

A Postcolonial Analysis of Hegemony and Resistance in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022)

Hibatur Rahman

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya
hibatur.20060@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi teori Hegemoni Antonio Gramsci dan teori Mimikri Homi K. Bhabha dalam poskolonialisme, dengan fokus pada kajian mereka terhadap kekuasaan, budaya, dan perlawanan pasca-pemerintahan kolonial. Teori Gramsci menyoroti dinamika kekuasaan dan konflik kelas, sementara teori Bhabha membahas bagaimana kaum terjajah meniru budaya dominan sebagai bentuk perlawanan. Dengan menggunakan film *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) yang disutradarai oleh James Cameron, penelitian ini menganalisis tema-tema hegemoni dan perlawanan yang digambarkan melalui perjuangan Jake Sully melawan "Orang Langit". Analisis ini melibatkan elemen linguistik dan visual untuk mengungkap simbol dan metafora yang berkaitan dengan tema-tema tersebut. Penelitian ini mengacu pada "Prison Notebooks" karya Gramsci dan "The Location of Culture" karya Bhabha, dengan menggunakan kritik pascakolonial untuk menginterpretasikan sekuens, dialog, dan komponen visual dari film tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Hegemoni, Perlawanan, Mimikri.

Abstract

This study explores Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony theory and Homi K. Bhabha's Mimicry theory within postcolonialism, focusing on their examination of power, culture, and resistance post-colonial rule. Gramsci's theory sheds light on power dynamics and class conflict, while Bhabha's theory discusses how the colonized mimic dominant cultures as a form of resistance. Using the film *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) directed by James Cameron, this research analyzes the themes of hegemony and resistance portrayed through Jake Sully's struggle against the "Sky People." The analysis involves linguistic and visual elements to uncover symbols and metaphors related to these themes. The research draws on Gramsci's "Prison Notebooks" and Bhabha's "The Location of Culture," using postcolonial criticism to interpret key sequences, dialogues, and visual components from the film.

Keywords: Hegemony, Resistance, Mimicry.

1. 1. INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism examines the enduring effects of colonialism on societies, cultures, and politics, highlighting the power imbalances between former colonial powers and the countries they once ruled. It explores how colonial legacies influence identities and political dynamics in the postcolonial era. Homi K. Bhabha, in "The Location of Culture," focuses on postcolonialism through concepts like cultural hybridity, resistance, and the reshaping of social and political narratives after colonialism. Bhabha's work delves into the complex nature of postcolonial identities and the ongoing impact of colonial histories on contemporary cultures.

On page 183 of "The Location of Culture," Homi K. Bhabha argues that the postcolonial perspective, developed by cultural historians and literary theorists, differs from traditional views like underdevelopment

sociology or dependency theory. It critiques nationalist and nativist frameworks that create a binary opposition between the Third World and the First World. Instead, the postcolonial approach recognizes the complex cultural and political boundaries between these often conflicting regions. This passage emphasizes how postcolonial perspectives challenge conventional narratives and seek to redefine interregional relationships in a more nuanced way.

This research examines Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is crucial for understanding power dynamics, social change, and class conflict. An Italian Marxist scholar, Gramsci used hegemony to explain how dominant groups maintain power through consent rather than force. He argued that the ruling class sustains its dominance by shaping society's values, beliefs, and norms to serve its interests, using institutions like schools, media, and religious

organizations to propagate its worldview. Gramsci emphasized the role of intellectuals in challenging these hegemonic ideologies and promoting counter-hegemonic movements. He believed that organic intellectuals from the working class and other oppressed groups are essential for resisting dominant ideologies and advocating for social change. Gramsci's theory highlights the complex interplay between power, culture, and ideology in maintaining social relations and the status quo, stressing the need to understand how consent and coercion support dominant systems and how counter-hegemonic efforts can challenge and transform existing power structures.

