

On Women of Rido: A Film Analysis of “Women of The Weeping River” by Sheron Dayoc (2016) Through the Lens of Hamm-Ehsani, Wang, Feldman, and Hsu



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ABSTRACT: Several films today include the narratives of Muslim communities. Due to the vast array of movies on the subject, Muslim communities' representation has opened many representations and interpretations, whether positive or negative. The independent film “Women of the Weeping River” (WOTWR), by Sheron Dayoc, is one of the many indie films in the Philippines that includes the Muslim community. Using the lenses of Stuart Hall (1997) “Theory of Representation,” the researchers focused on how producers utilize elements of the film in crafting their representations towards cultural groups. This study focuses on this film to elaborate the potential of independent cinema in terms of minorities and highlight social issues. In the case of WOTWR, the study also emphasizes how the Muslim community throughout the film also portrays Islamic women and the film's influence regarding the formation of viewers' perspectives towards the selected cultural group. Through an analysis of WOTWR, this study also aims to discuss how indie films can break away and are capable of breaking away and alluding to mainstream cinema milestones. Several frameworks like Yihan Wang's “Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation,” Mark B. Feldman and Hsuan L. Hsu's “Introduction: Race, Environment, and Representation,” and Karin Hamm-Ehsani's “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity in Kutlug Ataman's Berlin Film *Lola und Bilidikid*,” were utilized in close reading, providing the reader with several perspectives. The study proved that independent film such as WOTWR is a powerful tool when it comes to representation because of having the privilege of autonomy.

KEYWORDS: Muslims; independent films; representation; social issues; Islamic women

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

This For quite a long time, Filipino autonomous producers like Kidlat Tahimik (directed “Perfumed Nightmare” in 1977), Raymond Red (directed “Anino” in 2001), and Brillante Mendoza (directed “Kinatay” in 2009), among numerous others, have gotten basic praise around the world. As film celebrations, rivalries, and dissemination channels, for example, Cinemalaya and Cinema One have propelled youthful nonconformist movie producers as of late, non-mainstream films have gotten equivalent with many Filipinos' innovative substance and points of view today. The Philippine non-mainstream entertainment world had made some amazing progress from its initial improvements in the Marcos time when the sensible depiction of Filipino society in expressions of the human experience was not considered “delightful” by the fascism. However, there is still a lack of sufficient government support towards indie filmmakers (Sollano, 2011). There have been a few issues on Philippine autonomous filmmaking that have gotten evident, particularly after its development a couple of years prior. Paul Sta. Ana, the author of “Bisperas,” one of Cinemalaya's determinations for the chief's grandstand class, says that the public authority's asset portion for film mirrors its standard filmmaking mentality. The public authority burns through a huge number of pesos, which would somehow, or another produce numerous independent movies, for one film project. Another difficulty is the common topic of destitution that exoticizes, even endeavours, Filipino neediness. Sta. Ana noticed that the principal issue here is the producer's goal, which, he concedes, is difficult to decide. The inquiry is whether movie producers are creating these movies since they need to uncover Filipino reality or look for worldwide film celebrations' consideration. He says that setting is pivotal in conceptualizing and introducing the film's material and understanding the movie producer's subject position. (Sollano, 2011).

The traditional portrayal of Muslims in Filipino cinema often revolved around the colonial perception. They were unfriendly, untrustworthy, and enemies of the state. (Angeles, 2016) Classic films such as “Badjao” and “Bagong Buwan” portrayed them as “others,” labelling their resistance to conform to societal norms as the “Moro problem” (Nubla, 2011; Toohey,

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2005). This representation pattern continued until the rise of independent Filipino films that offered new perspectives on Islam, such as their unique culture and impact on society (Howe, 2020).

The researchers watched an indie film, WOTWR (2016), which tells the story of a woman’s family’s dispute with another family. They were speaking in the Tausug language, which indicates that the location is in Mindanao, and they call on Allah, which refers to the one and only God in Islam. The casts are not actors nor widespread in the theatrical field, yet the characterization was well played and shown in the entire film, making viewers embrace the characters’ sentiments. The plot revolves around pain, grief, and guilt, which can be felt throughout since the movie was realistic and documentary-like. However, it is not based on authentic life, but some scenes show real events in Mindanao Muslim families. Some of the issues portrayed in the WOTWR are patriarchy, bloodshed, the importance of ancestral lands, rido, and superstitious beliefs.

B. Statement of the Problem

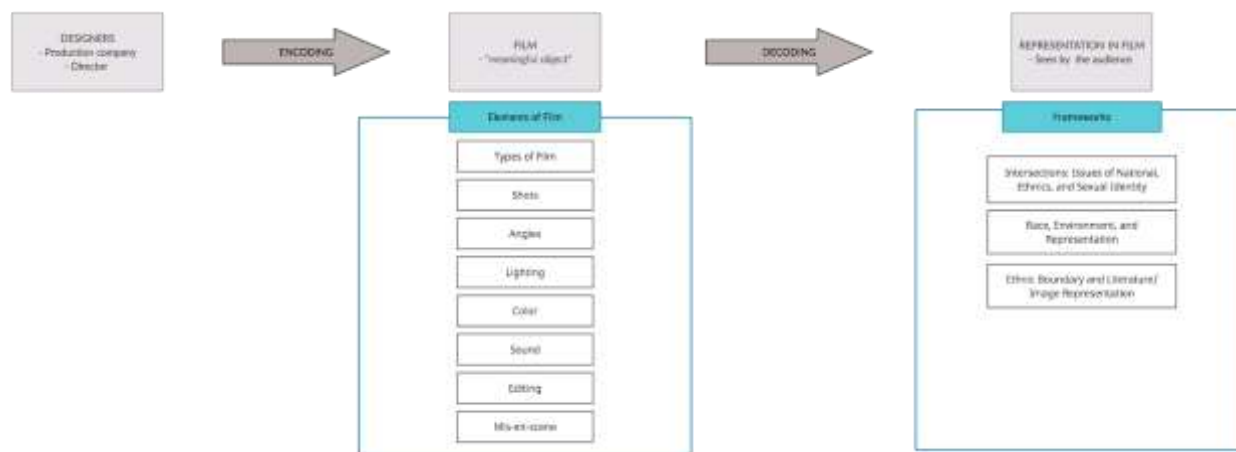
This study aims to (A) lay the groundwork in understanding how independent film can be a powerful tool in the representation of minorities, (B) discuss how films discuss social issues, and (B) describe the representation of the Muslim community in independent cinema. More specifically, the researchers aim to answer the following questions:

1. What makes an independent film a useful tool in representing a specific group of people?
2. What elements of the mainstream movie does WOTWR break or uphold?
3. (Concerning question #2) What effect does that have on the portrayal of Islamic women?
4. How does the WOTWR create and constraint the Islam religion and the Philippine Muslim group?

C. Definition of Terms

1. Muslims in the Philippines- Muslims in the Philippines are often called “Moros,” a title given to them by Spaniards during the Colonization due to their Islamic ideology. The majority of Muslims reside in Mindanao and practice their faith as Sunni Muslims there. However, they can be divided into eleven prominent ethnic groups, each with its language and tradition (Bara, n.d).
2. Film Analysis- Film analysis is the procedure that allows critics to analyse a film through various aspects such as narrative structure, cultural context, and more. Like literature analysis, it looks at the rhetoric and underlying assumptions within the film. However, a film analysis requires more elements to be understood. Some factors that must be considered are the casting and even the use of colours throughout the film. (The Writing Center, 2017)
3. Muslim Representation in Philippine Media- Most mass media had previously portrayed Muslims in their colonial assessment: they are closed off and untrustworthy. However, recent films have shifted away from that narrative and promoted Muslim and non-Muslim interactions. As films turn away from characterizing Muslims in isolation, there is hope that Muslims’ presentation in Philippine cinema becomes more positive. (Angeles, 2016)
4. Independent Films - These are films that operate outside the mainstream industry and are known for having more autonomy related to mechanical works, filmmaking shows, or political settings. (Research Guides: Film Genres: Independent Films, 2012) In the Philippine setting, these are the movies that were not created by Star Cinema, Regal Films, Viva Films, and GMA Films. (Primer Media Inc & Primer Media Inc, 2017)
5. WOTWR is a film produced by TBA Studios and directed by Sheron Dayoc, which tells Satra’s tale. She was caught in the middle of an intergenerational family feud and initially sought revenge. After her only child’s death, she leaves the land to reconcile with the rival clan’s matriarch. (TBA Studios, 2020)

D. Conceptual Framework



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I. Conceptual Framework

The framework above highlights the flow of analysis done by the researchers. They used the film's unique elements to closely read then interpreted their findings through the lens of three frameworks. They focused on the idea of representation in general instead of labelling it as "accurate representation" and "misrepresentation."

The first independent variable is the "Designers," these are the people who direct and produce the film. The portrayal of the characters, especially minority groups, is significantly affected by these people's backgrounds (Angeles, 2016). Stuart Hall further backs this statement when he writes that certain groups have hegemony in the media, often leading to the proliferation of stereotypes since they can dictate how minorities are portrayed (Hall, 1997). This affects the "Encoding" process or how the "Designers" translate their ideas into "Film," which is why it is identified as a meaningful object. The researchers tackled this through rigorous research into the producers and directors, followed by analysing independent films' qualities.

The "Film" can then go through the process of "Decoding" using the "Elements of Film Theory," where the film was broken down and analysed to comprehend the message of the "Designers" (Nashville Film Institute, 2020). The researchers used this as the second independent variable, as they analysed how WOTWR utilized these elements to showcase Muslim women in the Philippines. This was done through a close reading of the film followed by a thorough analysis of the findings.

The ideas that emerged from the "Decoding" are then seen as the "Representation in Film" group. This idea is the paper has looked at the central government's dependent variable, which studied if WOTWR could have a unique contribution to Philippine Muslims' representation in films through the lens of three frameworks. The frameworks chosen are "Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity," "Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation." and "Race, Environment, and Representation."

E. Scope and Limitations

The research only focused on analysing Muslims' representation in the film “WOTWR” as an independent film. The interpretation of the elements was contextualized using the frameworks of “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity,” “Introduction: Race, Environment, and Representation,” and “Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation.” The study was the groundwork for understanding how independent film can be a powerful medium for representing minority religious groups. The researchers understood how the film elements could reject Muslim communities' subjects within the Philippines through analysis.

The study did not cover audience reactions towards the film and its effects on their perceptions of Muslims. This study is not a comparative study, so most of the findings are nuanced to WOTWR. Finally, this analysis of representation came from non-Muslims whose examination was based on research and analysis.

F. Significance of the Study

Cultural and religious representation is commonly presented in different Philippine films, both mainstream and independent (where it is more emphasized). WOTWR is an example of the latter. As the media's role is crucial in different cultural and religious representations, certain matters may arise in Muslim representation in films. Cultural and religious representation is a lightly discussed issue in the Philippines, even more so in the movie. The researchers of this study intend to use these findings to give a better sense of understanding of the Muslim Community. Films such as “WOTWR” are a great avenue to propagate the culture and the stories they experience every day. The film portrays the real-life struggles of Muslim families in the 21st century. This study aims to achieve greater awareness and discernment of the Muslim Community. It can also be used as a guideline to have a more precise grasp of Muslims, their cultures, and traditions with utmost perceptiveness and recognition of the religious group. Lastly, this research is conducted to find the nexus, impact, and overall significance of films and the representation of different religious groups for more relevant and insightful movies in the future.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. The Power of Independent Films

In Szabo's study, he explains that Independent Films possess several characteristics that set them apart from classical and mainstream films. He mentions the financial differences between the makers of indie films and mainstream films, specifically Hollywood films. Large-scale film studios produce several films with the luxury of having a relatively high production budget. These studios' films are created with a mindset of gaining huge profit rather than focusing on the art of filmmaking. Indie films, on the other hand, are handled by starting companies. Influential studios do not control them, therefore having the liberty to mould their creations without hesitation. The only drawback would be the financial budget they hold that will not compare with the budget given by film studios, limiting their capabilities. Besides the differences in financial grants, other noticeable elements that set Indie films apart from mainstream films are aesthetics. Independent films choose to use angles that are not often used by mainstream cinema. The same goes for how the narrative goes in Indie films.

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The clear distinction between mainstream and Indie films sparks interest among casual audiences and film enthusiasts. It attracts new groups of consumers, setting an unfamiliar vibe with the film that they do not often experience with most mainstream films. Most, if not all, Indie films follow the same template whenever production begins— using similar colours, shots, and even tackling social issues that major studios steer away from. Since these films are easy to be identified, the audiences start to set expectations towards the medium. (Szabo, 2010)

Newman asserts Indie as an oppositional culture, being that it attempts to expose mainstream culture as a medium of blind conformity that intends to contaminate its viewers. Producers of indie content boast their “purity and danger,” wherein autonomy and authenticity serve as their basis of purity. This extent of purity amplifies their need for creative expression through the means of cultural production. Indie culture started with its separation from the dominant society. The break from the mainstream is autonomy, as the power filmmakers possess to control the creative process.

