

**HEROISM OF ROBERT NEVILLE IN
I AM LEGEND MOVIE**

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ABSTRACT

I am Legend is a film that tells about a military scientist who struggles to save human extinction from zombie virus. The purpose of this paper is to show the nature of heroism which exist in the protagonist's characters. The writer uses library research in collecting the data. This analysis is supported by intrinsic elements as cinematography. In analyzing the extrinsic elements, the author uses the theory of heroism. The result of this paper is that Neville shows heroism act such as being decisive, creative in finding solution, being a religious man, helping and fighting the enemy. Those are aspects which represent characteristics of heroism in Neville.

Keyword: *I am Legend*, heroism, zombie

1. Introduction

Film is an expression of art which delivers many kinds of messages and topics, such as heroism. Heroism is a passion with higher purposes and great skill to think what he/she will do, not just emotional moment. Heroism has been used since the era of Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1841. It is a social value that has been applied since cave paintings, spread in oral tradition and molded legends, folktales, and myths into poems, epics (Carlyle, 1891; Hook, 1943; Klapp, 1948). Literature also emphasizes the word heroism as to help without any compensation.

One of the films which talks about heroism is the Francis Lawrence movie's *I am Legend*. It describes about the condition in the world that was infected by virus. People who infected the virus will become a zombie. The genre of this movie is science fiction and put Will Smith as the main actor. This virus turns humans into carnivores zombies that afraid of sun. Robert Neville acted by Will Smith tries to search the antiviral to save human in the world. He has already lost everything, such as losing his family and many tragic situations, to get the antidotes. Finally, he finds the antiviral and goes to mountain areas to build a safe place for others.

Heroism of Robert Neville to risk his own life plays significant role in *I am Legend*. He gains the nature of heroism after he decided to stay in town. He is also concerned about human salvation. Selwyn W. Becker & Alice H. Eagly say in "The Heroism of Women and Men", that heroism consists of actions to help others, despite the possibility that they may result in the helper is death or injury (Becker and Eagly, 2004: 163).

The writer is interested in analyzing how heroism is reflected and how it works in Robert Neville. For those reasons, the writer chooses “*Heroism of Robert Neville in I am Legend Movie*” as the title of the project.

2. Theoretical Frame Works

2.1 Narrative Aspect

There are many narrative aspects based on Barsam in *Looking at Movies: An introduction to Film*. So, I would like to discuss character, setting, and event in this project.

2.1.1 Character

A character has a strong effect on a movie because it can turn on a situation in the movie. Besides, the protagonist and antagonist always exist in a character.

Richard Barsam says:

Thus, when we talk about characters in our analyses of movies, we should consider them both as beings who (much like living, breathing people) have discernible traits, habits, and dispositions and as formal elements that help develop the narrative.” (2010: 134).

Major characters, the most important characters to the plot, make the most things happen or have the most things happen to them. Because plots depend on conflict, major characters—male or female—are often further described as protagonists and antagonists (2010:135).

Barsam says about the minor characters that plays a less important role in the overall movie, functioning usually as a means of moving the plot forward or of fleshing out the motivations of the major characters (2010 :136). The function of the minor character is to support major character.

2.1.2 Setting

According to Barsam setting explains as follows:

The setting of a movie is the time and place in which the story occurs. It not only establishes the date, city, or country, but also provides the characters' social, educational, and cultural backgrounds and other identifying factors vital for understanding them, such as what they wear, eat, and drink. (2010:138)

A setting helps the film to attract the audience to be more understood about the place, situation, age, profession, and personality in the film. Barsam says that the characters will wear clothes similar to our own; the designer understands that we will read these costumes more closely and interpret them on the basis of our experiences (2010:171). From the quotation, audience can see the place and time in the movie such as setting a place in a movie like on the road, in the building, on the ground, at the airport. While for the setting the time in a film such as at night, and appearing the year or the date on film.

2.1.3 Event

According to Barsam, events consist of two hierarchies.

This hierarchy consists of (1) the events that seem crucial to the plot (and thus to the underlying story) and (2) the events that play a less crucial or even subordinate role. (2010:127)

The first hierarchy consists of major events that become the main events in the film. It also seems like the main conflict. The second hierarchy consists of minor events that support the main conflict.

2.2 Heroism

Heroism is an abstract and moral concept which is not easy to explain. Therefore heroism cannot be easily interpreted, because it involves some aspects. Heroism can be accepted when those actions are already visible and have an impact on the environment.

The concept of "heroism," like so many others, is a high-level abstraction--it is primarily a moral concept--and requires a rational philosophical system, including the principle of mind-body integration, as its proper base. Without such a basis the concept can be neither rigorously-defined nor adequately-understood (Bernstein, 2002:2).

