a grouping of occasions has a symbolic importance the occasions address something. Representation theory by Michael O'Connor would help this article to identity human degradation from theme, symbolism, and truth to reality. Writing might address reality by containing express statements about the world. It might likewise address or be about reality when the portrayed occasions are intended to be about more than themselves. In some yet not everything topical works the subject is made present to the reader through symbolic or symbolic portrayal. This can happen when the work's

sentences are fictitious (O'Connor 1985). This article aims to depict kinds of human degradation which happened and the implication of human degradation in that film.

DEPICTION OF HUMAN DEGRADATION

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The environmental degradation depicted in "Wall-E" is a stark representation of a planet destroyed by consumerism and neglect. Earth is shown as a barren wasteland, devoid of natural life, covered in trash and pollution. This depiction serves as a dire warning of the consequences of environmental irresponsibility. The presence of garbage towers and polluted skies is a visual metaphor for the unsustainable practices that led to this downfall. The role of the Buy n Large Corporation in this degradation highlights the dangers of corporate control over environmental policies and practices. Maniates (2009) expressed that a speeding up individualization of obligation in the public arena is limiting, in hazardous ways, our 'natural creative mind' and subverting our ability to respond successfully to ecological dangers to human prosperity. Those pained by overconsumption shouldn't and can't disregard this limiting. Facing the utilization issue requests, all things considered, the kind of institutional reasoning that the individualization of obligation evidently subverts.

PHYSICAL AND HEALTH DEGRADATION

Life aboard the Axiom presents a disturbing picture of human physical degradation. The inhabitants of the Axiom are depicted as extremely obese, with weakened bones and muscles due to prolonged inactivity. They rely entirely on automated systems for movement and sustenance, having lost the ability to perform even the most basic physical tasks. This physical degradation is a result of over-reliance on technology and a sedentary lifestyle, offering a critique of modern trends towards convenience and inactivity. For example, innovation dependence brings about dejection, tension, sadness, substance use, absence of public activity, struggle, and scholastic lack (Kim et al., 2018:5; Young, 2004:405 as cited in USLU 2022).

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEGRADATION

The subject of tragic social orders in writing is considered exceptionally pertinent on the grounds that it fills in as a vehicle for social discourse and reflects recent concerns and cultural feelings of apprehension may overcome. It additionally prompts basic investigation of the immortal power elements that various social orders face. Thus, to talk, tragic writing is an important focal point through which we can look at our own cultural designs (Moylan, 2000 as cited in Mostafa 2023). The social and social parts of human existence on the Axiom have likewise debased fundamentally. People are portrayed as secluded, with negligible direct friendly communication. They convey through screens, in any event, when truly near each other, mirroring a deficiency of significant human association. This dependence on innovation for correspondence features the film's evaluate of the developing disengage in contemporary society because of computerized reliance. Moreover, the consumerist culture on board the Axiom, propagated by the Buy N Large Company, stresses moment delight and inactive utilization, prompting a deficiency of social lavishness and variety.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL DEGRADATION

Psychologically, the humans on the Axiom exhibit signs of detachment and apathy. They are content with their passive existence, showing little curiosity or drive. The isolation and lack of purpose have led to a loss of identity and emotional depth. The film portrays this emotional degradation through the characters' interactions with Wall-E and EVE, who spark moments of realization and change among the humans. These interactions underscore the importance of connection, purpose, and emotional engagement in maintaining psychological well-being.

METHOD

Therefore, data of this study are taken from the film by Pixar Animation Studios, which directed by Andrew Stanton and produced by Jim Morris. In order to provide data, several steps are required. The first steps, the writer watch the movie clearly due to catch the information. So, the writer not only watches the movie but also take notes to the some important scenes. The next steps, gather the data into one selection, which contain the topic. In this case, the writer will find the theme and the conflict from the gather information. This journal uses an animation movie titled Wall-E for the source data. The source was published by Pixar and Disney on June 27th, 2008 in United States. The data analysis would employ a thematic themes and symbolism analysis on the basis of O'Connor's theory of representation. The article would explain the themes, symbolism and story events depicted of human degradation due to the representation on that film.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Pixar's Wall-E movie breaks the human disgrace through events on the film which seen from the plot and setting. This article applies the representation theory from one of representation figure, Michelle O'Connor, to reveals how human degradation depicted from the timeline of story which implicate on the movie.

