

Women's Representation In Science Fiction Cinema: Feminine-Masculine Integration In The Character Construction Of Neytiri In The Avatar Film Series

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of women in science fiction cinema through the character of Neytiri in the Avatar film series, with a particular focus on the integration of feminine and masculine attributes in public, domestic, and relational roles. While science fiction films have traditionally emphasized masculine dominance and positioned female characters within symbolic or subordinate roles, this research explores how Avatar offers a more complex construction of female agency. Using a qualitative approach with film text analysis, the study analyzes key scenes, dialogues, and visual representations of Neytiri across Avatar (2009), Avatar: The Way of Water (2022), and Avatar: Fire and Ash (2025). The analysis is informed by gender performativity theory and feminist film studies to identify how feminine and masculine attributes are constructed and integrated within narrative contexts. The findings indicate that Neytiri is consistently represented as an active subject of moral, strategic, and physical authority, while simultaneously performing maternal roles, family protection, and social leadership. Feminine attributes such as empathy, emotional expressiveness, and relational care coexist with masculine attributes including strategic leadership, decisiveness, and defensive violence, without hierarchical dominance. The longitudinal analysis reveals a significant character development, particularly in Fire and Ash, where maternal grief transforms into strategic and political action. This integration challenges binary gender constructions and highlights gender as performative, fluid, and context-dependent. The study contributes to gender and film studies by proposing feminine-masculine integration as an analytical framework and by demonstrating the relevance of cinematic representations to contemporary social contexts, particularly in relation to women's roles and leadership.

Keywords: *Women's Representation, Feminine-Masculine Integration, Science Fiction Cinema, Neytiri, Avatar*

INTRODUCTION

Film as a form of popular culture not only serves as entertainment but also plays a critical role in shaping, reproducing, and negotiating social meanings, including the construction of gender identities in society (Hall, 1997). Historically, mainstream cinema has often portrayed women in stereotypical roles as passive, subordinate, or confined to domestic spheres, while traits such as courage, leadership, and physical strength have been predominantly associated with masculine characters (Mulvey, 1975). Such representational patterns indirectly reinforce an essentialist binary of femininity and masculinity, positioning masculinity as the center of symbolic power and femininity as a less valued attribute within social structures (Connell, 2005).

This tendency is particularly pronounced in science fiction cinema, a genre historically linked with conflict, warfare, technological exploration, and rationality values associated with hegemonic masculinity (Bould et al., 2009). Yet, science fiction also offers an imaginative space for alternative articulations of identity, social relations, and gender construction, as it is not entirely constrained by conventional social realities (Sobchack, 1997). The tension between the reproduction and resistance of gender norms makes science fiction cinema a relevant field for the study of gender representation.

James Cameron's *Avatar* occupies a significant position within the global science fiction landscape, as it not only showcases spectacular visuals and futuristic conflict but also addresses ecological concerns, spirituality, and complex social structures within non-human communities

(Giroux, 2010). Through the character of Neytiri, *Avatar* presents a Na'vi female figure actively engaged in combat, highly skilled in warfare, and involved in strategic decision-making within her community (Cameron, 2009). Simultaneously, Neytiri is portrayed as deeply empathetic, strongly connected to nature, and actively performing relational and maternal roles within her clan's social structure (Tasker, 2015).

Neytiri's character construction demonstrates that she is not represented through a rigid binary separation between public and private roles. Instead, she integrates attributes culturally associated with both femininity and masculinity (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). She combines functional masculinity courage, decisiveness, and combat ability with relational femininity—empathy, care, and social connectedness without prioritizing one over the other (Gill, 2007). This representation aligns with the concept of gender performativity, which views gender as a fluid social practice continuously produced through actions and power relations, rather than as a fixed or biological category (Butler, 1990). Accordingly, Neytiri can be understood as an autonomous and complex female subject who challenges singular interpretations of gender identity in mainstream science fiction cinema (Wolmark, 2010).