Mimicry in postcolonial theory refers to the adoption and imitation of the cultural practices of colonizers by the colonized. This imitation both reveals and challenges the power dynamics between the two groups. In "The Location of Culture," Homi K. Bhabha describes mimicry as a form of camouflage, where blending into the dominant culture both conceals and subverts power structures. This concept is crucial for understanding how colonized individuals navigate and negotiate their identities within the confines of a colonial system.

Previous scholars have explored hegemony and mimicry in films. Sara Salem (2020) investigates Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony in Nasserist Egypt, examining power, colonialism, and anticolonialism. She highlights the relevance of Gramsci's ideas to the postcolonial era in understanding power and resistance dynamics during Nasser's rule. Conversely, Rifda Farnida (2020) analyzes postcolonial mimicry in Richard C. Morais' "The Hundred-Foot Journey," focusing on the character Hasan's assimilation into French society. Farnida's study delves into Hasan's adoption of French cultural practices and its significance for understanding postcolonial issues.

This study will analyze the themes of hegemony and mimicry in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022). By applying Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry, the research aims to explore the film's portrayal of power dynamics, cultural dominance, and the practice of imitation. Through this theoretical lens, the study will investigate how the movie depicts the complex interplay between dominant and subjugated cultures, as well as the strategies employed by the characters to navigate and resist these power structures.

Avatar (2009), directed by James Cameron and released in 2009, depicts human colonization of the planet Pandora and the conflict with the indigenous Na'vi over valuable resources. The sequel, *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), continues the story 15 years later, focusing

on Jake Sully and Neytiri as they confront ongoing threats and seek refuge with the Metkayina clan while facing renewed human colonization. This study will analyze *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry to explore the film's portrayal of power dynamics, cultural dominance, and the role of imitation in these conflicts.

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), the RDA Corporation asserts dominance over Pandora, exploiting its resources through economic and military might. As a survival strategy, some Na'vi, including Jake Sully, adopt mimicry by learning human language and customs. This adoption of human ways creates internal strife within the Na'vi community, as it is viewed as a form of betrayal. Over time, Jake Sully rejects the RDA's control and aligns himself with the Na'vi resistance, ultimately playing a crucial role in overthrowing the RDA's rule and defending Pandora, seeking redemption for his earlier actions. This narrative underscores the themes of hegemony and mimicry within the film. Hegemony is represented by the RDA's exertion of power over Pandora, while mimicry serves as a complex strategy for survival and resistance among the Na'vi. Studying these themes through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry offers insights into the dynamics of power, cultural dominance, and identity negotiation depicted in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022).

James Cameron, renowned for directing films like *Titanic* (1997) and the original *Avatar* (2009), anticipates significant success with *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), potentially surpassing the original in box office revenue. This research aims to explore the themes of hegemony and mimicry as forms of resistance within the narrative of *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022). The film provides a compelling backdrop to examine power dynamics and cultural hegemony, particularly within the context of colonialism and corporate exploitation of natural resources on Pandora. Through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry, this study will analyze how these themes are portrayed and how they reflect the broader struggles between the colonizers and the indigenous Na'vi.

The concept of mimicry in the film illuminates how marginalized communities, such as the Na'vi, navigate and resist dominant systems of oppression. By adopting elements of the colonizers' culture, characters like Jake Sully engage in a strategy of adaptation and survival, complicating their identities and allegiances. This thematic exploration offers insights into issues of identity

negotiation and the complexities of resistance against hegemonic structures. It highlights how mimicry serves as both a survival tactic and a form of subtle defiance, illustrating the intricate balance between assimilation and resistance in the face of cultural and political domination.

The researcher finds this topic intriguing due to its potential to deepen understanding of how contemporary cultural productions portray hegemony and resistance strategies. By analyzing *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry, the study aims to shed light on how these theoretical frameworks manifest in popular cinema. This analysis will contribute to broader discussions on power dynamics, identity negotiation, and strategies for social change within the context of cultural and political domination depicted in the film.