Consequently, autonomy brings forth authenticity. On the other side of the spectrum is danger, wherein rejecting dominant media results in limitations of technical and financial means. Due to this, indie producers are coaxed to live modest lives to make up for these limitations. Thus, products of modesty assure credibility. Another aspect of Indie cinema is the fact that popular success is not a priority. Indie filmmakers value the autonomy they hold and the integrity they constructed, and they would not sell these out just for the sake of appealing to the mass audience. (Newman, 2009)

Likewise, Ortner clarifies in her examination that in the viewpoint of an Indie world, Independent movies are produced using the producer's enthusiasm and their extreme obligation to pass on a story in a manner they need. This drives them to continue and produce such works despite the consequences of not conforming with mainstream films. Passion denies commercial sensibility. Films derived from passion result in the portrayal of the filmmaker's perspective, avoiding conventional ‘cookie-cutter’ templates often produced by major studios. Indie films are made with the intent to release the truth about modern society. It tells stories through a realist and hyperrealist approach: showing the world as it is without sugar-coating the unpleasantness and cruelty, no matter how uncomfortable it makes the audience feel. This awkward feeling is necessary to convey the truth. With that in mind, Indie filmmakers are committed to exposing the truth (Ortner, 2012). Ortner alludes to Porterfield's examination, commenting on a specific movie producer about his new film, saying that “If it speaks with honesty, people will listen and respond” (Porterfield, 2011). Ortner also shares an interview with Rodrigo Garcia, making remarks about “how a film needs to make demands on you, and throw you off balance.” He continues with, “art is not supposed to make you feel good, it is supposed to question things, hold up the mirror, take you somewhere you will not or would rather not go in real life.” (Ortner, 2012). Indie is known to be revolutionary; it is made to question and pressure the cultural status quo. Its essence is against the monopoly of media ownership, avoiding prevailing styles, genres, and meanings. It amplifies the voice of the deprived. Indie film has been the most distinct avenue for diverse voices and perspectives. Its content is usually politically left and seldom traditionalist (Newman, 2009).

B. The Bangsamoro Basic Law

In the movie WOTWR, the audience can see one of the main characters looking curious and quizzical as protestors discussed the urgency of submitting the Bangsamoro Basic Law. First, to clarify and better understand the said topic, it is essential to define what Bangsamoro is. The Bangsamoro public, as indicated by House Bill 4994 (2014), are the individuals who at the hour of victory and colonization were viewed as locals or unique occupants of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago and its neighbouring islands, including Palawan, and their relatives, regardless of whether of blended or 3 of full blood, will reserve the option to recognize themselves as Bangsamoro by credit or self-attribution. Mates and their relatives are named Bangsamoro. Another definition from Gutierrez (n.d.), the term Bangsamoro was gotten from the Malay word "country" or "bansa," which signifies "country of the Moro." These locals and unique occupants of Mindanao have a place with numerous ethnolinguistic bunches of Muslims who for the most part live in Mindanao, Sulu, and Basilan. They are the individuals who have held a few or the entirety of their own social, monetary, social, and political convictions and reserve the option to distinguish themselves by attribution or self-credit. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is simply the Muslims' home battling for their assurance and desires for a quiet and reformist locale (Gutierrez, n.d.).

War and strife in Mindanao are a portion of the country's most critical issues that root back with their disagreements about tribal land and religion. Mindanao is wealthy in common assets. Its metallic stores incorporate lead, zinc, metal, iron, copper, and gold. Gold dug in Mindanao represents almost 50% of the public gold stores (Institute of Island Studies, 2007). These are factors as to why the region is closely looked upon by many investors who want to take advantage of these natural treasures. However, forcefully taking one's land and its natural resources are causing detrimental impacts to the region. There are also other matters regarding peace and other aspects that significantly affect Mindanao. Past organizations have directed harmony arrangements with rebel gatherings, for example, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), who went to savagery and requested a different state, yet none have succeeded. The approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) last January 25, 2019, is the organization's most recent acquisition to accomplish harmony in Mindanao and

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end their long-lasting battle for freedom (Gutierrez, n.d.). Under previous President Benigno Aquino III, a few renditions of the proposed BBL were submitted to Congress, the House Committee, and the Senate. However, its endeavours to pass the BBL at last fizzled. Then again, in a historic move, President Rodrigo Duterte signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, home minority Muslims fighting for self-determination in the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines (Marcelo, 2018).

In the ARMM, the Bangsamoro government was under the overall oversight of the President of the Philippines. In any case, the Bangsamoro government will have a topsy-turvy relationship with the public government, as BARMM will have more self-sufficiency than different areas. A few issues, including planning, organization of equity, agribusiness, calamity hazard decrease and the board, tribal areas, common liberties, neighbourhood government units, public works, social administrations, the travel industry, and exchange and industry, are the selective forces the Bangsamoro government will have. At the same time, the focal government's nine secretive forces will hold controls over established and public matters like international concerns and safeguard (Gutierrez, n.d.) (Philippine Information Agency, n.d.).

Some human rights advocates believe that the primary purpose of the extended militarization in Mindanao is to steal, take advantage, and take away indigenous people's lands to use them for personal gains, such as business interests like mining ventures and mall establishments, and the like. Nevertheless, doing such is a violation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, ancestral domains. This caused disputes among the Mindanao populace, indigenous groups, and those interested in their lands. Even Duterte, whose administration was reigning the year that the OLBARMM was passed, said in 2018 that he would open hereditary areas in Mindanao to financial backers to produce abundance. He said he would pick the organizations himself (Chandran, 2018). This conflicts with the Bangsamoro Organic Law since all administration incomes from the turn of events and utilization of characteristic assets inside the BARMM should go to the Bangsamoro government (yet incomes from non-renewable energy sources and uranium will be similarly imparted to the public government). Therefore, illegal taking, exporting, also, use of regular assets are against the said law.

In the film WOTWR, the characters show utmost importance in caring for their ancestral lands and how to protect them from those who try to take them away from them, in a scene where Mustafa, head of Satra's family, showed their ancestral land to his grandson Hasim, which shows how they value their lands, especially that they are their source of income, part of their cultural traditions, and their everyday lives. Mustafa reminisced when he and his brother would play on the hill and take care of the trees near it. Their respect and value for their ancestral lands were seen throughout the movie. Whoever tries to steal them, bloodshed and violence shall occur.

Nevertheless, this land that Mustafa was repeatedly talking about in the film was beyond economic importance. Lands, for indigenous and non-indigenous people, provide food for current and people in the future; it is associated with otherworldly convictions, conventional information, and lessons; it is principal to social generation; in addition, generally held land rights build up nationhood (OECD, 2020). The survival of these ancestral lands is also the survival of the people's cultures. Verifiably, the land was plentiful in numerous hereditary zones, and land grabbers were not many. This is not, at this point valid; today, every minority bunch is compromised. Most are attempting to endure. All require outside support (Lynch, n.d.). Factors, for example, quickly extending public populace and an expanding number of government-advanced, send out situated agro-modern and income extraction plans have increased rivalry for restricted land assets (Lynch, n.d.).

The WOTWR presented a scene where a woman, loud and proud, protested for the ANGSAMORO Basic Law's passing to benefit their families. There were other campaigners and supporters as well, mostly women. As portrayed in the film WOTWR, multiple scenes were showing how women should be'. Women were seen as weak, delicate, and powerless against men. The patriarchal standards in the movie were depicted throughout the film. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why the Bangsamoro Organic Law was given a cameo in the WOTWR; to show that women can be head of the household or that they can take a chance in the different fields of academe and business industry, or to be a leader of a community.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law is not just for peace, unity, justice, and settlements but also for the betterment of women in Mindanao. The recently approved Bangsamoro Organic Law contains a few arrangements that will profit ladies and young ladies. Ladies, youth, and native networks each have saved seats in Parliament, and at any rate one lady should be selected to the Cabinet. The law guarantees an assignment of at any rate 5% of the financial plan for sexual orientation and advancement programs. The law likewise centers around tending to the ladies fighting environmental change and for ladies should be considered in restoration and improvement programs for inside dislodged individuals (United Nations Women Organization, 2019). These arrangements establish a positive climate for ladies' support and sexual orientation responsive administration. Notwithstanding, the promotion and backing from networks, NGOs, and different entertainers, and the upfront investment and backing from government authorities will be essential to ensure ladies' privileges and sex equity. Ladies' interest in the new government is basic to addressing ladies' requirements of parents in law and arrangements. This ought to be made in a comprehensive interaction with ladies, youth, and native people groups. They should likewise think about the contention, including dangers of vicious fanaticism, that has ceaselessly tested the locale (United Nations Women Organization, 2019).

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C. Rido

Torres presents various studies that revolve around violent conflicts, such as feuding, revenge killing, and blood revenge, among many others. He characterizes these as scattered outbreaks of violent retaliation between families, kinship groups, and communities. This marvel for the most part occurs in zones where government authority needs and territories where equity and security are not kept up. Torres refers to Rido as recurring aggression between families and kins distinguished by several violent acts to combat injustice. Rido is all the more usually seen as a contention in Mindanao because of the probability of rido to start in destructive manners with nonconformist issues and outfitted brutality. There have been many armed violence cases involving rebel groups and the military that were rooted in rido. The rido cases in Dapiawan (2004) and Linantangan (2005) in Maguindanao drew the Philippines' Armed Forces, Civilian Volunteer Organizations, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The Shariff Aguak case in June 2006 is a more recent example of a rido that shows the involvement of military forces and MILF. These occurrences stress the chance of limited scope fights to include outsider powers to undermine the harmony between the public authority and MILF. However, an occurrence wherein the MILF had to protect the people from an ongoing rido between families Tubaran, Lanao del Sur. Torres adds that this feat may have been misinterpreted as an offensive action without a subtle understanding of local conflict dynamics.

In Torres' introduction, he includes a survey with results showing that although the religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in Mindanao is prominent globally and in local media, kin conflicts are much more common in Muslim people's lives. They are more worried about clan conflict's regularity and its adverse effects on their community than the government's affairs and rebel groups in Mindanao. A rido meeting done in Davao was imperative since it permitted Mindanao partners to maintain the investigations' discoveries and reaffirm the desperation. The discussion spoke about the culture's role in observing rido, leaders and women mediators' responsibility, the call for media outlets to showcase these kinds of conflict, and the threat rido imposes on peacemaking. Personal experiences were also shared in this forum, one being Datu “Toto” Paglas. His family took part in a rido and shared how he lost loved ones in this conflict and managed to look past his resentment for his enemies, therefore resolving the issue. He added that “I also thought of the pain others would feel in losing their loved ones, as I and my family felt (when we lost ours). I felt the pain that the families of those we would have hit back at, their wives and children especially, would feel. I decided to accept the truth, that vengeance is God's alone, that everything should be up to His Will” (Torres, 2014)

D. Independent Filipino Films

An eminent scholar and filmmaker, Clodualdo del Mundo Jr.'s lecture on Philippine cinema started by mentioning a claim he first heard in the 60s; “Philippine Cinema is Dead.” This began when the big three of Philippine cinema: Sampaguita, LVN, and Premiere, reigned over small companies producing fewer budget films. However, with the rise of the new millennium, the term rose once more. However, when independent films came alive, they “saved” the film industry.

For the past eight years, The Philippine Inquirer has held an awards ceremony entitled “Indio Bravo!” that honours Indie filmmakers' exemplary works. The term “Indie” can be traced back to the term “Indio,” which Spanish colonizers used to address indigenous people or natives. Moreover, the term “Bravo” either means courageous or barbaric. Dr. Jose Rizal, Juan Luna, and the others refused to let this derogatory term belittle them. They instead twisted the narrative and used it to honour their excellence. The late Bayani San Diego Jr. of the Philippine Inquirer's entertainment section stated that the modern indie filmmakers share the same objective with the Los Indios Bravos of the 19th century in traveling across the country and sharing the narrative of the resilience of the Filipino people. Therefore, Indie films are rooted in subversion and resistance.

The pattern used by the big three studios can be traced back to the pattern used in Hollywood, each stuck to a niche genre. Sampaguita focused on melodrama, LVN stuck with comedy and musicals, and Premiere did mostly action. Eventually, these studios encountered various hurdles, and smaller companies established by actors like Dolphy, Fernando Poe Jr., and Amalia Fuentes came into the picture. With that, the Philippine Film Industry situation became worse with the western sexual revolution in the 60s.

However, not all the films made in the 60s are bad. In 1965, Manila started the week-long Metro Manila Film Festival that highlights the best in all Filipino theatres. Films shown here were not necessarily considered as “indie” but are out of the mainstream. They tackled issues that mainstream cinema would not dare dabble into. Expectedly, they did not do well on the first MMFF. A few indie filmmakers made documentaries using the term “underground” that are shot in 16 millimetres.

As time passed, indie filmmakers had a shorter and more straightforward filmmaking process thanks to the pioneers. There was an influx of interest in filmmaking in schools, and sponsored film festivals helped them gain recognition. Aside from the lively indie film industry, student films were also booming. In the new Millennium, digital technology came, and it made it even easier to process films using a computer and other shooting equipment. However, despite all the advances, indie filmmakers were still considered outsiders.

