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The animated film *WALL-E* (2008) offers a post-apocalyptic scenario in which the earth is no longer inhabitable because humanity’s consumerist mode of living has caused large-scale environmental destruction. For this theme, the film has been celebrated as “the most powerful environmental statement made by either Disney or Pixar studios” (Murray and Heumann) and as a strong critique of the way of life in the Anthropocene. However, other scholars have criticized its green, anti-consumerist message as underlyingly perpetuating consumer-capitalist structures and as an example of Hollywood greenwashing. The urgency of the issues dealt with in the film, environmental concerns and consumerism, has increased in the past decade – as has the awareness of popular films’ profound influence on our education, values, and lifestyle choices. Thus, especially in light of the diverging appraisals of its environmentalist position, a critical analysis of *WALL-E* continues to be relevant.

In this paper, I will attempt to make sense of the perceived ambiguity of *WALL-E*’s environmentalist theme by focusing on its anthropogenic dimension – the representation of consumerism as responsible for the environmental Armageddon – and by placing the film within the framework of the post-apocalyptic genre. Building on theories that conceptualize Fordist and post-Fordist forms of consumer culture, I will argue that, on the one hand, *WALL-E* convincingly presents a human-made ecological destruction, framing Fordist consumer culture as the cause of the apocalypse. This environmentalist critique of consumerism is, as I will demonstrate, undermined by making the protagonist WALL-E a classic male hero of the post-apocalypse who saves the remnants of humanity and by characterizing him as a heroic post-Fordist consumer. Ultimately, the film falls short of being a consequent green statement. Instead, it presents post-Fordist consumer culture as the remedy of eco-catastrophe in a post-apocalyptic world.

References

Murray, Robin L., and Joseph K. Heumann. “WALL-E: From Environmental Adaptation to Sentimental Nostalgia.” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, vol. 51, 2009, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/WallE/text.html>. Accessed 8 June 2021.

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