

Representation of Masculinity in FPJ's Action Films

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This study focuses on the representation of male protagonists in several selected films of Ronald Allan Poe Kelly, or more famously known as Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ). New categories of the representation of male protagonists in action films were arrived at after a thorough reading of the main heroes. The infantilized, trigger-happy, and sadist protagonists that FPJ's films created were identified. This research, which uses dialogue exchanges and movie scenes to create a representation of masculinity, can be regarded as part of cultural studies.

In order to give meaning to the categories created by this study, these need to be projected onto a wider context of social issues that take the form of visual culture. The produced categories became the basis with which to analyze the Metro Guwapo project of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) during the term of Bayani Fernando. In addition, these categories were also used to analyze the matrimony of the state and the military during the tenure of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as a political and cultural text. Lastly, the created representation of masculinity was used as the basis with which to analyze a photo of former U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenny as she was delivering the guest of honor's speech urging Mindanaoans to take care of Lake Lanao.

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Representation of Masculinity in FPJ's Action Films

Fernando Poe Jr. is acclaimed as the king of Filipino movies, one reason being his drawing power to moviegoers, particularly in action films. A proof of this is the transcendence of his created representation in the movies when he ran as president in the 2004 Philippine national elections. The fact that a movie actor almost won in the elections reflects the extent of his influence on Filipinos. He would have been the second action film star cum president after Joseph Estrada. Most of the films he starred in depict an ordinary citizen victimized by social circumstances that impel his transformation; from a seemingly immaculate character—an honest policeman, a doting father, a gentle pillar of the family, and so on—into a character exhibiting violence and vengeance, a trigger-happy and sadist protagonist. From this, we can read a seemingly two-faced image of the male hero in several of FPJ's films; one good and the other evil, which in fact is still regarded by viewers as being good, for this was only brought about by the hardships the protagonist endured.

This issue amuses. First, because his films seemingly depict that vengeance employing violence is justice, and second, because the audience readily accepts

it. Added to this are several issues regarding his view of love and his naiveté regarding simple things, such as courtship. Still, despite these, there is his sadism, especially in how he dealt with the antagonist who raped and killed his wife, kidnapped his child, or the villains who shattered his formerly peaceful and happy life. What we mean is that even though FPJ takes on the traits of his villains, his image as an acceptable movie character remains. These issues serve as the setting for this study: how several selected FPJ films create the representation of his masculinity. From this, the issues raised in the criticism of his films will be connected to a wider context in order to show the implicit relation between the creation of the male archetype to issues such as the masculinization of the city and the modernity of contemporary times.

Masculinity, even if regarded as standing on a privileged position, still warrants examination, not to revive the long-disproved notions of patriarchy and domination, but to contextualize the long-running discourse that people have sought to demolish for having been deemed an obstacle to women's movements and the liberation of marginalized genders of society. For example, Rolando Tolentino's article *Richard Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkatalalaki* (2002) focuses on how the aggression of society's males betrays its origins in the femininity they suppress.

Employing several ideas, for example, Freud's constitutional bisexuality and Anthony Easthope's theorization on the phallogocentric existence of masculinity as the dominant gender in a patriarchal society, this study uses as its core the view of masculinity as a myth (Tolentino, 2002). If masculinity is viewed as a myth that went through the process of creation, it is possible to tear it down and create new discourses and studies regarding masculinity. Tolentino's article uses the film *Dyesebel* (Chionglo, 1990) to prove the ideas he presented.

An additional example would be the study conducted by Soledad Reyes in her article *The Outlaw and the Prostitute: Images of Otherness in Popular Culture* (1991), which presented readings on images that society has disregarded but still manifest themselves in various forms of popular culture, such as in comics and movies. On the other hand, taking examples from literature, after Rosario Torres-Yu's book *Sarilaysay* anthologized the narratives of female writers on their experiences and poetics, this was immediately followed by Rosario Torres-Yu's *Sarilaysay 2* (2004), which contained narratives by male writers. This work revealed their testimonial conceptualizations on their being male writers who possess their own experiences and poetics, which, if not at all dissimilar to those of female writers, are certain to be contextualized in their being males and the roles of the male (as a son, husband, father, etc.).