2. METHOD

This study uses Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony from "Prison Notebooks" (1971) and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry from "The Location of Culture" (1994) to analyze the 192-minute film *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022). Directed by James Cameron and produced by James Cameron and Jon Landau, the film continues Jake Sully's resistance against human invasion on Pandora. It examines how the film portrays the hegemonic actions of human colonizers (Sky People), the Na'vi's strategies of resistance, and how Na'vi mimicry emerges as a form of resistance. This analysis explores how Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Bhabha's theory of mimicry are intertwined in the narrative, providing insights into power dynamics, cultural dominance, and resistance strategies in popular cinema.

The researcher used a systematic approach to analyze *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), focusing on key scenes, dialogues, and visual elements depicting hegemony and resistance within Jake Sully's family and the Pandora tribe. Data collection involved thorough film viewing, extensive note-taking, and documenting aspects illustrating colonialism's impact. This included analyzing scenarios, emotions, and interpersonal dynamics. The analysis proceeded by reviewing selected material to uncover deeper meanings and symbols related to hegemony and resistance. The study explored how Na'vi mimicry served as a resistance strategy against invaders, culminating in a comprehensive understanding of hegemony, resistance, and mimicry in the film. This structured approach revealed nuanced layers of power dynamics, cultural identity, and strategies of resistance portrayed in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher presents a detailed analysis of hegemony and resistance among the Na'vi people as depicted in the movie *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) directed by James Cameron. The chapter aims to explore how the film portrays hegemonic dynamics and the strategies employed by the Na'vi to resist these forces, ultimately leading to the phenomenon of mimicry. Additionally, it seeks to discuss the cinematic depiction of hegemony and mimicry within the narrative.

3.1 Hegemony depicted in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022)

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher, introduced the concept of hegemony to describe how the ruling class maintains cultural, ideological, and moral leadership over society. He emphasized that this dominance relies not only on force but also on the consent and involvement of subordinate classes.

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), hegemony is depicted through themes of colonialism and exploitation, similar to the original *Avatar* film (2009). The sequel continues the narrative of human attempts to dominate Pandora and exploit its resources, primarily through the RDA (Resources Development Administration), a powerful corporation based on Earth.

In both Gramsci's theory and *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), hegemony plays a central role. It illustrates how dominant groups maintain societal control not just through coercion, but also by gaining consent and exerting cultural influence. Gramsci's concept of hegemony, rooted in Marxist theory, underscores that cultural, ideological, and moral leadership enables the ruling class to sustain its power.

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), hegemony is evident through the actions of the human corporation RDA, which seeks to exploit Pandora's resources for its own benefit. This reflects economic hegemony, where the dominant group controls valuable resources to maintain power and accumulate wealth. Additionally, humans utilize advanced technology and military force to assert dominance over the indigenous Na'vi people, illustrating military hegemony in the narrative.

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), cultural imperialism is evident as humans impose their lifestyle on the Na'vi, disregarding their customs and deep connection to nature. This aspect of hegemony highlights how dominant cultural norms are forced onto subordinate groups, reinforcing the perceived superiority of the ruling class. It shows how the dominant group not only controls economic and military aspects but also seeks to reshape

the cultural identity and practices of the subjugated group to align with its own worldview.

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), the Na'vi's resistance against human hegemony illustrates how oppressed groups can challenge and defy the dominant order. This aspect of the story emphasizes their ability to defend autonomy, preserve cultural heritage, and maintain their identity amidst external pressures. It portrays marginalized communities actively resisting domination and striving to uphold their traditions and connection to their land despite overwhelming challenges. This resistance symbolizes resilience and determination in the face of cultural and economic imperialism.

Avatar: The Way of Water (2022) critiques hegemony in the contexts of colonialism, exploitation, and cultural dominance. The film prompts viewers to reflect on real-world power dynamics, the impact of imperialism on indigenous communities, and the importance of cultural preservation and social justice. From Gramsci's perspective, hegemony is a complex system of domination across economic, political, cultural, and ideological dimensions, shaping societal norms and perceptions of legitimacy.

The following scenes from the film illustrate how hegemony is depicted in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022):



Figure 1. Eliminating the Rebellious Leader (16:22-16:34)

(WAINFLEET SNIFFS)

Wainfleet : Do we have a mission yet?