ANALYSIS OF KEY SCENES

INTRODUCTION OF THE AXIOM AND ITS INHABITANTS



In this picture portrayed the sophisticated technology which human developed. People no longer walk but use advanced multifunctional chairs. This chair has many functions, such as taking it wherever it goes, a screen is available to communicate with others, and various services on the ship are connected to the chair. Therefore, robot and human use a line as the circuit which portrayed in that picture. The introduction to life aboard the Axiom sets the stage for understanding human degradation. Scenes depicting daily life on the spaceship show

humans engaged in passive activities, relying on automated chairs and screens for all their needs. In the current review, the examinations got to utilizing the innovation compulsion watchword were inspected according to a more extensive viewpoint. This restricting comprises the constraint of the review. Another limit is the general spotlight on just the causes and outcomes of innovation fixation(USLU 2022). The stark contrast between the advanced technology of the Axiom and the deteriorated physical and mental state of its inhabitants highlights the consequences of excessive technological dependence.



This picture explained toward human communication which used the virtual screen without realize the person who communicate is next to him. Therefore, the effect is that individuals are becoming impolite. In the event that individuals use radio or virtual screen as the media of correspondence they won't have a clue about the declaration of the others they are conversing with whether they are exhausted or energized or miserable. Technology actually drowns people in a routine and creates work automation. Vasudha (2021) stated which is like the current circumstance of our general public. Individuals of this age normally have no up close and personal communication with neighbors. Yet, they would be companions via web-based entertainment or they may be visiting through any internet-based stage yet they cannot perceive each other regardless of whether they are remaining close by.



In this picture show, even when it comes to sports, humans use robots to do it. Truth be told, by doing sport straightforwardly, individuals could construct a decent communication. They could get to know individuals and make companions. Having numerous companions will give them benefits. Doing the virtual game will make the practitioner to be a maverick who feels desolate and discharge. Moreover, it's just like playing a video game.



In this picture show, humans experience laziness in what they do. Brushing teeth and dressing up is a human instinct that is done in the morning after waking up. However, in the picture it is explained that the robots are replacing human tasks. The essence of Captain McCrea as a human is what he should have done, but it was done by a robot, thus making Captain McCrea alienated from his essence as a human. This explains that humans must be able to balance the use of technology with physical activities in their daily lives, because if we depend too much on technology it will have a bad impact on our physical being.



In that scene, humans only use hand movements and voice command to move the robot without having to make much effort. These humans do not need to move if they need something, because the humans' needs are automatically met by the axiom ship. Automation makes human activities dependent on technology and experiences alienation from the products of their activities.

THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN AND ROBOT INTERACTION

Wall-E and EVE's presence aboard the Axiom initiate a series of changes in human behavior. Wall-E's curiosity and determination inspire the humans he encounters to re-evaluate their existence.



In that scene presented of Wall-E which accidentally realize about her surroundings. Previously, she was profoundly caught up in her call, carelessly uninformed about her general climate and what is really occurring on board the Axiom. However, when these consumerist advancements were briefly removed, the unexpected amazed appearance all over shows the acknowledgment of her activities and powers her to confront the genuine truth of the Axiom.



In that photo, Wall-E helping a human named John to get up and walk, illustrate the potential for change and the reawakening of human abilities and connections. In this film one of the ways in which the theme of human degradation is presented by the use of Wall-E as a character symbolizing human dignity.



In that scene portrayed, Wall-E does an interaction between other robots. This ethic should be applied on the humans in this film but it is symbolic by the robot. In this case, robot could represent as human because they have a curiosity to learn a new thing.



In the image, Mary notices the two spots outside the window and remembers them. She attempts to recall the name yet unwittingly she goes in reverse and hits John's drifting seat. She switches off his virtual screen and converses with John. This is the primary direct contact between people. It implies that immediate correspondence, in which correspondence is one of the models of humanism, has started



In the image, John simply awakens from rest after Mary closes the virtual screen down. John perceives the spot and he waves Wall-E followed by Mary. Waving is one of somebody's method for hello somebody and hello is one more model of refinement.



