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Environmental Degradation as a Deviation of Tauhid: Analysis of the Film WALL-E from the Perspective of Mawil Izzi Dien

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ABSTRACT

The global environmental crisis is not merely a technical issue but reflects a deeper moral and spiritual crisis within humanity. This research analyzes the representation of environmental degradation in the film WALL-E through the lens of Islamic Environmental Ethics as proposed by Mawil Izzi Dien. Using a qualitative textual analysis method, the study explores how the film's depiction of a waste-covered Earth and consumerist human lifestyle mirrors the Quranic concept of fasad (destruction). The findings indicate that the environmental collapse portrayed in the film is a systemic breach of mizan (balance) and a failure of humans to fulfill their role as khalifah (stewards). Ultimately, the research argues that environmental crises are manifestations of a deviation from the principle of Tauhid (the Oneness of God), where humanity's spiritual disconnect leads to the exploitation of nature. The study concludes that addressing ecological issues requires a reconstruction of spiritual awareness rooted in theological responsibility.

Keywords: *Tauhid, Environmental Ethics, WALL-E, Mawil Izzi Dien, Mizan.*

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world is currently under a “slow and steady” ecological attack, where the Earth’s health is becoming increasingly compromised. Manifestations of this crisis include rising global temperatures, the rapid melting of glaciers, and a “snowball effect” that disrupts aquatic life and strands wildlife. Beyond these climatic changes, the physical displacement of nature is evident as fields and rainforests are systematically converted into urban developments and shopping malls. While these issues are often viewed through a technical lens, they fundamentally reflect a profound moral and spiritual crisis within humanity, characterized by consumerist lifestyles and an exploitative relationship with the natural world.

In the framework of Islamic environmental ethics, the relationship between humanity and nature is deeply rooted in the principle of Tauhid (the Oneness of God). This theological foundation posits that the entire universe is a singular, integrated system created by Allah, where every component has a divine origin and intrinsic value. Within this system, humans are appointed as khalifah (stewards or trustees), tasked with the responsibility of managing the Earth with justice and sustainability. This role is not one of absolute ownership but a bestowed trust (amanah) that requires humans to uphold the mizan (balance) established by the Creator.

The violation of these universal laws leads to fasad, a Quranic concept referring to the corruption and destruction of the Earth resulting from human actions (QS. Ar-Rum: 41). The film *WALL-E* (2008) provides a poignant visual representation of this theological deviation. It depicts a future Earth rendered uninhabitable by mountains of waste, where humans have retreated into a hyper-technological existence, completely disconnected from their spiritual and ecological responsibilities. This cinematic narrative mirrors the concerns of contemporary Islamic scholars like Mawil Izzi Dien, who argues that the environmental crisis is a manifestation of a breach in the cosmic balance and a failure of human stewardship.

This research aims to analyze the representation of environmental degradation in *WALL-E* through the lens of Islamic ecotheology, specifically focusing on the perspectives of Mawil Izzi Dien. By examining the film’s portrayal of consumerism and ecological collapse, this study seeks to demonstrate how the physical destruction of the planet is a symptom of a deeper spiritual void and a deviation from the values of Tauhid. Ultimately, the study argues that addressing the ecological crisis requires more than technical solutions; it necessitates a reconstruction of spiritual awareness and a return to the ethical mandate of stewardship.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Research Design and Approach This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing interpretive textual and media analysis.

This approach is selected because the research aims to uncover deep-seated meanings, symbolic representations, and moral messages within a cultural artifact, rather than measuring data quantitatively. The film *WALL-E* (2008) is treated as a cultural text that reflects contemporary social realities, specifically regarding the global ecological crisis, consumerist lifestyles, and the spiritual alienation of humanity from the natural world. By using an interpretive lens, this study decodes how visual and narrative elements serve

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as metaphors for theological concepts.