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Mainstream and indie differ in terms of motivation. Mainstream cinema focused on making money by producing films. In the periphery, the filmmakers aspire to create films for art and advocacy. They still desire to film for money, but not entirely. Moreover, in the indie film industry, you are free to do whatever you want. Independent producers produce another age of movie producer by permitting them to explore different avenues regarding various styles, classifications, and dialects. With the indie film's success, mainstream companies encouraged indie filmmakers to cross over and migrate to mainstream films. Unfortunately, these attempts were not successful. Nevertheless, some were able to flourish by adjusting to the taste of the mainstream. However, indie filmmakers and the indie film industry became successful as is. Various local and international film festivals provide opportunities for these films to be shown. Schools and universities also conduct film festivals wherein film students can showcase their works.

Other advancements in the film industry, in general, came to fruition as time passed by. Notably, the rise of online streaming services such as Netflix will access many movies through a subscription. This affects the Philippine cinema industry significantly, especially theatre screenings. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the film industry will suffer. If they have to provide films for these newer platforms, they are more than willing to do so. (Project Virkurso, 2020)

The year 2000 began with the dread that the Philippine film is dead. The wellspring of this tension was the decrease in yield of Filipino movies made during the early piece of the 2000s contrasted with that of the 1990s. The approach of film theft during the 2000s hurt the standard entertainment world, which still generally represented its film creation. Not very many watched Filipino movies in theatres because, particularly for the mass crowd focused by standard film, it seemed well and good to purchase a pilfered VCD or DVD at half to a fourth of the film cost ticket (Gutierrez, 2011). The Philippine cinema industry booms during holidays, especially during the Christmas period and New Year. It is that time of the year when families and friends celebrate the holidays by going to mall establishments and watching Filipino movies produced by renowned filmmakers and actors. People cannot pirate these films since they are all new, and there are no copies of them on the internet. So whenever the Christmas season is up, expect a long line of customers in almost all movie theatres nationwide.

The Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) is a yearly film celebration in Metro Manila, the Philippines. The celebration, which runs from December 25 (Christmas) through New Year's Day and into the principal few days of January in the next year, centers around Filipino movies. During the celebration, just movies affirmed by the adjudicators of the MMFF are appeared in cinemas. No foreign films are permitted in the films besides in 3D theatres and IMAX theatres (Film Development Council of the Philippines, 2018). It has been a tradition that during Christmas in the Philippines, when the MMFF is being held, a handful of family-friendly films are released in cinemas since it is believed that one of the reasons Christmas is celebrated to spend more time and reunite with families. Some of the top actors and actresses admired and most-awaited by many Filipino families during the MMFF are Jose Marie Vical (Vice Ganda), Vic Sotto, and Coco Martin. They have been sharing their remarkable talents in acting and bringing joy to the people. In the MMFF of 2016, the 42nd edition of the MMFF commenced, and a huge change came to cinema theatres worldwide.

Instead of the usual romantic-comedy, family dramas, and three-part horror mainstream films, which the MMFF usually releases on Christmas day, 2016 was the year for Philippine Indie Films. The Philippines' Film Development Council decided to replace mainstream with independent films; there were eyebrows raised and negative feedback from the audiences, actors, and filmmakers. Vic Sotto and Vice Ganda additionally offered clearing expressions in light of the fact that their movies were prohibited from the first-class list. Vic Sotto anticipated that there would be a low crowd turnout, while Vice Ganda attested that each film he made was of acceptable quality (Wang, 2017). Film Development Council of the Philippines' Liza Diño was worried about the low crowd turnout in the initial two days of the MMFF. In an interview with CNN Philippines, Diño said in vernacular, "Our audience is not yet ready for these kinds of films. At this point, we are still in the process of encouraging the public to watch them.". The terms not yet ready were proof that they were unaware of the Filipino audiences (Wang, 2017). In social media, there were some statements by netizens that attempt to focus on the importance of media platforms to expand Philippine independent films' impact on audiences. The following paragraph shall discuss the importance of media in indie films.

Through Night and Day, the romantic-comedy indie film performed ineffectively in the cinematic world when it debuted in November 2018 (Policarpio, 2020). During its underlying delivery in 2018, the film was pulled out of theatres following a few days (Lopez, 2020). Noreen Capili, the movie's script writer, tweeted why Through Night and Day was a flop in its first release, "(Because no one was watching [in the theatres]. Even if there was word of mouth [promotion] from a number of those who saw the film, and an actor-host who was not part of the movie hosted a block screening, he just really liked it. Nothing." (Lopez, 2020). Through Night And Day (2018), which stars Alessandra De Rossi (Jen) and Paolo Contis (Ben), recounts the narrative of a couple whose relationship is tried when they go out traveling to Iceland. The film has made individuals cry pails of tears since the time it dropped on Netflix (Policarpio, 2020). The top movie streaming website in the Philippines, Netflix, made the film Through Night and Day top the charts of their Top 10 most-streamed movies and tv shows in July. This only shows how different media platforms play a significant role in the broad influential impact of films. Angela Courtin, the Global Head of YouTube TV Originals Marketing, said that computerized media are likewise better for producers in the event that you need to assemble a local

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area and have a fanbase develop with you rather than "just" dispatching a film. Not all independent filmmakers are given enough budget for platforms and overall filmmaking. Some do not hit the blockbusters due to some contributing factors such as low audience reviews and lack of platforms. The lacking crowd nearby movies get is certifiably not another issue (Emocling, n.d.). While the worldwide film crowd gets Filipino motion pictures well, there has been an absence of help locally. "What is killing Philippine Cinema, then, is none other than commercialism," screenwriter Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr. writes in a paper. Once upon a time, independent performance centers would show films for a plentiful measure of time. Be that as it may, this day, the time span given to a film is estimated by its passages in the cinematic world. Films change each week, and if a film doesn't progress nicely, another productive film replaces it. Frequently, autonomous movies are a casualty of this cycle (Emocling, n.d.).

Another explanation is the pervasiveness of robbery. With the coming of innovation, robbery turned out to be more far reaching. Previously, an inferior quality pilfered DVD would cost 50 pesos. Since the emergence of technology like new gadgets and other tools or applications one can use for streaming, there is no need for a DVD player. Everything necessary is web access and a cell phone. Pilfered duplicates of truly ongoing movies are effectively open on Torrent, YouTube, and even Facebook (Emocling, n.d.). These are some of the factors as to why indie films do not gain the popularity and recognition it deserves, unlike mainstream and foreign films.

There are selected Philippine indie films on Netflix like *Heneral Luna*, *Goyo: Ang Batang Heneral*, and *Pamilya Ordinaryo*. *Heneral Luna*, directed by Jerrold Tarrog, was indeed a success. At first, it was not doing well and was about to be pulled out from the cinemas. However, after great reviews on social media, recommendations and praises on the movie spread like wildfire, thus earning its place in one of the country's most successful indie films. It made 256 million pesos and became a hit and trending topic on social media from 2015 until 2016. More people got to know about the film, which in effect led to them watching the movie and telling their peers as well to catch it in cinemas after enjoying and appreciating the film (Guison, 2015). People are still talking about the movie now on social media, like Twitter and such. They use famous lines from the movie, "Negosyo o kalayaan, Bayan o sarili," to compare the country's current happenings. This proves the considerable impact of the film *Heneral Luna* on its audiences. More than being talked about on social media, "Heneral Luna" tackled social and political issues, which made audiences realize that after watching the movie, the problems presented during the Filipino-American war still resonate even up to now (Guison, 2015). Films that focus more on societal issues, such as poverty, hunger, and countries in jeopardy, are not usually found in mainstream movies except if they use symbolism and metaphor in the film. The film *Pamilya Ordinaryo* tackles teenage parents' real-life situations, street children, and the struggles they go through every day to survive. One can anticipate critical advancements in the Philippine autonomous film in a little while. Until further notice, what Filipino crowds can clutch is the immense assortment of great Filipino free movies and the wonderful ability of Filipino autonomous producers. They will keep making films, for innovativeness isn't a result of the material conditions within reach, however is even increased due to, and regardless of, the absence of them (Sollano, 2011). The Indie film industry will continue to grow and flourish for as long as they stay true to indie filmmaking's essence.

E. Feudal Desires

Alvin Yapan's article entitled *Feudal Desires: Sexualizing Agriculture in the Philippines*, which is published in *Project Muse*, signifies how powerful and influential a medium film is when depicting social issues despite the constraints of financial problems as conservative Christian values upheld by the MTRCB. The article focuses on four different films, namely: "Kesong Puti" (cottage cheese) directed by Mauro Gia Samonte in 1997, "Talong" (eggplant) directed by Samonte, in 1999, "Kangkong" (water spinach) directed by Samonte in 2000, and "Itlog" (egg) directed by Francis Jun Posadas, in 2002. These films have titles that are suggestive and have erotic ideas behind them. Kesong puti is used synonymously to semen, talong to the penis, kangkong to the word "kangkang," which alludes to pumping scenes, and itlog used to describe a man's balls. The use of these sexualized agricultural products can be traced back to two main reasons, Filipinos' failing patronage of local films and the highly restrictive and morality-based guidelines that are strictly implemented by MTRCB.

With the rise of the Film industry, the international film industry exceptionally increases in quality compared to the local film industry. A film needs a full production from scriptwriting to directing, shooting the film, and promoting the film. This also includes the budget for the cast, the setting, and post-production. In short, much money is needed for a film to be produced. Furthermore, when a film screens, the viewers' patronage is needed to gain back the money, invest in the film's production, and earn a profit.

Nevertheless, when the Hollywood film industry rose to fame, film viewers tend to veer away from locally produced films to international films. They prefer to watch films from abroad rather than pay for local films that, in their opinion, have way worse quality. The local film industry needed something that would pull them up from bankruptcy. Furthermore, the solution they discovered was sex. Sex sells regardless of what form it is sold. Whether it be through pornographic videos, magazines, or pocketbook stories. Everyone wanted content that discusses a topic that is taboo and forbidden.

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Furthermore, when filmmakers such as Seiko Film productions thought of this idea, they immediately jumped the gun. They wanted the films they produce to have the same narratives to save them and the local film industry. Nevertheless, the Philippines being a conservative Christian country, this would not be that easy to execute. Above all sectors, the church was expected to oppose something blasphemous shown on the silver screen. This is where the MTRCB comes in.

MTRCB was always expected to be conservative and traditional. This is because the board of directors was founded in Marcos under martial law and the Presidential Decree no. 1986. Ever since it was founded, it always leaned towards traditional ideologies. It was even nicknamed the “moral guardian of the nation.” Filmmakers, directors, and writers were not a fan of this conservative culture. The main issue is freedom of speech and expression. The film is supposed to be a medium where the creative industry thrives. It is where thought and ideas are solidified and portrayed through artistic choices.

Moreover, when authorities such as the MTRCB restrict filmmakers one way or the other, the process of creation is disrupted. Furthermore, as expected, this restriction is challenged by filmmakers, but they were unsuccessful in doing so. So, they titled their films something that has a double entendre and is not necessarily perceived as sexual at first glance and portraying soft pornography instead of full-blown sex scenes to downplay it. In this case, the filmmakers still make money through sex, and they still fall within the guidelines of MTRCB regardless of how far they stretch it. Nevertheless, this is not the only reason why agricultural products, the agricultural industry, and the lower-class sector is sexualized.

Patriarchal Feudalist ideologies, where a strong, rich man or a woman with manly attributes who take control of the lower class's fate, were very influential. They manipulate the poor to work for them and provide them short term solutions to alleviate their current situations and harm their long-term situation even more. Furthermore, when they cannot fight for their interests due to sickness or old age, they look for another male figure that could inherit their riches and hopefully continue their oppressive legacy. This, in turn, causes a cycle that would continue to hurt and oppress minorities, specifically women. Nevertheless, when their Christian moralities hit them, their guilt grows, and they seek to find ways to repent their sins so that they could still be accepted in heaven. This theme is shared among the four movies analysed in the article.

Moreover, even when women are given a sliver of what looks like freedom and autonomy, it is nothing but an extension of their stereotypical lifestyle. In the film “Talong,” one of the female characters chooses to go abroad and work there instead of hoping and praying that their love interest would provide for them and their future family. At first glance, this would be seen as something brave and noteworthy since the women go beyond what they are told to do instead of conforming to their current life. Nevertheless, come to think of it, their work overseas is merely an extension of their stereotypical roles in their home. Whether it be taking care of the home through cleaning, cooking, and taking care of the children or fulfilling men's sexual fantasies, another evidence that the patriarchal ideology reigns in this film genre are the suggestive titles themselves. Note that three out of four film titles mentioned are related to phallus itself, which is not surprising since most of these films' audience are men.

Another interesting point in this argument is how erotic the rural scene is depicted. All four of the films mentioned sexualizes the ruralness of the setting. In the film “Kesong Puti,” women were shown bathing themselves with cow milk to emphasize their figure underneath their clothing. The movie “Talong” shows the lead male character bathing half-naked in the river while displaying his body to the lead female character. “Itlog” shows two of the characters having sex in the egg storage room, and the movie “Kangkong” shows them having sex in the kangkong fields. Yapan excellently portrays the situation by stating that “in these films, to be poor is to be erotic,” where it all goes back to the idea of patriarchal feudalism.

