



## Robert Kearns' Obsession in Fighting for Recognition in Flash of Genius Movie

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Hasundungan, J., Priyoto, and Mujani, S. (2024). Robert Kearns' Obsession in Fighting for Recognition in Flash of Genius Movie. *Journal of English Language and literature*, 9(1), 113-118. doi: 10.37110/jell.v9i1.213

Received: 10-01-2023

Accepted: 15-01-2024

Published:02-03-2024

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to analyze and to know the causes of Robert Kearns the causes of Robert Kearns obsession to obsess in gaining recognition. This research uses qualitative methods. The object used in this study is a film namely Flash of Genius film. The data collected is obtained from the results of watching the film and sorting out the scenes and dialogues or utterances in the film. The results showed that Robert Kearns experienced some psychological problems which include having mind set all the time, self-doubt, Self-worth, Project delays and abandonment, steering clear of challenges and maintaining a facade at all times

**Keywords:** Obsession, recognition, frustration

### INTRODUCTION

Literature is a social institution, using medium language a social creation. Such tradition literally derives as symbolism and matter are social in their very nature. Movies are entertainment. Movies are documents of their time and place. Movies are artistic forms of self-expression. Movies we see at theaters, on television, or home video are typically narrative films. They tell stories about characters going through experiences. Film is a medium of communication rich with social implications, created within different social, historical and cultural contexts. A recording of moving images that tells a story and that people watch on a screen or television.

From the understanding above, a movie can be understood as a story that is recorded by camera which shows a set of moving images in order for people to understand by using television as a media.

Understanding literary works has been defined by experts. Literature is a fictional work that is the result of creation based on spontaneous emotional overflowing that is able to reveal the aesthetic aspects of both linguistic aspects and aspects of meaning. (Mukarovskiy, E.E. Cummings, and Sjklovski,2020). Literary works are taken from the words SAS and TRA. The word -Sas can be interpreted as a guide or directing. The word -Tra contains the meaning of Facilities. The literary works can be interpreted as a means to convey messages

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about life (Teeuw, 2022) In addition, another expert state that literature is a creative activity, a series of works of art (Wellek and Warren, 2020)

Language is used to communicate in daily life , they share their thoughts or their feelings through languages. It is also formed in beautiful words to express to people. It is called literature. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in Theory of Literature stated that: Literature is social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation – But furthermore , literature „represents“ „life“; and „life“ is , in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation. “ (Rene and Wellek, 1948: 94).

According to Lombardi (2015), Literary can be used as a term to express written and spoken material. It comes from the Latin word, Literature means “writing formed with letter”, some of literary works commonly are poetry, drama, novel, fiction, nonfiction, journalism, and song, it is such a creative imagination.

Movie that will be discussed in this thesis will be Flash Of Genius. Movie that directed by Marc Abraham, was taken from a true story. The movie itself is focusing on the main character Robert Kearns who struggles to fight for his right to get acknowledgement on the inventions that he was making. However, a series of unfortunate events were giving him a mental breakdown which hindered him in achieving the acknowledgment itself.

Flash Of Genius tells the story Dr. Robert W. Kearns, an electrical engineer and college professor who in the late 1960s invented and patented the intermittent windshield wiper. After he presented his invention to the major Detroit automakers, Ford demanded a sample unit, then adopted his system without paying him or giving him credit. He ultimately sued Ford and then Chrysler for patent infringement.

Frustrated, Kearns attends a Ford dealer's convention at which the latest model of the Mustang is unveiled, promoting the intermittent wiper as a selling point. Realizing the company has used his idea without giving him credit or payment for it, Kearns begins his descent into a despair so deep he boards a Greyhound bus and heads for Washington, D.C., where he

apparently hopes to find legal recourse. Instead, Maryland state troopers remove him from the bus and escort him to a mental hospital, where he is treated for a nervous breakdown. Finally released when doctors decide his obsession has subsided, he returns home a broken man, determined to receive public acknowledgement for his accomplishment. Thus begins years of legal battles, during which time his wife leaves him, and he becomes estranged from his children.

### **Cognitive Theory of Obsession**

According to Misnawati in her article Linguistics and Literature Journal Vol. 3, No. 2, 98 - 104,a cognitive-behavioral explanation was put forth by Salkovskis (1985) to explain the emergence and maintenance of clinical obsessions. Salkovskis's cognitive-behavioral theory has a significant influence on some theories of obsession (Abramowitz & Houts, 2005).