Sources

The data for this research are divided into two distinct categories:

1. **Primary Data:** The primary source is the feature-length animated film *WALL-E* (2008), directed by Andrew Stanton. The analysis focuses on three specific elements: **dialogue** (inter-character communication), **narrative structure** (the progression from environmental decay to restoration), and **visual symbolism** (depictions of global waste, the sterilized environment of the *Axiom* ship, and the remaining biological life on Earth).
2. **Secondary Data:** Supporting data are drawn from authoritative literature on **Islamic Environmental Ethics**. Key sources include **Mawil Izzi Dien's** *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (2000), which provides a summary of the environmental components in Islam such as water, earth, and biogeological cycles. Additionally, the study incorporates the philosophy of **Seyyed Hossein Nasr** regarding the spiritual crisis of modern man, as well as **Al-Qur'an** (specifically verses regarding *fasad* or corruption, such as QS. Ar-Rum: 41) and relevant hadiths that discuss human stewardship.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through two primary methods:

1. **Observation (Watching Method):** The researchers employed a "repeated viewing" technique of *WALL-E* to systematically identify and document scenes, symbols, and motifs that represent environmental destruction and the loss of human spiritual awareness.
2. **Library Research:** A comprehensive review of academic literature was conducted to establish a theoretical framework. This involved analyzing eco-theological concepts such as *Tauhid* (unity), *Khalifah* (stewardship), and *Mizan* (balance) as they relate to environmental sustainability.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis follows a **qualitative interpretive model** consisting of four systematic stages:

1. **Data Reduction:** Filtering and focusing on specific segments of the film that directly relate to the research variables, such as scenes depicting the accumulation of waste and the sedentary, consumer-driven lifestyle of the humans.
2. **Data Categorization:** The reduced data are classified into four conceptual pillars of Islamic environmental ethics: **Fasad** (environmental corruption), **Mizan** (violation of ecological balance), **Khalifah** (the failure of human stewardship), and **Tauhid** (spiritual disconnection).
3. **Data Interpretation:** At this stage, the categorized filmic elements are analyzed through the eco-theological perspectives of Mawil Izzi Dien and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This involves explaining how the "technical" crisis shown in the film is a manifestation of an underlying "moral and spiritual" crisis.
4. **Conclusion Drawing:** The final stage synthesizes the findings to determine how *WALL-E* serves as a critique of modern anthropocentrism and confirms that ecological restoration requires a reconstruction of spiritual values rooted in the principle of *Tauhid*.



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Fasad and the Disconnect from Nature

The film *WALL-E* (2008) serves as a poignant cultural artifact that visualizes the "slow and steady" ecological attack currently threatening our planet. The depiction of an abandoned Earth, submerged under monolithic mountains of waste, acts as a literal manifestation of **fasad**, a Qur'anic concept referring to the corruption and destruction of the Earth resulting from irresponsible human activity. In Islamic eco-theology, this state of *fasad* is not merely a physical phenomenon but a reflection of a profound moral and spiritual crisis within humanity, characterized by an exploitative relationship with the natural world.

Humanity's retreat to the *Axiom* spaceship further illustrates a total **alienation from nature**. Life on the vessel is entirely mediated by technology and hyper-consumerism, where individuals live in a state of spiritual and ecological amnesia, losing sight of their inherent responsibility toward the planet. This cinematic narrative mirrors the scholarly critique that modern environmental crises are rooted in a problematic **anthropocentric view**. In this paradigm, nature is perceived merely as a resource for exploitation and a commodity for wealth generation rather than a **bestowed trust (amanah)**. Islamic environmental ethics, conversely, posits that the protection and preservation of the environment are obligatory duties because the Earth

B. Breach of Mizan and the Role of Khalifah

The ecological collapse presented in the film is analyzed as a direct consequence of violating the principle of **mizan**, or cosmic balance. Islamic teachings emphasize that the universe was created in a state of perfect balance and proportion at both qualitative and quantitative levels. As Mawil Izzi Dien underscores, this balance is a fundamental universal law, and its violation inevitably leads to systemic disorder and "ecocatastrophes". The hyper-consumption and sedentary lifestyle depicted on the *Axiom* represent a total abandonment of the "**middle path**" (**moderation**) and the values of frugality and simplicity central to Islamic tradition. In this state of imbalance, human greed and extravagance uproot the harmony intended by the Creator.