In heroism there are several classifications which determine whether a person is a hero or not; that is having higher purpose. A higher purpose in life is a way to build character, to have an ethical life and good thinking. Hero must be able to act quickly when he finds a new problem. Heroism also needs physical and moral courage to solve the problems, both physically and morally. Ron Lieberman said:

Heroism is man's attempt to fulfill a higher purpose, it is the basis for character development, ethical living, and critical thought. Athletes, race car drivers, and firemen are all marketed as heroes, but they do not pass the critical test: They are not engaged in a battle of good versus evil (Lieberman, 2002:1).

According to William R Thomas in *The Assault in Civilization* the concept of heroism is self-sacrifice (2001:1). Heroism is not always apparent because heroism is the condition of someone who wants to help each other by her/his sacrifice. Soul of

heroism cannot be bought with anything like the desire to achieve something material or non-material like fame.

In summary, heroism is based on better characteristics of things such as moral greatness, skills, action, and the readiness to face the problems physically or non-physically. I argue that the character of heroism is important because it has a great impact on a life. The act requires of willingness of sacrifices to achieve peace.

3. Analysis

In the analysis, the writer connects the intrinsic elements of the movie with the theory reflected in “*I am Legend*” Movie. Meanwhile, the theories talk about how heroism working in Will Smith as Robert Neville when he tries to save the human race from a virus.

3.1 Character

3.1.1 Major Character

3.1.1.1 Robert Neville



Picture 1 (*I am Legend*, 00.45.24)



Picture 2 (*I am Legend*, 00.09.17)

Neville is a virologist for the military living in New York City with his dog, Sam. Neville's wife and daughter are killed in an accident while evacuating the city due to the outbreak of the virus. He is a man who has a stronger immune than others so he can live in the midst of savage zombie. Before the virus attack the city, he worked as a military scientist. He spends his days exercising, hunting, driving his car, watching films and mostly making attempts to finding a cure for the virus.

TV dialogue : “Dr. Neville will be taking a closer look at the ongoing mutations of Dr. Alice Krippin's once-hailed miracle cure for cancer. So far, almost 5000 patients treated with her retrofitted virus have begun exhibiting symptoms resembling the early onset of rabies. Twenty-five patients have already died. Dr. Neville has ordered local hospitals to stockpile antiviral drugs and to begin preliminary quarantine protocols. We are fully confident Dr. Neville.”
(*I am Legend*, 00:44:43)

It shows that Neville is a scientist who is considered important by the government. He affects the safety of people on the virus. Besides published on the news, in picture 2, Neville's photo became the main picture in the cover of the magazine which the magazine is a famous magazine.

3.1.2 Minor Character

3.1.2.1 Anna



Picture 3 (*I am Legend*, 01:11:51) Picture 4 (*I am Legend*, 01:08:04)

In this film, there are some people who have the same immunity like Neville. Anna is a woman who struggling for her life. Anna struggling tries to find a help with a little boy, Ethan. They can find Neville from radio calls were often broadcast when daytime. In this film, Anna is a person who believes that there are still some people who can survive from the virus. She believes that every problem has an escape. In picture 4, he tried to convince Neville about people who are still alive.

3.1.2.2 Ethan



Picture 5 (*I am Legend*, 01:11:05) Picture 6 (*I am Legend*, 01:09:26)

Ethan is one of the children who can survive from virus attack. In the movie, Ethan and Anna are gone to look for Neville. He is the only child who has bravery because when Neville angry, he quickly took the knife to defend from bad situation is going to happen. The picture 6 shows that he was easy to adapted in new environment. It looks when Ethan and Anna entered Neville's home, they do anything like cooking, playing, and watching television like their own home.

3.2 Setting of *I am Legend* Movie

“*I am Legend*” movie was made in 2007. It means the film was made in modern era.



Picture 7 (*I am Legend*, 00:05:36)



Picture 8 (*I am Legend*, 00:24:50)



Picture 9 (*I am Legend*, 00:16:35)

The pictures above explain the setting of film both place and time.

Picture 7 which is taken in the road of New York city. All of the building is mess and no one else. At the time, Neville and his dog was hunting a deer. The

setting of the time is in midday because zombies cannot attack him, they are afraid with light especially sun light.

In seaport, picture 8, Neville offers the help for other. The bridge was destroyed because to prevent zombies to out from city. The setting of the time is in midday. Every day Neville stayed in there to broadcast the help message.

Meanwhile picture 9 describes the laboratory's Neville. All of the equipment is complete to do all of his experiments. The laboratory's design and the equipments indicate that he was actually preparing to help people in search for antidote. The setting of time is every day that he wants to do.