The model takes into account two cognitive processes that are essential to the emergence of obsessions. First, excessive personal responsibility is attributed by obsessive-compulsive individuals to potentially harming themselves or others as a reaction to unwelcome intrusive thoughts.

According to Newburg,2019) there are 10 Signs People May Be Suffering from obsession for Perfectionism , but the writer would like to take only 6 :

1) Having a mindset that is all or nothing.

A person who tends to assess their own attributes in an extreme manner is said to have "All-or-Nothing" thinking. This way of thinking allows little space for error; every minor issue will have a significant effect on the perfectionist's mindset.

2) Self-doubt all the time.

Extreme self-doubt is another common trait of a perfectionist, particularly when it comes to one's own performance. They would worry excessively, even in the event that they received overwhelming feedback. A perfectionist would think about everything incessantly since their sense of value stems on what other people think of them.

3) Self-worth is influenced by one's accomplishments and the reactions of others.

A perfectionist measures their value on their accomplishments. Because their perception of themselves determines the perfection they attain, they constantly compare themselves to others in an attempt to win their approval. In an effort to attain perfection, those who are affected by this will compare themselves to others all the time.

4) Project delays and abandonment are caused by a fear of failing.

Perfectionists will be concerned that they fall short of expectations set by others or by themselves. Anticipatory anxiety stemming from the expectation of unfavorable outcomes eventually results in avoidance. Procrastination and perfectionism are closely related. One can prevent failure by putting off or ignoring a challenging task. Perfectionists might want to avoid taking on projects that have a high chance of failing. Project delays and abandonment are caused by a fear of failing.

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5) Steer clear of challenges that could reveal your weaknesses.

Perseverance is a trait of perfectionists who prefer to avoid making mistakes by acting on their realizations. They fear they won't be able to pick up new skills when faced with new obstacles. They consequently shy away from taking chances and stifle their creativity in an effort to maintain their comfort level. They fear that they won't be able to reach the self-perfection they have been striving for if their mistakes expose their flaws.

6) Maintain a facade at all times, saying that everything is flawless.

Perfectionists, especially when it comes to matters of public concern, have an external need to appear flawless and will not tolerate the chance to show their flaws. Under the influence of a deep-seated fear of being vulnerable, perfectionists conceal their perceived flaws in order to win other people's acceptance.

## METHOD

Researcher used descriptive qualitative research methods for data analysis; Qualitative descriptive research is a concept that involves methods for interpreting and characterizing data in the form of descriptions. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research methods are methods that explore the meaning ascribed to certain individuals or groups of people on social or humanitarian issues. In general, qualitative research can be used to study history, behavior, social activities, engineering organizations, people's lives, and more. The technique analysis researcher conducted after collecting the data from the movie Flash of Genius, the researcher did several steps to analyze the data. Firstly, the researcher found the scene and categorized the data in accordance with the theory which he used to analyze the problem. Secondly, the researcher described the data from each scene. Thirdly, the researcher described the reason why she used the scene and the dialogue or utterance to be proof of his formulated problem. And the last, the researcher made a conclusion based on the research findings

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Causes Of Robert Kearns Obsession

Obsession is a feeling that can appear in various forms, such as obsession with a person, idea, activity, fear or object. For example, an obsession with another person may mean that a person constantly thinks about or feels the need to get attention or affection from that person. In an unconscious position, obsession is often mistaken for love.

Obsessions can also appear in the form of excessive worry or obsessive thoughts that occur continuously without stopping, such as excessive worry about cleanliness or order. The following is a review of obsession, which is a condition or feeling that is very strong and excessive towards something.

Robert Kearns is shown as having an "all or nothing" mentality in the movie "Flash of Genius," especially when it comes to his legal battle against Ford Motor Company for allegedly stealing his intermittent windshield wiper technology.

1) Having a mindset that is all or nothing.

Several essential components define this mindset as the causes of his obsession: Absolute Belief in Righteousness.

Kearns firmly believes that he is in the right and that Ford wronged him by taking credit for his invention. His mindset is rooted in the absolute righteousness of his cause, and he is unwilling to compromise on the principle that he deserves recognition and compensation. It can be seen from this dialogue as the proof of the above statements.

