



Avatar: A Film at the Center of the Feminine Other

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Volume 13.1 (2025) | ISSN 2158-8724 (online) | DOI 10.5195/cinej.2025.731 | <http://cinej.pitt.edu>

Abstract

This study analyzes James Cameron's 2009 film *Avatar* from the perspective of the feminine other through deconstruction. In the movie, nature and the Na'vi people are depicted as feminine, while modern man and the science, technology, and military power he represents are portrayed as masculine. Although it critiques the colonialist structure of modernity, the film's narrative structure and character portrayals indicate that it reproduces the superiority of Western-centered ideology and the masculine mind. The study analyzes how the film's narrative and character representations implicitly support masculine centrism. The analysis reveals how nature and marginalized cultures are romanticized and presented in the film and how the notion that the feminine can only survive by adopting masculine traits is processed in the subtext. Grounded in a conceptual and theoretical framework, this research focuses on the sustainability of the patriarchal capitalist system and gender politics while critically examining how cinema reconstructs ideological structures through the narratives in the film.

Keywords: Avatar, Feminine other, Masculine centrism, Gender politics, Cinema



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Introduction

Defining oneself and others, seen as an effort to understand oneself and the world, stems from the Western metaphysical tradition of thought. In this context, comprehending othering practices is essential to grasping how one's thought trajectory is constructed from micro to macro levels. The "other," initially constructed and then sought to be eliminated to create the self, is a perpetual scapegoat that modern individuals have consistently branded as criminals. However, the other does not need to promise a tangible or intangible "otherness." Othering, involving rigid images of cultural reflexes, always entails power dynamics (Cervinkova et al., 2015, p.24). This state of distance importantly indicates that the center is "me." In this process, the "other" holds no meaning beyond being an "object" used to define the self (Bumin, 1998, pp.30-34; Levinas, 1998, p.3). Mediation and intermediation are not only the primary conditions of being human but also the primary conditions for dehumanizing and instrumentalizing the other. There is no practice of othering in which the other is not objectified.

The feminine other has been one of the most recognized traditional depictions of the other, sometimes constructed to shape societies and the identity of "us," and at other times to acquire authority and power. Nature (Temizkan, 2011, p. 89)—the first other to which human beings are subjected before they distinguish themselves culturally, politically, and socially—is also regarded as the primary feminine other, identified as the initial enemy that man must overcome to become a modern subject. Feminine nature has been used to reinforce the modern subject and the masculine identity of institutions. Logos and its extension, science, emerged as tools to convert feminine nature into a masculine machine, denying the body, nature, and women from a humanist perspective (Plumwood, 2017, pp. 148-155).

This study deconstructs the film *Avatar* from a feminist perspective, analyzing its internal tensions, excluded elements, and the Western metaphysical tradition (logocentrism and dualism). It evaluates the film's othering practices, character representations, and narrative structure using media deconstruction questions from the New Mexico Literacy Project (Nkana, 2010). The study discusses how the narrative, seemingly a critique of colonialism and modernity, ultimately reproduces masculine thought and Western ideology.

The First Other from Past to Present: Feminine

Examining gender roles in the primitive period, it is understood that the short-term egalitarian dynamic between the sexes during the hunting-gathering era resulted from economic

dependence (Lerner, 1987, pp. 18-21). While it is recognized that women's social role in prehistory was strong and that they were not hierarchically inferior, the claims that these societies were "matriarchal" do not accurately reflect reality (Briffault, 1990; cited in Türköne, 1995). To glorify patriarchy, Bachofen contended that prehistoric societies were centered around a "primitive" belief in Mother Earth, asserting that this period, equated with a low level of humanity, was matriarchal (Roller, 2004, p. 29). However, archaeological evidence contradicts the generalization that the creators of Paleolithic art were male, as well as the notion that the hunter was male and the gatherer was female (Eisler, 2015, pp. 26-27). Although it is not feasible to speak of an era of fundamental female dominance, it is reasonable to discuss a period when women held significance and were respected (Türköne, 1995, p. 26). In anthropological studies, the concepts of matrilineal or matrifocal are preferred for these communities where the mother is central.

This subordinate status is reinforced by gender roles. In agrarian societies, tasks such as gathering food and growing vegetables were regarded as "women's work". Even when women collected more food than men, hunting—associated with men—was seen as more prestigious, thereby diminishing the value of women's economic contributions (Zastrow, 2010, p. 419).

Interestingly, modern psychology also supports traditional views on gender roles. According to

Freud (1933), the “normal human being” was male, while females were viewed as a deviation from this standard. Women internalized the pressure of lacking a penis, structuring their entire psychology around compensating for this perceived deficiency (Lerner, 1987, p. 19).

The Logos and its representation, man, are compelled to tame nature, perceived as an unconscious sphere of existence, and its representation, woman, as a gender to be dominated. Even in Ancient Greece, midwifery and healing were taken from women during the early capitalist period (Yaman, 2016, p.26). Midwifery, medicine, and herbalism came under the control of modern medicine with the dominance of masculine reason, and even the protective feminine spirits (iyeler) in Turkish mythology were demonized and began to be labeled as "Alkarısı", "Albastı", "Umacı", etc. (Türkmen, 2011, p.24). Thus, manifestations of feminine power, which were productive and sacred in primitive societies, were subdued, mediated, and dominated by masculine reason. Witch hunts are an effort to subject materials from "nature" to masculine power under more economic conditions.