The aforementioned studies and anthologies prove that a more meaningful discourse on masculinity is being explored, whether it is in the realm of pop culture, literature, or the creative process of contemporary writers. Still, the discourse on masculinity is not limited to the references we identified. It can be seen in the wider context of society, such as the city's masculinization in the

tagline “Metro Guwapo,” which was used during the tenure of Bayani Fernando at the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA). In addition, we can sense the state’s aggression and sadistic tendencies in the issue of the strengthening of the nation’s military agency.

In an article by Uro dela Cruz (2006), he mentions the usual formulas employed by FPJ’s films. Most of them are set in the city, specifically Manila’s Quiapo and Tondo districts. The scenes take place in narrow places in squatter areas, as well as in the city’s wide thoroughfares. There’s always a scene in an abandoned warehouse or factory. While originally placid, the oppressed protagonist seethes and gradually fights back once the troubles involve his family among the victims. A series of crimes, abuses, rapes, kidnapping, transactions of illegal drugs takes place, culminating in the specter of battle. Dela Cruz adds that the first characters portrayed by FPJ in his films were centered on the lives of rebels and peasants who even manifest radical and progressive traits. But his portrayals soon began to lean toward policemen and soldiers.

Once FPJ more frequently used a policeman or soldier as his character, some of his followers lost interest in him as a hero, and this included dela Cruz. It could not be denied, however, that FPJ’s films continued to lord over the box office despite the fact that his characters’ social status had seemingly transformed. What was once an oppressed farmer and militant rebel was subsumed into a social agency that wielded (temporal) power due to his authority to carry a gun, an authority bestowed by the state.

In fact, why FPJ’s former characters of the militant rebel, peasant or ordinary citizen, became policemen warrants scrutiny. This is a major aspect of his transformation as a hero. His teacher-rebel character as Asedillo in the movie *Asedillo* (Castillo, 1971) is important due to its being shown during the martial law era. Even though the protagonist had already metamorphosed, his existence as an oppressed character is sustained throughout the film’s entirety, but in the end, he prevails over all challenges he faces. He exerts control over every scene he appears in. He is adept at using the gun, he is a marksman, he is great at dodging bullets, and he only suffers scratches despite leaping or tumbling through the air before falling hard on the ground. At this point, to further expand this study on the representation of the male protagonist in FPJ’s action films, it is interesting to observe his character’s calm.

Infantilized Father

An FPJ film that is not set in the structure of the family as part of society is rare. His father-character is a doting one who does his best to give his family a decent life despite his meager salary. He leads a simple life. The embrace and kiss of his wife and the warmth of his children are all that it takes for an ideal life. Though lacking in material things, the love of his family is more than enough for him to live peacefully and honorably. His enervation quickly dissipates in the presence of his children who are innocent to the dangers of his work.

This is brightly depicted in the film *Kahit Butas ng Karayum Papasukin Ko* (Milan, 1995). This is the story of Sergeant Daniel Torres who is transferred from Manila to Mindanao because he had a run-in with the grandchild of an influential businessman. The struggle for power between the state and the military agency effects his family's dislocation. He takes his only child, a daughter, along with her lifelong nanny (the sister of his deceased wife) to Mindanao. Despite their relocation to Mindanao, Sergeant Torres cannot escape the antagonists so he can live the peaceful life he desires. In his new place, he comes up against fellow soldiers who are in cahoots with local smugglers and drug lords.

Through his calm way of speaking, he comes across as a rational thinker, something that angers the antagonist soldiers. However, when the issue of love is on the table, he is unable to come to a resolution. His status as a father helps raise our expectations that he should possess a wide understanding of the world. His being a good father and head of the family is dissolved, and instead he becomes a child who receives advice from his daughter. He is a father in the familial structure, but upon closer examination, he is the most childlike in the family. Here we note the seeming infantilization of FPJ's character that is part of the representation of masculinity in action films.

Let us examine a few excerpts of dialogues between father and daughter from this film. The first dialogue takes place after Daniel was beaten up by his fellow soldiers whom he had a run-in in a bar. It is his daughter who finds out the betrayal of these soldiers, even though she was not present in the brawl scene. Daniel finds out only much later that the reason he ended up really hurt was that one soldier used metal knuckles to harden his blows. Here is the dialogue between father and daughter as she tended to Daniel's wounds (Milan, 1995):

Daniel: Ano ba 'yan?

Vanessa: Langis po ng niyog saka dinikdik na luya.

Daniel: Hindi ba para sa pilay 'yan?

Vanessa: Hindi po, para po talaga ito sa pasa.

Daniel: Teka, teka...