*"This is not about money. This is about right and wrong, and you know it."*

(Sequence) : 00:43:18,109 - 00:43:21,203 ,  
"No. No, we're gonna go after the Ford Motor Company.

*They're the ones that screwed us.*

(sequence) : 00:44:17,702 - 00:44:20,932

## 2) Uncompromising Principles

Kearns demonstrates an unwavering commitment to his principles. He refuses to accept any settlement or compromise that falls short of acknowledging his role in the invention and providing due credit. This uncompromising stance reflects his all-or-nothing mentality.

Kearns constantly rejects settlement offers from Ford throughout the legal process. He refuses to compromise on what he believes is the rightful recognition and compensation for his invention. This reflects his commitment to his principles over financial gain. He views the case not just as a matter of patents and monetary compensation but as a moral and ethical stand. He is driven by the belief that what Ford did was fundamentally wrong, and he refuses to compromise on the principles of honesty and fairness. He makes significant personal sacrifices in his pursuit of justice. His unwavering dedication to proving his case and the toll it takes on his relationships and well-being demonstrate his commitment to principles beyond personal comfort. He sees the theft of his idea by Ford as an attack on his personal integrity. His refusal to compromise is, in part, a defense of his reputation and the integrity of his work as an inventor. Throughout the film, Kearns faces ethical dilemmas, including advice from his lawyers to accept settlements that fall short of his expectations. However, he remains resolute in his refusal to compromise on his principles, even when it might seem pragmatic to do so. Kearns' determination to see the legal battle through to

the end, despite numerous challenges and setbacks, underscores his commitment to the principle that justice must prevail, and his invention deserves proper acknowledgment.

*"I always thought I was put here on this earth for a purpose.*

*I thought it was to be an engineer. Or maybe an inventor.*

*But that's not it. And now I know what it is."*

(Sequence) : 01:05:49 - 01:05:57

The film portrays Kearns as a man driven not just by personal gain but by a strong sense of ethics and justice. His unwillingness to compromise on these principles defines his character and the central theme of the movie.

## 3) Refusal to Back Down

Kearns is facing serious legal and personal obstacles, but he is not going to let up on his legal fight with Ford. His "all or nothing" mentality is highlighted by his resolve to pursue the lawsuit all the way to the end, despite advice from others to settle. He engages in a protracted legal battle against Ford Motor Company to prove that they stole his invention of the intermittent windshield wiper. Despite facing challenges, legal complexities, and pressure to settle, Kearns refuses to back down. His determination to see the case through becomes a symbol of his refusal to compromise on what he believes is right.

Kearns takes a principled stand against Ford, not just for monetary gain but for the acknowledgment of his invention and the restoration of his reputation. His refusal to back down is rooted in his belief in justice and his unwillingness to let a powerful corporation take credit for his work.

He makes significant personal sacrifices, including strained relationships with his family and financial hardships, as a result of his unwavering commitment to the legal battle. His refusal to back down extends beyond the courtroom and affects various aspects of his life.

Kearns faces ethical dilemmas throughout the film, including moments when his lawyers advise him to accept settlements that fall short of his expectations. However, he remains resolute in his refusal to back down, driven by a sense of integrity and justice.

Kearns' refusal to back down isolates him at times. Some people around him, including family members and colleagues, question the wisdom of his choices. Despite the isolation, Kearns remains steadfast in his pursuit of justice.

The portrayal of Kearns' refusal to back down in the film underscores the strength of his character and the depth of his convictions. It highlights the personal and professional sacrifices he is willing to make to uphold his principles and seek justice for what he believes is rightfully his.

*Well, I'll make it simple, too. Forget the check*

*Get an admission that they stole it and give me the right to manufacture my wipers and this'll all be over.*

(Sequence): 01:07:08 : 01:07:18

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#### *Emotional Investment*

Below is the dialogue to show the proof of the above information:

*"To you, maybe. To that bartender up there. But to me it's the Mona Lisa."*

Sequence : 01:01:05 - 01:01:11

The emotional investment in "Flash of Genius" is a key element that drives Robert Kearns to fight for what he believes is right. It adds complexity to his character and elevates the story beyond a mere legal dispute, emphasizing the personal and emotional aspects of his journey.

#### 4) Personal Sacrifices

In his quest for justice, Kearns endures significant personal costs, such as damaged ties with his family and financial difficulties. This extreme all-or-nothing mentality is reflected in his willingness to forego his own well-being in order to further his cause.