The urgency of studying Neytiri's character becomes even more relevant when connected to everyday social realities, which remain heavily influenced by patriarchal norms. In many social contexts, women are still normatively confined to domestic and relational spheres, while public spaces, leadership roles, and decision-making are considered masculine domains (Walby, 1990). Such gendered role divisions not only restrict women's social and economic participation but also shape societal perceptions of female competence, authority, and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 2001). In this context, film representations gain significance as popular media function as sites for meaning-making that can reproduce yet simultaneously challenge internalized patriarchal values (Hall, 1997).

By observing narrative structures and analyzing scenes in the *Avatar* series, this study seeks to address how Neytiri represents women capable of integrating public and domestic roles simultaneously, how feminine and masculine attributes are constructed through actions, social relations, and decision-making positions, and how her representation negotiates patriarchal views that constrain women in both domestic and public spheres. This research also aims to illuminate how such representation provides an alternative model of gender identity relevant to everyday life.

Therefore, the study aims to analyze the representation of women through Neytiri as a figure integrating public and domestic roles, identify the integration of feminine and masculine attributes in her character construction, and explain the relevance of her representation to contemporary social life, particularly in challenging patriarchal norms that continue to limit women's roles. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to gender studies and film analysis by offering a non-binary reading of female representation in popular cinema and enriching critical understanding of how popular media shapes audience perceptions of gender identity and relations in contemporary culture.

Existing studies on the *Avatar* film series have predominantly examined ecological criticism, colonialism, indigenous spirituality, and ecofeminist discourse rather than focusing on the longitudinal development of female characters (El Shazly, 2025; Lid, 2025). Recent analyses also interpret Neytiri and other Na'vi women through the framework of the "feminine other," emphasizing symbolic representations of nature, motherhood, and resistance while offering limited discussion of evolving gender agency across sequels (Dereboyu et al., 2025). In broader science-fiction and ecofeminist cinema studies, scholars continue to critique the persistence of patriarchal dichotomies that separate femininity and masculinity into rigid binary categories (Gough, 2024; Haspolat, 2024). Therefore, limited attention has been given to how female characters integrate feminine and masculine traits dynamically in response to conflict, leadership, and emotional trauma across multiple films.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with film text analysis to examine the representation of women through the integration of feminine and masculine attributes in the character of Neytiri in the *Avatar* film series (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tasker, 2015). This approach enables the interpretation of symbolic and ideological meanings embedded in film narratives as cultural products (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hall, 1997). The research object is Neytiri in *Avatar* (2009) and its sequels, focusing on her actions, dialogues, and social interactions that reflect public roles, domestic roles, leadership, and affective relationships (Butler, 1990; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006).

To operationalize the analysis, this study applies a working definition of feminine–masculine integration as an analytical framework. Feminine attributes are identified through indicators such as relational care, emotional expressiveness, empathy, and domestic responsibility, which are commonly associated with affective and nurturing roles in private and social spheres (Gilligan, 1982; Wood, 2011). Masculine attributes are identified through indicators including strategic leadership, physical aggression, risk-taking, and decision-making authority, traditionally linked to public power, control, and militarized action (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2017). Integration is identified when feminine and masculine attributes co-exist within a single action, role, or narrative context without hierarchical dominance, particularly when emotional depth and relational care operate simultaneously with authority, combat readiness, or strategic leadership (Butler, 2004; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006).

Data were collected through repeated viewings of the films to identify and document relevant scenes, dialogues, and visual elements illustrating gender construction (Krippendorff, 2019; Tasker, 2015). Secondary data were gathered from books, journals, and academic sources related to gender studies, media representation, and science fiction cinema (Gill, 2007; Wolmark, 2010). Data analysis followed a thematic and interpretative process, categorizing content into key themes such as public roles, domestic roles, leadership, empathy, and courage (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The findings were interpreted using a gender performativity perspective to understand how Neytiri negotiates gender identity and its relevance to broader social understandings of gender roles (Butler, 1990; Hall, 1997). Validity was ensured through theoretical triangulation and repeated film viewings to maintain analytical consistency and minimize subjectivity (Denzin, 1978; Yin, 2018). This methodology enables a nuanced analysis of how popular cinema constructs complex female identities while offering insight into the negotiation of gender norms in real-life social contexts (Tasker & Negra, 2007; Bould et al., 2009). The inclusion of *Avatar: Fire and Ash* (2025) allows the analysis of Neytiri's character under conditions of extreme loss, where maternal grief escalates into political and strategic action, providing a critical context to examine the transformation of Neytiri from protector to avenger.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Character Background of Neytiri