Additionally, witch hunts marked the initial step in the process of transforming ancient sexuality and women's sexual acts into a profession, service to men, and procreation (Federici, 2004, p.272). These witch hunts aimed to condemn sexuality that extends beyond procreation, mechanize the birthing process, and render it efficient while also facilitating the emergence of

biopower. This biopower represents a significant turning point for rationalizing the "body", defined as anti-logos and discredited.

The power used in the process of rationalization of the body, animal, and nature, reason - logos- and science are entirely constructed by the masculine reason. In this context, the "facts" constructed to produce and perpetuate the power of masculine reason ascribe a secondary, peripheral role to feminine reason only for making -and defining- masculine reason visible (Işıklı & Gezginci, 2017, pp.54-55). As a result of this power, when "woman" is mentioned, "the image that comes to mind with connotations such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, kitchen, and home is a presupposition based on gender" (Atayurt, 2009, p.2). These images are clues for understanding the representation of women. Gender stereotypes, on the other hand, are artifacts that masculine reason attempts to justify with "natural-biological" facts and instrumentalizes to determine the direction of power and desire (Butler, 2012).

The marginalization of the feminine, which is perhaps the only point of agreement between monotheistic religions and science, is understood through the masculine construction of the human being -logos. In both agnostic texts (Fidan, 2019) and sacred books, feminine images that need to be subdued and dominated are constructed as objects through which the human (masculine) is mediated. In the hierarchy, the earth is classified as "mother," and the living, non-

living, plants, and animals are all classified as feminine (Karakale, 2019, pp.13-73). As can be seen, the dichotomy of definition in question is a state of being other that encompasses all dichotomies, including center-periphery, subordinate-superior, and good-bad, rather than being constructed in the center of gender differences. In this context, the qualities attributed to the feminine other are portrayed as the opposite of the masculine -reasonable.

Feminine as the Opposite of the Masculine Other

Masculine and feminine anatomical elements coexist in both the male and female body. The structure that points to this contrast and absence is the result of mental teaching. As mentioned, the dichotomic structure that is tried to be imposed on the person as a sexual identity is the cultural presuppositions constructed for the continuity of power relations. The association of masculine qualities with male sexual identity is purely cultural, that is, fictional (Butler, 2012, pp.24-16). Sexual identity, just like other social categories that find a place in society, is one of the templates that constructs its own other and its "center" with this reference. The center-other distinction is a product of the "logocentric" (logocentric) perspective that is seen in every duality and determines the direction of the hierarchy of the duality in question. In this framework, those in the center are associated with those in the center, while those in the "beyond" are doomed to be associated with other "beyond".

As Bhasin (2003) classifies in his book *Gender*, other distinctions that we can subordinate concerning the male-female dichotomy can be expressed as follows (Table 1).

Table 1: Dichotomies Male-Female

Woman	Male
Size	Mind
Nature	Culture
Emotion	Logic
Object	Subject
Special	Public

Source: Bhasin, 2003, p.18

As mentioned, this distinction determines not only the opposing poles but also the direction of the center and the hierarchy. In today's modern world, the concepts that are characterized and glorified as good and valuable and positioned in the center as "the goal to be achieved" are the "masculine" qualities on the left side of the table. "Women are the body, almost like nature (they reproduce like animals): men are the mind, thinking, rational, action-oriented beings who process nature and transform "it" into culture. This is why men are dominant and superior to nature, they can do whatever they want to nature" (Bhasin, 2003, p.18). This thought reflex can be seen in all

artifacts (religious texts, Hollywood movies, philosophical works, etc.) that are manifestations of the masculine perspective. Another point made by Bhasin is that the same qualities are attributed to natives, the poor, and Third World countries (see Torn countries). In the center of these contrasts, women are imprisoned first in their bodies and then in their homes -and even in their kitchens (Atayurt, 2009; Bourdieu, 2015; Işıklı & Gezginci, 2017; Tunç-Subaşı, 2020).

The masculine-feminine dichotomy is also evident in Hofstede's (1983) distinction of cultural differences. He distinguishes the masculine-feminine dimension of culture as referring to "the roles attributed to men and women in society, and the extent to which the valid and dominant values in society are specific to men or women" (Turan et al., 2005, p.188). Hofstede uses the term "masculine culture" to describe cultures where gender roles are sharply defined and materialistic values are prioritized. In masculine cultures, individuals possess a strong need for success and tend to admire the powerful. In contrast, feminine cultures show significant overlap in gender roles, placing a higher value on relationships and communication. These feminine societies, characterized by warmth, modesty, empathy, and support for the vulnerable, prioritize quality of life over success (Hofstede, 1983, p.296). In other words, while masculine societies emphasize success, duty, money, and performance, feminine societies focus on people, quality of life, and helping others (Nakata & Sivakumar, 1996, p.64). Within this framework, a man from a feminine culture and a man from a masculine culture possess different gender roles and values

(Birsel et al., 2008, p.58). Therefore, it is clear that the dehumanizing new world order, driven by continuous progress, success, and competition, reflects masculine culture. In this context, for women to participate in the new world order, they must internalize their perceived subordinate status within the masculine culture and adopt masculine values and traits—essentially becoming masculine. In masculine cultures, gender roles may serve as a means of establishing biopower, where individuals are positioned in relation to one another, with the male at the center (Atilla, 2007, pp.61-62).