John absentmindedly brings his given over to his armrest and contacts Mary's hand. Both turn towards one another. They visually engage interestingly. Here, another model gives the idea that is eye to eye connection. Close to guide cooperation and direct discussion eye to eye, eye contact connection is likewise required in light of the fact that having eye to eye connection with the individual we are conversing with is vital. It demonstrates that we respect him. This is the principal direct discussion between people without utilizing the virtual screen. Mary and John find it different with the virtual screen discussion on the grounds that in direct contact they might be aware of one's inclination and articulation.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PLANT



Seedling implies the living plant. This is an image implies the new living for a new life. In this film, the robot names wall-e have a mission to clean the earth, then again, the other robot names Eve. Her occupation is tracking down a plant on the earth to beginning another life for individuals. The plant Wall-E discovers symbolizes hope and renewal. Its significance extends beyond being a mere plot device; it represents the possibility of a return to a sustainable way of living.

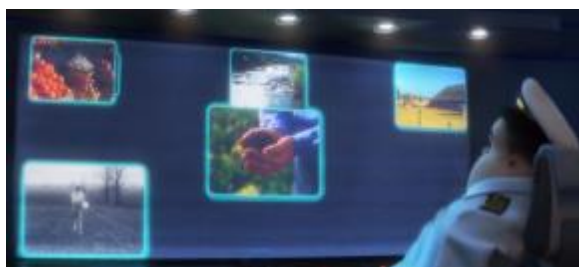


In that scene, Eve has found a plant which is the mission that programmed for her. Eve implies the main female robot from Buy N Large space apparatus that appointed her to the earth. This image broke down as the earth mother that will save the earth via looking through the plant and cause it to develop well to cover and save the earth.

THE CAPTAIN'S AWAKENING



In this scene, it is a turning point for a captain who begins to have curiosity after analyzing the soil carried by Wall-E. The character arc of Captain McCrea embodies the potential for leadership and change. Tomkins(1962, as cited in Kashdan and Silvia, 2024) stated interest persuades individuals to attempt new things, investigate complex thoughts, meet charming individuals, and do novel activities. Pleasure, conversely, persuades individuals to frame connections to recognizable things and to support exercises that were agreeable previously.



The captain begins to learn about the earth to fulfill his insight. Understand what is meant by Earth as the place of origin. By learning, humans get new things for their own development. As seen by the captain, humans are starting to regain their identity as humans who are not ruled by robots or A.I.



Initially complacent and reliant on the ship's autopilot, AUTO, the captain gradually awakens to the reality of their situation. His determination to return to Earth and restore humanity's connection to their home planet represents a reclaiming of human agency and responsibility. The captain symbolism his confrontation to AUOTO which humans try to rise of their will and ambition.

THEMES AND SYMBOLISM

CRITIQUE OF CONSUMERISM

The Buy n Large Corporation represents the dangers of unchecked consumerism and corporate control. The film critiques the culture of instant gratification and passive consumption that has led to environmental and human degradation.



This company influence human do fulfill its self -satisfaction without pay attention to the resources. So, the society hegemonic for hedonist lifestyle which the impact of that are mass consumption and environmental degradation. Over-consumption characterized as huge volumes are delivered by the business, while on the other, the regular utilization of items past might be viewed as fundamental necessities. Nevertheless, Merriem Webster said that the extreme expending or utilization of something(Treadaway 2019). Through the design of the film, the Buy N Large Company is introduced as being undefined from the public authority. Since humankind lives on what is all a monster space journey transport which is controlled by Buy N Large, the partnership basically oversees all of mankind.



The film adds to the deception of Buy N Large being the public authority in its show of the Chief. During the recordings that the Chief of Buy N Large made for the skipper of the Axiom, he is outlined so that he could undoubtedly be confused with the Leader of the US. The President concedes that the garbage has prompted an ascent in harmfulness in the environment and that it is outside of Buy N Large's reach to fix the wreck it made, and people cannot get back to earth. These scenes in the film show that in the realm of WALL-E people have consumed so a lot and delivered such a lot of waste, that it has basically covered the entire planet and made life unreasonable.