Neytiri te Tskaha Mo'at'ite is the daughter of the *Omaticaya* clan, born to *Mo'at*, the clan's *Tsahik* (spiritual leader), and *Eytukan*, the *Olo'eyktan* (chief) of the *Omaticaya*, in the year 2136 (Cameron, 2009). As a *Na'vi* princess, she is trained from a young age in hunting, survival, and spiritual rituals, including the *Iknimaya* rite, which involves bonding with a flying creature called an *Ikran*. Her upbringing combines rigorous physical training with cultural education

through the songs and traditions of the *Na’vi*, reflecting her dual role as both a warrior and a spiritual custodian of her community (Tasker, 2015; Wolmark, 2010). Neytiri is depicted as brave, assertive, empathetic, and loyal, embodying a complex personality that integrates strength with care, traits central to her leadership within the *Omaticaya* (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).



Figure 1. Neytiri Character

Source : <https://inconsistently-admirable.fandom.com/wiki/Neytiri>. Accessed in 2026

Her first encounter with Jake Sully occurs when she rescues him, in his *Avatar* form, from the dangers of the forest. From that moment, Neytiri assumes the role of mentor, guiding Jake in understanding the *Na’vi* language, customs, and ecological relationships with Pandora (Sobchack, 1997; Hall, 1997). Their relationship evolves into a romantic partnership, culminating in marriage, and positions Neytiri not only as Jake’s mate but as a co-leader and collaborator in both domestic and community responsibilities (Butler, 1990; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). Through this relational dynamic, she exemplifies a model of gender integration where care, mentorship, and emotional intelligence coexist with strategic and martial competence (Gill, 2007).

In times of conflict, Neytiri emerges as a decisive and courageous figure. Together with Jake, she leads the *Omaticaya* in defending Pandora against the human RDA corporation, particularly in protecting sacred sites such as the *Tree of Souls* (Cameron, 2009; Giroux, 2010). Within her family, she is mother to Neteyam, Lo’ak, and Tuk, while also adopting Kiri, the daughter of Grace Augustine’s *Avatar*, and Spider, a human child raised among the *Na’vi* (Tasker & Negra, 2007). Neytiri’s actions demonstrate a willingness to engage directly in combat to ensure the safety of her loved ones and her people, illustrating a complex negotiation of feminine and masculine traits where protection, leadership, and relational care are inseparable (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2005). Her character therefore serves as a rich subject for analyzing the integration of gendered roles in popular culture narratives and the potential for reimagining women’s agency in both public and domestic spheres (Hall, 1997; Tasker, 2015)

Analysis of Character Neytiri in Avatar (2009)

The analysis indicates that in *Avatar* (2009), Neytiri is consistently represented as an active and authoritative figure in public and social domains, while simultaneously demonstrating strong emotional sensitivity and moral responsibility. As shown in **Table 1**, this integration is evident in scenes where Neytiri exercises life-or-death decision-making during her first encounter with Jake, provides cultural guidance during his training, and mobilizes collective defense despite experiencing personal grief during the attack on Hometree.