Colonel Quaritch : Indeed we do.

*Our mission is to hunt down and k*ll*

The leader of the Na'vi insurgency.

The one they call

Toruk Makto.

Jake Sully.

SQUAD: Yeah!

That's what it is!

Colonel Quaritch's mission to assassinate Jake Sully, also known as Toruk Makto, is crucial as Jake has become the linchpin of the Na'vi rebellion against the human invaders.

Colonel Quaritch, as the representative of the human military on Pandora, is determined to uphold human control over the indigenous Na'vi. His objective to eliminate Jake Sully, a symbol of Na'vi resistance, underscores the broader conflict between the technologically advanced humans and the native Na'vi population.

Targeting Jake Sully, also known as Toruk Makto, holds profound significance. Toruk Makto is a revered figure among the Na'vi, celebrated for riding the mighty Toruk and uniting the clans. Colonel Quaritch's mission to eliminate Jake aims to weaken Na'vi resistance and bolster human dominance, especially in their pursuit of Pandora's valuable mineral, unobtainium.

This scene depicts a direct confrontation between Colonel Quaritch and Jake Sully, symbolizing a profound ideological conflict. Quaritch embodies human greed and imperialism, while Jake represents the Na'vi's resistance against oppression and their quest for independence.



Figure 2. The Sky People's Ambition of Colonizing Pandora (24:10-24:20)

General Ardmore : We're not here to run a mine, Colonel.

As On-World Commander, I have been charged with a greater mission.

(MACHINES WHIRRING LOUDLY)

Earth is dying.

Our task here is to tame this frontier.

Nothing less than to make Pandora

The new home for humanity.

The conversation between General Ardmore and Colonel Quaritch unveils that their agenda on Pandora transcends mere resource extraction; they intend to make Pandora a new home for humanity due to Earth's declining condition. This underscores the "Sky People's" resolve to assert dominance over the indigenous Na'vi, even at the cost of their lives, driven by their dire situation on Earth.

This dialogue reveals that the human presence on Pandora goes beyond extracting resources; it aims to establish a new home for humanity due to Earth's deteriorating conditions. This plan highlights the

ambitious goal of the "Sky People" to dominate and subjugate the Na'vi tribe as part of their broader agenda.

The dialogue further suggests that the "Sky People" are prepared to take drastic actions to achieve their objectives, including sacrificing the lives and freedom of the Na'vi. This disregard for the well-being of the indigenous people underscores the ruthless nature of their pursuit for control, prioritizing their own survival and prosperity above all else.

Essentially, this dialogue serves as a stark reminder of the extreme measures powerful groups are willing to take to preserve their dominance, revealing the inherent injustices and violence within hegemonic systems.



**Figure 3. Colonel Quaritch's Pursuit of Revenge
 (01:43:18-01:46:04)**

(GROANS)

Wainfleet : Stay down and shut up!

(SPEAKS NA'VI)

(IN NA'VI)

(IN ENGLISH)

Colonel Quaritch : Now what's he saying?

Spider : They never saw him.

Spider : These are Sea People.

Spider : Forest People don't come here.

Colonel Quaritch : I ain't buyin' that.

(QUARRELLING IN NA'VI)

(IN NA'VI)

(SPEAKS NA'VI)

(IN ENGLISH)

Spider : They don't know anything.

*Colonel Quaritch : Sh**t that animal.*

(YELPS)

Spider : What the hell are you doing?

(GASPS)

(YELLS)

(ALL EXCLAIM)

Wainfleet : Down!

(SHOUTS IN NA'VI)

In a crucial scene, Colonel Quaritch leads an expedition to apprehend Jake Sully, known as Toruk Makto, who has sought refuge with the Na'vi sea tribe, the Metkayina. Facing pressure from Quaritch's forces to surrender Jake, the Metkayina leader, Tonowari, defiantly refuses. In response, Colonel Quaritch's expedition

retaliates by burning down the entire coastal settlement of the Metkayina.