The scene shows about humans which drink and eat in a cup. Eating and drinking is a daily agenda for humans to fulfill nutritional intake. However, in the film Wall-E where humans eat almost all the time. Also, in this scene, humans fulfill their needs with foods that are high in sugar and low in fiber, protein and vitamins. Therefore, excessive consumption of sugar could lead to obesity, which is a major risk factor for metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Also, it can additionally increase the risk of heart disease by triggering inflammation and increasing blood pressure. These conditions are worst for humans which led to degradation of health.



The picture explained that the Axiom ship introduces the newest clothing model, the color blue. The axiom ship shaped people's thoughts regarding the fashion styles that were trendy at that time. An AI tries to persuade humans to consume what is being offered, thus making humans become automatons who are easily directed to their desires. Become a human being who is obliged to consume the goods offered by advertisements. This critique is evident in the portrayal of the Axiom's society, where every aspect of life is dominated by consumerist values.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY



In that scene symbolizes many towers of junk are standing next to a real building. It shows a lot of garbage that produced by humans. "Wall-E" emphasizes the importance of environmental stewardship. The depiction of a destroyed Earth serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of neglecting the environment.



In the picture presented about water condition in the earth which become lake of sludge. So, the water contains a dangerous substance due to the waste. There is no living creature could survive on that water. Because, it could be seen on that water there is a chemical color and have a bad smell. As it is portrayed in the movie, water pollution such as lake of sludge caused by degradation of human.



This picture symbolize about human degradation due to environmental responsibility. a lot of waste already reach outside part of atmosphere due to exploitation of nature by human. So environmental degradation happened in every corner of the earth. Earth become a wasteland and have an extreme climate change such as a sandstorm would happened suddenly.



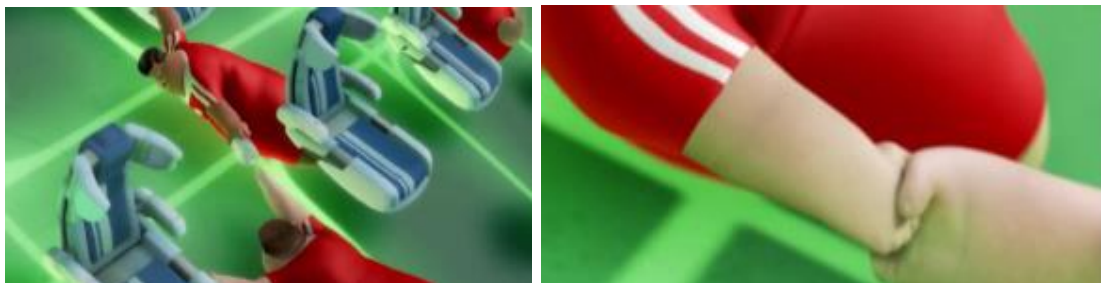
In that shot, the CEO of Buy N Large company stated that earth already have a high toxic due to make earth unstable. The CEO told the pilot to stay in that ship forever to make it easier. After the over-consumption, many of junk spread through the town that impact to earth. The condition of earth which so many pollutions and have a skyscraper that not a building, except tower of rubbish. There are no green plants or any kind of animal life in the earth due to the degradation of human. Such as in this picture below, many towers of junk are standing next to a real building. It shows a lot of garbage that produced by a human. Waste studies by Kafka(2021) centers as much around removal as it does on commercialization and the repercussions of this, compounded by globalization, on arrangements of self, cooperation with others, articles and conditions, and the association of human social orders

HUMAN POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

Despite the grim depiction of human degradation, "Wall-E" ultimately offers a message of hope. The transformation of the humans on the Axiom, inspired by Wall-E and EVE, demonstrates the potential for change and renewal. The film underscores the importance of leadership, individual responsibility, and collective action in overcoming challenges and reclaiming human dignity.



The captain has stepped up and stepped out of his comfort zone. The captain took over the plane that had been hijacked by his assistant pilot, AUTO. The captain fights for his pride as a captain and to be able to return home, because the conditions on Earth have changed and become habitable. Making decisions is a progress that humans have achieved in the film. Because for a long time, humans have only followed directions from robots and A.I. that have been provided by Axiom.



In these image a man is attempting to help another man. Assuming they actually utilize the sophisticated floating seat, they will to avoid that since there are robots that will help them. This demonstrates that they have a seed of humanism. The seed of humanism becomes further.