Furthermore, the humans' initial refusal to return to Earth—preferring the sterilized comfort of the *Axiom*—highlights a total failure of their role as **khalifah** (stewards). In the Islamic worldview, humans are not absolute owners of the planet but are **temporary administrators** or "gardeners" tasked with managing the Earth with justice, sustainability, and compassion. The role of a *khalifah* requires active participation in maintaining the Earth's health as a religious duty. The film's depiction of humans as passive, obese consumers serves as a critique of a society that has abdicated this divine mandate, trading the noble responsibility of stewardship for the hollow promises of corporate consumerism.

C. Environmental Crisis as a Deviation of Tauhid

The analysis suggests that the physical destruction of the planet in *WALL-E* is a symptom of a deeper **spiritual void** characterized by a deviation from the principle of **Tauhid** (the Oneness of God). *Tauhid* posits that the entire universe is a singular, integrated system where every component has a divine origin and intrinsic value, creating a "unity of creation". This theological foundation implies that humans and nature are synergistically dependent; when humans lose their spiritual connection to the Creator, they also



lose their moral compass regarding the treatment of creation.

The resolution of the film—symbolized by the discovery of a single green plant and the subsequent decision to return to Earth to "plant" again—represents the potential for revitalizing environmental theology by reconnecting value systems with **ecological praxis**. Unlike Western views that often treat environmental protection as a reaction to external factors or technical interests, the Islamic perspective is **taqwa-centric**. This means environmental activity is driven by a religious duty to please Allah, elevating nature protection to an act of worship (*ibadah*). Ultimately, addressing the global crisis requires more than technical solutions; it necessitates a reconstruction of spiritual awareness that recognizes nature as a trust (*amanah*) and a mirror reflecting the Divine.

CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive analysis of the film *WALL-E* through the lens of Islamic environmental ethics, particularly the perspectives of Mawil Izzi Dien, confirms that environmental degradation is not merely a technical or physical phenomenon but a profound **manifestation of a crisis in Tauhid**. The film's portrayal of a waste-covered Earth serves as a literal manifestation of *fasad* (corruption), reflecting a deeper spiritual void where humanity's disconnect from the Creator leads to the exploitation of nature. Within the framework of *Tauhid* (the Oneness of God), the universe is a singular, integrated system where every component has intrinsic value; thus, the ecological ruin depicted in the film symbolizes a total deviation from this "Unity of Creation".

Furthermore, the narrative of *WALL-E* highlights a systemic **breach of mizan** (cosmic balance) and a total failure of humans to fulfill their role as **khalifah (stewards)**. According to Islamic teachings, the universe was created in a state of perfect proportion and balance, yet the hyper-consumerist and sedentary lifestyle on the *Axiom* spaceship represents an abandonment of the "middle path" and the frugality encouraged in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The humans' initial refusal to return to Earth underscores their failure as "temporary administrators" or "gardeners" of the planet, having traded their divine mandate of stewardship for a life mediated entirely by technology and consumption.

To effectively address the current global ecological crisis, this study concludes that it is **insufficient to rely on technical solutions alone**. Instead, there must be a fundamental **reconstruction of spiritual awareness** that recognizes nature as a **bestowed trust (amanah)** from God. Environmental protection must transition from being a reaction to external factors toward a **taqwa-centric responsibility**, where ecological activity is driven by a religious duty to maintain the Earth's health as an act of worship (*ibadah*).

Looking forward, this research suggests that the resolution of the film—returning a single plant to Earth to restart life—symbolizes the potential for revitalizing environmental theology by reconnecting value systems with **ecological praxis**. **Future studies** could further explore how other media forms and cinematic narratives can be utilized as **pedagogical tools** to foster "eco-theology" awareness in various educational settings. The integration of such theological values into school curricula and community social awareness programs can serve as a powerful medium for building a generation of environmentally conscious *khalifah* dedicated to sustainable stewardship.



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