This expedition vividly illustrates Colonel Quaritch's relentless pursuit of power and his resolve to eradicate any challenges to human dominance on Pandora, resorting to violence and coercion. The destruction of the Metkayina's coastal homes underscores Quaritch's willingness to employ brute force to assert human superiority over the Na'vi.

The burning of the Metkayina's homes is a dual assault: physically on their community and symbolically on human imperialism. It highlights Quaritch's ruthless mission and determination to achieve his goals at any cost.

This scene resonates with themes of oppression, resistance, and the fight for freedom against overwhelming aggression. It foreshadows a narrative of rebellion as Jake Sully and the Na'vi unite to protect their homeland from the destructive forces of human imperialism.

3.2 Resistance Towards Hegemony by Na'Vi People in *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022)

The Na'vi actively resisted the hegemony imposed by the "Sky People" on Pandora, driven by their strong connection to their environment and a steadfast commitment to protect their home and cultural traditions. This defiance, significant for Jake Sully and his family, included Jake making a profound sacrifice by giving up his title of Toruk Makto to ensure the safety of his Omaticaya clan.

This act of resistance emphasizes the Na'vi's unwavering dedication to safeguarding their way of life despite external threats. It showcases their bravery in confronting the superior technological and military might of the human invaders, fueled by their deep connection to Pandora's ecosystem and shared identity.

Overall, the Na'vi's active resistance against hegemony on Pandora stands as a powerful narrative of resilience and cultural preservation. It illustrates their steadfast commitment to defend their homeland and oppose the forces of exploitation and domination imposed by the "Sky People."

(WISTFUL MUSIC PLAYING)

*Jake Sully : This is like stones
 in my heart.*

Tarsem is wise for his years.

He will be a strong Olo'eyktan.

The leader must die.

(YELLS)

(TARSEM GRUNTS)

Jake Sully : So the leader can be born.

Toruk Makto will disappear.

(PEOPLE SOBBING)

Jake Sully : The People will be safe.

(SIGHS HEAVILY)

(WISTFUL MUSIC CONTINUES)

(YIPS)

(YELPS)

The Na'vi, deeply connected to Pandora's natural landscape, used guerrilla tactics against human invaders. They exploited the terrain to launch surprise attacks on vulnerable points like fuel depots, communication lines, and transportation routes, disrupting the "Sky People's" operations effectively.

Central to their resistance, the Na'vi united previously independent clans against the common threat, fostering cooperation and sharing defense strategies. Their spiritual connection to Eywa, Pandora's life force, gave them strength and resilience. Drawing courage from this bond, they adapted tactics to counter the human invasion effectively.

The Na'vi's guerrilla tactics and unity highlight their resolve to defend Pandora and maintain their way of life. Their strategic resilience, grounded in spiritual beliefs and environmental harmony, tells a powerful story of resistance against exploitation and domination.

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), several scenes depict the Na'vi's resistance, showcasing their tactical ingenuity and unwavering spirit. Through their efforts, the Na'vi demonstrated their determination to protect their home and preserve their way of life. Several of these scene such as:



Figure 4. Toruk Makto's Sacrifices in Clashing with the Sky People (48:37-49:23)

Jake Sully : Toruk Makto will disappear.

(PEOPLE SOBBING)

Jake Sully : The People will be safe.

(SIGHS HEAVILY)

(WISTFUL MUSIC CONTINUES)

(YIPS)

(YELPS)

Jake Sully : A father protects.

It's what gives him meaning.

One life ends.

Another begins.

Jake Sully and Neytiri play crucial roles in Pandora's resistance movement, embodying courage and unwavering commitment in their fight against external threats. As leaders, they not only strategize but also actively engage in battles, demonstrating their readiness to confront danger directly.

Initially an outsider to the Na'vi, Jake brings a unique perspective and tactical expertise to the resistance. His background as a former human soldier allows him to understand the strategies and motivations of the human forces they oppose, offering invaluable insights. Jake's transformation from outsider to a respected leader among the Na'vi underscores his profound dedication to their cause.