Scene / Context	Dialogue / Meaning	Visual Representation	Role Domain	Feminine Aspect	Masculine Aspect	Representational Meaning
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First encounter in the forest	Neytiri asserts that Jake is not worthy of living without respecting <i>Eywa</i>	Dominant posture, directed bow, control of the situation	Public	Protection, moral care	Functional dominance, life-or-death decision-making	Women as protectors & critical decision-makers; shows balance between empathy & functional dominance
Jake’s training	Neytiri scolds Jake for not listening to nature	Firm gestures, teaching position	Public	Relational, guidance, empathy	Assertive, authoritative, situational control	Knowledge & empathy as a source of authority; feminine guidance combined with situational masculine control
Ikran selection	Neytiri gives guidance without taking over	Visual accompaniment, symbolic distance	Public	Support, accompaniment	Ritual & strategic leadership	Leadership that supports rather than dominates; symbolizes integration of feminine & masculine roles in cultural ritual
Hometree attack	Neytiri mourns her father but calls the clan to defend	Crying while preparing for battle	Public	Deep emotion & grief	Defensive strategy & combat readiness	Grief does not prevent leadership and strategy; emotional-strategic integration
Rejection of Jake	Neytiri rejects Jake because of betrayal	Physical distancing, angry expression	Social relation	Moral autonomy, integrity	Firmness in facing betrayal	Moral autonomy and courage in facing betrayal; women assert ethical and social boundaries

Table 1. Representation of the Character Neytiri in *Avatar* (2009)

Analysis of Character Neytiri in *Avatar : The Way of Water* (2022)

In Avatar: The Way of Water (2022), Neytiri’s gendered representation expands into a more complex configuration that encompasses leadership, family protection, and emotional autonomy across public and domestic spheres. Table 2 demonstrates that moments of intimate emotional expression coexist with strategic aggression and command authority, particularly in scenes involving family defense, ritual leadership, and confrontation with external threats.

Scene / Context	Dialogue / Subtitle	Visual Representation	Role Domain	Feminine Aspect	Masculine Aspect	Representational Meaning
Spiritual recognition & relationship	NEYTIRI: “I see you.” JAKE: (a hoarse whisper) “I see you.”	Neytiri & Jake gaze at each other in front of the Na’vi clan; strong emotional expressions	Social relation	Willingness to open up & intimate connection	Mutual recognition of identity as strategic commitment	Depicts depth of emotional relationship & identity acknowledgment ; symbolizes spiritual equality between men & women

Early interaction after training	<i>"You have a strong heart. No fear. But stupid! Ignorant like a child!"</i>	Neytiri advises Jake during wrestling training; body ready for combat but tone is guiding	Public / Social relation	Advice & guidance	Firmness & criticism that transforms Jake's abilities	Education & mentorship involve not only physical skill but character transformation; balance of care & discipline
Na'vi cultural training / identity assertion	<i>"To become taronyu...choose your own Ikran."</i>	Neytiri introduces the Ikran selection ritual; leading gesture	Public	Guiding & connecting with culture	Warrior ritual & courage	Cultural ritual as a means of integrating into the community; symbolizes transition from novice to true warrior
Refusal of thanks	<i>"Don't thank. You don't thank for this! This is sad. Very sad only."</i>	Neytiri rejects Jake's thanks for her risky action	Social relation	Rejects simple sentiment for deeper meaning	Emphasizes life/death reality	Highlights responsibility & risk; emphasizes serious life-and-death values in Na'vi world
Protecting Jake during conflict	(Non-verbal)	Neytiri shoots Quaritch attempting to kill Jake; holds bow firmly	Public	Protective motivation toward partner	Defensive aggression as warrior	Strength of love & loyalty; feminine & masculine combine in heroic action
Early family defense	<i>"This is not a squad, it's a family."</i>	Neytiri with Jake & children; visual of united family	Public / Domestic	Family solidarity	Collective strategy	Family as social & strategic unit; values of collectivism & solidarity
Commanding against threat	<i>"I will kill you as many times as I have to."</i>	Neytiri directs defensive attack	Public	Family protection	Defensive aggression	Moral decisiveness & courage facing danger; defensive power as protection
Long declaration of family identity	<i>"A son for a son."</i>	Neytiri expresses anger & revenge	Public / Domestic	Maternal instinct & grief	Extreme defense	Maternal instinct & vengeance as intense emotional expression & social responsibility
Family involvement in conflict	<i>"Every song cord must have a last bead."</i>	Dialogue during family/warrior ritual	Public	Emphasis on tradition & community connection	Social leadership	Tradition & community connection as collective identity; social leadership as protection
Role assertion	<i>"Do not apologize for me."</i>	Confrontation moment during danger	Social relation	Self-confidence & autonomy	Firmness in decisions & self-protection	Personal autonomy, courage, & moral decisiveness; integration of feminine &

						masculine in assertive action
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Table 2. Representation of the Character Neytiri in *Avatar : The Way of Water* (2022)**Analysis of Character Neytiri in *Avatar : Fire and Ash* (2025)**

