

## SELFISHNESS IN JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR (CHARACTER ANALYSIS)

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to reveal the selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch which is one of the main characters in the movie *Avatar* by James Cameron, and also to analyze what the causes and effects of the selfishness are. In conducting this research, the researcher uses qualitative research in which the data collected in the form of words and presented in descriptive form, so the data that the researcher gets is only from the movie script and other books that relation to this research. In this research, the movie script was analyzed with objective approach, it means that the data are found from intrinsic point of the movie script *Avatar*. From the result shows that selfishness is a bad trait to have in a person's attitude. The researcher calls it's a bad trait because it does not only bring no benefit to the person himself but also to another person surrounds him. Collonel Miles Quaritch is a selfish person. It can be seen from his actions that ignoring the opinions of others and neglecting the safety of the troop to achieve his goal. The Causes of the selfishness of Colonel Miles are ambition, arrogance and madness. And the effects of selfishness of Colonel Miles are losing the war and Colonel Miles killed by Neytiri.

**Keywords:** *Selfishness, Character, Avatar, Objective Approach.*

### INTRODUCTION

"Literature is a product of creative thinking of human being with aesthetic and artistic aspect, Maru, Mantouw & Andries, (2021) stated that it is as an expression of author's feeling and as valuable art. Many works of literature are fictional in the sense that something in them lets readers know that they are different for real life" (Griffith 20). Maru et al, (2018) state that "A literary text provides learners with real world experiences, relationships between society and people where the target language is spoken, even if they are fictions". "Literature divided into two

groups. They are Literature of knowledge and literature (informative) as entertaining or literature of power (Imaginative)" (Jones). The researcher of imaginative language uses figurative language in their writing. It provides the feelings and thoughts.

"Figurative language is words or expressions that carry more than their literal meaning" (Stanford 48). Figurative language is also used to make the words or phrases be more beautiful, more interesting, and make more clear the image (Liando, Tatipang & Lengkoan, 2022). Figurative Language is not only used in poem, but also in lyrics, poetries, and screenplays or movie script. Wuntu, (2015) said that "A literary work which has affective nature is a significant power to touch the deepest sense that can produce perfect consciousness as it successfully carries out its mission as a form generator of human consciousness".

Rorintulus et al, (2022) and Sabudu, (2017) stated that "Literature is the reflection of human life whether in the society or in their private life, every phenomenon that found in the society usually reflects in the literary works such as poem, novel, drama or short story". *Avatar* is an American epic science fiction film written and produced by James Cameron. Science fiction films are only regarded as mere entertainment. But in reality, science fiction films have moral values that can be a life lesson for people who watch works like this. *Avatar* tells the story of a world conflict that caused the war between the human race and the Na'vi nation on the planet Pandora. This conflict was created because people who want to mine a valuable mineral called unobtainium on the planet Pandora.

However, the researcher sees the irregularities in the character of Colonel Miles Quaritch which become a major influence in the storyline of this movie. This study determines a "bad selfishness" in Colonel Miles Quaritch's character. The main discussion of this study is how the selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch is depicted in the movie and its causes and effects.

The researcher thinks that it is important to analyze the selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch because it has a direct effect to himself, that is he must die for his selfishness. So the writer and the reader should learn a lesson from Colonel Miles Quaritch's selfishness that is we can't just ruin another person's possessions to get what we want and also have been more respectful to other people.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research. Bryman, (2008) states that "Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (366). It means that the data in this research are collecting and analyzing in the form of words and not with a numbered diagram of formulas. This research is an analysis of the character of James Cameron's Avatar, that is Colonel Miles Quaritch.

In collecting the data, the researcher divide into two categories those are the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources is the movie script by James Cameron entitle Avatar. The secondary source are taken from some books and internet reference in supporting the data, as started by Griffith "Two kinds of evidence are relevant for essays about literature; evidence for primary sources are the works of literature themselves and secondary sources consist of facts opinion outside the work itself." (32)

In the analysis of the data, the researcher will use an objective approach since the writer focuses her research on the work itself. "Objective approach regards the work of art in isolation from all these external points of reference, analyzing is as self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations, and set out to judge it solely by criteria to its mode of being" (Abram 26). The objective approach is only focused on the literary work itself without looking at the external aspects of the literary works. "Selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch" in James Cameron's Avatar is the object of this study. The writer wants to find out the elements of the works, in this case, the character of the movie conducted by interpreting the events taken from the Avatar movie.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Selfishness is one of human characteristics which is commonly found in human life. Selfishness means putting yourself in the center of one's goals and not caring about the suffering of others. After reading James Cameron's Avatar, the writer sees that the character of Colonel Miles is the main character in the story. As a Colonel who is the head of the RDA, he leads his troops to carry out their duties on planet Pandora. But, his ambition to attack and destroy the Navi population and

their place to get what they want, made him act in selfishness, because to achieve his aim, he must take a big risk in fighting with the Navi People, he must ignore the fate of others, and finally put himself and the others into danger.

