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ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS IN GLOBALIZED CINEMA: SOCIAL MEANINGS IN *WALL-E*, *AVATAR* AND *INTERSTELLAR*

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Abstract

In globalized cinema, portrayals of polluted Earth and critical remarks associated with lack of people's environmental responsibility are rather scarce, but they do exist. The paper explains how and why such motifs are incorporated into mainstream film production. The main aim of the text is to identify key popular film stories able to offer spectacular as well as meaningful images of environmentalism and implicit critique of people's indifference toward protecting the nature. The paper works with the assumption that while most Hollywood feature films representing the so-called climate fiction tend to focus on natural disasters and grim images of the future that involve humankind struggling to survive, we are still able to identify a range of film projects which explore new variations of this topic and/or further develop the cinematic social meaning bound to the "man against the nature" trope. Three different popular feature films – *WALL-E*, *Avatar*, and *Interstellar* – are examined in more detail through discourse analysis. Our results suggest that some of the most popular feature-length films focused on environmental topics tend to offer pessimistic, dystopian visions of humankind's future and promote the strangely appealing idea of humans giving up on the nature they have destroyed and actually leaving the uninhabitable Earth.

Key words: *Avatar*, climate fiction, environment, globalized cinema, *Interstellar*, *WALL-E*

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Introduction

Academic discussions on the ways in which nature and environmentalism are presented within globalized cinema necessarily have to address a number of issues. First of all, this particular topic and similar approaches to understanding social and cultural frameworks of contemporary fictional narrative cinema are largely overlooked by academics, especially when compared to substantial volume of scholarly discourses reflecting on mainstream cinema's ability to convey profoundly crafted messages about the power of love and other universal human values and interests (see, for example, Huntington, 2002), such as friendship, beauty, happy life, wealth, sex, and violence. Another issue worth mentioning, as O'Brien (2018) points out, is the fact that while experimental filmmaking and documentary cinema both have their respective traditions of scholarly research interested in environment-related motifs and topics, there is no clear line of thinking related to mainstream feature film's ability (and willingness) to represent environmental problems humanity has faced, is facing nowadays, and/or will face in the foreseeable future. As a result, approaches to discussing fictional narrative films that involve environmental themes are paradigmatically and methodologically diverse, typically associated with specific genres or national cinemas. We may also pay attention to environmental ethics communicated through film; Brereton (2016) explains that it allows us to look away from headline news and use mythic and allegorical storylines to safely, although only symbolically experience a variety of environmental problems.

This paper's purpose is to contribute to the evolving scholarly discourse which is centered on varying and ambiguous portrayals of environmental issues within globalized cinema. We define the term "globalized cinema" as the body of production processes, investments, personal relationships, creative approaches, thematic and formal elements, and specific feature films capable of attracting the attention of global movie audiences. These films are largely produced or co-produced by Hollywood studios or rather by their employees, subcontractors and representatives (Radošinská, Kvetanová and Rusňáková, 2020). As we assume, the visibility and general popularity of these motion pictures might help the motifs involving different aspects of environmentalism to gain prominence and wider recognition with hypermodern media culture.

According to Merriam-Webster, “environmentalism” is “a political and social movement focused on the preservation, restoration, and improvement of the natural environment” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This term unifies different approaches to studying and explaining environmentalism, which possess diverse levels of analytical strength and practicality, as explained by Sturgeon (2022). For example, we may differentiate between contemporary radical environmentalism (such as ecofeminism, etc.) and environmental justice advocacy. Our common responses to the key issue of global climate change differ as well; some are rather optimistic and utopian, other deeply pessimistic and dystopian. In globalized cinema, dystopian pessimism is largely prevalent, as noted below. O’Brien (2018) remarks that environmental themes are present in cinema more than ever before, also claiming that the relationship between film and the natural world is long and complex, and thus cannot be reduced to the most prominent problems such as climate change and pollution.