The findings from *Avatar: Fire and Ash* (2025) reveal a significant intensification of Neytiri's gender performance under conditions of extreme loss and prolonged conflict. As illustrated in **Table 3**, maternal grief does not diminish her agency but instead amplifies her strategic and defensive actions, marking a transformation from protector to avenger while maintaining strong relational and moral commitments

Scene / Context	Dialogue /Popular Quote	Visual Representation	Role Domain	Feminine Aspect	Masculine Aspect	Representational Meaning
Reaction to Neteyam's death	"I will avenge him, no matter the cost." – Neytiri	Neytiri crying with an enraged gaze, driven by vengeance	Public / Domestic	Maternal grief and deep emotional pain	Defensive violence / war strategy	Demonstrates maternal protective instinct, emotional depth, and strategic response to loss; balance between grief and defensive action
Conflict with Spider	"You are not welcome in my family." – Neytiri	Neytiri rejecting Spider's presence at home and base	Domestic / Social relation	Family protection and emotional boundary-setting	Firmness and courage in facing perceived threats	Family protection as a priority; enforcement of emotional and social boundaries, showing courage in asserting authority
Battle against the Ash People	"We defend Pandora at all costs." – Neytiri	Neytiri leading the battle with bow and arrows; leadership symbolism	Public	Care for the community	Strategic aggression and military leadership	Community care and collective defense, combining leadership and warrior roles; symbol of feminine–masculine integration in leadership
Struggle to protect the family	"I will not let my family fall." – Neytiri	Neytiri guiding her children and Jake to safety	Public / Domestic	Active and nurturing maternal role	Courage and strategic decision-making	Family protection strategy prioritizing safety; fusion of maternal care and warrior bravery
Emotional confrontation with Quaritch	"This ends here." – Neytiri	Neytiri standing firm, intense gaze, combat-ready posture	Public	Personal emotion and determination	Defensive action and decisive leadership	Expression of determination, personal courage, and

						defensive strength; balance between emotion and decisive action
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Table 3. Representation of the Character Neytiri in *Avatar: Fire and Ash* (2022)

Taken together, these findings demonstrate a consistent pattern of feminine–masculine integration across the three films, with increasing emotional intensity and strategic complexity over time. The following discussion interprets these patterns in relation to gender theory and contemporary social contexts

Discussion

Women, Power, and Legitimate Violence in Science Fiction Cinema

The findings of this study demonstrate that Neytiri is consistently positioned as a legitimate subject of power in the public sphere across the *Avatar* film series. Unlike conventional science fiction narratives that reserve strategic leadership, rational authority, and legitimate violence for male protagonists, Neytiri exercises these forms of power without narrative punishment or symbolic marginalization. Her authority is not portrayed as exceptional or unnatural but as integral to the social and political order of the *Na'vi* community. This challenges the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in science fiction cinema, which traditionally associates leadership, rationality, and militarized action with male characters (Connell, 2005; Tasker, 2015).

Neytiri's representation also diverges from earlier cinematic portrayals of strong female characters who often gain authority by suppressing emotional expression or adopting hyper-masculine traits. Instead, her power is framed as relational, ethical, and community-oriented. Feminist film scholars have long criticized the tendency of popular cinema to legitimize female power only when it mimics masculine dominance (Tasker, 1993; Gill, 2007). The *Avatar* series offers an alternative by depicting Neytiri's authority as emerging from her embeddedness within cultural, familial, and spiritual networks rather than from individualistic domination.