In analyzing the story of this movie script the researcher focuses on how the selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch revealed in the story. There are many characteristics that can be described through the character of Colonel Miles, such as he is a very ambitious person. His bad side becomes the factor and reason that he becomes a selfish person. The writer takes a great notice of the Colonel Miles' selfishness because it sticks to the Colonel's character as it can be seen in the story.

### **The Selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch**

Colonel Miles Quaritch in the Avatar story is a quite character. He is the chief of security of the Resources Development Administration (RDA) that want to mine a valuable mineral called Unobtainium on Planet Pandora. Before joining the Resources Development Administration Security Operations branch, Colonel Quaritch served as an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps. On his first day on Pandora, an encounter with the wildlife dealt him a trio of trademark scars to the right side of his head and face. Given the option to return home to Earth for reconstructive surgery he opted to stay on Pandora. With his impressive record, he was eventually chosen as the chief of security operations on Pandora.

Quaritch : "I was a couple years ahead of you in First Recon. Quite a few, in fact. I've done two tours in Nigeria and haven't broken a sweat. I've come out here to--"

He points to his scarred face.

Quaritch : "If I rotated back, they might be able to cure it. But, guess what? It appeals to me. Every day, it serves as a reminder of what is out there. Besides, I won't be able to go --"

He looks out, as if he can see through the wall to the tree-line.

Quaritch : "This is my war, here"

(Avatar 24)

Quaritch looked and acted like a lifelong military man. He wore his hair short and was covered with battle scars, most notably a trio of claw marks on the side of his head which he sustained during his time on Pandora. His long-running military career was representative of his personality. He regularly worked out to off-set the low gravity on Pandora so he didn't get "soft". He was in outstanding physical condition, despite being middle-aged, and was willing to put himself in significant personal risk when he thought the situation warranted it. An expert with his AMP suit, he was familiar with combat techniques as demonstrated by his marksmanship, hand-to-hand and melee combat skills.

The selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch can be seen clearly in the story, where he and the RDA who wants to get a valuable mineral called Unobtainium, by destroying the gathering place of the Na'vi, Pandora residents. Their initial goal was an avatar program that used a Na'vi-human hybrid called Avatar to study Na'vi's life and persuade them to leave Home-Tree. And the Avatar program was almost successful with Jake Sully's presence, but that did not make Colonel Miles & RDA satisfied so they began to destroy the Home-Tree with their military equipment. Selfishness can be seen from his actions that do not appreciate and respond to opinions of others.

### **Ignoring the opinions of Others**

Selfishness is an individual who is busy with himself and thinks that he is the most important and most correct so that he becomes less concerned with the conditions of others around him and ignores the opinions of others. As in this story, Colonel Miles ignores Jake Sully's opinion because he feels what he is about to do is more accurate than other people's opinions.

Jake Sully is a marine who replaces his brother in the Avatar Program on Pandora. Jake was assigned to help Colonel Miles find a way to force the Na'vi to leave the Home Tree or destroy it by pretending to be part of the Na'vi through the Avatar program.

“Quaritch : “I need you to get to know these barbarians and acquire their trust. Find out how I can compel their cooperation, or how I can punish them severely if they refuse. Perhaps you can prevent some of my lads from following in your footsteps and returning home. Alternatively, bagged-and-tagged.”

Jake : (nodding) “Colonel, it sounds fantastic. So, am I still in Augustine's company?”

Quaritch : “On paper,” she says. You walk and quack like one of her science pukes, but you report to me. “Are you able to help me with that?”

Jake nods. Quaritch brings the ‘suit to life. He steps forward and pivots smoothly”.  
(25)

After Jake became a part of Na'vi, he became so interested in Na'vi's life that he forgot to give information to Colonel Miles, and that made Colonel Miles begin to doubt Jake. But he tries to convince Colonel Miles to give him time so that Jake can negotiate with Na'vi to leave the Home Tree.

Jake : “I've got to finish this.” One final exam remains: the Dream Hunt. It's the last step in the process of maturing into a man. If that's the case, I'm one of them. They'll believe me if I say...”

It's hard for him to even form these word -

Jake : “... and I can negotiate the terms of their relocation.”