The paper does not aspire to function as a contribution to the contemporary ecocriticism, which we understand as a recognizable sub-branch of both literary and cultural studies that strives to define the relationship between literature (or, in our case, media content) and the natural environment, necessarily aiming to raise awareness of the need for concern and eventually action with regard to the environment (Buchanan, 2018). No critical analytical frameworks (such as phenomenology) are discussed, as we focus predominantly on the content of the mentioned and analyzed film works.

Theoretical Background

The first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed an explosion of films and video productions reflecting on environmental issues, as mentioned by Duvall (2017). The author also specifies the key themes appearing in this type of audiovisual content: climate change, peak oil, pollution, corporate control of food processing and management of water sources, social inequity, extinction of multiple animal species, general distrust in renewable energy technologies, etc. The rise of environmental motifs in terms of film production is marked by the involvement of environmental organizations, self-financed filmmakers and NGOs, but also Hollywood

major and influential television networks. Moore (2017) suggests that the related themes are often linked to specific movie genres. For example, the commodification of the environment often occurs in family films, while natural disasters are inherently typical for eco- thrillers and catastrophic movies. Environmental dystopias are frequently communicated via Hollywood science-fiction, and resource scarcity may even appear in westerns. Superheroic narratives sometimes address these issues as well. Murray and Heumann (2022) even mention so-called eco-comedies as a genre able to depict society's problems and environmental crises in a humorous manner, providing a safe symbolic space within which we may laugh at ecological disasters.

Šašalová (2022) explains that this surge of attention toward environmental motifs is also obvious in terms of mainstream production of popular fiction (literature), films, TV dramas, and digital games. Our growing awareness of the need to reduce pollution, global warming, lack of clean water, unsustainable demographic indicators, and so on is entering the essential narrative structures to challenge the existing creative strategies; for instance, thanks to a new subgenre of climate fiction or cli-fi. Murray and Heumann (2009) explain that films widely regarded as “environmental” can attract the attention of the mainstream audiences, but typically only for a short time period, mentioning movies such as Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) or *The 11th Hour* (2007) produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, which are driven by their producers' political influence or celebrity power, respectively. However, the authors also point out that when discussing fictional narrative cinema, we need to pay attention to the idea of a new, ecological type of hero. This eco-hero(ine) is portrayed as a savior; however, instead of saving the world, the character's main purpose is to overcome their deeply personal struggle, often by protecting someone important. This motif is present in movies such as *The Day after Tomorrow* (2004, directed by Roland Emmerich) or *Children of Men* (2006, directed by Alfonso Cuarón). The former story focuses on a father trying to save his son during the aftermath of a disastrous global event resulting in a new Ice Age, while the latter narrative involves a father figure as well, portraying a man helping a young pregnant girl who survives in a collapsing world in which people cannot procreate anymore.

Kaplan (2015) argues that movies which tend to depict futurist dystopian worlds (as imagined by their producers), and thus the consequences

of humankind's actions and mistakes in relation to the nature and environment, might be categorized as a new (sub)genre. The author calls this concept “pretrauma cinema”, because its purpose is to offer their audiences a vision of what might eventually become everyone's harsh reality. These environmental dystopias exist to recognize audience fears associated with the degradation of the environment that has already begun, but also with the utter devastation anticipated in the future. As it seems, mainstream cinema often works with the unpleasant idea mentioned by Sturgeon (2022); that most dystopian environmental scenarios involve production of new fortress communities built to protect either elites or vigilante warlords and their private armies. These fortresses are typically isolated from those suffering outside who desperately need access to food, water, energy sources and/or medical care. For example, the movie *Mad Max 4: Fury Road* (2015, directed by George Miller) portrays a self-proclaimed warlord who restricts “his” people's freedom and access to water while exchanging milk and food for weapons and gasoline. He also sexually abuses young and beautiful girls (called “prized breeders”) to produce healthier heirs. Another film to consider is Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013). The story depicts daily struggles of ordinary people barely surviving on Earth without any real medical care while the rich and powerful inhabit Elysium, a luxurious space station orbiting the planet which offers cutting-edge technologies and medical facilities. The role of “a warlord” is replaced by a ruthless woman managing the station and any access to its systems.