Vanessa: Bakit 'tay?

Daniel: Baka lalong mamaga 'yan ha?

Vanessa: 'Tay naman, hindi mamamaga 'yan. Lalo pa 'yang gagaling basta ako ang nag-alaga.

Daniel: Sigurado ka?

Vanessa: Oo.

Daniel: O sige.

Vanessa: Alam mo 'tay, hindi talaga ako naniniwala na basta-basta ka na lang nagkaganyan.

Daniel: O, bakit naman?

Vanessa: Basta alam ko 'tay na hindi ka naman basta-basta napupuruhan. Palagay ko, trinaydor ka. Kasi alam mo 'tay na naniniwala ako, na kahit ilan pa sila, na kahit sampu-sampu pa sila, kayang-kaya mo sila.

(Daniel: What's that?)

Vanessa: Coconut oil and ground ginger.

Daniel: Isn't that for a limp? (Is limp the direct translation of pilay?) Should it be sprain?

Vanessa: No, it's really for bruises.

Daniel: Wait, wait...

Vanessa: Why, dad?

Daniel: Won't my bruise swell up?

Vanessa: Dad, really, it won't swell up. It can just get better especially since I'm the one taking care of it.

Daniel: Are you sure?

Vanessa: Yes.

Daniel: All right then.

Vanessa: You know, dad, I don't really believe that you ended up like this just because of nothing.

Daniel: Really, why?

Vanessa: Dad, I just know that you don't get easily hurt. I guess they betrayed you. Because, dad, I believe that even though they might be many, even though they might be dozens, you can take on all of them.)

The second excerpt is a dialogue between the pair wherein Daniel regresses to a childlike state when it comes to love. His daughter comments on her father's ineptitude regarding the issue of remarrying. Her daughter stresses Daniel's need for a wife to fulfill his emotional, physical, and sexual needs. From the dialogue between the pair, one can glean how the daughter insinuates that she cannot answer the needs of her father. She can never serve as her mother's substitute. And so to revive Daniel's castrated masculinity, she urges him to remarry. This is the daughter's hidden motivation when she urges her father to court a woman that they've gotten to know since they moved to Mindanao. Here is the exchange of lines between the pair, with intermittent dialogue from Nanay Tinay, the sister of Daniel's departed spouse:

Vanessa: Itay, kilala n'yo po ba si Aling Lina?

Daniel: Bakit?

Vanessa: Kasi po 'tay kanina kausap ko siya. Alam n'yo po 'tay, marami siyang tinanong tungkol sa inyo.

Daniel: Tungkol sa akin?

Vanessa: Opo.

Daniel: Ano naman ang sinabi mo?

Vanessa: Siyempre marami po. Ang sabi niya sa akin, ang lolo pala niya datu, tapos po ang nanay niya, prinsesa.

Daniel: Si Lina, maaaring prinsesa rin?

Vanessa: Yun nga po ang tinanong ko, pero ang sabi niya, hindi raw. Ang nanay niya nag-asawa ng taga-Maynila. Tapos siya pala nag-aral sa Amerika. Tapos yung nanay at tatay niya dun na nanirahan.

Nanay Tinay: Tingnan mo iyang anak mo, isang araw pa lang sa eskuwela, ayan ang dami na niyang alam.

Vanessa: E kasi po itay, kanina ang tagal ng prinsipal. At ang sabi niya sa akin, kapag wala daw po akong pasok, samahan ko daw siya sa center. Samahan n'yo po ako ha.

Daniel: Sinabi niya 'yun?

Vanessa: Opo.

Daniel: Baka mangulit ka lang dun ha.

Vanessa: Hindi naman po 'tay. Ah, tay, di ba maganda si Aling Lina?

Daniel: Maganda na rin, pwede na rin.

Nanay Tinay: Anong pwede na rin Daniel? Aba nakita ko yata sa palengke, ang ganda-ganda.

Vanessa: Mabait pa 'no? Alam mo 'tay, palagay ko, okey rin na may makilala kang ibang babae. Alam mo mahal ko si nanay, pero palagay ko dapat, lumigaya ka.

Daniel: Vanessa, sa ngayon, sa mga oras ngayon, wala akong panahon sa mga bagay na 'yan.

Nanay Tinay: Hoy, anong walang oras? Daniel, magpipitong taon na...

Vanessa: Si tatay pa-simple pa.

Daniel: Anong pa-simple?

Vanessa: Talaga naman e.

