

Caledon Hockley As An Antagonist In James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997) Movie Script

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the portrayal of Caledon Hockley as an antagonist in James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997) movie script, focusing on his antagonist functions and characterization. The analysis draws on the theories of Holman, Abrams, Smiley, and Forster to examine Caledon's antagonist functions, characterization, and contribution to the screenplay's moral and thematic construction. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. The finding shows that data are to reveal that Caledon, characterized by traits such as possessiveness and class superiority, fulfills essential antagonist functions by opposing the protagonists and generating conflicts. His consistent traits classify him as a flat character, and his role extends to exposing moral values and reinforcing themes of freedom, love, social inequality and power. Ultimately, Caledon serves both as a source of conflict and as a rhetorical device that enhances the screenplay's narrative and thematic depth, underscoring the importance of antagonist characterization in literary analysis.

Keywords: Antagonist, Characterization, Caledon Hockley, *Titanic*, Movie Script

INTRODUCTION

Literary works commonly present conflicts through the interaction between protagonists and antagonists. The antagonist is an important element of a narrative because the character provides resistance, creates conflict, and challenges the protagonist's pursuit of a particular goal. However, an antagonist should not necessarily be understood as an entirely evil character. Rather, antagonism is primarily determined by the character's narrative function and opposition to the protagonist. Holman (1981) defines an antagonist as a character who stands directly opposed to the protagonist, while Abrams (1999) explains that the opposition between the protagonist and antagonist contributes to the development of the plot. Similarly, Smiley (2005) describes the antagonist as a *counterforce* that provides resistance and balance to the protagonist. Therefore, analyzing an antagonist requires attention not only to the character's personality but also to the character's actions, dialogue, goals, and contribution to the development of conflict.

Film provides an important medium for presenting such conflicts because characterization can be communicated through dialogue, actions, visual representation, and *stage directions*. This is particularly relevant to James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), which presents a dramatic conflict involving love, social class, individual freedom, and power. The story centers on Jack Dawson and Rose DeWitt Bukater, whose relationship is challenged by Caledon Hockley. Caledon functions as an antagonist because his objectives and actions conflict with the protagonists' pursuit of love and freedom. His possessiveness toward Rose, his sense of social superiority, and his attempts to control her demonstrate how antagonism can operate through personal, social, and psychological forms of conflict. Rather than functioning merely as a conventional villain, Caledon can also be interpreted as a representation of social hierarchy, patriarchal control, and the abuse of privilege. Therefore, examining his role as an antagonist can provide a deeper understanding of how Cameron constructs conflict and social tension within the narrative. The present study focuses specifically on the *movie script* rather than the film itself because dialogue, actions, and *stage directions* provide textual evidence for identifying Caledon's antagonistic function.

Previous studies have examined antagonistic characters from different perspectives. Sa'adah et al. (2022), in their study *Antagonistic Kindness in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"*, examined John's treatment of his wife and argued that his apparently caring behavior becomes a form of antagonistic control. Their study employed a qualitative descriptive method from a feminist literary criticism perspective and demonstrated that antagonism can be expressed through domination and manipulation rather than direct hostility. Mukhallad and Wibowo (2022) investigated the main antagonist's utterances in *Cruella* by applying Culpeper's theory of *impoliteness strategies* and Searle's classification of *speech acts*. Using the movie's dialogue script as their data, they identified 90 instances involving five types of *impoliteness strategies* and five types of *speech acts*.

Further research has also examined antagonistic characters through linguistic and characterization perspectives. Tandiono and Tjitrakusuma (2023) analyzed the Baroness as an antagonistic character in *Cruella* and focused on the *impoliteness strategies* used in her interactions with Estella and Cruella. Using a qualitative approach, the study identified six types of *impoliteness strategies* in the Baroness's interactions with Estella and four types in her interactions with Cruella. Anastasia et al. (2024) examined Hans Landa as an antagonist in *Inglourious Basterds*, focusing on his characterization and his role within the narrative. The study illustrates how an antagonist can be constructed as a complex and manipulative character whose presence contributes to conflict and the development of the story. The study was published in *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Garut* in 2024.

Among these previous studies, the research conducted by Danda and Ariyaningsih (2024) is particularly relevant because it examines the same object as the present study, James Cameron's *Titanic*. Their study analyzed the main characters, particularly Jack Dawson and Rose DeWitt Bukater, using Kenney's theory of character types and Wellek and Warren's theory of characterization. Their findings identified the main characters as protagonists and classified them as *major* and *dynamic* characters. The researchers analyzed data through scenes and dialogue from the film. However, their study does not specifically examine Caledon Hockley as an antagonist or investigate how his actions function as resistance against the protagonists.