Besides setting of place explained above, there is setting of time. From the pictures above, we can see that the film was made in the modern era. Modern design is clearly seen in the picture both in the building design that shows

3.3 Heroism Reflected in Robert Neville's Character in *I am Legend* movie

I am Legend movie represents the heroism in Neville's act. The writer found five heroism showed in this movie, such as: Neville decision to find the antidote, Neville's creativity to make the trap for the zombies, Neville is a religious man, Neville offers the help, Neville fights with zombie.

In the movie, Neville is a man who has a job as a scientist in military. In the first time, he decides to stay in town to get the antidote for virus. Neville has a family and he wants save his family by a helicopter but he loses them because other helicopter crushed their helicopter but before he delivered his family, he promise to

his wife that he wants to stay in town and find the antidote. Heroism rise in Neville when he conscious that he must find the antidote. The movie reflected in heroism that he decide to stay in town. Philip Zimbardo in *Understanding Heroism* (Zimbardo, 2013), heroism typically involved bravery and gallantry, which combine to become courage.

Neville is a great man that he trying continuously searches the virus. Many way he did to get how can heal humans from zombie become a human. In this movie, it shows that he did a lot of experiments from many sample zombies and one day he want caught the zombie with a trap in a building. That movie reflected with Ron Liebermann theory that heroism have character development, ethical living, and critical thought. The character development in this movie is when he wants to understand about the zombie and virus. It looks that Neville make a lot of experience in his laboratory. In this movie, the creative way looks in scene when he tries to catch zombie in a building. He also put some explosives and lights which surround the house to protect him from zombie.

The writer found what Neville has a sacrifice that cannot be replaced with anything. He tries with all knowledge that he knows. Neville fights with evil in his home, it is one of the characteristic of heroism that he tries to save the other survivor who in his home.

Heroism of Neville are reflected in:

A. Neville's decision to find the antidote



Picture 10 (*I am Legend*, 00:15:08) Picture 11 (*I am Legend*, 00:14:47)

Someone who has a soul of heroism usually has good purpose of doing things. This is supported by good morals that are commonly done long ago. With a good foundation, a heroic person can help others who are unfortunate. In this film, Neville wants to remain in the city to fight the zombies by finding antivirus. He volunteered himself to live alone and leave his family. It is pushed by a high goal to save people. He was able to save people because he is a scientist. In the picture, Neville said to his wife that he must live in the city to find an antivirus and save people. He is willing and daring to be directly involved in this rescue.

His wife : “What are you doing?”
Neville : “What am I doing?”
 : “I’m not gonna let this happen”
His wife : “Let? This isn’t up to you.”
 : “You can’t control—“
(*I’m a Legend*, 00:15:08)

In this dialogue, Neville shows that he has to stay in town to save all of people that he can. He does not care for himself because he thinks about how to save humanity from the zombie. In order to find the antidote, Neville conduct experiment.



Picture 12 (*I am Legend*, 01:15:15)

Picture 13 (*I am Legend*, 00:17:11)

Heroism is also based on critical thought; one of them is not easy to give up. Someone who does not easily give up will do everything to be able to get the goal. Hard work, perseverance and clear purpose are keys to improving spirit to achieve the goal. In the picture 12, Neville has done a lot of experiments on zombies to be changed back into a human. He does not give up easily to find the antivirus by doing many ways because he does not want humans become extinct due to zombies. He involve emotionally because he lost his dog due to a zombie attack.

Other survivor: "Did all of them die?"

Neville : "Yes."

Other survivor: "My God."

Neville : "God didn't do this, Anna, we did."

(*I'm Legend*, 01:15:15)

In these conversations, other survivor surprised to see more results of experiments in Neville's laboratory. Accidentally other survivor said "My God" but Neville replied "God didn't do this, Anna, we did". The conversation proves that there must be an antivirus for the zombie virus and Neville believes that zombies can be cured because it is not God's creation.

B. Neville's creativity to solve the problems



Picture 14 (*I am Legend*, 00:33:56)

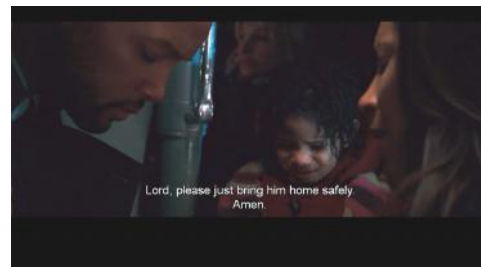
Picture 15 (*I am Legend*, 00:32:09)

Creative thinking is the result of an existing problem that requires to be solved. Flexible, unconventional, passionate, free, self-centered, hard-working, dedication and intelligence are things that there are in a person to think creatively. Neville has several properties that indicate that he was creative, which is flexible, unconventional, self-centered, hard-working, dedicated and intelligent. He proves it to make a trap to catch the zombies. The goal is to find the antivirus.