Daniel: Nahawa ka na sa nanay Tinay mo.

Vanessa: Sige na 'tay, aminin mo na, hindi ko sasabihin kay nanay Tinay.

(Vanessa: Dad, do you know Aling Lina?)

Daniel: Why?

Vanessa: Because, dad, I was talking to her earlier. You know, dad, she kept asking me a lot of things about you.

Daniel: About me?

Vanessa: Yes.

Daniel: And what did you say?

Vanessa: A lot, of course. She told me that her grandpa was a datu, and her mom, a princess.

Daniel: So Lina might also be a princess?

Vanessa: That's exactly what I asked, but she said, no. Her mother married someone from Manila. And she studied in America. And her mother and father have already migrated there.

Nanay Tinay: Look at your daughter, just a day in school, and she already knows a lot.

Vanessa: Because, dad, the principal took arrived late. And she told me, I should accompany her to the center when I don't have class. I'll bring you along, okay?

Daniel: She said that?

Vanessa: Yes.

Daniel: You might just be a nuisance there, 'kay.

Vanessa: No, dad, I won't. Ah, dad, isn't Aling Lina pretty?

Daniel: Kinda pretty. She's okay.

Nanay Tinay: What okay, Daniel? Huh, I saw her at the market, she's so pretty.

Vanessa: And she's kind, right? You know, dad, I just think that it's okay for you to know other women. I know that you love mommy, but I think you also need to be happy.

Daniel: Vanessa, right now, these days, I don't have the time for things like that.

Nanay Tinay: Hey, what? No time? Daniel, it has been seven years...

Vanessa: Dad, acting as if...

Daniel: What acting as if?

Vanessa: It's true, I know.

Daniel: You've taken after your Nanay Tinay.

Vanessa: Come on, dad, admit it, I won't tell Nanay Tinay.)

Daniel's status as a father does not stop at his being a dad to his daughter. He needs to extend his masculinity. This is fulfilled when he acts like a father to the soldiers he joins in Mindanao. At first, he is at odds with them because of their crooked ways. Add to that their unsavory traits—they wear their hair long, they look dirty, they throw their weight around—in addition to indulging in the vices of beer and women.

Daniel's lack of a son to complete his fatherly image, in order to also fulfill his being a model, is filled by the soldiers who submit themselves to his influence and leadership. Daniel becomes their disciplinarian. It does not take long before Daniel proves his mettle as a disciplinarian and upright soldier, and the soldiers who formerly abused their power and position gradually change their ways. The erstwhile gun-toting terrors are soon loved and admired by the community's civilians. Daniel resorts to violence as a form of discipline. Because he cannot discipline the soldiers under his jurisdiction on the level of being a father, he accomplishes this by being a model soldier whom the soldiers obey and emulate: kind-hearted, a believer of justice, and a fighter against corrupt local community officials and soldiers.

There is a scene where he confronts soldiers who seem to spurn his desire for them to emulate his masculinity. Daniel's masculinity does not merely revolve on his disciplinary skills. The deeper aspect of his masculinity lies within his rational thinking and manner of speech bordering on the philosophical. Note the dialogue between Daniel and Jamin, a Muslim leader in the movie (Milan, 1995):

Daniel: There are people who remain alive, only because it's against the law to kill them. And even the criminal has the right to a trial.

Daniel: May mga taong nananatiling buhay, dahil labag sa batas na patayin sila. At maging ang kriminal ay may karapatan sa isang paglilitis.

Jamin: Naiisip ko lang, hindi ba galit ang pumapatay sa liwanag ng ating pag-iisip?

Daniel: Maraming pagkukulang ang batas. Ang diwa ng batas ang bumubuhay sa hustisya.

Jamin: Hindi lahat ng taong nakikipaglaban ay pawang magigiting at dapat hangaan. Dapat munang pag-aralan bago palakpakan. Kung tama o mali ang paninindigan.

Daniel: Hindi tayo ang nagmamay-ari ng kinabukasan, kundi ang ating mga anak.

Jamin: Hanggang anong sakripisyo ang kaya mong daanan upang maabot ang sakripisyong sinasabi mo?

Daniel: Kahit butas ng karayum, papasukin ko.

Jamin: Hindi madali ang sinasabi mo.

Daniel: Alam ko. Kaya dapat matuto tayong mabuhay bilang magkakabati o sama-sama tayong mamatay na parang mga hangal.

