

Research paper on asian masculinity in movies

[Parts of the World](#), [Asia](#)



Males of Asian descent have got an unpleasant rap in mainstream movies from all over the world. If they do not get depicted as a type of caricature, then they will often be stereotypes that they are humble as well as unassuming, the kind of people who will stick around somewhere in the background. Also, film directors view them as those who are especially not outgoing, and an exact antonym of the terms “ handsome” and “ sexy.” This kind of mentality perhaps became popular because there are extremely few famous Asians in the United States, from which most of the films come (Gates 34). In most films, if an Asian male is not a kind of stereotypical young man exhibiting martial skills, then he plays the role of a backdrop, which becomes consigned to some supportive task while a Caucasian becomes a leading man. The leading man takes the center stage. Even films which take place in the Asian Continent sometimes deal with themes which would usually call for actors of Asian descent. They almost always star non-Asians. A perfect illustration is *The Last Samurai*--probably an excellently interesting movie which probably would be even more interesting if it was named otherwise, especially considering the way Tom Cruise plays the “ last” samurai. This kind of depiction has brought forth heated argument among movie makers. College students, especially those of tender ages are made to believe that the Asian male is a kind of a weakling, who can only make a martial artist. These beliefs are so prevalent among American children, most of whom have not even seen an Asian man. In an attempt to counter the negative depiction these movies perpetuate, some movie makers have gone to the extent of producing counter-films. The latter depict the Asian as a superhero. This says a lot about Asian masculinity in movies,

considering the hundreds of young Asian boys who want to get role models (Gates 57). When Asians become stereotyped in the movies or put in small roles in films, it turns out to be an unfortunate fact that a young boy from China growing up in the United States who could use a famous person to emulate. A San Francisco-based artist by the name Enrile Lao has realized this fact. Unlike many others who just accept these stereotypes as a mere sad reality, she has decided to challenge the situation head-on. To achieve this, she uses her “ Manhood” series, which is a pattern of posters that feature numerous iconic Asian males who have def the anti-masculine stereotypes. These males have also in some way had an immense impact on the American landscape (Carroll 12).

The figures that the “ Manhood” series displays read more like a list of superheroes from the Asian Continent: film legend Bruce Lee Star, Trek mainstay George Takei, Filipino hip-hop pioneer DJ Qbert, civil rights activist Richard Aoki as well as basketball golden boy Jeremy Lin. The resemblance of this collection to the Avengers, which was an Asian version, was not accidental (Gates 18). In this version, Lao pointed out that Lao felt the compulsion to come up with images which were iconic, with her elder sibling serving as the role of the initial inspiration for this series of posters, which Starting with Bruce Lee, Lao picked famous Asian figures like George Takai and Jeremy Lin, but also made up his mind to lay focus on other lesser-known icons, the likes of DJ Qbert, probably the most popular disc jockeys that has not got sufficient recognition yet, as well as Richard Aoki, the Asian who served in the civil rights group. By portraying both underground and mainstream icons, the series by Lao paints a total representation of the

Asian men (Lo 46). This image is neither stuck in a Caucasian shadow nor marred by prejudice. While Asian males still face many challenges in the way the movies portray them, and while it is interesting to view more movies out there with Asian leads, at least, “ Manhood” series by Lao’s depicts the existence of real Asian superheroes in the world (Eng, David 17). These superheroes are excellent role models for Asian young boys to look up to as well as manly. The young boys aspire, and admire to one day go beyond the level these superheroes have gone.

It is unsettling to see how these loosely defined groups of Asian men have gotten interesting portrayals of masculinity, which are also starkly contrasting, in their strive to find their place as men. Movies, especially those of American origin, however, mark them otherwise. Although it seems they are so different from other actors, they get somewhat emasculated by ethnicity, racism as well as nationality (Lo 51).

An extremely hateful stereotype is the one by the movie maker, Richard Fung, who claims succinctly that the Filipino is now eclipsed, and that he has turned into a penis. He might end up becoming a real penis (Lo 52). In fact, this filmmaker defines the Asian man by the perceived absence of the male organ in its rightful place. This kind of stereotype, apart from being abusive, creates dislike of the Filipino among college students (Eng, David 29).

However, recent films have drawn a lot of attention to the plight of males of Asian descent, but the mainstream demonizing of Asians is not new. A history of mockery, as well as that of equating Asian males with deviant masculinity, dates back to 20th Century. Furthermore, depictions of Asian men still depend on sexually freakish, caricatures that speak broken English.

This takes a heavy toll on Asian men, how movie makers and the general population perceive them, as well as the way they perceive themselves. This, however, does not justify any kind of violence, but rather is one way of appreciating the influence of power, masculinity and race, on all people. For Asian men who live in the U. S., filmmakers argue in their exaggerated portrayals, that the hyper-masculine male should ultimately get castrated through self-destruction or lynching, in a rifle battle with police rival or fellow gang members. Moreover, the slaying of the legendary dragon takes place in characters like Fu Manchu. The fictional core criminal represented a dangerous threat to the whites. However, he was also an effeminate, simpering actor. The heroes in the movie, Petrie and Smith, almost always thwarted the criminal (Gates 46).

The unending strives for the Asian men of color to claim the masculinity along the shadows of movie depictions was the subject of a journal by the movie maker Byron Hurt. He claims that he viewed , also a film featuring Asian characters in 2010 at . Coincidentally, Hurt shot his movie about masculinity and violence. In addition, the day NBC released a disturbing video dubbed “ manifesto,” which Cho relayed to the network prior to the murderous plan; Hurt released the same video in music of the rap variety. When watching the film, it was not possible to forget Cho (Gates 50).

In conclusion, filmmakers have a lot of stereotypes for the Asian man. They have transmitted these stereotypes to young college students, who are more likely to take time to watch movies compared with the older members of the society. As a result, college students view the Asian man as one with deviant masculinity, as well as unassuming. In an attempt to avert this general view,

some producers of films have made movies that depict the Asian as a superhero.

Works Cited

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