Quaritch : “Then you must complete it, Corporal.” (82)

But the fact is that Colonel Miles does not give respond to Jake's advice, and continue his plan to destroy the Na'vi's place, the Home Tree. The researcher finds that Colonel Miles puts his self-interest on the highest place than other, he does not care about Jake's opinion. And with the existing military power, they began to destroy the place.

Beside that, Jake and Grace does not agree with what will be done by the Colonel, so Jake told the Colonel and the RDA to withdraw their men because he thought that destroying the Home Tree was a mistake that would put them in danger. But Colonel found a Jake video log that said that the Na'vi would never surrender their land, they would not negotiate with the RDA and also would not

leave the Home Tree. And that made Colonel Miles and his troops continue their goal of destroying the Home Tree.

From what that presents above it is clear that Colonel Miles did not listen to the advice of others and continued to carry out his goal of destroying the Home Tree with their military power, and no one could stop him, even Jake. It means that Colonel Miles does think about others people's lives and is only concerned about with his personal or group interests and that is what makes him selfish.

### **Neglecting the Safety of the Troop to achieve his goal**

Selfishness is the attitude of someone who is selfish without thinking about the fate of others. neglecting someone's safety in order to get what we want is part of being selfish. Colonel Miles is very persistent with his goal of destroying the gathering place of the Na'vi, Pandora residents. The desire to achieve his goal makes him forget the safety of his crew, even he promises he will give what them what they need. Like his promise to Jake Sully.

Quaritch : "I need you to get to know these barbarians and acquire their trust. Find out how I can compel their cooperation, or how I can punish them severely if they refuse. Perhaps you can prevent some of my lads from following in your footsteps and returning home. Alternatively, bagged-and-tagged."

Jake : (nodding) "That sound real good, Colonel."

Quaritch : "Look, son, I'm a self-sufficient individual. Get me what I need, and when you rotate home, I'll make sure you get your legs back. "Those are your true legs." (25)

The promise of giving a reward to his crew is to appeal them to help him archiving his goal without considering his crew safety. But Colonel Miles doesn't realize that human have many limitations, even though his crew is consist of few selected through people like Jake Sully, but Miles doesn't get what he wants, because in the middle of the story the Na'vi know the purpose of Jake who studies their lives only to provide information to the Colonel Miles, and that puts Jake's life into danger.

Colonel Miles only thinks about his goal. He does not care what other people think as long as it does not give him what he wants. And from there he ignores the opinion of Jake and Grace who tell them that what they understand about the Home tree and the Na'vi nation is wrong. Instead, he thought of his own opinion and did what he wanted to do, which is to stick to the original goal of destroying the Home tree and the Na'vi nation without thinking about their fate.

### **The Causes of Selfishness of Colonel Miles**

Miles behaves like a sane man, but his motives are entirely insane. He resolves to use everything in his power to achieve his goal. But behind all of them there are so many reasons that build Colonel Miles's selfishness. It begins his great ambition. His temper also triggers the selfishness inside him. Miles is so sure that what he is doing is right. But what he does not realize are the consequences that will be faced and the dangers after what he did. He does not care about the risks he will face as long as his goal of destroying the Home tree and the Na'vi people and getting what they want is achieved. Another factor that becomes the cause for his selfishness which can be seen from his nature which is ambitious, arrogance and madness.

### **Ambition**

"An ambitious person can be thought of as being goal-driven, having goals and the energy to accomplish them. Ambition can be a discontentment with one's current state or condition that motivates the person to accomplish something greater. Ambition can have its negative side, particularly when it emphasizes aggressiveness and acquisitiveness for self-aggrandizement. Ambition may be observed as the drive to get ahead of others or to acquire power or money. While ambition can emphasize individual advancement at the cost of others, it does not have to be that way". (DiPiro)

Someone who is ambitious is often defined as someone who has a passionate attitude and is very passionate about achieving something. It could even be, all means are used to achieve that desire. Usually ambitious people tend to be careless



in their attitude or decisions. Therefore, the wrong ways sometimes does not seem completely wrong to the ambitious. It could be due to a competitive spirit that does not want to be defeated, or it could be rooted in egoism.

Ambitious is one of the causes that makes Colonel Miles selfish. The reason that makes him so ambitious to destroy the Na'vi nation is they are not going to give up their home nor make any deals with Colonel Miles and the RDA and made Colonel Miles go crazy about destroying the Home Tree and the Na'vi nation.

Quaritch : "We understand them just fine. Thanks to Jake here."