Jamin: I'm just thinking, isn't it anger that slays the clarity of our thinking?

Daniel: The law has many loopholes. It is the spirit of the law that breathes life into justice.

Jamin: Not all people who fight are brave and worthy of admiration. They need to be examined before being applauded, if their convictions are right or wrong.

Daniel: We do not own the future. Our children do.

Jamin: Up to what extent are you willing to endure to achieve the sacrifice you are talking about?

Daniel: I will go through even the head of a needle.

Jamin: What you're saying is not easy.

Daniel: I know. Which is why we need to learn how to live in harmony, or we die together like fools.

Trigger-Happy Vigilante

There are action films based on real life. In this type of film, the story revolves on the life of a famous personality, whether he is looked upon favorably by society or not. In cases where the narrative is pure fiction, FPJ's hero characters appear to be vigilantes who resolve cases that should have been better left to the police. In such FPJ movies, he begins as an ordinary citizen who in the end places the law and the punishment in his own hands. Defending the oppressed becomes his trait, and he likewise exacts vengeance if the victim is powerless to do so.

The film *Aguila ng Maynila* (Reyes, 1989) is about Mauro Reyes, a policeman who is framed and kicked out of the force. While walking alone along some Manila alley, a group of toughies fancy him and beat him up. Inebriated with booze and melancholy, Mauro is easily felled by the group. They leave him unconscious and black-and-blue on the sidewalk. A group of scavenger kids approach him. They carry him like a baby to their wooden pushcart. Come morning, Mauro eavesdrops on the conversation between a blind old man and one of the kids who rescued him. The child asks why he witnesses a lot of evil deeds in Manila, such as robberies, killings, and the use and trade of illegal drugs. The blind old man answers that the day would come when a savior will resolve the problems of the poor and oppressed. This prophetic answer will impel the transformation of Mauro toward becoming an anonymous savior of Manila's browbeaten.

Despite the old man's lack of sight, his prediction gains traction as the film's narrative progresses. After listening to the conversation between grandpa and grandchild, Mauro realizes that the blind old man might have been referring to him. He would become the "eagle" of Manila who would help the oppressed. Having formed the notion of being a messiah, he begins to fight various crimes all over the city. Instead of acting as a trial witness to a killing he beheld, he takes

vengeance in the name of the victim's family. He kills the goons of a gambling lord who killed an acquaintance. In addition, he kills a toughie from the inner streets, a rapist, and those who contributed to the death of his wife and children. He takes revenge against those who caused his dismissal from police service. Whereas Mauro was once an agent of the law, by becoming a vigilante, he has now become the entire body of the law. And in this law, there is no time for the court, or any investigation and presentation of evidence. Every wrongdoing he perceives end with the trigger and firing of the gun.

Mauro's character is seen as a savior in this movie, but it cannot be denied that the anger and aggression he unleashes in the form of vengeance is a sadistic expression of repression. This is concealed within his transformation from a policeman to a city vigilante. The death of his wife and children created a void in his fatherhood that translated into repressed anger and aggression. The loss of his family is also the loss of his identity as a man, as a father. He has lost his purpose as a husband. He has no one to have sex with, and so his reproductive organ has lost its purpose. Which is why the character's every pull of the trigger is like an uninterrupted series of orgasms, for he transmutes the absence of physical, sexual, and emotional purpose into acts of aggression. This is his way of venting his tensions, deficiencies, and his search for the meaning of his existence. The gun seemingly becomes his organ that always reminds him of his manhood and his role in society.

The presence of vigilantes in Manila was an indication that Mayor Lim was then beginning his campaign to "revive" the city. This was part of a project to portray Manila as a beautiful city of commerce and tourism, which was actually a form of internal cleansing of the city. Mayor Alfredo Lim was known as the "Dirty Harry" of Manila. Being a vigilante had the blessing of the state, and violence against criminals and those considered as the city's rubbish was legitimized. These rubbish and trash of society are often the victims of nameless groups/vigilantes. The killing of suspected roots of Manila's drug and crime problems would be the solution to end the illegal drug trade. But this has long been proven to be ineffective. If the vigilante-esque actions of Mayor Alfredo Lim were then supported by the state, the vigilante deeds of FPJ's characters have the blessing of the oppressed.