Neytiri, a skilled warrior deeply rooted in Na'vi customs, complements Jake's leadership with her profound understanding of their culture and spiritual bond with Pandora's natural world. Her role in bridging human and Na'vi perspectives highlights unity and respect for their environment.

Together, Jake and Neytiri form a formidable and dynamic pair, exemplifying leadership and unity. Their combined strengths and mutual respect inspire their people to stand firm for freedom and the planet's preservation. Their leadership galvanizes the Na'vi and allies, fostering purpose and resilience in the resistance movement.



Figure 5. Uniting Clans to Combat the Sky People (02:18:52-02:19:20)

(BREATHES HEAVILY)

(SIGHS)

Jake Sully : Hold here.

*Tonowari : They are k*llers of tulkun.*

They must die.

Here.

Today.

Jake Sully : It's me that they want.

That's what all this has been about, all right?

The hunting of our tulkun.

The taking of our kids.

Ronal : You brought this upon us!

You! (BREATHING HEAVILY)

Jake Sully : Well, then it's me that has to do this.

(BREATHES HEAVILY)

Jake Sully, alongside the Metkayina clan, exemplifies the power of unity as diverse Na'vi groups unite against a common adversary. This solidarity showcases how clans can overcome differences to find collective strength, emphasizing the significant impact of unified action in resisting invaders.

The Metkayina's unique skills complement the Omatikaya's strengths, demonstrating how each clan's abilities contribute synergistically to the resistance. Their collaboration develops strategies that leverage combined resources and knowledge, highlighting how cooperation enhances the effectiveness of resistance tactics.

This scene illustrates diverse Na'vi clans uniting under a shared objective despite varying customs. Their collaboration presents a cohesive front that bolsters their determination and showcases their capability to defend their homeland and way of life against external threats. This unity is a potent testament to the effectiveness of diverse groups collaborating to confront existential challenges.



Figure 6. Sabotage and Guerrilla Warfare (12:45-13:14)

(TENSE MUSIC PLAYING)

(IKRAN ROARS)

(HOOTING)

(ULULATING)

(IKRAN SQUAWKING)

Jake Sully : Ground team, go!

*(WARRIORS SHOUTING w*r CRIES)*

(WHEELS SCREECH)

(HEROIC MUSIC PLAYING)

(YELLS)

(WHOOPING)

(NEYTIRI ULULATING)

(YELLS)

(GRUNTS)

(PILOT GROANS)

(HOLLERS)

(ALL ULULATING)

(ULULATING)

Tarsem : Take this! Go!

(IKRAN SCREECHING)

Jake Sully : Let's go. Two minutes, people.

Let's go.

The Na'vi employ guerrilla warfare and sabotage tactics to disrupt human military efforts, leveraging their deep knowledge of Pandora's environment to counter the invaders' technological superiority. They use hit-and-run maneuvers to swiftly strike critical targets like vehicles, weapons depots, and supply convoys before retreating into the dense terrain. By targeting vulnerable points in the human supply chain such as fuel depots, communication lines, and transportation routes, they effectively hinder and slow down military operations.

Leveraging Pandora's unique ecosystem, the Na'vi strategically create diversions and obstacles during engagements. Their capability to strike unexpectedly and blend into the landscape instills fear and uncertainty among human forces, undermining their morale. Supported by their tight-knit communities, the Na'vi gather intelligence, offer shelter, and provide steadfast support to their fighters, strengthening their resistance efforts.

Despite technological disadvantages, the Na'vi display resourcefulness by using traditional weapons effectively against advanced human arms and repurposing human equipment to their advantage. These strategies allow them to maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses, challenging the military dominance of the human forces.

Furthermore, the Na'vi resistance movement inspires them to employ mimicry by observing and adapting elements of human technology and tactics. Integrating these into their own strategies enhances their combat effectiveness, highlighting their resilience and determination to protect their homeland and way of life from invading forces.