*This is my number one priority, Phyllis.*

*Whatever it's gonna take..*

Sequence : 0:44:29– 00:44:33

Kearns discusses his invention and the emotional impact of the legal battle. These moments are likely to reveal his deep emotional investment in the invention and his personal struggle for recognition and justice.

Kearns is portrayed as a passionate inventor who invests a significant amount of time, energy, and creativity into developing the intermittent windshield wiper. His emotional investment is not solely driven by financial gain but also by a genuine desire to contribute to automotive safety.

When Ford Motor Company allegedly steals Kearns' invention without giving him credit, it becomes a profound betrayal. The emotional impact of this betrayal is heightened by Kearns' personal attachment to the invention, making it more than just a technical achievement.

Kearns' emotional investment extends to a deep sense of justice. He believes that what Ford did was fundamentally wrong, and this belief becomes a driving force in his determination to seek acknowledgment for his invention. The legal battle takes a toll on Kearns' personal life, leading to strained relationships with his family. The emotional investment in the case affects not only his professional identity but also his connections with those closest to him.

Kearns' emotional investment is tied to his identity as an inventor. The invention is not just a product; it represents his legacy. The emotional significance of having his creation recognized and acknowledged becomes a crucial aspect of his fight.

He is willing to make significant personal sacrifices, including financial difficulties and strained family relationships, due to his emotional investment in the legal battle. The personal toll underscores the depth of his commitment.

In summary, the emotional investment in "Flash of Genius" is a key element that drives Robert Kearns to fight for what he believes is right. It adds complexity to his character and elevates the story beyond a mere legal dispute, emphasizing the personal and emotional aspects of his journey.

#### 5) Single-minded Focus

Kearns gets completely preoccupied with establishing his case against Ford. This all-or-nothing attitude to the legal struggle is demonstrated by his extreme focus on his objective to the detriment of other facets of his life.

*How am I supposed to teach my kids about doing the right thing*

*if I let these guys get away with this?*

Sequence 01:09:24 - 01:09:28,

The above statement shows that Keran emphasizes Kearns' relentless pursuit of justice and his refusal to be deterred by the challenges and obstacles he faces. It highlights his single-minded focus on proving the legitimacy of his invention and holding those who infringed upon his idea accountable.

## 6) Risking Everything

In his pursuit of justice, Kearns is prepared to jeopardize everything, including his connections with family, job, and financial security. The extreme nature of his thinking is demonstrated by his readiness to risk everything on how the case turns out. In the film "Flash of Genius," Robert Kearns, portrayed by Greg Kinnear, risks everything in his pursuit of justice and recognition for his invention of the intermittent windshield wiper. One of the key moments illustrating this is when Kearns decides to represent himself in court against the powerful automakers he accuses of stealing his idea.

Below is the proof of the above statements;

*"We used to talk about the Kearns Corporation. You remember that?"*

(Sequence) : 01:14:55 - 01:14:57

All things considered, Robert Kearns in "Flash of Genius" demonstrates an all-or-nothing mentality in his unwavering quest for justice and credit for his creation. Throughout the movie, his unwavering adherence to his beliefs, reluctance to give in, and readiness to take any kind of risk demonstrate how serious he is about his beliefs.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is obtained after the researcher conducted the analysis in the part result and discussion of this research. Based on

the analysis the researcher concludes every part in this conclusion.

At the end of Flash of Genius film, Robert Kearns, played by Greg Kinnear, achieves a bittersweet victory in a legal battle with the auto industry. After years of struggle, personal sacrifice, and the impact on his family and mental health, Kearns finally won a series of lawsuits against automakers for patent infringement related to his invention of the intermittent wiper. However, victory comes at a price.

Although Kearns has received significant compensation, the emotional and personal toll of the long legal battle has left lasting scars. The film's ending reflects the complexity of Kearns' character, portraying him not only as an inventor seeking justice, but also as a man deeply affected by the adversity he faces.

Ultimately, The film A Flash of Genius serves as a meditation on the cost of innovation, the challenges of confronting powerful beings, and the personal sacrifices that come with the pursuit of justice.

This ending leaves the audience with a mixture of satisfaction at Kearns' victory in proving his case and empathy for the toll it has taken on his life.

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