It is stated that the feminine perspective envisions a peaceful world centered on compassion, reconciliation, and kindness, whereas the masculine perspective emphasizes success on the axis of economic development, competition, and leadership (Temel et al., 2006; Atilla, 2007, p.62; Sargut, 2015). As a result, it is seen that in the new world order, feminine values centering on humans and quality of life are being pushed to the background, and a masculine system focused on materialism and competition is being built.

Methodology and Analysis

"While this polar metaphysics positively positions reality above appearance, word above writing, masculine above feminine, reason above nature, good above evil, beautiful above ugly, white above black, and spirit above body; it ensures the continuity of the destructive hierarchy

between the subordinate and superior terms of this polarity." (Erdem, 2020, p.34). Films, in which the continuity of this hierarchy is reconstructed, are among the most important tools of the culture industry for the formation and continuity of mental patterns with the power of narrative and technology. According to poststructuralists, everything is a text and deconstruction, which is used to examine how what is "excluded" in every text, that is, what is not said or written, interferes with what is said/written in the text, aims to discover the "other" through the "I" created by the text. It aims to decipher the manifestations of the Western metaphysical tradition of thought -logocentrism and dualism - based on the internal tensions of the text (the tension between what it excludes and what it contains). The Avatar Movie is a 2009 US science fiction film written and directed by James Cameron. Shot in three-dimensional cinema technique, the film was released on December 18, 2009. Avatar is still the second highest-grossing movie in the world, the only movie outside the US to earn \$2 billion (Rose & Bartolli, 2021). The deconstruction of the film was carried out regarding the questions of media deconstruction defined by the New Mexico Literacy Project (Nkana, 2010, pp.173-174).

1. Whose message is this? Who created or financed this media message? Why?

The movie is a production of 20th Century Fox -Hollywood-, one of the largest popular culture industries. The movie, which contains economic relations like any other capitalist product, is a product of biopower within this framework. Hollywood's target audience is the

whole world. Like every commodity, it provides material gain to capital through its consumption. However, the main profit that culture industry products provide to the system is the reproduction of capitalist ideology. Although the film seems to criticize colonialism and the dehumanization brought by modernism, it is possible to say that "like other Hollywood productions, the story of Avatar is an imperialist production that glorifies racist, sexist and individualist bourgeois ideology" (Çeliker & Aksoy, 2011).

2. Who is the target audience? Which text, image, or voice points to this?

The target audience of a Hollywood movie is moviegoers in all countries of the world. The more people watch the movie, the higher the profit. Like other popular culture industries, it gains existence and legitimacy in proportion to its "popularity". In this context, the taste and demand of the target audience are vital. For this reason, with technical and technological developments, the viewing experience is to be improved every day, and the content of the movie is constructed in a framework that covers universal tastes and values. Produced with 3D technology and gaining a lot of interest and curiosity with its content, the movie is centered on the Earthling vs. Alien dilemma; it has created the potential to contain a holistic and common message for humanity.

3. What is the text (plain meaning) of this message? (What do we hear and see from the written and read words, photographs, drawings, music, and sounds?)

The movie begins in the year 2154 when Earth's natural resources are running out and takes place on the planet Pandora, where the unobtainium mine is located, which could be a solution to the energy crisis. The Na'vi are depicted as tall, blue-skinned humanoid beings with ears and tails. Humans use genetically engineered "Avatars" with the Na'vi form to blend in with Pandora's biosphere and remain unnoticed by the Na'vi people.

Dr. Grace Augustine, the head of the scientific team studying Pandora for economic interests, advocates diplomatic negotiations with the Na'vi people to reach the mine. However, Colonel Miles Quaritch, the military director of the operation, characterizes the Na'vi as "savages" and considers communication efforts a waste of time. The Colonel intends to use military force to force the Na'vi people out of Mother Eywa, which they consider sacred.

After the death of his twin brother Tom, Jake Sully, a paraplegic former Marine, is called to duty. Dr. Grace initially distances herself from Jake due to his lack of scientific qualifications but eventually accepts him. Colonel Miles uses Jake's military background to offer to give him his "real" legs back in exchange for information about the Na'vi people.

During an expedition, Jake is attacked by one of Pandora's dangerous creatures, the Thanatos, and is rescued by Neytiri. Upon receiving a spiritual sign, Neytiri takes Jake to the

clan, and his mother, Mo'at, assigns Neytiri to teach Jake about Na'vi culture. This process brings Jake closer to the people of Pandora and eventually brings him to their side.

When Jake's loyalty to the Na'vi is recognized, the Earthlings make an offer to the Na'vi people to move from the Nest Tree. However, the Na'vi reject this offer and resist the attacks. Through Jake's prayer, the support of Eywa, the help of Jake and his friends, and the struggle of the Na'vi, Pandora is freed from human exploitation. Jake completely leaves his human body and starts his new life in the form of Avatar. As a result, on the surface, the film presents a critique of modernity's exploitation of nature through militarism, science, and industry (Gaine, 2011).

4. What is the subtext of this message? What do you think about the hidden or unspoken meanings?

The characters, their representations, and their roles in the film should be examined to understand their hidden or unspoken meanings. Then, the other practices in the plot should be understood within this framework.

The "feminine others" of the planet Pandora

Pandora is envisioned as a planet of natural, colorful living forms, surrounded by dense forests, covered by a universe of advanced forms of plants and trees, and endowed with

unobtainium, a mineral of great material value to the world. The plant and animal forms on Pandora show an unusual variety of colors and forms.