In the film industry's attempt to save their jobs, they knowingly or unknowingly preserve the patriarchal ideology because they cannot keep up with the threat of globalization. As the rest of the world improves in different fields, the Philippines' industries fail to keep up with globalization's pace; therefore, they do what the masses want regardless of the morality and social issues present. This can not only be traced to the patriarchal order but the idea of capitalism as well. Money rises above all.

F. Muslims in Independent Films

As established in the former part of the RRL, Indie films differ from mainstream films because they are more open to discussing sensitive topics considered taboo. This is because Indie filmmakers are willing to take risks for the art of filmmaking, and they are not concerned about the profit of the film they are making. With that being said, Muslims in the film industry have another struggle to add to that. Both the filmmaker and the viewer who is part of the Muslim community find it hard to see themselves represented in films or represented correctly. According to Ryah Aqel, a filmmaker and a cultural producer based in metro Detroit, in the conversations she had with black and brown youth, “many of the kids already know what a stereotype feels like—before they even know what the word representation means.” She only saw herself represented when she watched a film called *Amreeka* by Cherien Dabis. Since then, she has wanted to create films that evoke the same emotions she had when she saw herself on the film screens.

Filipino Indie filmmakers have taken the challenge of representing the Muslim community that steers away from the stereotypes. They did not focus on the aspect that was known by most non-Muslim citizens. A good example would be Muslim filmmakers Linda and Nadjou Bansil's short film called “BOHE: The Sons of The Waves.” This documentary-fiction film is the

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first-ever Badjao film and the first to be in the Sinama language. It was screened at the 2012 Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival and in the Cebu Documentary International Film Festival. This fiction-film tackled the poverty they are currently facing due to dire circumstances. It showed how Badjaos are viewed as the most reduced among the clans, so they chose to live in the southern piece of the nation to maintain a strategic distance from strife with different clans and the overall population. They found the island they called “Badjawan Island” where they found hope and peace. The story revolves around five Badjao boys, Harun, Rasul, Manel, Jamil, and Carding. After learning from the elders about how the mangroves that save them from sinking are slowly going away piece by piece due to harsh weather and other actions made by humans, they orchestrated a plan to save it. The film portrayed the Badjaos as strong, brave, independent, and smart. They were shown to love dancing and music and how they have a wide array of talents.

Another Indie film about Muslims is Ida Anita Del Mundo called “K’na The Dreamweaver,” spoken in the T’boli language based in Southern Cotabato. This film revolves around K’na, the princess of the Southern T’boli tribe. She was anointed by her grandmother named Be Lamfey as the gods’ choice to become the next Dreamweaver. A Dreamweaver is “someone whose skills in weaving could talk about the dreams of her people.” All is well in her life as she fell in love with her friend Silaw, but her father betrothed her to the son of the chief of the northern tribe to solve a long-running conflict between the two tribes. She was conflicted if she should follow her father’s orders and marry the northern prince or if she should resist and live with the love of her life. Before the wedding, K’na and Silaw wanted to be together. However, when K’na’s father and the northern chieftain found out, they took K’na and imprisoned Silaw to prevent him from stopping the ceremony. Silaw managed to escape with his friends’ help, and they tried to fight off the northern people. However, in the end, he was unsuccessful, and K’na married the northern prince. Silaw decided to take his own life.

The people were unsure how he did so, but they knew that he died full of his love for K’na. This film portrayed T’bolis as someone who was regal. They valued the art of weaving and gave high importance to the sacredness of each pattern. They valued loyalty and honor, and they pay respect to the people who are in power. It was also shown how much they value their women. In one scene where K’na was being taken care of by her servants, she was handled so delicately as if her skin would break with one wrong move like a porcelain doll. Despite this fact, they also think that women are strong and brave. Whenever the chieftain talks to K’na, he never talks lowly of her. Instead, he knew that K’na had a mind of her own and was confident that she understood the gravity of being a leader and prioritizing her people’s needs and safety. The men were also represented as humans who were rational when making decisions. During the fight between the southern and northern tribe people, when Silaw escaped, the northern tribe’s prince saw that Silaw was already beaten up, and he had no chance if he continued to fight. Moreover, instead of asking the northern people to beat Silaw even further, he called off the attack and let Silaw be.

Due to the idea of Independent movies being free in financing and creation, a couple of autonomous movies are being made, not to mention autonomous movies delivered by Muslim people group individuals or motion pictures with Muslims as the lead characters. However, with the evolution of our society and the film industry, representation is essential in accepting marginalized and minority groups. Indie filmmakers, specifically Filipino filmmakers in the Philippines, strive to use their craft and talents to amplify the Muslim community’s struggles.

G. Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity in Kutlug Ataman’s Berlin Film “Lola und Bilidikid.”

Karin Hamm-Ehsani’s article talks about the intersectionality of different National, Ethnic, and Sexual identities in film and how A Berlin Film by Kutlug Ataman entitled “Lola und Bilidikid” is an excellent example of it. Since the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there has been a great debate about how Germany’s national and cultural identity is and how the multicultural nature of the Federal Republic of Germany seems to contradict the traditional notion of German life because this community is composed mostly of foreigners, specifically Turkish nationals. Furthermore, in the mid-90s, various Turkish filmmakers aim to use film and change people who view Germans and Turks as the traditional, one-dimensional portrayal seen in earlier movies. These filmmakers focus on the diversity of the transcultural and transnational nature of said communities.

Lola und Bilidikid is a film that shows the lives of Turkish minorities after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This film was also considered part of the “new wave” era of German films because it shows Western-European viewers an inside look at the minority communities of Turks in their home, but it also shows the queer scene in Berlin. The film shows how sexuality is intertwined with politics and how other issues such as race, class status, and generation are seen as fragments in each other; how issues transcend each other. Hamm-Ehsani’s article aims to discuss the representational strategies in Ataman’s film that emphasizes the “identity negotiations” relating to marginalization, racism, xenophobia, and homophobia.

The movie narrates the story of Lola, played by Gandi Mukli, and his love interest Bili played by Erdal Yildiz, living in Berlin-Kreuzberg, which is considered the largest Turkish city outside Turkey. Their relationship was a contradiction because Bili, even though he is in a relationship with Lola, dresses feminine and has a feminine name, is considered homophobic. His dream was to become a beach cafe owner and be in a normal relationship with Lola only if Lola has a sex change first. All would be well if only they have enough money to survive daily. Bili’s job is a “rent boy” or a male prostitute who gives oral sex to men

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who attend the gay bar where Lola performs with his two other queer friends as a drag trio named “Die Gastarbeiterinnen.” Another character’s story parallels the events happening in Lola’s life. Murat, who was discovered to be Lola’s younger brother, was also going through a coming-out narrative. It was revealed that when Lola came out to his parents, he was disowned, and Murat was born to “replace” him. Murat was terrified when he learned this because he started to discover his sexuality by going to gay bars and engaging with the queer community. What made matters worse was when he learned that their oldest brother Osman continuously raped Lola before he was outed.

When Osman discovered that Murat was queer himself, he insisted on making a man out of him and forcing him to have sex with female prostitutes. When Lola’s dead body was found floating in the river, people quickly assumed that the thugs who constantly degraded and harassed Lola and Bili were the ones who killed him. Murat orchestrated a revenge plan where he dressed like Lola to lure the thugs so Bili can kill them. As Bili ruthlessly kills them, one of them manages to escape and helps Murat realize that the thugs did not kill Lola. He was killed by Osman when he rode his taxi while he was running away from the thugs. Murat goes home and confronts his brother. When their mother knew what happened, she also rebelled against Osman.

Throughout the film, Ataman made it a point to showcase how Lola’s story is affected by their settings as Turkish minorities living in Berlin. This can be seen through various symbolisms, both spoken and not. Lola’s drag trio mindlessly makes political and controversial jokes, mostly since they are not accepted in Berlin as minorities and as queer people. Their low-paying jobs where they are almost unable to live daily were also traced to the fact that they are not purely German. Even though the Berlin wall has collapsed, and the government leaders have agreed that everyone should be on good terms with one another, people, specifically Germans, were not necessarily willing to make room for other nationalities to reside in Germany.

The film portrays an intersection of issues of nationality, ethnicity, and sexuality. Issues of nationality and ethnicity were portrayed through showing their struggles with discrimination, stereotypes, racism, and xenophobia, all because they are immigrants in Germany. Issues of sexuality were portrayed through queer struggles, homophobia (both internal and external), the complexity of coming out, and hate crimes against queer people. All of the mentioned issues were experienced by Lola, where it is shown that issues transcend each other.

H. Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation

Wang’s paper was focused on comparing and expressing ethnic boundaries in three Chinese minority writers who are also filmmakers and writers. Ethnic boundary, as defined by Fredrik Barth, can be classified into two: geographical and social boundary. The latter is described to be more intricate rather than the former. Generally considered, the ethnic boundary is related to a specific ancestral home, but an ethnic group does not have to occupy an exclusive territory; besides, increasing a population is not always the only way to maintain an ethnic boundary and gain acceptance. What matters more is the continuous literary representation and its verification checked by experience. Literary expressions affect people’s perception and understanding of ethnic boundaries (Wang, 2019). The emphasis on how ethnic boundaries do not only focus on increasing populace or specific territories allows the researchers to have a more insightful understanding of the said topic. It also cleared misconceptions such as the difference between ethnic groups and ethnic boundaries.

Wang also provided an in-depth analysis and explanation of how today’s ethnic groups cope with the changing times while living within socio-linguistic and geographical boundaries. A series of works, written by Kazakh female writer Yerkex Hurmanbek, are statements of the unification of ethnic boundary and sociolinguistic boundary (Wang, 2019). There are certain lines from her piece *Prairie Oumay* where she narrates her childhood experiences and tells the readers about the unique traditions and cultures. There were cultural perspectives in her works, as well as her beliefs toward things and traditions. For example, the lyric writing of the Kazakh love, parting, birth, and death reflects the most authentic perception in her heart (Wang, 2019). The experiential knowledge and self-awareness of a writer could help him/her further realize the importance of actual knowledge or experiences versus interpretations. Another writer, Yerkex, presents a non-discriminatory, full-minded cognition of Kazakh culture. The life scenes she wrote do not reflect the division between any ethnic, geographical boundaries and linguistic–social boundaries (Wang, 2019). Although there were individual interpretations of some of her childhood experiences, the clear distinction between interpretations and obfuscation of meanings is present. Yerkex’s *An Eternal Lamb* is one of her masterpieces that could obtain geographical and socio-linguistic boundaries. This is because of the combined experiences, cultural contexts, historical figures, and the compelling nexus between Yerkex’s past and mythological figures.

In addition to this, reflected in *An Eternal Lamb*’s lyrical style, everything happened in the natural background and influenced it. People’s lives and behaviors are governed and adjusted by natural rhythms. Therefore, the whole film is composed of daily life in the natural context. Daily life’s primary conflicts are not mainly from relations between people but changes in nature, seasons, and climates. For example, in the film based on the novel, snow disasters bring hazards to lambs (Wang, 2019). It focused mainly on the people’s daily way of living, and how it is influenced by nature, there was no alteration of cultural activities or traditions and rituals. However, Wang (2019) stated that complications might arise from geographical boundaries and linguistic-social boundaries. One of the mentioned issues is how locals or natives may experience psychological dilemmas such as

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self-cognitive crises brought about by external cultures. The reality and contradictions they confront are not easy, considering that the absolute difference between local and eternal cultures is evident (Wang, 2019). Exposure to external cultures may bring cultural shock, which may affect people’s perspectives and beliefs. Tibetan writer and director Pema Tsenden wrote in his novel *Teeth of Wu Jin*, which took place in his homeland, Tibet. It discussed both Buddhism and science in the novel while also valuing cultural values. Tsenden described his confusion on Buddha himself due to rational/logical explanations provided by the writer. The values, habits, and customs included by religious belief had been internalized into an unquestionable, a priori, and rational cultural existence within the ethnic culture (Wang, 2019). Religion and Science do not precisely meet most of the time, and Tsenden questioned some religious practices and rituals through scientific logic.

As Barth emphasized, ethnic group differentiation is a simple division of ethnic, geographical boundaries and how members of the ethnic group interact with other ethnic groups and members based on their established social order, cultural symbols, and meaning systems. In the various ways of maintaining their ethnic identities, they need constant self-expression and empirical verifications and conduct new cognitive construction in interactions that accept cultural differences (Wang, 2019). Wang also emphasized the importance of symbolism and how it will affect a person’s work on a bigger scale, like using a particular symbol that one imitated from, say, other cultures, disrespectful and offensive. The concept of ethnic boundaries is continuously changing, thus challenging ethnic, cultural cognition (Wang, 2019). With this in mind, it is essential to have a great sense of awareness and practice maintaining boundaries that could affect people one is working with to avoid misrepresentations and prejudicial perceptions towards a cultural group. The sample works mentioned above are excellent and perceptive accounts telling its readers what elements and influences should be considered when doing literary works involving people of different ethnic groups and cultures.