Based on these previous studies, a research gap can be identified. Existing research has examined antagonistic characters through *impoliteness strategies*, *speech acts*, social control, characterization, and narrative representation. However, there remains limited research specifically examining Caledon Hockley as an antagonist in *Titanic*. In particular, although Danda and Ariyaningsih (2024) analyzed the main characters of *Titanic*, their research focuses on Jack and Rose rather than Caledon's antagonistic function. Furthermore, previous studies have generally emphasized the linguistic features or general characterization of antagonists rather than examining their structural function through direct opposition, conflict creation, obstruction of the protagonist's goals, and their role as a *counterforce*. This gap provides the basis for the present study, which specifically examines Caledon Hockley through four antagonist functions: direct opposition, conflict creation, obstruction of the protagonists' goals, and *counterforce*. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how Caledon Hockley is portrayed as an antagonist in James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997) *movie script*. The analysis is based on four operational indicators derived from Holman (1981), Abrams (1999), and Smiley (2005): (1) direct opposition to the protagonist, (2) being a source of conflict, (3) obstructing the protagonist's goals, and (4) functioning as a *counterforce* that drives and balances the plot. Through this analysis, the study is expected to contribute to the understanding of antagonistic characterization in film narratives and to demonstrate how Caledon Hockley represents broader issues of social class, power, control, and individual freedom within *Titanic*.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze words, dialogues, and *stage directions* in James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997) *movie script*. The study applies an intrinsic approach because it focuses on character, dialogue, action, conflict, and narrative function within the screenplay. The data consist of 25 selected data portraying Caledon Hockley's four antagonist functions: direct opposition, source of conflict, obstruction of the protagonists' goals, and *counterforce* in the plot. Of the 25 data points analyzed, only 4 representative excerpts are presented in the Results and Discussion section to illustrate each antagonistic function. The data are also examined using Forster's concept of flat and round characters to determine Caledon's characterization.

The data are collected through repeated *close reading* of the screenplay by identifying and marking relevant dialogues and *stage directions* involving Caledon Hockley, Jack Dawson, and Rose DeWitt Bukater. The data are then analyzed using deductive and inductive approaches. Each datum is classified according to the antagonist functions and characterization criteria, followed by contextual and theoretical interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Opposition to the Protagonists

Data 1

CAL :“You will never behave like that again! Do you understand?” (Cameron, 1997, p. 75)

The quotation above explains Caledon's prohibitive attitude after he learns that Rose has spent time below deck and associated with Jack. The absolute word requires Rose not to repeat conduct that Caledon regards as disobedient. As an antagonist, Caledon directly opposes Rose's developing desire for personal freedom. His command attempts to control her movement and social relationship, thereby establishing the conflict between Rose's autonomy and Caledon's authority. This evidence corresponds to Holman's and Abrams' definition of an antagonist who stands against the protagonist's intended course. In terms of Forster's theory, the command introduces a fixed controlling pattern that recurs throughout the screenplay. Caledon repeatedly answers Rose's independence with prohibition rather than reflection or change. This

evidence contributes to the classification of Caledon as a *flat character*, a conclusion supported by the consistency of his controlling behavior across the screenplay.

Caledon as a Source of Conflict

Data 6

CAL :“What made you think you could put your hands on my fiancée?! Look at me, you filth! What did you think you were doing?” (Cameron, 1997, p. 43)

The quotation above explains Caledon’s contemptuous reaction when he finds Jack beside Rose after Jack has prevented her from falling from the stern. Before hearing a complete explanation, Caledon treats Jack as a contaminating and inferior presence. The noun generates conflict by converting an uncertain rescue scene into an accusation. Caledon’s interpretation encourages the surrounding authority figures to suspect Jack and produces the first open confrontation between the two men. His personal hostility is strengthened by class prejudice. This reaction is consistent with the class-conscious superiority that governs Caledon’s later treatment of Jack and third-class passengers. He does not revise the judgment after learning that Jack saved Rose. The fixed prejudice and predictable contempt are indicators of flat characterization.

Caledon as an Obstacle to the Protagonists’ Goals

Data 11

CAL :“(low but forceful) This is ridiculous, Lovejoy. Find her” (Cameron, 1997, p. 90)

The quotation above explains Caledon ordering Lovejoy to locate Rose after she cannot be found. The imperative turns a servant into an instrument of surveillance. The command obstructs Rose’s effort to move freely and meet Jack outside Caledon’s supervision. By extending his control through Lovejoy, Caledon creates a continuing barrier that follows the protagonists through several scenes. The obstruction is intentional and directed toward restoring possession. The use of surveillance repeats Caledon’s established need to control Rose rather than introducing a new or contradictory motivation. His response to uncertainty is predictably authoritarian. The consistency of the behavioural core is evidence of a flat character.

Functioning as a *counterforce* that drives the plot

Data 16

CAL :“This should be amusing” (Cameron, 1997, p. 45)

The quotation above explains Caledon treating Jack’s dinner invitation as a social experiment intended to expose the lower-class guest to ridicule rather than as sincere gratitude. The invitation drives the plot because it brings Jack into Rose’s first-class environment and makes the contrast between Jack and Caledon visible. Caledon’s behavior can be interpreted as an attempt to expose Jack to the social expectations of the first-class environment. The antagonist’s resistance therefore produces narrative movement. The social test is consistent with Caledon’s fixed class superiority and desire to control social situations. Its unintended result does not change his attitude. Because he remains predictable despite the outcome, the scene supports flat characterization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Caledon Hockley functions as an antagonist in *Titanic* through four main roles: opposing the protagonists, creating conflict, obstructing their goals, and acting as a *counterforce* that drives the plot. His possessiveness, social superiority, and controlling behavior consistently create barriers to Rose’s freedom and her relationship with Jack. The analysis also identifies Caledon as a *flat character* because his dominant traits remain relatively consistent throughout the screenplay. His antagonistic role therefore extends beyond personal conflict, as it represents broader issues of social class, power, control, and individual freedom. Overall, Caledon’s character demonstrates how an antagonist can function not only as an obstacle to the protagonists but also as an important element in developing the narrative’s social and thematic meaning.

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