Other frequently used tropes are inexplicable mass suicides, criminal practices of pharmaceutical companies or other business subjects, and missions sheltering the remnants of human population after cataclysmic events. The notion of people committing mass suicides is present in *The Happening* (2008, directed by M. Night Shyamalan). The movie's storyline depicts people suddenly starting to take their own lives; their self-destructing behavior is seemingly caused by an airborne bio-terrorist attack based on spreading a dangerous neurotoxin. An obvious trait of ecocriticism can be seen in the critically acclaimed biographical drama *Erin Brockovich* (2000, directed by Steven Soderbergh), in which a young woman, who is an environmental activist and advocate, initiates a legal case against a major provider of natural gas and electricity due to the company's obvious responsibility for contamination of groundwater causing terminal illnesses such as cancer. A thematically similar plot is present in *The Constant*

Gardener (2005, directed by Fernando Meirelles). The film focuses on a married couple, a British diplomat Justin and his wife Tessa working for Amnesty International, during their stay in Nairobi, Kenya, specifically in the slums of Kibera. Tessa investigates local deaths and eventually links many of them to illegal trials of a new drug, Dypraxa. These tests are conducted by Kenyan-based company, which eventually has Tessa and some of her colleagues killed in order to destroy the damaging report mapping their activities. The movie is loosely based on real events that occurred in Nigeria. The motif of a group of last survivors is dominant in the science-fiction film *Snowpiercer* (2013, directed by Bong Joon-ho), in which a hi-tech train carries the people who survived a failed attempt to suppress global warming by the means of climate engineering. Instead, a Snowball Earth was created. However, the film's conclusion suggests that life outside the train still exists, even though the surviving species are not people, but rather animals.

According to Moore (2017), once producers choose environmental degradation as a topic, they must make delicate decisions regarding how to portray the process cinematically. However, the author critically points out that globalized cinema's desire to appeal to wide audiences constricts or flattens this otherwise controversial and multi-layered problem. Given that, many feature films focused on environmental motifs present simplistic solutions to complex issues in order to soothe the people's anxiety stemming from climate crisis and its obvious consequences.

As we believe, one of those simplified “ways out” is the idea that humans are not supposed to rally together and save the Earth;¹⁰³ instead, they are supposed to leave it and start over elsewhere. This premise is shared by all three feature films we discuss below – *WALL-E*, *Avatar*, and *Interstellar*.

Objective and Method

As noted above, the main objective of the paper is to identify key popular film stories able to offer spectacular as well as meaningful images

103 Note: We may mention an interesting exception, the movie *Sunshine* (2007, directed by Danny Boyle), in which a group of astronauts, scientists and technicians aboard a spaceship struggle to deliver their “payload”, a massive thermonuclear device designed to “revive” the dying Sun. Their purpose is to save life on Earth and they are supposed to return if everything goes as planned. The so-called payload includes the planet's remaining energy resources, i.e., it is the last chance to save the humankind before the Sun loses its power and dies down.

of environmentalism and implicit critique of people's indifference toward protecting the nature. We focus on three popular and highly commercially successful feature-length films – *WALL-E* (2008, directed by Andrew Stanton), *Avatar* (2009, directed by James Cameron), and *Interstellar* (2014, directed by Christopher Nolan). Our ambition is to understand the ways in which the given fictional narratives address different environmental issues within their storylines representing a range of genre conventions typical for science-fiction. The main research question is posed as follows: RQ: What kinds of environmental problems these movies reflect on, and which social meanings do they include?