I. Race, Environment, and Representation

In Hsu and Feldman’s paper, they state that the growing distinction of ecological disaster does not coax a redirect from the colour line and the problems it follows. The dispersal of environmental responsibility and dangers displays the repercussions of racialization and colonialism. These cannot be observed or resolved without acknowledging the issues of racial inequality and geographically unbalanced development. The consideration of race, class, and gender influences the dissemination of private property and access to preserved natural spaces, the participation in political decision-making that involve the environment, and vulnerability towards environmental risks. Documentations on political, aesthetic, and literary discussions have attempted to raise awareness of racial differences and amend laws and stereotypes. As the coexisting of nature and society continues, the concept of representation in the environment must be rethought; nature cannot be represented as a detached entity and absolute on its own. Instead, it must be viewed concerning society. As ecological critics expressed their concern on how society perceives natural landscapes, this concern is being shifted in the often-overlooked changes. Indistinguishable risk factors, rising ecological danger, government responses are just a few issues that are being overlooked.

Moreover, the paper questions what proper mediums would encourage to depict natural settings and change how one perceives the concept of nature. The paper refers to the Hudson River school painters’ works, Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Church, and Asher Durand, wherein their creations featured direct visual representations of the environment. These artists usually did their paintings outdoors, and their works were realistic portraits of natural landscapes uninterrupted by humans. Although these works did not showcase any symbolic elements, the school presented the landscapes as an explicit scene open to interpretation. Only through the presumption that the absolute presence of undisturbed nature can the artists portray the false notion that environment produces character.

In contrast to the Hudson River school painters’ works, Basia Irland’s artwork entitled “Giardia Lamblia” (2001) exhibits images that look like landscapes and portrays elements that are difficult to notice. The artwork seems to be an aerial view of a field, but a skin sample infected with Giardia Lamblia. The work coaxes viewers to perceive it as a landscape even if it is not. While an aerial view of a field is disembodied, the infection Giardia is physical and tangible. The portrait of this infection refers to a disease that occurs within the body; thus, it is a disease that destroys the boundary between the body and environment. This approach invites new perspectives on the environment, not as an image of leisure, but as an art-filled with unseeable and unknown danger.

Presenting a similar case, Mitchum Huehls coerces environmental discussions that insist on metaphors on nature and culture while ignoring the invisible dangers in this world. Huehls examines catachresis, the misuse of language in Helena Viramonte’s “Under the Feet of Jesus” (1996). Huehls presents how the story uses catachresis to respond to the unseeable dangers that toxic waste provides to; both Chicano migrant farmers’ lives. Feldman and Hsu emphasize the need for conversations about global environmental threats and their inequalities against minority groups (Feldman & Hsu, 2007).

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III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This research's main goal was to understand how independent film can become a powerful tool in representing minorities, specifically Muslims. This topic was chosen because it was researched, and the group wanted to add to the foundation of Filipino film studies. The group collected qualitative data to Successfully answer the research question since it is the standard data in film analysis (Flick, 2014, pp. 409–422). The data contained in the paper is primary, so ethical considerations must be taken into account, such as the personal biases of the researchers. There were no interventions to the observations gathered throughout the study.

To answer the question, the researchers choose to close read the film WOTWR directed by Sheron Dayoc. The film was divided into four parts and distributed among the members while each scene's length is five minutes. In close reading, the group decided to focus on film elements presented by Film theory; type of film, shots, angles, lighting, colour, sound, editing, mise-en-scene (Nashville Film Institute, 2020). Afterward, the thematic analysis was conducted through the lens of three frameworks that focus on minority representation; Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity, Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation and Race, Environment, and Representation.

A. Sampling content

The researchers choose WOTWR because it was an acclaimed independent Filipino film that discussed a taboo topic of blood feud in a minority group, Muslims.

C. Synopsis of WOTWR

The movie WOTWR, written and directed by Sheron Dayoc (2016), stars non-actors Laila Ulao as Satra, Taha Daranda as her father-in-law named Mustafa, and Sharifa Pearlsia Ali-Dans as Farida, the peacemaker.

The story begins when Mustafa sits with Farida discussing the blood feud or “rido” between his family and another that has been going on for generations and was intensified by Satra's husband's death. Despite numerous attempts of Farida to convince Mustafa and his family to end the feud and reconcile, the anger and vengeance rush through Mustafa's family's bloodstream, and they refuse to compromise; the same goes for the other family. However, Farida was battling issues on her own regarding her declining health and her desire for peace.

As time passed by, the feud intensified, and the men shed blood. However, when Satra's only child Hassim was killed, she decided that the feud must end. She proposed to leave the land and start anew, but her family refused because of pride. She considered reconciling with the other family, and she knew that the women of both families are the only ones who can end it because the men are clouded with anger. They will not be able to make rational decisions. At the end of the movie, Satra meets up with the other clan's matriarch to make amends.

D. Instrumentation

The film was close read using film theory; type of film, shots, angles, lighting, colour, sound, editing, mise-en-scene (Nashville Film Institute, 2020). The type of film is limited to realism, classical, and formalism. A shot is analysed by its ability to convey messages and modes. Simultaneously, angles focus on how the camera was aimed during the scene and what emotions they incite from the audience. In comparison, the mood a movie omits is often due to its lighting. This is closely related to colour, which adds to the film's general feeling; saturated colours paint a picture of fantasies while desaturated colours give off a more melancholic vibe. Sound is also essential and when close reading. Films have two types of sound; both need to be observed; diegetic sounds the characters can hear, and non-diegetic, sounds outside the narrative. Editing is observed when regards to the flow of the story. In contrast, mise-en-scene refers to how things are arranged in a frame and how they add to the film's meaning (Hellerman, 2019; Nashville Film Institute, 2020; Monaco, 2009, pp. 74–124; 172-214).

E. Data Gathering Procedure

The film was divided into four parts, with each part assigned to a different group member. The members then close read the film in five-minute intervals, noting their observations and ideas regarding the instrumentation. After the members finished close reading, they held a group discussion about the observations to ensure that everything was covered. Throughout this process, they were mindful of researching the possible symbolisms of various objects within the film, such as animals and cinematics techniques.

F. Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis strategy used was thematic analysis since the researchers focused on three frameworks when reviewing the observations. The three frameworks chosen were “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity,” “Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation.” and “Race, Environment, and Representation.” They were chosen because they tackled a diverse range of issues that all tied back to minority representation. To sort the data, the members coded the observations then linked them to each framework. They then answered the research questions using the analysis.

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IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Background of The Film Production

Before the film begins, an opening sequence showcasing the production teams, funding institutions, and other film-related organizations was shown to give gratitude to the people behind the film’s production. Film festivals where the film was shown were also showcased in the beginning.

TBA Studios was the primary producer of the film. It is led by Fernando Ortigas and Eduardo Rocha, who fills in as its leader maker, Vincent Nebrida. As indicated by their site, they are “committed to producing high-calibre entertaining Filipino films that push and break boundaries in the service of the new generation of audiences.” They also state that they aim to grow the Philippine film industry by gearing towards braver storytelling. They want to touch and inspire people’s lives through film. Other films produced by TBA Studios are “Heneral Luna” and “BirdShot.” The acronym “TBA” comes from the three sub-production companies: Tuko Film Productions, Buchi Boy Films, and Artikulo Uno films. Fernando Ortigas founded tuko Film Productions in 2013 to help him start his film production career. They produced films such as “K’na The Dreamweaver” and “Bonifacio: Ang Unang Pangulo.” Eduardo Rocha heads Buchi Boy Films, and they also made “Sunday Beauty Queen” and “I’m Drunk, I Love You.” Another film production company was Sheron Dayoc’s own company called Southern Lantern Studios. It was described as “a creative think tank and production company for multimedia short and long film and video content for various platforms.” Haut Le Mains Productions was also mentioned as part of the team behind the film. It is a French production company created by Karim Aitouna and Thomas Micoulet in 2009. They help produce both documentaries and fictional films for both the small and big screen, and they have a particular interest in projects that have “international potential.”

Funding institutions can also be credited in the creation of the film. Sundance Institute helped in the promotion and networking that occurs behind the scenes. They are a non-profit organization that allows independent filmmakers to produce their work. According to their website, they are “dedicated to the discovery and development of independent artists and audiences,” and their goals are to “delight and entertain, push creative boundaries, spark new levels of empathy and understanding, and even lead to social change.” Another funding institution is the Asian Cinema Fund, wherein they help independent filmmakers and film producers to have a stable production environment. They help with script development, post-production, and producing documentaries. The Hubert Bals Fund also helped fund the film. It is dedicated to supporting filmmakers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and some parts of Eastern Europe. They have a distinguished taste for “filmmakers with a forward-looking artistic vision.” The next institution mentioned is the Sørfond or Norwegian South Film Fund that helps struggling filmmakers in countries where political and economic problems limit filmmaking. They aim to help reinforce film as a “cultural expression, promote diversity and artistic integrity, and strengthen freedom of speech in such countries.”

Other organizations and institutions have also helped the film in forms other than funding. The Asian Project Market helped network with other international film professionals, global investors, producers, and distributors. The company Ties That Bind helped through training programs, including script development, marketing distribution, and other production aspects. It is under the EAVE or the European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs who offers professional training and project development for producers and was founded in 1988. The Quezon City Film Development Commission was also involved in the film. It is the local film commission of Quezon City, and it was created in 2006. According to their website, they help filmmakers “practice their craft and deliver to the people world-class masterpieces as they portray the Filipinos' way of life, aspirations, history, and culture.”

Various awards were also given to the film and the team behind it. They received recognition from the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, the region’s highest accolade in film. It was established in 2007, and it honours filmmaking that reflects the cultural origins and diversity of the Asia Pacific. Young Critics Award awarded to Laila Ulao, who played Satra the best actress award. The film was also granted the best film and best editing award. The Qcinema International Film Festival presented Laila Ulao the same award, Taha Daranda, who played Mustafa, the best-supporting actor award, and the film the best film award. Gawad Urian also recognized the film with the honours of best film, best director for Sheron Dayoc, best screenplay, best cinematography, best editing, and best supporting actress for Sharifa Pearlsia Ali-Dans, who played Farida. The War on Screen International Film Festival focuses on films highlighting the conflict in cinema and animated images. They awarded Sheron Dayoc the best director award. Lastly, the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival awarded WOTWR the best film award.

B. Close Read and Analysis of The Film

1:10-1:31

The film shows a dead grasshopper flapping its wings. It appears to be dead or is nearing its death since grasshoppers are usually active when they are alive. It is surrounded by ants who seem to be taking advantage of the grasshopper to which they will consume for later. A wrinkly thumb appears on the screen as it gently crushes the ant. The thumb belongs to the old lady, Aunt Farida, sitting on a chair beside the table where the grasshopper is. In the movie, Aunt Farida is the mediator of the two families involved in the rido. Rido and other forms of feuds often have mediators that stand in between the families to help them resolve the issue and avoid further damage such as deaths from both sides. When appointed, they are obligated to remain objective in

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order to avoid complications concerning bias. These appointed mediators are more often than not, women. Hanna Tetteh, former foreign minister of Ghana, emphasized the importance of having women as the mediators. In Muslim culture, men are the ones more associated in feuds of any kind. According to Samira Gutoc, there is a code of honor in ridos that state that women as well as children and the elderly are seen as weak and defenseless therefore, they are not often involved as targets but are collateral damage. Therefore, women put their foot down and demand their involvement in conflict or in the solution of it by serving as mediators. Despite the traditional conception that women are ranked lower than men in the eyes of Allah, they are in fact considered as equal to men in the Qur’An and it is the government of the Muslim countries or nations that are pushing the propaganda against gender equality (Padilla, 2016).

The grasshopper and Farida seem to have one thing in common; they are both waiting for their death. The grasshopper is waiting for its death since its body is practically lifeless aside from its wings, which are flapping. It does not show any signs of struggle, nor is it fighting for its life. The moment that the grasshopper egg was hatched, it only had to wait for approximately a year before its death (Vedantu, n.d.). Therefore, death was inevitable for it and it did not bother to fight for another year or so. This serves as a symbolism to Aunt Farida’s waiting for death. She also appears to be waiting for her death since she is now old, which means she is nearing death. The concept of death in Islam is not normally perceived as something that is sad or unfortunate. As stated by Abduljalil Sajid, from the moment Muslims have gotten their consciousness, they are aware that it’s only a matter of time before they die. They believe that when their soul inhabits their earthly body, their lives are spent preparing for the moment that their soul returns to Allah. Death is viewed as a mere stage in human existence (Sajid, 2009).

1:32-1:57

Satra, the protagonist of the movie and the matriarch of one of the feuding families is shown standing on a hill. Everything else around her is moving. The sky, the grass, even her clothes are moving. Like Farida and the grasshopper, she seems to be waiting for her death as well. Since Satra is a widow, and her husband died in their rido against the Ismaels, there is an air of grief and sadness. In Muslim culture, the concept of Iddah or the time a widow is given to mourn as well as remove herself from any social situation aside from those that are required of her (for example working to provide for her family) for a third of a year as opposed to three days for everyone else (Marie Curie Organization, 2020). The death of her husband Hasmullah was recent, and she is grieving her loss even though everything around her has moved on.