C. Neville's religiosity



Picture 16 (*I am Legend*, 00:43:24)



Picture 17 (*I am Legend*, 00:43:28)

Religious are more inclined according to the nature of religion. The examples of religious is to have a high spirit, prayerful, loving fellow humans, doing rituals / practices there are in the religion, follow the rules of the religion and the nature of reality (religion more applicable to everyday life). Neville has these natures and applies it to life. In the picture, Neville is praying for his wife and child to be in the evacuation of the save place. He hopes that his family is fine. Besides that, he also

applies the nature of other religion rule which loves fellow humans by looking for antivirus. Whatever happens, Neville still saves people.

His wife : “Dear Lord, please watch over Robert and keep him strong through the struggles ahead. Lord, please just bring him home safely. Amen.”

Neville : Daddy's gonna make the monsters go away, baby, okay?

His daughter : Sam, you protect Daddy
(*I'm Legend*, 00:43:24)

In the dialogue, his wife was praying to God to keep Neville. This means that Neville’s family loves each other. In addition, the family shows a gesture of a good prayer by closing their eyes and folding their hands. It shows that the family is a religious even though they are in a bad condition

D. Neville’s offer to help others



Picture 18 (*I am Legend*, 00:24:43)



Picture 19 (*I am Legend*, 00:24:50)

Someone who offers help to someone else will always fill fulfilled. Similarly with Neville that offers help to others in the dock using the radio. It makes him have a good personality when being a scientist military. Care for others is one of the results of military education. In addition, he has positive perspectives that there are a few people who are not exposed to the zombies virus, therefore he broadcasts the help continuously.

(Monologue)

Neville: "I am a survivor living in New York City. I am broadcasting on all AM frequencies. I will be at the South Street Seaport every day at midday when the sun is highest in the sky.

If you are out there, If anyone is out there I can provide food. I can provide shelter. I can provide security. If there's anybody out there anybody. Please. You are not alone. "

(*I'm Legend*, 00:24:43)

In the monologue, he helps in providing all the necessary requirements. He provides food and shelter where every people need it. Another situation that shows Neville helps other people is depicted below:



Picture 20 (*I am Legend*, 01:25:57)



Picture 21 (*I am Legend*, 01:34:19)

A rescue will be useful if there are people who need it. Like in the picture 20, other survivors are hiding under the table of zombies who was in a room with them and Neville comes at the right time. In this case, Neville venture to against zombies directly because he wanted to save them.

Other survivor: [ETHAN CRIES]

Neville : "Ssssttt...!!!"

[Shot the zombie][YELLS]

Neville : "Come on. Come on."

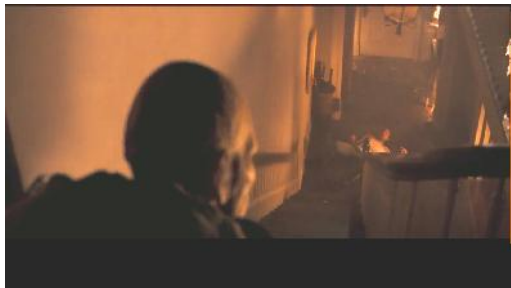
"Are you okay? You all right?"

Other survivor: " Yeah"

(I'm Legend, 01:25:57)

In the dialogue, Neville tries to rescue other survivors by calming the situation. Although almost caught by zombies but Neville readily shoot zombies and eventually other survivors survived. Not just physically, he also ask directly how their condition to calm them down.

E. Neville's battle with zombie



Picture 22 (*I am Legend*, 01:24:33)



Picture 23 (*I am Legend*, 01:24:40)

Fighting means using physical force to try to defeat someone. It is to protect something or show something. When someone is fighting to save something, he does not think of himself. There are 2 kinds of fights, physical and non-physical. In this film, it was shown that Neville was doing a physical fight with zombies. He fights to save himself and others who are at home.

4. CONCLUSION

The movie *I am Legend* tells about a scientist who cannot stop the spread of dangerous viruses that infect humans, but he has immunity. He decided to stay in the city alone only to find the antivirus. He also hopes to help others who may still be in the city. Many experiments were

conducted to sacrifice his lives and life. Film that directed by Lawrence, also shows the characteristic of heroism shown in the main character, Neville. Heroism occurs to him when he chooses to learn about the virus. This heroic characteristic becomes stronger as his background as a soldier who has discipline, determination, and strong belief that he can find the antidote to solve the problems.

Neville uses his energy and intelligence to hunt zombies as experimental material by making a trap. Besides that, Neville also tries to help other survivors by using radio broadcast to save other survivors.

Based on the description in the previous section of this final project, several conclusions can be drawn that the heroism emerges because of higher purpose, it is the basis for character development, ethical living, and critical thought. Finally, the story ends with victory that Neville finds the antidote.

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