The origin of the name Pandora is based on the story of Prometheus and Epimetheus in Ancient Greek mythology. Prometheus brings fire (consciousness and its logo) to humanity without Zeus' permission and pays for it by being chained to the Caucasus Mountains. To punish humanity, Zeus creates an enchanting woman named Pandora and sends her to Epimetheus. With the opening of the sealed box she carries with her, evil spreads to the world (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 720). In this narrative, Pandora is represented as a feminine figure who influences and misleads men, and female nature is seen as the traditional "source of evil". A similar threat is portrayed in the movie. The rational children of modernism who go to Pandora are bewitched and deviate from the path of reason. They rebel against their god (reason) and choose to stay in Pandora. However, contrary to the myth, this time, Pandora does not go to earth; instead, it is the human Pandora who has attained reason and technical competence. In this framework, the planet Pandora is represented as the price and curse of humanity's access to knowledge.

Another example of the reverse reading is that the Na'vi people are cursed and subjected to evil with the arrival of logos-centered modern man-knowledge/fire. In the movie, Avatars are the manifestation of the human who brings knowledge and evil to Pandora. Avatar is a concept known as "Avatara" in Hinduism, which refers to the incarnation of God on earth. God manifests

in human or animal form to fulfill certain purposes (Kutlutürk, 2015, p.143). The Oxford Dictionary (2024) also defines an avatar as the physical manifestation of God on earth or the period of such a process. In the movie, the Avatars, which enable humans to take the form of Na'vi in Pandora, allow an analogy to be established between God and humans.

The Na'vi people are represented at the beginning of the movie as a people with a mother. Although the mother Mo'at and her husband (the clan chief) are the general authority figures, the mother is closer to power as she is the one who voices Eva's desire. Eva is the most important figure in the film, mediated by the mother, and whose power is recognized. Eywa, depicted as feminine and considered the center of the unobtainium mine, is the English equivalent of "Eve" in celestial religions. In this framework, the fact that the name of the character Eve, who can be seen as the equivalent of Pandora created by Zeus to punish Prometheus, is constructed as the feminine god of the Na'vi people strengthens this identity.

Accepted on Pandora through his Avatar, Jake masculinizes the feminine perspective of life and "enlightens" the Na'vi people with the Western tradition of dualistic, egocentric thinking. Jake, another pitied figure in the real world, merges with the leader's daughter in Pandora and becomes the leader, possessing the greatest Ikran (Toruk). He masculinizes the feminine society, clashes with Neytiri's fiancé Tsu'tey, seeks help from Eywa, and nature, the balancing feminine

element, takes a masculine identity and takes sides. Thus, Jake, coming into the feminine world, opens the box of the masculine curse.

The Na'vi people's convergence to patriarchy is crystallized by Jake's return as Toruk Makto. To mediate his authority, he tasks Tsu'tey with transmitting his word. Just as Eywa uses Mo'at to transmit her word, Jake uses Tsu'tey. With Mo'at's death, Jake alone takes the seat of authority. This transformation, which reinforces the patriarchal structure, is also embodied in the battle scene when Jake instructs Neytiri by saying, "This is an order". The role of "submissiveness" attributed to women is established in Na'vi society with Jake's arrival and causes the masculinization of the feminine structure.

Another sequence that can be analogized with the narrative of Prometheus is the moment of Jake and Neytiri's first encounter; Jake lights a torch with his means to be able to see and dominate his surroundings as it gets dark on Pandora, and when animals attack Jake in the light of the torch, Neytiri kills the animals to save Jake. Neytiri does not accept Jake's thanks at the end of this scene and considers the attack of the animals as Jake's fault. Jake started a fire, so Neytiri had to kill the animals to save Jake.

Pandora simulates the invention of fire in the scene in question, considered the first human opposition to nature and its rules and a milestone in humanity's development. However, fire and enlightenment, which are read as the manifestation of not accepting the darkness of nature and

the desire to dominate even at night, make the darkness knowable and take control, do not correspond to the same meaning in Pandora.

Neytiri tells Jake that he is "ignorant like a child". This statement of a member of the Na'vi people, whom people describe as an ignorant, undeveloped, and wild tribe, and her subsequent education of Jake is the teaching of the feminine life perspective and feminine knowledge to the audience and Jake. Knowledge is "the subject's judgment about the object" (Işıklı, 2014, p. 11), which also determines the position of the object vis-à-vis the subject. Masculine and feminine knowledge of the same object will differ within the framework of masculine and feminine values. For example, the knowledge of nature is quite different for the "air people" and the "Na'vi people".

The Neytiri and Na'vi people's view of nature reflects a feminine worldview. Unlike the modern masculine understanding, they do not instrumentalize nature and the body, nor do they separate human beings from animals and nature. For them, the physical and the spiritual, the human and the animal are one and sacred. This holistic view is emphasized by CEO Parker Selfridge's words, "Whenever you throw a stone in the air here, it always lands on a sacred grass." "Air people" with a masculine perspective, on the other hand, glorify only human beings and the mind and see other beings as mere tools for human service.

The Na'vi people's view of nature is rooted in a holistic circle of energy that encompasses all beings. To them, energy is borrowed and must eventually be returned. For this reason, hunted animals are honored, and death is ritualized. Death is regarded as a transformation rather than an end; the voices of the ancestors are said to continue in the tree of souls. In Pandora, humans, animals, and nature are not dehumanized; there is no distinction between enslaver and enslaved person. The difference between the Na'vi people and the "air people" is that one possesses a feminine, holistic understanding of life, while the other embraces a masculine, domination-oriented mentality. In this context, the "air people"—as the Na'vi refers to humans—and the Na'vi people themselves exemplify the distinction between masculine and feminine, with the masculine mentality mediating its relationship with women, animals, and nature to maintain its power.