The vigilantes in FPJ's movies are not always entirely fictitious. Some of the stories are based on the true-to-life stories of renowned individuals. One example of these is the film *Epimaco Velasco: NBI* (Vinarao, 1994) in which FPJ starred. This movie fused the character of the vigilante and the agent of the law. Here, violence as supported by the state is laid bare for all to see. The narrative traces the improvement of Velasco's life—from being a janitor to being a lawyer and then entering the NBI as an agent. From cleaning corridors, the narrative moves into cleaning society through the use of force. For example, a group of youth who were the scions of rich persons was then involved in various crimes. Through Velasco's supervision, his group solves the case and arrests and kills

several of the members in one encounter. Another scene depicts an event in a marijuana plantation wherein two NBI agents are slain. Again, Velasco resolves the case. Armed with a shotgun, he kills his foes one by one.

A Sadist Hero

Aside from using the gun and his skills at fisticuffs, FPJ's characters have other ways of taking revenge. There are times when he does not allow the villain to talk. Violence is the only path to end the troubles and problems faced by the protagonists in his films. Here, the law of the state is equaled by his own law. In his films, if justice is difficult to attain, this could be achieved with individual actions, using a gun and violence.



Figure 1. Image of two of PFJ's films (*Ang Dalubhasa* and *Batas sa Lansangan*) that depict violence and aggression as part of the representation of his films' protagonists. (Rodriguez, 2011a)

Again, in the film *Aguila ng Maynila* (Gomez, 1989), there is a scene wherein the villain (Paquito Diaz) is tied to the front of an owner-type jeep. Mauro comes close to crashing the car a few times while the antagonist curses and pleads for mercy. The villain turns hysterical, sensing that the time of his death had come. Mauro demands to know the perpetrators of his family's killing. The villain confesses, but Mauro still goes on to crash the jeep into the wall. The film *Sanctuario* (Meyer, 1974) has an equivalent scene.

Selmo is accused of killing a big landowner and is thus regarded by the barrio folk as a murderer. The church becomes Selmo's sanctuary; he hides there for the meantime while planning how he can clean his name of the crime he did not commit. The movie progresses until he captures the two antagonists. He leaves them tied to a post in the middle of a plaza. Selmo rings the church bell and the townspeople arrive. They circle the two men tied in the middle of the plaza. Selmo demands that the two men confess in front of the crowd. He shoots at the two men, his bullets deliberately missing them by a hairline, even

as they beg for mercy. As they act to tell the truth, their boss quickly shoots them dead. A gun battle erupts. Selmo wins in the end. The people forgive him and welcome him back to the community.

The injustice in the community becomes the impetus for Mauro and Selmo to unleash their sadistic tendencies. From being peaceful citizens, the challenges they face along the films' narratives force the protagonists to display their repressed violence and anger, to be witnessed by the viewers. The amusing thing about this, however, is that whatever amount of violence and explosion of anger the protagonists exhibit, this is easily accepted by the audience. Even the uncommon and sadistic tendencies of the hero characters are just accepted as common, which seem to create a familiarization to aggression and violence. Violence as an act of aggression and torture against the villains loses its efficacy.

The Representation of Masculinity in the Context of the City and Modernity

Masculine aggression and violence in FPJ's films as a representation of the male hero can be used in the discourse of the city and modernity. This was the same process of masculinization of the city during the tenure of Bayani Fernando as Chairman of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. Recall, for example, how his enforcers resorted to the violent sousing of gas on the vendors' wares in Manila, rendering the items useless. In addition, he also wanted to arm MMDA personnel with bolos as deterrent to those who would violate traffic laws. Discipline and respect for traffic laws were ensured due to the fear of unbridled violence. The violent tendencies of the state are fulfilled through such rules and regulations. This is a muscular assertion of the laws of the streets, in addition to being a direct masculinization of the city through the tagline Metro Guwapo.



Figure 2. A reminder to pedestrians by the MMDA by way of direct threat. (Rodriguez, 2011b)



Figure 3. MMDA container van displaying the Metro Gwapo tagline. (Rodriguez, 2011c)

The masculinization of the city can be identified using the customs of the MMDA as the main agency, said to be responsible for ensuring a liveable city. At present, the MMDA prevails over the streets and possesses the power to mete out punishment to anyone who disobeys the laws that they implement. Isn't the city like a huge prison infested with regulations and prohibitions? Add to this the architectural structures that can be considered as apparatus to control the mobility of human bodies.