In order to define social meanings present in *WALL-E*, *Avatar*, and *Interstellar*, we apply the principles of discourse analysis defined by Rose (2012), which means that we intend to place the discourse of visuals present in these films in their social and cultural context, in our case specifically in the context of environmental issues and the ways in which they are portrayed and reflected on. The term “social meaning” is inspired by Turner's (2006) introduction to film and its place within popular culture which emphasizes the medium's ability to offer narratives and characters the cinema audiences can easily identify with. Plencner (2008) claims that “social meanings” begin to exist when we interact with film narratives, and they are initiated by discourse (the way in which a movie plot is narrated) or created on basis on our identification with the film's protagonists. In other words, social meanings can be defined as criteria of mainstream film's popularity. Given that our paper reflects on cinematic portrayals of environmental themes, the crucial social meaning we deal with could be specified as the “man against the nature” trope.

Results Interpretation

WALL-E (2008)

The highly popular film story centered on WALL-E, a small robot developing a personality while trying to fulfil an impossible task, proves that environmental topics can also be present in an animated movie which is primarily aimed at children. At first sight, the film might be seen as an entertaining story about an insignificant, self-sustainable robot who tries to

clean the Earth flooded by garbage and toxic waste. However, the titular character also communicates the situational social meaning of romantic struggles, as most of WALL-E's actions are driven by his (at first comical and awkward) attempts to impress EVA, a much more progressive probe with obvious feminine characteristics. WALL-E's charming infatuation and efforts to attract EVA's attention also refer to the motivational social meaning of loneliness, desire and seeking true love.

Organized and encouraged by a massive corporation named Buy n Large, a multi-national shopping and technological conglomerate, humans left a long time ago to cruise the space inside a luxurious spaceship. Other, much bigger waste management robots have been dysfunctional for decades, even centuries, leaving WALL-E with an impossible task. There is no chance he will ever manage to clean up all this trash. However, the robot keeps trying, admiring ordinary things people threw away a long time ago and developing a peculiar, human-like personality during the process. The animated movie might be labeled as eco-comedy, even though it also includes elements of science-fiction.

Flaig (2016) explains that *WALL-E* functions as a humorous, yet convincing image of what may become of an increasingly rationalized, industrial world. The author also remarks that the film successfully humanizes a figure that represents perfected Fordism. WALL-E wanders a post-apocalyptic Earth devoid of human life. The titular character is modeled after legendary slapstick artists such as Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, dancing to songs from old musicals and admiring the most mundane objects people got rid of without thinking twice. In contrast, the film's humans do not have to work thanks to automation and robots immediately fulfilling their needs and wishes. The film thus offers a satirical reflection of post-Fordist notion of the "end of work" as well as a clear critique of virtual entertainment which is all around these people, distracting them and encouraging them to consume and enjoy life without any regrets or doubts. Shaw (2010) explains that the story depicts a toxic planet Earth that was abandoned due to an ecological disaster. Humanity is literally floating, not just inside a spaceship cruising the universe, but also throughout infinite modes of consumption, from levitating loungers to immediately available drinks and snacks. We might add that this journey across the space was first advertised as a "relaxing cruise", ideal vacation which was supposed to give waste management machinery enough

time and a chance to clean up the planet. And yet, no one really thinks about returning home; even the process of launching EVA probes that are supposed to scan the environment on Earth and its ability to sustain life again, is fully automated and people aboard are not aware something like that even exists. Given that, when EVA and WALL-E eventually deliver a small plant obtained on Earth aboard the spaceship, humans are surprised, even puzzled.

Thus, the story depicts an exaggerated, yet convincing portrayal of what has become of humans after they “temporarily” left their home planet. None of them were born on Earth and they spend every day having fun, relaxing, eating and drinking. They individually receive tailor-made, targeted “useful tips” or rather ads shared by Buy n Large, as the corporation also owns the spaceship named Axiom on board of which the human-kind roams across the galaxy. These people are visualized as helpless, overweight, always bored and lazy, barely able to walk or even stand, fully dependent on the spaceship’s automated services, just like small children who cannot survive without their parents who take care of them, shape their behavior, feed them and protect them. The Axiom’s lethargic population is surprised to see WALL-E, a small robot delivering a living plant, something these spacers have never seen before, a proof that Earth is still inhabitable.