Jake shares a look of alarm with Grace as Quaritch selects a New Clip on the main monitor -

Tight on monitor - Video-Log Image of Jake, looking haggard and borderline deranged, rambling in a late-night monologue.

Jake : (recorded) "They aren't going to give up their home - they aren't going to make an agreement. For what purpose? What's better than a lite beer and a shopping channel? They don't desire what we have. To them, we're a nightmare. We're the extraterrestrial monster."

Jake watches with a growing dread as his words condemn the people he has grown to love.

Jake : (recorded) "They're never going to leave Hometree."

Quaritch Freezes the recording.

Quaritch : "Since an agreement cannot be reached, things become quite straightforward. So, thank you. (to Jake, icily) I'm getting a little teary. I'm thinking of giving you a huge wet kiss." (101-102)

The researcher starts to realize how much Colonel Miles wants to destroy the Hometree, where the Na'vi people lived. He believes that he can conquer the planet Pandora with their military power, he believes that the Na'vi nation can be easily destroyed.

The display shows an overhead image of the Well of Souls. It looks like Woodstock in the jungle.

Quaritch : “According to these orbital photographs, the hostiles' numbers have risen from a few hundred to over two thousand in just one day, and more are on their way. It's possible that it'll be 20,000 by next week. Then they'll be encroaching on our perimeter. We can't wait to get started. Preemptive attack is the only way to ensure our safety. We will retaliate with retaliation.”

Tracking Across the grim faces of the miners and troopers. Fear transforming to hatred in their eyes.

Quaritch : “On to the next slide. Their deity is said to defend this mountain stronghold. When we demolish it, we'll leave a crater in their racial memory so deep that they'll never venture within a thousand kilometers of it again.” (124)

From the quotation above it can be seen that the ambition to destroy the Na'vi people and their gathering place is so deep. Colonel Miles will do everything he can to destroy the Na'vi nation, even though he knows that the Na'vi have enormous strength. But his high belief makes him even more ambitious to destroy the Na'vi nation which without he knowing it will make him and his entire crew destroyed.

### **Arrogance**

“Arrogance is engaging in behaviors intended to exaggerate a person's sense of superiority by disparaging others” (Silverman 22). Arrogance can be thought of as a cluster of behaviors that communicate one's superiority and importance relative to others. These behaviors include disrespecting colleagues and their ideas, purporting to be more knowledgeable than others, avoiding blame and/or pinning blame on others, and discounting feedback. Arrogance makes people forget the limitations that exist within them. Like Colonel Miles who felt so great about his abilities that he thought he could make the Na'vi give up what they wanted.

Quaritch crosses to the 'suit, with Jake following.

“Quaritch : “I was a couple years ahead of you in First Recon. Quite a few, in fact. I've done two tours in Nigeria and haven't broken a sweat. I've come out here to—”

He point to his scarred face.

Quaritch : “If I rotated back, they might be able to cure it. But, guess what? It appeals to me. Every day, it serves as a reminder of what is out there. Besides, I won't be able to go –”

He looks out, as if he can see through the wall to the tree-line.

Quaritch : “This is my war, here.”

Quaritch climbs the ‘suit and reaches into the cockpit, throwing some switches. The ‘suit’s gas-turbine spools up with rising Whine.” (24)

Colonel Miles felt that he was very capable of conquering the planet Pandora with the abilities he had honed from his life experience, he even underestimated the abilities of others.

“Quaritch : The avatar program is a load of knucklehead scientists. You and I, on the other hand, have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. On the ground, down in the hostiles' camp, a recon Marine in an Avatar body may deliver me the information I need.” (25)

From the quotation above, it is clear that Colonel Miles really looks down on other people. Because he thinks the Avatar Program is a joke. A program created by Grace who is a Xenobotanist who believes that the planet Pandora has something that humans cannot measure. But Colonel Miles ignored the Avatar Program because according to him it was nothing compared to the military power they had. The writer can see that Colonel Miles’ vanity, feeling great and underestimating the abilities of others is one of the causes of the selfishness that grew in him. Which without knowing it would put him in danger.

### **Madness**

Anger often make human forgets about their limitation. Colonel Miles is the head of the detailed security of mining operation. He is very loyal to his military code, he greatly ignored the people of Pandora who were clearly seen in both his action and his language.

Jake : “It’s all over Quaritch –”

Quaritch turns, seeing Jake Dropping from a tree limb. The 'suit rises slowly, knife glinting in the morning sun.

Quaritch : "While I'm breathing, nothing is over."

Jake : "I was hoping you'd say that." (145)

Quaritch, panting, glowers at Jake.