3.3 Resistance leading to Mimicry

Homi K. Bhabha, a pivotal figure in postcolonial theory, introduced concepts like mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence in his 1994 work "The Location of Culture." Mimicry, as Bhabha defines it, involves colonized individuals or groups adopting the outward appearances and behaviors of their colonizers while subtly challenging their authority. This tactic serves as a form of resistance by undermining the colonizers' claim to absolute dominance and revealing the complexities within colonial discourse.

Bhabha's theory challenges rigid national and cultural identities by showing how cultural representations are fluid and subject to negotiation. Colonial encounters are dynamic, involving power relations where the colonized both imitate and resist the dominant culture simultaneously. This concept highlights the hybrid nature of cultural identities and the ambivalent

positions of colonized subjects as they navigate within colonial frameworks.

Overall, Bhabha's exploration of mimicry deepens our understanding of how colonialism shapes cultural identities and how resistance can occur through subtle acts of imitation that challenge and destabilize colonial power structures.

Moreover, researchers apply Bhabha's mimicry theory within postcolonialism to analyze films like *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022). The following scenes from the film illustrate the mimicry depiction of *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022):



Figure 7. Mastering the Metkayina Way of Life to Combat the Sky People (01:06:00-01:06:38)

Breathe in. (INHALES DEEPLY)

(ALL INHALE DEEPLY)

And breathe out.

(ALL EXHALE DEEPLY)

Imagine

flickering a flame.

*You must slow down
your heartbeat.*

Breathe in.

(INHALES DEEPLY)

Breathe from down here.

Breathe out slowly.

(EXHALES SLOWLY)

Lo'ak,

your heartbeat is fast.

Sorry.

Try to focus.

Okay.

Breathe in.

(BOTH SNICKERING)

And breathe out.

Let your mind go clear.

(SIGHS)

The scene portrays the Omatikaya clan adapting to the aquatic lifestyle of the Metkayina as a blend of resistance and adaptation. Visiting the Metkayina's coastal village, the Omatikaya observe the Metkayina's proficiency underwater, marked by grace, agility, and specialized skills like prolonged breath-holding and

communication using adapted vocal sounds and hand signals for underwater acoustics.

Originating from jungle terrain, the Omatikaya initially face challenges adapting to underwater life with slower movements and limited breath-holding. Guided by Metkayina elders, they undergo intensive training starting with land-based breathing exercises to enhance lung capacity. Progressing to shallow water dives, they master techniques for deeper and longer dives, mirroring the Metkayina's fluid movements to adapt to aquatic challenges effectively.

Throughout their journey, the Omatikaya face physical and psychological challenges, including water pressure and discomfort from prolonged breath-holding. Guided by Metkayina elders, they develop unity and mutual respect between the clans. Despite initial proficiency differences, the Omatikaya's progress symbolizes resilience and adaptability, fostering a deeper connection and collaborative spirit in overcoming adversity.



Figure 8. Utilizing Technology to Withstand Challenges (13:19-13:26)

Norm : Taking the whole case!

We're taking mags,

the RPGs, the stingers.

(IKRAN SQUAWKS)

Bro, let's go. Come on!

Neteyam : Lo'ak!

Lo'ak : Okay, let's go!

Neteyam : Lo'ak!

Tarsem : Move! Take that!

*Take these w*apon.*

Here, boy. Go!

Neteyam : Lo'ak!

(ULULATING)

You don't even know

how to use it.

Dad taught me.

(WARRIORS HOLLERING)

(NA'VI SPOTTER SNARLS)

(NA'VI SPOTTER HOLLERS)

The scene shows the Na'vi adopting the advanced fighting tactics of the "Sky People," including the use of

firearms. This adaptation reflects their necessity to confront the superior weaponry of the invaders, despite their deep connection to Eywa and traditional cultural practices.

Na'vi warriors encounter a maglev train carrying firearms and swiftly exploit the opportunity. Despite their traditional values, they skillfully breach the train's security, revealing rifles, pistols, and ammunition intended for the human outpost.

Upon seizing the firearms, the Na'vi experienced mixed emotions. They are intrigued by their defensive potential yet feel conflicted, recognizing a departure from their traditional values and a sense of guilt. Despite these internal conflicts, they accept the need to adapt for survival in a hostile environment.