Although the people living on the Axiom were not born on Earth and they know nothing about their own history, culture and natural environment, they are eventually forced to return. The scene in which they stumble, looking around to see the amount of waste their ancestors left behind, is both strange and funny. On the one hand, these people know nothing about the nature, saying that they look forward to grow their own pizza plants. On the other hand, they do have robots, digital archives, and other necessary technologies and they are probably able to make the planet sustainable again, at least partly.

Avatar

The blockbuster movie *Avatar* is one of the most commercially successful Hollywood projects in history, as well as its recently released sequel, *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022). The first film primarily tells a story about a physically disadvantaged soldier given a second chance, who eventually

decides to abandon his mission and live among natives inhabiting a planet named Pandora. However, this heroic story also communicates human indifference toward death and destruction happening on Pandora.

The colonizers are primarily interested in unobtainium, which is an extremely rare and thus highly valuable raw material that is otherwise unavailable. It is basically the only reason why they travel across the galaxy to Pandora and stay there; to mine and ship away as much unobtainium as possible. In the movie, Earth's military forces accompany a corporation responsible for mining unobtainium to make sure the process runs smoothly, i.e., without any interventions initiated by the Indigenous people, Na'vi. However, the previous attempts to "civilize" these "savages" through the Avatar program are rather unsuccessful, as it becomes clear that the richest sources of unobtainium are located beneath the most sacred places on the planet's surface, where the Na'vi gather to worship their deity.

The Na'vi tribe includes warriors and prophets portrayed as "noble savages". According to Krech (1999), "noble savages" represent a rational, moral savagery, being close to the nature. Bird (1996) also claims that such Indigenous people are physically and emotionally tied to their land, manifesting their spirituality, heroism and virtue.¹⁰⁴ However, their future is threatened by invaders and their tribes and communities tend to fall eventually. Fritz (2012) claims that the Na'vi in *Avatar* are depicted as "Ecological Indians", which means that they represent spiritual "noble savages" with deep understanding of their own lands and nature. However, they not only respect and cherish their sacred soil. They are also prepared to fiercely defend it against people from Earth – indifferent soldiers, highly efficient miners, and ruthless, cynical businessmen.

When attacked by humans, the Na'vi do not only face brutal violence and death. Their sacred tree is eventually destroyed as well. During the story, the giant "tree of souls" is defined as a living spirit which represents the Na'vi's goddess called Eywa. Eywa is perceived as the All- Mother, the Indigenous people's collective consciousness and the force balancing the nature on Pandora. This means that when the tree falls, hit by airstrikes, the Na'vi lose their Goddess, as well as a part of their history and shared mind, which causes both despair and great suffering. This is

¹⁰⁴ Note: On the contrary, "ignoble savages" are often imagined as wild, almost inhuman beasts who often actively participate in bloodshed and cannibalism (Krech, 1999).

a clever way to present human greed and desire to get rich, regardless of anyone else's fascinating natural habitat, highly valued religion and cultural tradition.

Even though the film's message related to protecting the nature and eco-criticism is clear, Rupert (2020) shares several critical remarks. The author argues that the wilderness on Pandora filled with wild animals and various dangers is depicted as Eden, a mystically perfect, harmonic environment sustained thanks to an endless cycle of renewal provided by Eywa. This portrayal is rather sentimental and simplified; Eywa is a forest deity similar to our understanding of "Mother Nature". In *Avatar*, Eywa "activates" wild beasts living in the forest to disrupt mining operations or eliminate military vehicles and aircrafts. That is precisely why the author criticizes the film; in reality Mother Nature cannot defend itself against destroyers, miners, or polluters. In other words, there is no magical, spiritual solution to the problem of endangering the environment. On the other hand, humans forced to roam the wilderness, such as Jake Sully, the film's main protagonist (Sam Worthington) personalize the timeless struggle of man facing the nature and, at the same time, repeated encounters with irrational spiritual forces. The film thus utilizes the most essential social meaning related to the good vs. evil binarity, portraying the nature, forest, deity and spiritual life as good, and technology, machinery, weaponry, economy and prioritization of valuable elements as evil.