Quaritch : "Can you describe how it feels to betray your own race?" (146)

Because he is a loyal person, he hates people who betray him so that it makes the anger in him overflow and he can destroy that person. Just as Jake Sully, who was one of their members, betrayed him by helping the Na'vi people in their war against them, thus making Colonel Miles angry and want to kill Jake Sully.

The researcher can see Colonel Miles' madness has become a sort of living thing all of its own, something that can inhabit his body even when his soul is not there. Something that influences his thought and actions, which makes him even more eager to destroy those who get in his way.

### **Effect of the Colonel Miles' Selfishness**

The result of all his effort is gone to waste. His goal of attacking and destroying the Na'vi nation to get what they want is not achieved. His ambition, his stubbornness, the effort of Collonel Miles and his troop turn out to be so far from what they hope it would be.

Colonel Miles' ending in this story is very dramatic, because of his arrogance and stubbornness, he and his army lost the war against the Na'vi nation which ended when Neytiri who is the Na'vi Princess killed him with arrows. There is no good result from his ambition. The RDA and their troops lose in the war and they are captured and returned to earth.

"THWAP! Quaritch's chest is pierced by an arrow. He raises his head.

Neytiri takes a step forward, her rage unleashed. She nocks another arrow like a classic archer. Then smoothly draws and releases.

TH-WHAP! The machine topples off Jake and lies still.

Quaritch examines the two arrows embedded in his chest. He strokes the antique weapon's feathers, then dies with an ironic laugh." (147)

The quotation above shows the end of the Colonel Miles that selfishly leading him and his troops into a war that ends with defeat and even death. With his big ambition, he can confidently destroy the Na'vi nation. And with confidence, pride and ambition, Colonel Miles did not listen to the opinions of others who warned him that what he was about to face had a great power which could not be measured by human ability. And without realizing it, it only makes his life and his entire army in danger even death.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research above, the researcher concludes that selfishness is a bad trait to have in a person's attitude. The researcher calls it a bad trait because it does not only bring no benefit to the person himself but also to another person surrounds him. It can also makes people hate and even lose their trust because selfishness makes the individual busy with himself and thinks that he is the most important and true one so that he is less concerned with the condition of other people around him.

According to the story from the movie Avatar, Collonel Miles Quaritch is a selfish person. It can be seen from his ambition to attack and destroy the Navi population and their place of residence to get what they want without thinking about the fate of others. He only thought about his goals and did not listen to the opinions of others thus putting himself even his troops in danger.

From the analysis of the story, the researcher and the reader can see that in achieving the goals that already set, one must consider the goal and also the meaning of the goal itself, the effects of the benefit and the loss for him and moreover to others around him. The Colonel on the other hand does not even consider about the effects of his selfishness to him and his troops. The Colonel

thinks he has good military strength so he ignores the opinion of his crew and only that in the end brings himself even his troops into danger.

Colonel Quaritch is transformed from a captain who is loyal to his military term and also that has respects from his crew into a selfish captain who only focuses on his goals and does everything he can to get what he wants without considering the fate of his troops or even the fate of others. So the conclusion of this research is the Selfishness of Colonel Miles Quaritch is ignoring the opinions of others and neglecting the safety of the troop to achieve his goal. And the causes of his selfishness are ambition, arrogance and madness. And the effect of his selfishness is Colonel Miles and his troop lost the war against the Navi nation and he was killed by the princess of the Navi nation.

### **Suggestion**

The film Avatar not only tells how colonialism happened, but also tells about how living things really must unite with nature with a sense of tolerance, and not do destruction for the sake of certain groups. To get a better understanding of what Cameron really wants the viewers to know is not sufficient by only focusing on a single character, Colonel Miles Quaritch, as an intrinsic elements analysis. Accordingly, those who want to know more detail about the intrinsic elements of the story can further the discussion in analyzing other characters such as Jake Sully and so forth.

As people know, that reading for characters is rather difficult, considerable skill may be needed to describe what person is. But through understanding characters in a literary work, a reader will be able to uncover the meanings and intentions of the author. Hardly does an author write unreasonably. He/ she has “something” that he or she wants to express to his or her readers, as a proverb said “an author is the spokesman of his or her rea”. Thus, the character study will give a lot of benefits.

The researcher hopes that the reader that reads about this research to pay attention to the moral values that explicitly contain in the story and in which the

writer tries to bring up to surface by analyzing the character of Colonel Miles Quaritch. To get something, people have to consider what they will do so as not to harm themselves, especially harming others. People should not place himself above others because they also have the freedom to have goals and hopes that they have of their own. And also all people have equal rights and freedom so another person's existence should not be set aside but must be respected.

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