Aunt Farida and Satra have one striking similarity that they aren’t aware of that they share. Satra is nowhere near peace due to the recent death of her husband as well as the constant feuds between the two families. Farida has not achieved peace either despite being the mediator or the peacemaker. Because of the responsibility bestowed upon her, she is consumed by the problems she is trying to solve. The irony lies in her being a peacemaker without achieving peace herself. Which makes her doubt if she deserves the job given to her which adds to the pressure and stress. Lives of human beings are dependent on her and it is wearing her out. The only way that she can achieve true peace is through death. Therefore, death is not something she fears but rather anticipates.

1:58-2:43

Satra and her mom were shown carrying Hasmulla’s corpse through a muddy forest under the rain despite having to deal with grief. This scene depicts the situation of women from both the feuding families. Since the men always end up killing each other, the women are almost forced to work instead of adhering to the common notion of women staying at home and taking care of the family. It could also mean that both the families think that men and women are equally useful; therefore, the women are carrying the body. Since women are prohibited to be the target according to the code of honor of rido, they are the ones who usually work for their families.

4:12-8:21

Farida visits Satra’s family and convinces them to handle matters in a more peaceful way where blood won’t be shed. Ultimately, Mustafa (Satra’s father) listed numerous reasons why he would not agree even if blood money is offered. The rido is generational, which means that it has been going on for way too long and they find it hard to just give up everything they have fought for especially because of the numerous deaths in their family. Second, the root cause of the rido is them fighting for the land which they claim the Ismaels stole. If they would be able to give them blood money, it would be coming from the very land they are seeking to get back. And even if they consider taking the offer, it would be too soon since Satra is still grieving her husband’s death.

The umbrella problem as to why Satra’s family refuses to give up in the rido is poverty. According to Jodesz Gavilan from Rappler Philippines, Mindanao continues to be in the state of poverty for years. The Philippine Statistics Authority states that four out of five of the poorest regions in the country are in Mindanao. In the same Rappler article Gavilan states that this issue occurs because of the constant conflict surrounding the area either within the residents themselves or against the national forces. The conflicts continuously ruin farms, fisheries, and other sources of income which eliminates the consistent flow of income.

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9:29-11:05

Junail and Khalil went to a field but was immediately driven off when men from the Ismaels came. In dinner, Mustafa was furious on how the men were reckless and they could've died just by being in the part of the land that the Ismaels claimed. To which his children, including Satra disagreed, and they claimed that they should be fighting for their rights to the land. Mustafa's children, especially Satra, were met with disagreement. Mustafa insists that they should be careful and that they, especially Satra being a woman should know their place.

In this scene, Satra is shown acting as the mediator between her family when she strives to find the middle ground between her father and her brothers. It may not come off as peaceful as Farida's mediation, but it still has the same effect. She has suffered and was hurt just as much as everyone else in her family, but she chooses to speak and initiate conversations. From the framework written by Hamm-Ehsani entitled “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity.” Various roles and responsibilities, whether inherent or chosen, makes Satra's character so complex, which is emphasized in this scene. She is a Muslim woman, often regarded as weaker and inferior to men even though she believes she has equal abilities than the men in her family. This was shown when she mentioned that she is more than willing to fight the Ismaels just as much as her father does but she was immediately shut off by Mustafa and stated that she should “know her place” which was within the premises of their home, taking care of the family. She is a widow and a mother who lost her husband in a rido. The responsibility of raising a child and providing for her family was dropped on her shoulder without warning. She is now forced to get over a traumatic experience to carry on with life.

12:27-16:34

Farida's home is shown through bits and pieces. She narrates how she plans to renovate and fix the house. This signifies that she is rich and that she lives in a house which has a stronger foundation compared to Satra's kubo. She also has two house helps which again signifies her wealth. She does not have to worry about what she will eat the next day unlike Satra and her family. But she is just as unhappy as Satra.

Nusra and one other house help is shown in the kitchen. Nusra is fixing up the dishes while the other is seen on the table crying. Farida looks for one of her cats and sees the house help. She says that she should take control of her actions. In which she replied that she is taking control of her actions. This remark made by her is ironic since she herself cannot claim the peace she so badly wanted because of the expectations and responsibilities yet she advises her house help to take control of her actions. She seems conflicted on doing her job or prioritizing her happiness and peace.

16:33-19:51

She is shown lying down on her rocking chair while music from the record player is playing. She is slowly falling asleep as she fights back her sleepiness but eventually sleeps. Farida dreams of her in her younger years and a man. The man she was talking to appears to be her lover who has died. She talks about his death and that she wants him to be alive again. A woman is shown dragging a corpse of a man out of the river. Farida wakes up to the sound of a boy in the corner of her living room crying. The boy is named Rashid, and when Farida asks why he is crying, he says that he and Farida fought. The Farida in his story was mad when he confessed, he liked her because their families are feuding. Throughout the conversation, many parallels appear in both Faridas in the story, which makes it seem that Rashid was the man in Farida's dream, and she is imagining or hallucinating.

In Muslim culture, dreams are given more regard than in other cultures. There are three types of dreams. The good dreams which are believed to be from Allah, the bad dreams which are from Shaytan (the Islam version of Satan), and the random dreams which come from our daily lives. The first two dreams are not taken lightly and are considered as a message from either Allah or Shaytan. These dreams can serve as premonitions for what is bound to happen. In Farida's dream, it is what bothers her the most. She was already involved in a rido in her youth, and she is now mediating one. She feels guilty that she was not able to stop bloodshed from happening then and now she fears that she would not be able to stop it again. Her mind is occupied with her duty as the mediator that her peace is completely taken away from her.

23:03-23:36

While she and Hassim gather the copra in the baskets, the men inside the Kubo talked about how they should defend their land through Jihad (a word Muslims use to describe the struggle according to BBC). This shows Muslims' protective nature because everything they own has been threatened to be taken away from them at one point or another.

Since time immemorial, Muslims have been very protective of their land and their resources. This scene amplifies the intensity between the rido of the families involved in the movie. The men are more than willing to shed blood to protect their families' interests. Satra was never for bloodshed, but she is not also backing down from the fight. She shares this disposition with many other characters in the film which signifies that the war is far from being over.

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26:15-27:02

A woman was protesting and pleading for the government to approve the BANGSAMORO Basic Law. The woman speaking emphasized the importance of the said law and how it will affect them and their children. Many people attended the protest. Satra was seen in the protest, looking curious. She was somewhat aware of the happenings in her community but not knowledgeable enough about it.

27:02-27:59

Satra was walking with her son, Hasim, and Hasim's grandmother, in their community's busy market. As they passed by a store, a military vehicle and a few soldiers were hanging around the area. This reminded the researchers of the ongoing militarization of Mindanao in the Philippines. There were protests about the Mindanao militarization in real life, fighting for the indigenous people's rights on their land properties. Some protesters say Mindanao's extended militarization is intended to force indigenous people off their land to be handed over to mining, energy, and logging companies and take advantage of the land.

28:00-29:19

Satra and her mother were doubtful of the measuring scale due to their fear of inaccuracy and unjust payment. When the bargaining price was revealed, they found it too small and tried to bargain higher, but the merchant boy insisted that it is the last price already. This shows the audience how the devastating impact of exploitation of resources in Mindanao--shortage of natural resources, unemployment especially for farmers as shown in the movie. Satra was indeed able to produce and sell her family's crops, but the selling value wasn't enough to sustain his family's basic needs such as proper education for Hasim.

29:20-30:35

As Satra struggles to look for cheap condiments for her family, the researchers figured this scene has a connection as to how most families in the Philippines do not have to struggle to budget for their household needs if only the State upheld the right of all workers to a family living wage. (IBON Media and Communications, 2020).

While Satra was looking for cooking oil, her son, Hasim, was curiously looking at a coloring book about transportation. The desire in his eyes to buy the book was evident. He also took a look at students passing by, which indicated that Hasim wanted to go to school. Satra noticed Hasim looking at the students and the book. This was depicting Hasim's desire to go to school and study. However, his mother Satra pities her son because they do not have the means to send Hasim to school. Many children are still illiterate in remote areas in the country and are wishing to finish their studies. The depiction of this scene portrays the issue of many poor families in the country that lack access to education.

30:36-31:41

The tension rose as Satra tried to follow her while she kept looking back and forth to see if Satra was still following him. The woman was nervous, trying to escape from Satra's sight. Perhaps this scene was trying to tell us that the characters, looking back and forth, do the same in their lives. They keep on looking back and forth to their past, finding it hard to move on from it.

31:42-32:05

The scene shifted on to a hill where armed soldiers were seen walking on it. They looked from left to right, indicating that they were searching for something guarding the area if something dangerous breaks out. As mentioned earlier in the paper, this could be because of the ongoing militarization in Mindanao. Another reason might be that communist rebels may threaten to attack the people and take some of the land. The fortress of the New People's Army in Western Mindanao is currently a national issue that the people and the country are debating about.

32:06-33:16

Hasim's love for his mother was shown throughout the movie, but this was an essential highlight to it as it shows that he is willing to give his hiding spot instead. Mustafa's fondness and affection was clearly presented as he declared that he would protect Hasim no matter what. If anyone harms Hasim, Mustafa will be ready to kill the perpetrator himself.

33:17-34:36

Satra was considering taking Hasim away from their place/community. She thinks it is dangerous, but her brother, Hasim's uncle, rejected the idea. He believes that they will not be able to ensure Hasim's safety if they go away. Satra's concern in giving Hasim a safer, peaceful environment to live in shows that their community is indeed prone to disputes and wars between groups or families. Mustafa made himself clear that no one can harm their family, especially Hasim. He is very protective, and he embodied the strong father figure in a household who wants to protect his family at all costs. Also, the traditional Muslim families usually include parents, children, grandparents, and elderly relatives. Most Muslims believe that extended families mean more excellent stability, continuity, love, and support for each other. This may explain why Mustafa is very fond of his family, considering that they have been through together so much and the loss of Satra's husband brought so much pain to the family.

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34:36-35:52

Satra’s brother, Junail, mentioned Hasmullah’s kin joining them for the funeral (Hasmullah is her late husband). Nevertheless, Satra insisted that Hasmullah’s kin is not a part of their feud with the Ismaels. She also felt pity and mercy for them because the Hasmullahs are poor and that their family is left with women. Satra probably thinks that fighting against a family full of women should not be done at all. Women are highly valued in the Islamic culture; they should be protected from harm in order to live peacefully. They should not be in war or any situation that could put them to danger. Muslim women are often portrayed as inferior beings, desperately in need of liberation from the Islamic patriarchal culture that prevents their progress. This was depicted in the scene when Satra told Junail not to get the Hasmullah’s kins (women) to be involved because they are women. With Yihan Wang’s Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image representation as the basis, it was portrayed in the movie that Muslims living in Mindanao were seen to be living in a patriarchal society. In the present, patriarchy is still evident among Muslim families, not just in the Philippines but worldwide. The WOTWR was able to show the depiction of this said issue by providing a plot that revolves around men from different families avenging their pain from the past. Women were often seen to be submissive and followers of what the head of the family says, usually males because of Islam’s culture of viewing women as highly valued and must be protected. The film carefully observed precautions on alterations in Muslim families’ cultures and traditions since no prejudicial attitudes were portrayed in WOTWR, instead current events and issues regarding the happenings in the Muslim community in Mindanao were presented. . Although the plot is lifelike, there is this clear distinction between reality and perceptions in the WOTWR.

35:52-36:16

Mustafa was leading a prayer to Allah for the eternal repose of Hasmullah’s soul, and the prayer was about forgiveness among his Muslim brothers and sisters. In the Islamic doctrines, in order to be forgiven, one must sincerely repent. Tawbah (Arabic for ‘repentance’) is an Arabic Quranic term which means “a retreat” or “a return”. Repentance is of immense importance in the religion of Islam. For a faithful Muslim, it is a major gateway to rectifying one’s life and amending one’s own wrong acts. According to Islamic Shariah, when an act of repentance is performed by a Muslim, Allah generally accepts it as long as it is sincere and true. On the other hand, if a person is not ashamed of his past misdeeds, or does not intend to forsake these misdeeds, then his verbal announcement of repentance is an open mockery of repentance. Mere verbal repentance does not account for a true repentance. (Al-Halawani, 2018)

36:17-37:11

Satra was seen not joining the prayer led by Mustafa. Instead, she was quietly observing her family do their prayers. Nevertheless, after a few seconds, there were tears in her eyes, still grieving for the loss of her beloved. This scene does not fully reflect the division between any ethnic boundaries and socio-cultural boundaries, based on the study of Wang (2019). Since there is no direct definition of ethnic boundaries given in Wang’s paper, the researchers took a definition from Sanders (2002) who defined it as social mediums through which association transpires rather than as territorial demarcation. It has been a practice for Muslims in mosques to segregate women and men when praying. Although there are Muslims against this custom of their religion, this scene of Satra apart from her family only showed the religious practice itself. There was acknowledgement of the tradition. WOTWR did not touch the lying issue behind this. However, when trying to view it in a bigger perspective as to how gender segregation affects Islamic society, take the protests about the said topic as an example.