Interstellar

Another highly successful movie to mention is the science-fiction film *Interstellar*. Again, the aspect of space travel is present within the narrative, and quite prominently. However, this time humans try to "save" the Earth or rather people living on it by finding a new home somewhere else in outer space. While talking to the main protagonist named Cooper, Professor Brand, the character played by Michael Caine, repeatedly says that we are not meant to save the Earth; we are meant to leave it. He also claims that we have manufactured all the appliances, TVs and technologies possible, but we have also run out of food due to irreversible climate changes. It remains unclear why people are not able to grow any other crops than genetically modified corn, although a serious disease that has decimated almost all crops (called "the Blight") is briefly discussed on several occasions. The

movie thus offers a pessimistic vision of the humankind's future. Despite technological progress, our unlimited consumerism and the resulting climate changes have damaged the planet permanently and the environment has irretrievably changed.

The true range of environmental destruction is outlined through the main character, Cooper (Matthew McConaughey), and his family and homestead. Corn fields are the only crops left and they are often decimated by wildfires. The family's everyday struggles deeply humanize the problems all people seem to face. One of the film's most remarkable scenes involves a sad conclusion that it is much more important to work as a farmer than to pursue much more prestigious and lucrative career patterns. This representational social meaning refers to questioning the role and purpose of technologies in relation to ordinary life, seeing our inventions and technological achievements as interesting and important, yet unable to satisfy the most fundamental needs – to breathe clean air, drink fresh water and eat quality food. The air people breathe is badly polluted and sandstorms or small tornadoes happen on a daily basis. People are getting increasingly sick, especially suffering from various lung diseases. Eventually, Cooper's adult son and his own family fall ill as well. Besides many inspirational notions of life-saving science and the possibilities of exploring the universe and fully explaining laws of physics related to gravity, the film also portrays people giving up any hope they have had left and eventually finding refuge elsewhere in space.

Being depicted as a reluctant eco-hero, Cooper initially leaves his family to join a space mission dedicated to finding an inhabitable planet. He hopes that the spaceship's crew will return after several years, which would mean that he will see his children and loved ones again. This ties the character to the situational social meaning of being a father who acts and sacrifices his own future to save his children. However, Cooper later finds out that the crew's return is almost impossible to achieve and that he and his fellow astronauts, in fact, left everyone behind, without any assistance or hope. Gittell (2014) remarks that the film overly simplifies the hard, complex choice to be made toward a plain statement that mankind can either leave the planet for good, or it can stay here and die. However, as the author reminds, the choices we actually have to make (and will have to make) regarding climate change and the future of Earth are much more

complicated. This is why it is possible to say that the film does not function as a convincing climate-change parable.

Besides seeing the collapsing ecosystems on Earth, the audiences are also confronted with images of hostile natural environments on different planetary systems across the space, from wild expanses of water similar to tsunami to frozen wastelands. However, on Earth we do not see much besides Cooper's corn farm and other settlements around his hometown and Professor Brand's highly classified research lab where the most qualified people are trying to find a solution to a seemingly unsolvable problem. We might see an abandoned drone Cooper seizes and plans to utilize as progressive farming equipment. He speculates that the drone no one controls and/or pilots might be Indian. Nevertheless, we do not actually find out how much of Earth's surface can still sustain life and how people live in other parts of the world.

Conclusions

Garforth (2006) argues that the presence of environmental consciousness and ecopolitics within cinema is a relatively recent phenomenon, which further diversifies the field of film studies and the broader area of "green cultural studies". However, the contemporary situation suggests that the number of mainstream films communicating rather generalized, yet emotionally intense "green" messages is constantly growing. Future research should examine how these topics evolve within mainstream cinema and in which ways they merge with other social meanings. The necessity to expand the existing variations of social meaning based on the "man against the nature" trope in globalized filmmaking is growing urgent especially in relation to children and teenagers, i.e., the future generations that will one day assume the responsibility for climate changes and protection of the remaining natural resources. Another question we need to address is to find out how to produce commercially successful and globally popular feature films involving environmental messages, as mainstream film audiences are generally interested in different types of social meanings such as finding true love, seeking one's true purpose in life, or eliminating a dangerous enemy. However, the most appealing social meanings can be cleverly combined with images of environmentally responsible behavior expressed by lead or at least supporting characters trying to save their loved ones or confront those who devastate the nature.

