

Avatar

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Avatar: Story telling in the tradition of the legend Avatar is a multi-faceted film with rich scope for interpretation and analysis. It could also be fitted into various story-telling traditions like oral, folk tale, legend, etc. While the plot development and cinematic exposition lend themselves to association with any story-telling format, it is most easily related to the traditions of legend. The rest of this essay will elaborate on this view.

One of the remarkable qualities of Avatar is its grand narrative scale. The story and the numerous participant characters combine to make it quite an epic. Oral traditions normally convey supernatural beliefs and anecdotes. Likewise, folk tales are most conducive to short moral or humorous tales. But for epic battles and profound victories, the format of the legend is the most similar. Avatar's celebration of heroism makes it equal to the tradition of legendary tales.

And there is plenty of elements and events in the film that support claims of its legendary status. For instance, in legends of renown, we usually have a forthright protagonist confronted by an evil villain whom he successfully quells. This is exactly how the story of Avatar unfolds. Here the morally upright is Jake and his sympathizers irrespective of whether they assume a human or Na'vi physical form. The chief antagonist is played by Quaritch, whose obsession with acquisition of material wealth makes him lose his humanity. This sets up a legendary battle between the twins of morality and decadence. As is always the case in traditions of legend, it is the morally righteous who emerge victorious.

At the center of legendary stories are one heroic figure that epitomizes moral virtue and human values. Jake is that heroic figure in Avatar. Despite

being born human and being equipped to think like human, through his avatar he is able to empathize with a biologically distant race. Though he is not a Na'vi in substance, he merges into one with them in spirit. His successful integration into Na'vi society is indeed the stuff legends are made of. Ironically, this improbable transition was made possible by Jake's deep sense of humanity. His sense of righteousness allows him to put considerations of justice and fairness above material gratifications.

In stories of legend, valor is a recurrent feature. There is plenty of that in display in the film. Jake's courage is exemplary, for he puts his life on the line several times so as to save his adopted race.

Avatar is also congruent with the format of the legend due to its mythical quality. The heroism and sacrifice displayed by Na'vi will be commemorated, celebrated and passed down generations. But soon, history will be colored and the legend will take a mythic hue. This is the likely journey that awaits the legend of Avatar.

Finally, only those stories survive as legends which have an acute social consciousness. Despite Avatar's potential for turning into a myth, its historicity will be informed by stark realism. To this extent, Avatar holds high social relevance vis-à-vis the Na'vi race and the Pandora moon. Its legend will be carried on by future generations of Na'vis.