Throughout the film, Pandora is associated with the metaphor of "dream". Jake's description of his experience with Pandora, "I was flying, I was free, but sooner or later you wake up," emphasizes that Pandora is not the real world. The fact that scientists have a "sleep-like" experience while connecting to Avatar bodies also supports this theme. Even if the Avatar bodies are damaged, they have no counterpart in the real world. The Na'vi people refer to humans as "sleepwalkers," implying that they are beings who cannot comprehend the reality of Pandora.

Humans attain their Avatar bodies in a state of sleep and are described as beings who "cannot see" the reality of Pandora, who think they can take whatever they want.

Dr. Grace says that the Forest of Souls is not a simple Pagan or Voodoo belief, that there is a reality there that can be scientifically measured. CEO Selfridge, however, scorns this view and sees the trees as simple objects. Dr. Grace, on the other hand, emphasizes that real wealth is in the environment, not underground. As the movie progresses, Eva is consulted at the point where science is helpless, showing the limits of scientific rationality. When Grace says, "I was with her... She is real" before she dies, Eva goes beyond being merely "measurable" and is recognized. In this context, the state of being acceptable, which is visible from the masculine point of view (Temel, Yakın and Misci, 2006: 29), is broken, and the existence of the felt and the intuited is recognized.

In the film, the act of "seeing" ("Air cannot learn people", "You do not see", "I see you", "I see through you", etc.) is used as a metaphor for understanding the truth beyond the physical. In the sequence in which Neytiri and Jake meet, in which the emphasis is on seeing, Jake's realization of Pandora's natural beauty as a result of Jake extinguishing the torch in his hand and looking at with fascination can be said to refer to the fascinating aura of naturalness that modern man has lost with his "science" centered perspective. Modern man and his colonialist perspective

that turns everything he sees into a capital machine is criticized in the film. However, this criticism is only centered on "changing planets and colonization" in the film. The fact that Jake calls the soldiers working on Pandora "hired guns" but characterizes the same soldiers as "brave heroes" for their mission on Earth is a manifestation of this hypocritical attitude. The fact that the soldiers, whom he belittles with the phrase "take the money, work for the company", are "unpaid weapons for hire" mediated for the same mission on Earth in the name of the states that they find money dependent on, is ignored (Erdem & Sayılğan, 2011).

In the film, the difference between the value of humans on Earth and the value of nature, people, and animals on Pandora reflects the contrast between masculine and feminine worldviews. While Jake's scientist brother Tom is killed for the sake of material gain, a soldier's words, "No one should die today, it is bad for my record," show the devaluation of human life on Earth. Jake's motivation to join Pandora also emphasizes the injustice of the capitalist system; he goes there because he cannot get treatment on his pension. The CEO's statement that although he finds the killing of the natives "outrageous", it is the "terrible financial reports" that concern the shareholders reveals the priorities of the system. The last scene in the film in which colonial-centered marginalization practices are criticized can be seen in Jake's statement "It is always like this, if someone is living above what you want, first make them an enemy so that you have the right to take them" after the CEO authorizes the operation against the Navi's. While the film

criticizes capitalist society in these four sequences, the colonial masculine capitalist mentality that constructs the main problem of the film is ignored, and the struggle is reduced to a power struggle between the hero Jake and the evil commander Colonel Quaritch (Çeliker & Aksoy, 2011, p. 76). In this framework, the film, like other commodities of the classical, popular culture industry, has a narrative in which the real thing - the criticism of the capitalist system, which is reduced to an individual-centered dichotomy of good and evil - is concealed, covered up, and the target is deflected.

In the film, the military hierarchy reinforces the masculine perspective; senior officers insult their subordinates by calling them "ladies, ladies", while Colonel Quaritch positions himself as "father" and "father dragon". In contrast, the Na'vi people address themselves as "my brothers," and there is no clear distinction between gender roles. In the war scenes, Na'vi women, men, and children fight together, but the vast majority of the soldiers from Earth are men; even the women in the military carry a masculine identity. Thus, it is seen that the gender policies of the patriarchal capitalist system are constructed in the context of the "feminine other" in the movie *Avatar*, albeit implicitly.

Representation and marginalization practices of the Na'vi people

The Na'vi people are presented as a ritualistic and matrilineal community, integrated with nature, with strong bonds between members of the community. This structure is positioned as the opposite of the modern world based on the masculine mind. Na'vi individuals are depicted in a form alien to humans, with their cyan skin color, abnormal size, striped skin, the shape of their ears and tails that allow them to establish a neural connection with other species, as well as their animal-like form with their kicking reflex. While their colors and physical differences make it difficult for the audience to identify with them, their mystical connection emphasizes their intertwined nature and animals. By drawing a material and bodily distinction between modern man and the Na'vi, the feminine mentality is placed in an inaccessible and utopian position. Although Jake takes the side of the Na'vi people, the main identification in the film is established through his character who maintains his human identity. While the clothes and jewelry of the Na'vi are similar to indigenous cultures, the fact that their language is left without subtitles further alienates the audience from them.