Moreover, Neytiri's use of violence is narratively justified as defensive, protective, and situational. Her combat actions are consistently linked to the preservation of life, territory, and social continuity rather than conquest or personal ambition. This framing aligns with feminist critiques that conceptualize women's violence in cinema as a form of resistance and survival rather than transgression (Higashi, 2016). Across the three films, Neytiri's engagement in violence evolves in scale and intensity, reflecting the escalating threats faced by her community. This longitudinal progression underscores that female authority in science fiction is not static or symbolic but responsive to structural conditions of conflict and loss.

Motherhood and the Domestic Sphere as Sites of Agency

One of the most significant contributions of this study is its demonstration that Neytiri's maternal and domestic roles function as central sites of agency rather than as limitations on her power. In dominant patriarchal narratives, domesticity and motherhood are often portrayed as apolitical spaces that constrain women's participation in public life. However, Neytiri's representation complicates this dichotomy by positioning the family as a strategic unit of survival and resistance. Her maternal labor includes not only emotional care but also physical protection, cultural transmission, and ethical decision-making.

Drawing on Tronto's (1993) conceptualization of care as political labor, Neytiri's maternal practices can be understood as integral to the maintenance of social order and collective resilience. In *The Way of Water*, domestic scenes are repeatedly intertwined with moments of strategic planning and communal defense, illustrating that care work and leadership operate simultaneously rather than sequentially. This challenges cinematic traditions that frame

motherhood as incompatible with authority and reinforces feminist arguments that domestic labor constitutes a foundational dimension of political life (Gilligan, 1982)

The representation of grief in *Avatar: Fire and Ash* further deepens this analysis. Following the death of her son, Neytiri's maternal grief is neither privatized nor pathologized. Instead, it becomes a visible and narratively meaningful force that informs her strategic decisions and defensive posture. This depiction challenges patriarchal expectations that demand emotional containment from mothers and reinforces feminist perspectives that recognize anger and grief as legitimate responses to structural violence (Ahmed, 2004). By transforming grief into action, the film reframes maternal emotion as a catalyst for agency rather than as a source of weakness.

Feminine–Masculine Integration as a Non-Binary Gender Performance

The core analytical contribution of this study lies in its articulation of feminine–masculine integration as a non-binary mode of gender performance. Rather than interpreting Neytiri's leadership and combat abilities as evidence of masculinization, this study demonstrates that emotional expressiveness, empathy, and relational care coexist with strategic aggression, decisiveness, and authority within a single narrative framework. This supports Butler's (1990, 2004) argument that gender is not a fixed identity but a performative practice shaped by context and power relations. Importantly, Neytiri's integration of feminine and masculine attributes does not occur through hierarchical dominance, where one set of traits overrides the other. Instead, these attributes operate relationally and situationally. Emotional depth enhances rather than undermines strategic judgment, while relational care strengthens rather than weakens leadership capacity. This challenges binary gender models that position femininity and masculinity as oppositional categories and aligns with contemporary feminist scholarship advocating for fluid and intersectional understandings of gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The longitudinal approach adopted in this study further reveals that feminine–masculine integration is dynamic rather than static. As the narrative context intensifies across the three films, Neytiri's emotional expressions become more pronounced while her strategic authority becomes more consolidated. This temporal dimension underscores that gender performance evolves in response to lived experience, loss, and responsibility. Such findings extend feminist film analysis beyond symbolic readings and contribute to a more process-oriented understanding of gendered agency in popular cinema.

Longitudinal Character Development and Narrative Escalation

A key strength of this study lies in its longitudinal analysis of Neytiri's character across three films spanning more than a decade of narrative time. Previous studies on *Avatar* have largely focused on single-film analysis or thematic readings centered on ecology, colonialism, or technological spectacle (Wolmark, 2010; Bould et al., 2009). By contrast, this study demonstrates how Neytiri's gender performance evolves alongside narrative escalation, shifting from spiritual guide and cultural mediator to strategic leader and avenger.