The masculinity appropriated by FPJ as an NBI director is a good example wherein domination is enacted using the endowment of position and power on the state. The violence seen in his films appear to be merely ordinary instead of having to go through the process that agents of justice and the law are duty-bound to safeguard. Here, violence becomes an effective method with which to defeat and erase those considered to be pests and rubbish of society. Take note of the picture of Pres. Gloria Arroyo, for example, and her handshake with AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon upon her return to the Philippines from New York, USA.

This photo shows the power bestowed by the president upon her military agency. While the mother of the nation is away, she leaves the latter in the hands of its most robust and most powerful officer to secure her own power during her absence. Even though this power comes from a female president, her feudal relationship with the military chief is part of a larger context. In here, the issue of power has a sexual basis, not in the realm of the body, but its symbolical and ideological existence. Symbolical, for we can view the power of the state and of the military agency at a level



SHE'S BACK. President Macapagal-Arroyo returns from New York and is welcomed by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon with arrival honors at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Figure 4. Photo of former President Gloria Arroyo upon her arrival in the country from an overseas trip. ("She's back," 2007)

of mutual benefaction. Ideological, for the desire to stay in power is achieved with the matrimony of the government and the military. We can see a trace of the representation of masculinity in FPJ's films in the picture. Here is violence (the state) and the executor of violence (the military).

The sexualized traits of our economy due to modernization are also greatly apparent. Whereas our state was peddling our labor force to various nations in the past, now foreign businessmen are gradually being lured over to invest in the Philippines in the name of eco-tourism. This can be seen in the dramatic scenes featuring former U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenny during her speech to save Lanao Lake. Note the photo:



Figure 5. Photo of former US Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenny as she speaks to the people of Lanao about the conservation of Lake Lanao. (Maranaos Unite to Save Lake Lanao, n.d.)

In this picture, we can see a seemingly caring foreign mother calling for Mindanaoans to preserve the beauty of their place. The image behind her (a nipa hut in the rice field) is a striking impression of a backward Philippine economy, but also reveals a region prosperous in agriculture and raw materials. Aside from its expansive fields, a variety of raw materials and resources, such as lumber and minerals can be obtained by foreign capitalists. If a female ambassador can appear to be peacefully and safely speaking in and touring Mindanao, which is identified with rebel and terrorist hideouts, what more would foreign businessmen or potential investors feel?

But more important than this, the seemingly serene and calm picture shows the concealed violence and aggression by America against the Philippines. The photo screams with the hidden truths and agenda of the American representative's visit to Mindanao. Military troops continue to pour into Mindanao to clean it of the supposed obstacles to the long-desired peace. At present, the Americans maintain a military base in the Zamboanga Peninsula. Several joint military exercises have also been conducted in Mindanao through the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

Conclusion

By studying the representation of masculinity in selected action films of FPJ, we identified its hidden silences. We presented the created categories that can be seen in the wider context of society. These categories can also serve as settings in which to read cultural texts, particularly visual culture, transcending its common notions and shallow descriptions of images.

With this estimation, the study of action films and the representations they reveal become more meaningful, for these can be used beyond the medium of film or popular culture. The created categories of representation can be used to weigh and identify the concealed power relations in society.

In fact, the created representations have long been rooted in the viewers' subconscious. The dominant and commercialized movies of FPJ seem to serve as agents so that people can accept the state's aggression and violence. On the other hand, projecting the created categories onto a wider social context can shed a deeper understanding on the aggression and violence manifested by those in power.

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Filmography

Asedillo

1971

FPJ Films

Direction and Screenplay: Celso Ad Castillo

Cast:

Fernando Poe Jr.

Paquito Diaz,

Barbara Perez

Sanctuario

1974

FPJ Films

Director: Rufy Meyer

Screenplay: Fred Navarro

Cast:

Marilou Destreza

Paquito Diaz

Aguila ng Maynila

1989

FPJ Films

Direction and Screenplay: Pablo S. Gomez

Cast:

Fernando Poe Jr.

Paquito Diaz

Vic Vargas

Charlie Davao

Epimaco Velasco: NBI

1994

FLT Films

Director: Edgardo Vinarao

Screenplay: Jose Carreon

Cast:

Fernando Poe Jr.

Charlene Gonzales

Jackie Aquino

Kahit Butas ng Karayum Papasukin Ko

1995

Libran Films

Director: Willie Milan

Screenplay: Mario Palao

Cast:

Fernando Poe Jr.

Sunshine Dizon

Caridad Sanchez

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