The relationship between the Na'vi people and modern man in the film, like any othering practice, contains the master-slave dilemma. At the same time, even though the film is constructed in the center of an example of the classical colonization approach of the Western subject, the "humanoid" yet non-human definition of the indigenous people - in this context non-

hierarchical - and the "dream and fantasy" discourse attributed to the life on Pandora in the film are also distanced (Norton, 2013, p. 132).

In the movie, the planet Pandora is represented in the military frame as "a planet scarier than hell, with crawling, mud-hiding, flying creatures that want to kill people and eat their eyes". The Na'vi people, on the other hand, are portrayed as humanoid, hard to kill, and possessing poisoned arrows. In the later scenes of the movie, the resistance of the Na'vi people is characterized as "bastards" and "vermin".¹ For the Colonel, they are recognized and equated as "enemies" who only make sense when they unite with other clans.

For scientists, the Na'vi people and Pandora are "different" humanoid beings that need to be scientifically explored. Although this "different" perception is described as "wonderful" in the following sequences, it is important in terms of other practices.

For CEO Selfridge (for the capital system), the Navi are blue monkeys living in valuable mines. The planet Pandora is of no importance except for the "unobtanium" mine. The Nest Tree and the Na'vi people are only recognizable to the CEO because they live on top of these underground riches. For the CEO and the shareholders, Pandora is a treasure to be seized - as masculine reason preaches. In this context, although cultural domination (opening schools, teaching languages, etc.) was first attempted "to avoid bad press", the use of military power

provided by technology was not held back when diplomacy failed to reach a compromise.

However, the natives did not give up choosing the mud and nature. However, nature is the first component of modern man's self-construction that he gives up and marginalizes.

Jake's representation in the movie

Jake is portrayed in the movie as a soldier who is retired due to his disability. He is a character who tries to live on his pension due to his inability to use his legs, cannot even afford his treatment due to the insufficiency of his salary, and does not have many dreams for the future. From Jake's point of view, Pandora is a chance for a new world in which he is not positioned as the other and is freed from the "stigma" of his physical disability and lack of physical disability. He hopes to have his legs cured with the chance to take part in the RDA, a blessing bestowed upon him by the death of his twin brother Tom. Jake, who is included in the group of scientists who discovered Pandora thanks to their common DNA structure with his twin brother Tom - so that Tom's Avatar would not go to waste - is marginalized by the scientist Dr. Grace as "goose-headed, discarded, empty-minded, bloodshed fool, moron".

Jake is portrayed as a masculine character but has no place in the masculine system. Due to his disability, he is the feminine other of the system. He does not allow Dr. Grace to help him settle in the identification unit and keeps his distance from the feminine attitude. However, even though Grace is in the masculine system, she is seen as a more feminine element. From the

beginning, the scientists were more inclined and willing to "see" and "understand" the Na'vis than the Ceo and the Colonel.

When Jake arrives at the RDA, the soldiers marginalize him as a "fast boy" and "Mr. Special". Because Jake has no place in the military team where masculine values are very dominant. Due to his disability, Jake is positioned in the opposite of the masculine and the good, as Bhasin mentions. As can be seen, Jake is the other for the team and the world he is in. In the film, Jake, who cannot find a place for himself in the world and is worthless and marginalized in this framework, will only be the savior, the chosen one who goes to Pandora. In this framework, only someone who has no place on Earth and is seen as unworthy would prefer Pandora and become the mighty one there.

The Colonel is pleased that Jake is a soldier in an Avatar body and plans to use him to "gain the trust of the savages and force them to obey". Jake will provide the support that the science team does not provide to the Colonel and will act as an unwitting mole. In return, he offers to get his "real legs" back. However, although his legs exist, they are not considered "real" because they are dysfunctional, just as Jake's twin has no function other than being compatible with the Avatar body... Jake, who has no meaning other than his Avatar body, is assigned as a mole, which is characterized as a feminine task in the masculine system. The nickname "mole" (Temel

et al., 2006, pp.26-37), which is used as an insult against women, points to Jake's feminine position within the system.

In the Colonel's conversation with Jake, the Colonel's statement, "low gravity melts you, you get soft", summarizes his thoughts on behalf of Pandora, and the way he inflates his muscles and continues weight training is just a show to remind Jake of his position. The Colonel is the Zeus of the masculine world, embodying the might of the physical, and is the leader of the military team. A father-son relationship is established between the Colonel and Jake; Jake takes on the role of the obedient and then rebellious son who can never have the power of his father (physical competence). He rebels against the Colonel by gaining physical power with his avatar body. Jake, like Prometheus, takes the fire (knowledge) of humanity and offers it to the people of Pandora. However, his curse is that he carries the legacy of masculine thought. As a result, even in the process of protecting Pandora, the weapons of the masculine world are used. Eywa, on the other hand, while she should remain a balancing, feminine, and neutral figure, becomes masculinized and turns into a tool that fulfills Jake's wish. Thus, not only the Na'vi people but also Pandora accepts Jake's authority. Norton (2013:132) discusses the father-son relationship between the Colonel and Jake in an Oedipal context, emphasizing their desire for the "feminine-primitive". The Colonel calls Jake a "son" and tries to equip him with the knowledge to control the "feminine primitive". However, as Jake progresses towards this mission, he is unable to resist

the feminine object of desire and loses his direction. The wholeness gained by the Na'vi with their feminine perspective leads Jake back to his primordial fantasy, the collective psychic wholeness in the womb (Norton, 2013, p.133).