The inclusion of *Avatar: Fire and Ash* (2025) is particularly significant, as it introduces conditions of extreme emotional loss and prolonged conflict that intensify Neytiri's agency. Under these conditions, maternal grief is transformed into political resolve and strategic action, illustrating how gendered identities are reshaped through crisis. This transformation supports feminist arguments that subjectivity is not static but continuously renegotiated through experience and social struggle (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). As such, Neytiri's character arc provides a rare example of sustained female development in blockbuster cinema

Relevance to Contemporary Indonesian Social Contexts

The relevance of Neytiri's representation extends beyond cinematic analysis to contemporary Indonesian social contexts, where women frequently navigate overlapping domestic, professional, and community responsibilities. Despite increased participation in education and the workforce, women remain underrepresented in strategic leadership and decision-making positions (BPS, 2023). Neytiri's integration of public authority and domestic

responsibility mirrors the lived realities of many Indonesian women who exercise leadership within families and communities while facing structural barriers in formal power structures.

As Hall (1997) argues, media texts function as sites of meaning production that shape social understanding and identity formation. In this context, the portrayal of a female character whose authority is normalized rather than exceptional can contribute to broader cultural shifts in how women's leadership is perceived. Neytiri's character offers a symbolic resource for challenging patriarchal norms that confine women to supportive or secondary roles and reinforces the legitimacy of emotional expressiveness as a component of leadership and decision-making.

Implications for Gender Studies and Media Representation

Beyond its contribution to film studies, this research offers broader implications for gender theory and media analysis. The concept of feminine–masculine integration provides a flexible analytical framework that can be applied to other media texts to examine how gender attributes intersect, overlap, and transform across narrative contexts. By moving beyond binary categorization, this framework supports feminist efforts to conceptualize gender as relational, dynamic, and embedded in power relations.

Neytiri's character thus functions not merely as a fictional representation but as a cultural site where alternative configurations of womanhood, leadership, and emotional authority are imagined and negotiated. Such representations have the potential to influence audience perceptions, validate women's presence in public power spaces, and challenge normative assumptions about gendered behavior. In this sense, science fiction cinema emerges as a critical arena for exploring and reconfiguring gender norms, offering imaginative possibilities for more inclusive and equitable social futures.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the representation of Neytiri in the *Avatar* film series constructs a female character capable of simultaneously occupying public, domestic, and relational roles without losing agency or authority. Neytiri is consistently portrayed as a subject of moral, strategic, and physical power in contexts of conflict, while also performing maternal roles, family protection, and social leadership. These findings affirm that women do not need to choose between public engagement and domestic responsibility; rather, both spheres can be dynamically negotiated in response to social, emotional, and political conditions.

The integration of feminine and masculine attributes in Neytiri's character reveals that courage, decisiveness, and defensive violence coexist with empathy, relational care, and emotional expressiveness. This representation challenges traditional gender binaries that position femininity as subordinate to masculinity and supports the understanding of gender as performative, fluid, and context-dependent. Instead of depicting a masculinization of femininity, the *Avatar* series presents a non-hierarchical integration of gendered attributes in which emotional depth and strategic authority reinforce one another.

The longitudinal analysis of *Avatar* (2009), *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), and *Avatar: Fire and Ash* (2025) highlights the evolution of Neytiri's character from a spiritual guide and cultural mediator to a strategic leader shaped by profound loss and political responsibility. The inclusion of *Fire and Ash* is particularly significant, as it captures the transformation of maternal grief into strategic and political action, extending the analysis of feminine–masculine integration under conditions of extreme emotional intensity. This progression reinforces the argument that women's emotions function as sources of agency and political motivation rather than as signs of weakness.

In a broader social context, Neytiri's representation holds particular relevance for contemporary Indonesian society, where women frequently navigate overlapping domestic and public responsibilities while remaining underrepresented in strategic leadership positions. As popular cinema serves as a powerful site of social meaning-making, the portrayal of a complex and autonomous female character such as Neytiri offers an alternative model of gender identity that validates women's leadership, maternal authority, and emotional autonomy. Consequently, this study contributes to gender and film studies by proposing feminine–masculine integration as an analytical framework for understanding female representation in popular cinema and for advancing more inclusive and equitable interpretations of gender in everyday social life.

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