Very much like a bloom which need a prolific soil and compost to flourish humanism does as well. Eagerness to help somebody who is in a difficult situation will fortify the development of humanism. Demonstrated by the image despite the fact that he, at the end of the day, is in a difficult situation however he attempts to give a hand to a man.



More grounded due to solidarity. The image has demonstrated that individuals need others. They are not surrender effectively in aiding individuals. Now and again the principal shot bombs yet never surrenders and continuously attempting is the key for progress. Humans are finely aware and united to embrace each other because by uniting, humans can become a society that is more solid and has integrity. In this manner, it demonstrated that people are the social animals. They understand that they cannot live alone. They need each other to live and to make due. They won't make it assuming that they remain solitary. Everybody in a general public requirements assist regardless of whether they with knowing one another. In the event that everybody does this, humanistic way of behaving has effectively been carried out solidly.

CONCLUSION

In summary, "Wall-E" presents a compelling narrative about human degradation through its depiction of environmental, physical, social, and psychological decline. The film serves as a critique of modern consumer culture and technological dependence, offering a powerful message about the importance of environmental responsibility and human connection. Through the themes and symbolism which depicted on that film, explain that degradation of human is firmly affected to the behavior of society which could not control their desire of consumption. Human life describes how civilization at that time was formed. In the film, human development is very advanced, but it is inversely proportional to the morals possessed by humans at that time.

Individuals ought to recall that they are social natures who need others to live. They ought to keep a decent and shared relationship among others and to arrive at this objective they ought to have great humanistic ways of behaving. Then, at that point, , in tolerating another reconstruction, for this situation the difference in the general public brought about by the modernization and the execution of innovation, they ought to prepare sure if they are intellectually and truly to carry out it throughout everyday life and furthermore they ought to think about innovation's positive and adverse consequences on their life. Individuals will generally have a high responsiveness, compassion and like to help others. These are the proof that humanistic ways of behaving are carried out solidly in their life. Then again, individuals in present day culture will more often than not have a low responsiveness, compassion and could do without to help or really focus on others. They put their requirements and their

business first. This is demonstrated by the terrible connection between neighbors in the public arena. All in all, dehumanization rehearses, naturally, frequently show up in current culture's life. Managing the execution of current innovation, scrutinize of present day customer culture, offering a strong message about the significance of natural obligation and human association. Through its engaging characters and thought-provoking themes, "Wall-E" remains a relevant and impactful commentary on contemporary societal issues. The lessons it imparts are essential for fostering a sustainable and fulfilling future for humanity.

REFERENCES

- Kashdan, Todd B., and Paul J. Silvia. (2005). "Curiosity and Interest: The Benefits of Thriving on Novelty and Challenge." *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, (2 Ed.) (January 2024). doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0034.
- L, Vasudha. (2021). "Andrew's Wall-E Reflection: Technology a Threat to Humanity." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* 6(6). doi: 10.22161/ijels.
- Mostafa, Malak. (2023). "Comparative Analysis of Dystopian Societies : Power Dynamics , Social Control , and Relevance in " Lord of the Flies " and " The Circle " Institute for English , American and Romance Studies , Chair of English Literature © Malak Mostafa Comparative Analys." (August). doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.33603.37920.
- O'connor, Michael. (1985). "Representation, Truth and Belief in Literature."
- Reynolds, Martin, Chris Blackmore, and Mark J. Smith. (2009). *The Environmental Response Reader*. edited by C. B. Martin Reynolds and and M. J. Smith. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Stories, Related. (2023). "Hollywood Flashback : ' Wall-E ' Blasted Its Way to Awards Glory in 2008." 1–8.
- Thanki, Kavita, James Ward, and Stephen Butler. (2021). "Wasted Lands : Waste Theory and Modern Dystopian Fiction." (July).
- Treadaway, Ashton. 2019. "The Loss of Humanity through Consumerism in *WALL-E*." (Vi):6–13.
- Uslu, Osman. (2022). "Causes and Consequences of Technology Addiction: A Review of Information Systems and Information Technology Studies." *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research* 8(3):299–306. doi: 10.24289/ijsser.1131136.