The seeds of the sacred tree signal that Jake is the "chosen one", and the spirits landing on him ascribe intuitiveness to the feminine. In this context, Jake is recognized with feminine appreciation but proves his authority through his masculine achievements. In Pandora, where he arrives by chance, he is again chosen by chance. Jake's importance to the Colonel and Dr. Grace is also determined by this choice. Although the film presents a different narrative on the surface, it essentially tells a story centered on Jake's -white, hetero, Western, male- achievements. His three main achievements, winning Neytiri, becoming Toruk Makto, and saving the Na'vi people from the colonizers, stand out as individual and masculine achievements.

Gender roles are the most commonly used roles to gain authority and power in the masculine society and are represented as such in the movie. Sexuality, which cannot be considered in a context separate from power relations, is one of the most natural acts through which masculine reason mediates its existence (Esenyel, 2020, p.698). The ideological framework in question covers not the act of sexuality but the "knowledge" of masculine sexuality. The act of sexuality, which is constructed based on the reflex of masculine reason to

dominate other females, is an achievement that enables Jake to become a key person for both the Na'vis and the RDA team in the film. Through his relationship with Neytiri, he establishes authority over the Na'vi people and reinforces his sexual power. Jake's second masculine achievement, his union with Toruk Makto, is also presented as an act of physical and symbolic domination. He transforms the recognition he gains through Neytiri into the submission of the Na'vi people. The most important breaking point of Jake's heroization is the scene of his first mating with the Avatar's body, which is also an act of union. The dominance of the human body over the Avatar and, in this context, the Na'vi is shown, laying the symbolic foundation for future superiority.

There is also the hegemonic superiority of the White Western male over the Blue Na'vi male, the subjugation of Neytiri and Toruk Makto - not by Tsutey or other Na'vi males - by the White Western "crippled" male, and the emasculation of other feminine males. A heroic story is created centered on the message that even a crippled White Western male is superior to the blue feminine Na'vi. Moreover, Neytiri's voluntary choice of Jake and the power of masculine reason over her fiancé explains and legitimizes that "the powerful can gain the voluntary consent of the governed" (Lemelle, 1995, cited in Rose and Bartolli, 2021, pp.147-152).

Although the last success was not won against the Na'vi, it is the act of the most symbolic violence against the Na'vi people through Jake. Unable to produce a hero from among

themselves, the Na'vi people could only resist the colonization under the leadership of a crippled and failed soldier (Çeliker & Aksoy, 2011, p.72). They could only win by using the weapons of the "air people" and by emasculating the masculinity of the masculine reason, that is, by becoming masculinized. More precisely, Jake is the winner. As an extension of Jake, the planet Pandora and its people were able to win. Nevertheless, in return, they had to renounce the feminine worldview. Because the only way for the feminine to perpetuate its existence is to become masculine.

The film concludes at the center of the "either-or..." dilemma presented by the classical Western metaphysical tradition: Jake must choose between life on Pandora and Earth. Jake chooses Pandora and, with Eva's help, transplants his body into the Avatar shell.

Representations of other characters in the movie

The three disciplines that exist within the RDA team are the three disciplines recognized in the modern world: the soldier, the CEO, and the scientist. The businessman at the top of the hierarchy has constructed the soldier and the scientist as intermediaries for capital. The soldier and the scientist, who can exist and have influence at the initiative of the CEO and serve the economy - and in this context exploitation - do not appear as an autonomous identity. While the Colonel - representing the military identity - calls scientists "empty heads, CEO's dogs", Dr.

Parker uses the expression "bloodshed fool" for the military identity. Dr. Parker (representing the scientists) is said to be merchant-headed.

Another important point is the representation of people who are on Jake's side and betray humanity to help the Na'vis (Table 2).

Table 2: Rescue Team Character Representation²

	TEN COLOR	OCCUPATION	GENDER ROLE	BIOLOGICAL SEX	I-THEN
Jake	White	Disabled Soldier	Masculine	Male	The Other
Turidi	Hybrid	Soldier	Masculine	Woman*	The Other
Dr. Grace	White	Scientist	Masculine	Woman*	The Other
Norm	White	Scientist	Feminine*	Male	The Other

The characters who want to save the feminine world are the ones who "could not - could not" succeed in the masculine world or who are doomed to always remain as the other. In this context, people who have not succeeded in the masculine world "only" betray the masculine world on behalf of Pandora. These characters are relatively feminine due to their other identity.

1. Who are the winners or losers of these messages? How does this serve the interests of media owners?

Although the film seems to deal with the victory of the Na'vi people, who live in peace and tranquility in the center of the feminine worldview, over the science and military forces - the modern world - which are manifestations of the hostile colonial masculine mind, the fiction of the text and the othering practices it contains reproduce the masculine mind and Western metaphysical traditions of thought. Although he is "Western, white, hetero and male" in the masculine modern world, he is a "normal soldier" due to his physical disability and a "normal scientist" due to his lack of technical knowledge. Jake, who is marginalized and excluded from the system - in this framework, on the same side as the feminine others within the system - is a hero in Pandora, despite all these inadequacies and shortcomings.

The main conflict in the film represents a clash between the masculine and feminine worlds. Our ancestors fought this conflict thousands of years ago against nature, man, woman, animal, and every feminine element, resulting in the "defeated" feminine being cursed as the other. In Avatar, we can view it as the 2009 version of this age-old conflict on the silver screen. This time, the winning side is the masculine us, disguised as the feminine us, which can be described as "trance" even though it appears feminine. How feminine can a victory indeed be when it relies on the weapons of the masculine to succeed? One of these weapons is Jake, the discarded soldier. Furthermore, an emasculating modern man adopts masculine methods to achieve this victory.