In 2010, a group of Muslim women in Washington, D.C. sought to protest what they considered to be an injustice — being confined to a separate prayer space from their male counterparts. The issue of gender segregation is one that many Muslims are talking about (The National Public Radio Organization, 2010). Gender segregation has reached the level of a “kind of phobia,” Adel Al-Kalbani, a former imam of Mecca’s grand mosque and a well-known Quran reciter, said on a state-sponsored television channel last 2019, arguing that in the era of the Prophet Mohammad, men and women prayed together. “Now unfortunately we’ve become paranoid to the level that in a mosque, a place of worship, it’s as if women are in a fortress,” he said. “They’re completely isolated from the men, not seeing or hearing them except through microphones or speakers.”. Even with the changes sweeping the kingdom, many support gender segregations, viewing it as a religious mandate. Separation still exists in many public and private places, including mosques, where women pray in different rooms or behind thick wooden barriers. “This is a kind of phobia of women, fear of them, doubt in them,” Al-Kalbani said. “God willing, this phobia will disappear after the decisions that did justice by women,” he said. (Nereim, 2019)

37:12-38:54

“Khalil killed Azzaril’s son!” Khalil, the younger brother of Junail and Satra, finally took revenge on one of the Ismaels. In the Islamic doctrine, Torah or Old Testament’s eye for an eye principle must be used for both capital and corporal punishment for many crimes. However, what is often overlooked is that the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad call for forgiveness instead of retaliation. Islam and its legal principles support forgiveness and peaceful arrangements between all parties. The second of three categories of crime in Islamic law is “Qisas”. Islamically “qisas” means the law of retaliation,

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however it is derived from the root *qess* meaning to track down the effect or trace of something, it may also be defined as tracking the footsteps of an enemy. “*Qisas*” is specifically for murder or serious assault. Whenever a person causes physical harm or death to another, the injured or a representative of the deceased has the right to retaliation. In crimes covered under the laws of “*Qisas*” the victim or his representative have three options, to insist upon the punishment, accept monetary recompense, or forgive the offender. Forgiveness is even able to avert the death penalty. The Quran urges forgiveness and mercy even in the direst of circumstances (Stacey, 2014).

38:55-40:03

It can be seen on Hasim’s face the fear and uneasiness. He told Satra that he is afraid of his uncle Junail and asked her why they must kill. Satra insisted that they needed to do such things in order to protect themselves. Hasim asked one question that Satra cannot directly answer: Does Allah want us to kill? The innocence and purity of the child are presented in this scene.

40:10-41:57

Farida struggled to listen to the radio, indicating that their community is not that advanced regarding technology. Then, Farida’s food that she was trying to cook burned up, and the fire was too intense. The helper immediately turned off the stove. In connection to the previous paragraph, the next scene was connected to the previous scene because just outside Satra’s home, a fire broke out in one of their Nipa huts. The transition from a fire at home to a fire at a particular part of the land may symbolize fire in the homeland. Fire symbolizes many things, including passion, desire, rebirth, resurrection, eternity, destruction, hope, hell, purification, and even our ancestors’ writings about the fire. They have written about its ability to give, nourish and protect, and harm and even kill. There were legends and myths that our Filipino ancestors shared with us. One that is very close to the scene’s depiction is that fire, although it provides life, can also destroy. Once a fire is not contained, it spreads like wildfire, and if it does, it can harm those affected by it. Just like the violence and feud going on between Mustafa’s family, the Ismaels, and other enemies, once bloodshed and rampage continue to rise, many will suffer, including the children of these families.

41:59-42:25

Mustafa was teaching his sons how to fire a gun. Junail, at his first try, aimed correctly. Junail’s younger brother, Khalil, also tried firing. However, he did not shoot the aim. Junail told him that he should learn how to do so or not last in battle. This indicates that there could be battles or unexpected fights between groups or families that may occur anytime, and Junail is not afraid of guns and violence; in fact, he is prepared for it, as shown in the entire film. Viewing this scene based on Hamm-Ehsani’s paper about Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity, it shows that Muslim families residing in Mindanao are fully cognizant of the possibilities that conflicts which could lead to warfare, whether it is between families or other groups who are considered threats to their safety. Satra’s family, who are in feud against the Ismaels, prepare themselves particularly the men to protect their loved-ones and their land at all costs. But trying to view it in a bigger perspective, in real life events, there have been bombings, wars, violence, and terrorist threats in Mindanao.

42:25-43:35

Khalil, pissed at what Junail said, pointed the rifle at Junail. Mustafa immediately scolded him and told him that they only use the weapon for enemies and not for families. Up to this point, the researcher did not know about the tension between the family members. There was like a hidden vendetta between Khalil and Junail, considering that Junail may come off as boastful and proud. Mustafa, although depicted as strong and a man of one’s word, values family among everything. He can come off as short-tempered at times but when it comes to his family, there’s not a thing he would do for them.

43:35-44:37

There was a group meeting in Aunt Farida’s house, but Aunt Farida was not meeting herself. She was staring blankly from the window. She looked worried and troubled as if she sensed that something terrible is going to happen. Perhaps she felt this disturbing gut that she was trying to understand. Aunt Farida may be concerned about the future, especially with what’s happening between Satra’s family versus the Ismaels. It could be that something devastating will be happening soon.

44:38-47:02

The Mother wished that Satra shall never experience what she went through. Satra’s family killed her son, and one of the Ismaels killed her wife. This depicts that despite the feud between the two families, violence will never be the answer. Losing a loved one is hard for both parties. The Ismaels still wished for Satra and her family to never experience what the Ismaels had to go through, but Satra firmly answered her and said that their family also had to grieve for what the Ismaels did to her husband. It can be seen here how Satra justified that they are not wrong for getting even with the Ismaels.

47:04-48:48

Mustafa brought Hasim on a hill. He told Hasim that this hill was inherited from their ancestors and passed on to the future generation. Abubakar, Mustafa’s younger brother, planted a tree along with Mustafa. Now that he is dead, he cannot enjoy

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the fruits of their labor. Mustafa reminded Hasim that the land is theirs. In Hsu and Feldman’s paper *Introduction: Race, Environment and Representation* (2007), it emphasized how environment and nature can impact people’s daily lives. It was shown here how important this land is for Mustafa and their family. It came from their ancestors, and they should inherit it. (This is called time immemorial). Many ancestral lands belonging to the Indigenous tribes and natives are often being forcefully taken from them. This happens whenever foreign investors or business owners want to use the rich lands for their profit in current events. Mustafa explained to his grandson the importance of their ancestors’ land and realized how timely this is. “Mindanao is very rich in resources, but the people remain poor and have not benefited from any business. If their lands are taken, they will have no means of livelihood,” said Jay Apiago at rights group Karapatan (Chandran, 2018).

48:49-49:19

Mustafa was shot in his right leg. He got lucky that the wound isn’t that deep. It can be seen here that there is no modern medical equipment used for his wound. Only traditional tools such as medical leaves were used. If the gunshot wound were deep, Mustafa would not survive because traditional medicines such as medical leaves will not suffice. This is what families from very remote areas experience whenever someone is sick or injured. The hospital is very far from their area, so they either self-medicate or use whatever is suitable to cure their sickness. There is a big difference between urban centers and remote areas, echoed by a stark contrast in poverty incidence. It makes sense that cities are hubs for healthcare – they have more people and get first access to resources. This leaves Filipinos in more rural areas at a significant disadvantage (Flores, 2020).

49:20-49:56

Khalil promised that he would avenge their father. Avenging family members is expected in the film whenever a Rido occurs in a family. This will most likely include violence and bloodshed. However, this goes against the Quran teachings, which is forgiveness and repentance over violence and revenge. But anger must have won over Khalil because of what happened to Mustafa.

49:57-50:41

The small fight between Hasim and the young Ismael brothers was about to get violent when Satra approached Hasim and asked him to come with her instead. Their older family members must have influenced the young Ismael brothers. Thinking that the elders would teach them hatred instead of reconciliation or forgiveness tells the viewers a strong affirmation that the feud between them will be hard to settle and resolve.

50:42-51:19

The characters were talking about her father’s situation and how Hasim was saved during the firing incident. Then, one of her coworkers asked if she could settle the feud between her families and the Ismaels. Satra said that it is too much to ask. This seemed like Satra is not ready for reconciliation and forgiveness. However, throughout the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims are taught that forgiveness is better than revenge (Stacey, 2014). Still, the pain of the past still haunts Satra’s family which is why it might take a long time for them to forgive the Ismaels and reconcile with them.

51:20-51:56

While Satra was plowing the soil with her fellow women, the motion of digging through the soil is somewhat similar to burying a person underground. They were also talking about the danger of the ongoing feud that could bring harm to their family, giving them fear that they might have to bury their loved one in the same soil they are plowing.

51:57-52:27

Satra was then seen looking for Hassim in the woods; her hijab still wrapped decently. At first, her hair was covered by the hijab, but then her hair is disheveled as she pauses for a moment. She moves forward, and her hijab gets caught on a branch, unwrapping the hijab around her. Satra’s disregard for her hijab could be interpreted as her desperation and her growing worry as she fails to find Hassim. Despite the common belief that the hijab is a symbol of a woman’s modesty, her religious obligation, and submission to faith, it is not explicitly written in the Quran that it is required to cover up one’s body to portray one’s modesty. Rather, the act of wearing a hijab and similar garments is a choice for women, with varying reasons as to why they wear it. One could wear it to portray their devotion to their religion, and another could wear it for they believe that it protects them and preserves their beauty (BBC, 2018). In Satra’s case, her wearing a hijab could symbolize something else besides her devotion to her faith as anything about it wasn’t explicitly mentioned throughout the film. Seeing that she was busying herself plowing the fields before looking for Hassim, her hijab could be seen as a garment to simply protect her from the sun. The act of Satra disregarding her hijab emphasizes her desperation for finding Hassim to the point where she has no clear awareness of her appearance and surroundings. This scene can be further analysed through the study of Hamm-Ehsani’s study entitled “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity”. It is clearly established that Satra is a Muslim woman living in a Muslim dominant area. She practices Muslim customs and has not shown any reluctance to her faith. But, it should be noted that

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this isn't her defining point as a character. Although she is Muslim and a woman, she is also a mother. This role of hers is what is most important to her. It can be seen throughout the film how much she loves Hassim and her desire to protect him at all costs.

52:58-53:56

The scolding continues at home, Hassim is quiet while the men in the house share how there should be nothing to worry about, and scolding Hassim will only make him a coward. This scene portrays men's expectations to be brave and courageous that start at a young age. The men of the house do not wish for Hassim to grow a coward, believing that he won't be able to protect his family if he does not develop bravery and courage. As seen from the previous scenes from the movie, the young men were already being taught about fighting and protecting their loved ones, even going so far as to lend them a gun and teach them how to handle firearms. They also involve these young men in discussions regarding the rido, developing strategies on how to fight back. They were always part of the conversation despite their young age. This scene can be viewed upon using Wang's paper entitled "Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation". The development of an individual differs accordingly to where they grew up in and to the people they grew up with. This includes the culture they practice and the availability of resources around their home. In Hassim's case, he grew up in a patriarchal dominant home, where men rule the home and have the responsibility of protecting their family. This condition affects the standards set on children, particularly Hassim, seeing that at a young age, he is being taught to be brave and courageous.

53:57-54:33

Intruders raid their house with gunshots, Satra, Hassim, and his grandmother are rushed to a safe spot they built while the men retaliate with guns of their own. They start to pray to Allah for safety. Possibly, the fact that their hideout was underground could correlate to being buried underground in death. This scene may imply the possibility of death being one's fate in the movie. On another note, the act of letting Satra and Hassim protect themselves by hiding underground portrays how they are valued in Muslim culture. It enforces what is commonly believed in Islam teachings that men are given the roles to protect their family, the word "ghavamoon" being used in the Quran. However, it should also be recognized how Allah had no intention of making men more superior than women. Rather, men and women were created as equals, the only difference being that they were given different roles, according to their strengths and capabilities. In this scene, it portrays the role of men being the protectors of their family (Kia, 2019).

54:34-55:41

Cut to the morning when the family is burying their cow, caught in the crossfire. Once again, it shows soil and digging and burying. It also portrays the inevitable in any war, which is death and losses. Hassim is heard crying in the background, depicting his fragility since he is still a child. Unlike their enemies, the men talk about fighting back head-on, unlike their enemies who claim to be cowards for ambushing them. This scene once again enforces the strength of men, which is being able to fight for their family. Therefore, they were conditioned to think that facing the battle head on portrays their true courage and bravery.

56:46-58:39

Satra is seen looking at herself in the mirror with her jewelry in hand. Mustafa talks with her and apologizes, saying that Satra supported them instead of the other way around. Mustafa apologizes for failing his role as the father, having to depend on Satra. Mustafa apologizes since he believes that his role as a father as well as a man is to protect his family, even more so the women. Satra expresses her exhaustion, and Mustafa answers that everything will end in time. Satra asks when Hassim is seen in the back enjoying his new book. This portrays that even through it all, Hassim is still a child, and his innocence is always there.