Returning to their village with the newly acquired arsenal, the Na'vi grapple with their unease. They acknowledge the risk of compromising cultural identity and principles by adopting human weaponry. Yet, prioritizing community protection and the preservation of their way of life, they confront the necessity of using these tools against imminent threats.

This scene highlights the Na'vi's pragmatic approach to external threats, showcasing the complexities of cultural adaptation and the tough decisions made for survival. It underscores the tension between preserving cultural heritage and effectively responding to challenges, revealing the nuanced dynamics of cultural change under pressure.



Figure 9. Acquiring Combat Skills for Engaging in Warfare (01:03:40-01:04:02)

(SKIMWING GROWLS AND HISSES)

(SKIMWING GRUNTS)

(SNARLING)

Tonowari : This is a warrior's mount.

Not easy to master.

Perhaps you should

Start with an ilu.

Jake : Nah.

This one.

Tonowari : Now remember,

When you dive back in,

good position.

Very important.

Jake : Uh-huh. (GRUNTS)

(SKIMWING GROWLS SOFTLY)

The scene depicts Jake Sully's immersion into the combat techniques and daily routines of the Metkayina clan, a coastal Na'vi community. Moving away from his prior life with the Omatikaya clan, Jake undergoes a significant transformation, acquiring new skills and strategies intricately tied to the oceanic environment and the distinct culture of the Metkayina.

Jake's learning journey extends beyond observation; he actively adopts Metkayina's unique practices, such as interacting closely with marine life. He masters riding the ilu for transportation and becomes skilled with the skimwing, a mount used in Metkayina military operations. Additionally, Jake gains understanding of the tulkun, large marine creatures deeply connected to the Metkayina.

Mastering skills like breath-holding and deep-sea diving becomes crucial for Jake as he adapts to the oceanic environment of the Metkayina. These abilities are essential for survival in their aquatic setting. Beyond physical adaptations, Jake also adopts Metkayina's spiritual reverence for the ocean and its creatures, incorporating their customs and beliefs into his own worldview.

Jake's observation and imitation of the Metkayina enhance his practical skills and deepen his understanding of their cultural identity. His mimicry is a strategy for resilience and survival, helping him navigate unfamiliar challenges. This narrative highlights how cultural exchange and adaptation empower individuals to confront adversity and transform their perspectives.

CONCLUSION

In *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), the film depicts a conflict between the "Sky People," human colonizers, and the indigenous Na'vi tribe, emphasizing themes of hegemony and resistance. The "Sky People" pursue ambitions to conquer Pandora and exploit its resources, evidenced by their attempts to eliminate Na'vi leaders, plan colonization efforts, and seek revenge against Jake Sully, who has integrated fully into Na'vi culture. Their aggressive military strategies and efforts to reshape Pandora highlight their hegemonic intentions.

In response, Jake Sully and the Na'vi actively resist this hegemony. Jake employs guerrilla warfare tactics to disrupt the "Sky People's" operations, sacrifices for the safety of his people, and unites different Na'vi clans to strengthen their defenses. By adopting some of the colonizers' tactics, the Na'vi demonstrate resourcefulness and unwavering determination to defend their homeland and preserve their cultural heritage. The film presents a compelling narrative of indigenous

resistance against imperialist forces, echoing real-world postcolonial themes of struggle and resilience.

Suggestion

Researchers exploring *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) can delve into themes of diaspora and mobility through Jake Sully's journey from the forest-dwelling Omatikaya tribe to the reef-dwelling Metkayina tribe. Investigating Jake's integration into the Metkayina community can provide insights into themes of diaspora, mobility, identity, and resistance. His adaptation to the oceanic lifestyle and his role within the clan offer a lens to understand how diasporic communities negotiate belonging and survival in the face of colonization and hegemonic pressures. Overall, studying Jake Sully's transition to the Metkayina tribe offers researchers a rich opportunity to explore socio-cultural dynamics and indigenous responses to external threats and cultural change within the Avatar narrative universe.

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