The masculine weapons, which even the feminine masculine requires to win the war, alongside the soldiers and scientists—equipped with masculine tools and not genuinely part of the feminine masculine—are extensions of a system designed to masculinize the feminine masculine, regardless of how much they seem to admire and adhere to it.

In the film, this feminine perspective is admired like watching a documentary. To improve the viewing experience and to dehumanize the feminine us, all the skills of colors and technology were used, and Na'vi people and nature were depicted by the fiction of the "other" imprinted in the minds. Since Jake, the only character in the film with whom it is desired not to identify, has a Western metaphysical thought trajectory, the entire Pandora is viewed with a logocentric and dualistic reference. Instead of identification with the feminine, immersion in the story is achieved through empathy established as a result of the masculinization of the feminine. It is for this reason that Pandora has no meaning other than being the "feminine other" that modern man, who has defeated the feminine, watches, consumes, and eviscerates like a tourist trip.

Pandora, which is fictionalized as an unspoiled planet, has chosen the best way to emphasize the superiority and dominance of Euro-American men to achieve a "post-colonial" expression (Norton, 2013, p.131). Although the aim of colonization is shown as unrealized, we see that the practices of dominating, possessing, and objectifying the other - the feminine - are realized through the protagonist (Jake). Although it can be meta-read as if it is constructed in

the center of the feminine life perspective, it serves the reproduction and naturalization of the masculine reason and its extensions - patriarchal and racist (Çeliker & Aksoy, 2011, p.80). Like every futurist film, Avatar prescribes what the future will be like - the search for feminine commodities on other planets as a result of the capitalist system's exhaustion of all feminine commodities on earth - and in this context normalizes it. As Rose and Batolli (2021, p.152) emphasize, although the "Earthlings" seem to be defeated in the film, the masculine reason and its extension, science and technology, are still superior. The weapons (agency) of the colonizers are "usurped" and used against them. In this context, the feminine was able to win and emasculate the masculine only by usurping the masculine's agency; by becoming masculinized and assuming a trans identity. As a result, the winner of the narrative is masculine reason, and the loser is feminine reason.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

In this study, by analyzing the film Avatar through the representation of the feminine other, it is revealed how the capitalist patriarchal and colonialist perspective is reproduced in the film. It has been observed that nature, land, women, animals, and communities considered primordial have been coded as backward and feminine throughout history in the Western tradition of thought, and this coding is continued in the movie Avatar through the Na'vi people and the planet

Pandora. At first glance, the movie seems critical of colonialism and modern man's domination of nature. However, when the narrative structure and character dynamics are analyzed, it reproduces the superiority of the Western masculine subject. In other words, the film, which seems to emulate matrilineal societies, normalizes gender inequality and pursues a logocentric and dualist understanding as a result of the media deconstruction method.

At the beginning of the film, the Na'vi people are portrayed as a feminine society, and the planet Pandora is constructed as a peaceful and mystical world in harmony with nature. However, later in the movie, the masculine Western subject (Jake Sully) enters this world, changes its rules, and rises to the position of leader. As a soldier who was discarded by the masculine forces due to his disability, Jake donated his world to the feminine other. In other words, it is also seen that the stereotype of the "white savior man" is strongly portrayed in the movie. As mentioned above, while Jake Sully is seen as a worthless and dysfunctional figure on Earth, his transformation into a hero in Pandora implies that the Western subject can only gain value as a figure who changes the fate of marginalized communities. The Na'vi people, the feminine other, could only achieve liberation under the leadership of a Western leader. This narrative structure reproduces the colonialist and capitalist patriarchal point of view often found in Western cinema.

In addition, the conflict between masculine and feminine society in the movie is resolved through the transformation of the feminine into the masculine. Although the Na'vi people are portrayed as peaceful people in touch with nature, they have to fight, resort to violence, and adopt masculine methods of struggle to survive and defend Pandora. Under Jake's guidance, the Na'vi people adopt military strategies and develop battle tactics, and ultimately, a masculine solution to defend Pandora is validated in the film. In the film, the emphasis that nature and the feminine world cannot exist without resorting to masculine strategies also legitimizes masculine domination. At this point, through Avatar, the message that the masculine is inevitably superior and that the feminine must be masculinized to survive is repeatedly reconstructed.

In conclusion, the film Avatar is an important example of how marginalized feminine elements such as nature and women are constructed and represented from a masculine perspective. Although at first glance the film seems to offer a critique against colonialism and modern man's domination of nature, an examination of its subtext reveals that it presents a narrative that reinforces the superiority of the Western masculine subject, reproduces the stereotype of the white savior man, and legitimizes masculine hegemony. Avatar is a narrative that centers on the idea that the feminine cannot exist on its own but can only survive under the guidance of the masculine mind and by resorting to masculine methods. In this framework, the

film can be considered as a striking example of how the Western masculine system of thought and capitalist patriarchal ideology are reproduced through a modern cinematic product.

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ENDNOTES:

¹ Even the use of the names "pest" or "insect" as insults is a product of the masculine perspective. For the masculine mentality, what is small in quality and quantity is inferior, worthless and insignificant.

² Those marked with an asterisk (*) are the character's marginalizing quality.