To answer the posed research question, we may conclude that the three interpreted examples of feature-length films involving ecocriticism show us that environmental topics can be cleverly incorporated into mainstream movies aimed at diverse target groups. However, erudite and intelligent discussions on the nature and sustainability are not included too often within globalized cinema. As it seems, such topics usually provide the story with a necessary background or support the narrative to humanize and emotionally saturate films that can often be defined as science-fiction, maybe even climate fiction.

The motif of people leaving Earth occurs in all three films. They do so either to obtain rare and expensive resources, or to save what is left of humanity and prevent starvation, or to live a comfortable, indifferent life aboard a spaceship where all necessary assistance is provided by robots, and everything seems to be very clean and well-arranged. Pradsmadji and Imanjaya (2023) observe that humans inside the Axiom have become severely obese. In addition to microgravity and its consequences, robots provide them with anything they might crave and they do not have to work or do anything meaningful whatsoever. One of the most serious consequences of this decline seems to be the fact that every individual is trapped inside their own, perfectly engineered “bubble” of never-ending consumerism. Thus, people have stopped interacting with one another, as anyone can enjoy comfort and security without other person’s help and approval, regardless of what kinds of activities are favored by their fellow “space travelers”. This might be interpreted as extreme individualism and consumerism.

People of the future are often portrayed as cruel, cynical and greedy (*Avatar*), helpless, sick and skeptical regarding their future (*Interstellar*), or lazy, incapable, bored and overweight (*WALL-E*). On the other hand, these films, in spite of their flaws or questionable narrative elements, successfully contribute to the much needed society-wide discussions on how important is to respect the nature and its spiritual meaning, how hard it will be to face the consequences of climate change in the future, or how important and demanding it is to actually care about the environment.

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EKOLOŠKE TEME U GLOBALIZIRANOJ KINEMATOGRAFIJI: DRUŠTVENA ZNAČENJA U FILMOVIMA *WALL-E*, *AVATAR* I *INTERSTELLAR*

Sažetak

U globaliziranom kinematografskom pejzažu prikazi zagađene Zemlje i kritički osvrt na nedostatak ekološke odgovornosti među ljudima relativno su rijetki, ali ipak postoje. Ovaj rad analizira na koji način i iz kojih razloga takvi motivi bivaju uključeni u mainstream filmsku produkciju. Glavni cilj rada je identificirati ključne popularne filmske narative koji ne samo da nude spektakularne vizualne prikaze ekoloških tema, već i implicitnu kritiku ljudske ravnodušnosti prema zaštiti prirode.

Polazna pretpostavka istraživanja je da se većina holivudskih igranih filmova koji se bave tematikom klimatske fikcije (climate fiction) fokusira na prirodne katastrofe i mračne vizije budućnosti u kojima čovječanstvo pokušava preživjeti. Ipak, moguće je izdvojiti niz filmskih projekata koji istražuju nove varijacije ove teme i/ili dodatno razvijaju društveno značenje povezano s tropom “čovjek protiv prirode” u filmskom diskursu.

Tri različita popularna igrana filma – *WALL-E*, *Avatar* i *Interstellar* – analiziraju se detaljnije metodom diskurzivne analize. Rezultati istraživanja sugeriraju da najpoznatiji filmovi s ekološkim temama često nude pesimistične, distopijske vizije budućnosti čovječanstva, promovirajući intrigantnu ideju o ljudima koji napuštaju prirodu koju su uništili i odlaze sa Zemlje, čineći je nenastanjivom.

Ključne riječi: avatar, klimatska fikcija, okoliš, globalizirana kinematografija, *Interstellar*, *WALL-E*