58:40-1:00:15

The next scene is of a male found dead in the river. It is a still shot, portraying the still moments' death induces onto people. A woman weeping is heard in the background. The family carries his coffin. Satra and her mom see the people mourning, portraying the same possible future if the rido continues; a warning. Satra is well aware that the rido that her family is involved in imposes grave consequences, such as the death she sees right in front of her.

1:01:31-1:03:14

Satra and Hassim take a visit to Aunt Farida. Hassim looks at the wall as cameras pan to the decor placed on it. Satra follows suit but instead looks at the portraits of their deceased relatives. Satra has been staring blankly lately. This time, she stares into the dead men. Satra is seen with a blank face, possibly contemplating matters of war and death. Hassim shows a fascination with the instruments, once again portraying his child features. A still shot is shown while they wait for Aunt Farida.

1:07:41-1:13:04

In this scene, Hassim is seen wandering into the woods until he eventually ends up in the river, the same river where deaths occurred. Hassim crosses the river that divides the two parties, implicating the possible danger as a result of his action. A few moments before Satra finds Hassim's cold body, she gazes in a certain direction where a light reaches her face. The concept

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of light is a common symbol in Islam culture, symbolizing light as guidance (Mirza, 2019). As grim as it may be, this major event that Satra faces serves as a guide to the path she is about to take.

1:13:05-1:14:14

Satra runs to Hassim, who is lying on the ground, lifeless. Naturally, she cries. Her screams echo. The fate of Hassim portrays Qişās, retaliation in kind (Stacey, 2014). Hassim’s death also marks the end of rido for Satra, being that she no longer has anyone to protect.

1:14:15-1:16:08

It is morning, and they are doing burial traditions, washing Hassim while saying a prayer. Satra approaches his body and whispers, asking for forgiveness. They continue by covering his eyes, mouth, and ears with cotton and then covering him with a white cloth. The act of enshrouding is done to respect the privacy and dignity of the deceased. Once wrapped, they pray the Salat al-Janazah. Satra is blank through it all.

1:16:53-1:19:56

Satra is seen flipping through Hassim’s books and proceeds to color one of the incomplete pictures. She completes the picture that Hassim started on, possibly marking Satra no longer desiring to continue the feud. A close-up of a portion of her face is shown; blank, portraying the deathly feeling when experiencing the loss of a loved one.

1:20:26-1:21:25

Satra’s hand is touching the surface of the river. She slowly submerges herself into the river. A male was seen dead in the river, and Hassim crossing the river meant his death. Satra submerging herself in the water could imply her desire for death or rather her disregard for it, seeing that she loses sight of her purpose.

1:21:26-1:22:00

The sound of the river is overpowering, as the frame captures Satra being surrounded by nature. The use of a worm-eye view of the sky is often used to show someone dying; in this case, it may mean that losing her family feels like death for Satra. The framework of Hsu and Feldman’s paper further deepens this when they address how films can add dimension to nature and interconnect it to human life.

1:22:1-1:25:59

The editing is used to highlight the anguish of Satra. In Muslim culture, goats are often sacrificing, so the scene with two goats ties with the conversation she and Ferida are having (Akyol, 2018). The deaths of Satra’s husband and child are sacrifices to make Satra question the rido. The shot’s composition also hints that Satra and Farida are on opposite ends age-wise and mentality wise. Satra is a young woman who still wants vengeance while Farida is old and believes that peace is the best solution. Farida is an example that war and running away are not the only options for Satra. The dialogue also references fire, an object throughout the film. It can be meant that the “fire in the homeland” came when the anger from within consumed the families, and they turned to violence.

1:26:00-1:26:24

This is reminiscent of the earlier scenes when Farida and Mustafa discussed the rido; once again, Satra is omitted even though her child was killed.

1:26:27-1:27:51

The dialogue in this shows that there is violence within the groups, but Muslims face a bigger enemy. The issue of Satra being unable to participate in the discussion but still contributing to the rido is further emphasized using the framework of “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic, and Sexual Identity in Kutlug Ataman’s Berlin Film “Lola und Bilidikid.”” As mother who as recently lost her child, she is tired of the war; however as a Muslim woman her ability to interfere with the decisions of the men is limited. In Wang’s framework of “Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation” the topic of geographical boundaries which is highlighted in the scene since Muslims want to separate themselves from the state and maintain an exclusive territory.

1:27:52-1:29:11

In this scene the militarization of the area is becoming more prominent. The other enemy or the state is deploying troops in the area. Information about the Bangsamoro law in Mindanao shows that the militarization of the area is due to the resources there, and that government troops are constantly being deployed in the area.

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1:29:12-1:30:06

The younger generation, especially those in their teens, are questioning the value of the rido. The younger brother, Junail, struggles to reconcile what the family wants to what he wants. However, we see that the rido has deep roots since Khalil is separated from his wife just to fight for the land.

1:30:06- 1:31:28

The sound of water is overpowering yet again. After death, the sound of water is a typical sequence in the film, like nature is a mother who weeps as her children die. The scene with the children is similar to the rido. The feud began early due to the land, it could have been settled, but the violence has proliferated. It can also show the effects of growing up with violence.

1:33:23-1:36:29

They were mourning those lost in violence but continued to fight. The women generally want reconciliation; however, their position limits them from doing it without permission. The rido can be resolved through women acting as peacekeepers however the leader should also agree to the terms.

1:36:29-1:38:05

Reconciling would mean disobeying Mustafa because he would never agree to a peace deal. Satra says that it is challenging to be haunted by one's fears; after a few moments of silence, the mom agrees that it would be suitable for the family.

Satra no longer wants to be haunted, the fear of losing her family. Even is finally ready to disobey, something she did not do throughout the film.

1:38:06-1:41:30

The butterfly is a reminder of Hassim and his innocent nature. Mustafa's conversation is the tipping point because Satra can see that this war will never end unless peace happens. “An eye for an eye.” Mustafa places a premium of vengeance and believes that he must enact it. According to Datu “Toto” Paglas, the only way he was able to end the Rido was when he understood that vengeance is God's alone.

1:41:30-1:42:26

Satra leaves the house. Her mom is awake, but she does not stop Satra. She continues walking until she reaches the river. The shot is taken from behind her; she is facing the river. The river is “the divide,” so Satra's crossing shows that she is ready to reconcile.

1:42:27-1:44:52

The scene is like the opening scene except this time it transitions to a forest with Farida and her lover. Farida's task throughout the film was to act as a guide for Satra. Now that Satra is going to negotiate with the Ismaels, her purpose is fulfilled. She sees her loved one in a dream. The choice between the animals can mean death, butterfly, or stay on earth, rat. She did not explicitly choose, but since she has lived life, death is the choice. She walks towards the water and what we think is the young Farida. She is letting go.

1:44:52-1:48:19

They understand the pain of the other because they both lost their husband and son. Their black clothing shows that they are serious, but the loud presence of nature also shows the Earth was tired of the bloodshed.

1:46:31-1:47:34

Shot from a birds-eye view, the two women are facing each other. It shows that the two are meeting and ready to reconcile.

1:47:34-1:48:13

The scene transitions to soldiers dying in the rain. They are on the road surrounded by steep inclines where people can easily hide. The sound of water is still heard, but it is significantly softer. The rido is being resolved, but the violence in the land is far from over. The difference in volume regarding the water can mean that nature mourns death, but those in the mountains are more loved.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the close read and analysis done by the researchers using different lenses of frameworks, they were able to answer the questions the researchers had in the beginning. These are what makes an independent film a useful tool in representing a specific group of people, what elements of the mainstream movie does WOTWR break or uphold, what effect does that have on the portrayal of Islamic women, and how does the WOTWR create and constraint the Islam religion and the Philippine Muslim group.

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Carrie Szabo (2010) stated how independent films are different from mainstream films in the sense that they utilize more freedom and liberty when it comes to storytelling. It gives the filmmakers the luxury of autonomy and authenticity especially when portraying the narrative of minorities or other specific groups of people. Filmmakers use this autonomy as a tool in telling a story as real and raw as possible without having to worry about pleasing studios and the mainstream audience.

This fact is seen in the film through the approach Dayoc chose to take when it comes to the narrative of the story. Stereotypically, films that are based on Mindanao and the Muslim culture are laced with rage and rebellion against the national government. It depicts war and violence between the rebellious groups in Mindanao and the Armed Forces of The Philippines often portraying the Mindanaons as terrorists. But with the liberty that the film production has been independent, they were able to introduce a narrative that portrays what actually happens; the concept of ridos or blood feuds. Although it was still full of violence, it was rooted in the cultures of Muslims and has been going on for generations. It was not based on rebellion or terrorism but is based on honor and family. The film confirmed the presence of the national military in the region, but it did not define the movie nor the characters.

Another indication is the choice of actors, or lack thereof, in the movie. The cast of the movie weren't paid actors who were famous but are rather real people with real experiences. The lead actress who played Satra, Laila Ulao, has a cousin who is involved in a rido. The supporting actress, Sharifa Pearlsia Ali-Dans, who played Farida was a mediator in real life. The rest of the characters have witnessed ridos, have seen its effects on their community, and are aware of how dangerous and harmful it is to them. The filmmakers didn't feel the need to hire actors that would ensure to make people watch. They are more concerned with the art of storytelling and what needs to be done to convey the narrative properly.

Unlike mainstream movies, the indie film WOTWR enabled viewers to delve deeper into the lives of Muslims in Mindanao, and how their rights, cultures and beliefs, as well as their environment affect their daily lives and most importantly, the future of their families. There were scenes that showed the audiences what it's like living in fear and uncertainty as your enemies, along with those who want to take the most important to you. Satra and her family were always on alert and were willing to give everything but their family's and their land's safety. It was also emphasized in the film how Muslim women are cherished, treasured, and protected by the men of the family. Satra for example, are considered by Mustafa, her brothers, and Hasim as someone who's worth her weight in gold. However, this can be contradicting with some of the beliefs and perspectives of the Islamic community. Women are always known to be subordinate to men, according to the Holy Qur'an. But the film did not fail in keeping the thin line between perception and reality by observing proper limits and boundaries, especially socio-cultural boundaries to an extent that no conclusive or biased perspectives were shown.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it tackled current events, which are the real-life issues in Muslim Mindanao that mainstream films do not contemplate and center on. One of the influential scenes in WOTWR was the cameo role by a Muslim woman activist, that is protesting about the importance of the Bangsamoro Basic Law for their families. Furthermore, all throughout the film, the militarization in Mindanao was shown by the presence of soldiers and military vehicles in the region. In addition to this, issues regarding exploitation of natural resources and illegal stealing of the indigenous people's lands in Mindanao were also given enough spotlight in the movie. In fact, the characters were ready to spark a bloodbath against anyone who tries to take away their rights on their ancestral lands. Viewing this in a bigger picture, these contemporary issues are currently happening in the regions of Mindanao--exploiting of resources, illegal mining, foreign interests on lands, etc.

According to Indie Films Dee (2019), indie films such as WOTWR are driven by artistic vision, not the box office. They are more likely to tell stories of the human experience and how people adapt in this world they live in. The stories of the WOTWR characters have more to offer than romantic and comedy stories; they make their viewers feel emotions that big-budget blockbusters only scratch the surface of. The film also educates the audiences about socio-political issues, and films based on critical real-life events or issues such as WOTWR, which helps teach people while entertaining them. Lastly, independent films allow everyone to get involved, no matter what social class, religion, race, or gender you have. Take the casting of WOTWR as an example, they're not experienced actors yet they delivered their parts to make the audiences feel what they're feeling, whether it's pain, grief, greed, or anger. (Indie Films Dee, 2019)

Muslim families are commonly known to uphold a patriarchal structure, wherein men are responsible for protecting their family while the women, on the other hand, are expected to care for their family; acting behind the scenes. However, this does not imply that women are below men, being that both parties have their own responsibilities bearing their own weight. Men take the duty to possess firearms for protection and initiate strategies for the ongoing rido, teaching the younger generation to follow in their footsteps. Although women are not expected to fight in the same battles, they are seen aiding these men through means of providing care and sustenance. But it should be noted that this does not mean that the responsibilities of women are easier. This is further seen in scenes throughout the film, one of them being Satra and Hassim having to go to town to gain funds. Another example would be Satra plowing through the fields and dealing with the invasive weeds on their land. These scenes break the stereotype that women are expected to stay at home and that although it is not explicitly shown, they are still involved in family feuds. The film WOTWR further shows how the responsibilities of a woman are just as hard and that they also have to experience

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the death of a loved one and the constant fear of danger during a rido. The inner turmoil experienced by Aunt Farida as a peacemaker, desiring peace for both families but the frustration of not being able to directly help them, thus being unable to find peace within herself. The conversation the group of women had while they were plowing through their fields, expressing their worry for the condition of their family if the rido persists; these women fight their own battles often unseen.

Besides the case of the rido among Satra’s family, Muslim women are also portrayed as having the capability to spread their voice and fight for what they believe in. This is found in a particular scene wherein a female activist is seen in town spreading her influence towards the citizens and showing her support for the Bangsamoro Basic Law. This goes to show that women have their own ways to fight for what they believe in, methods where violence or the use of firearms is not needed.

WOTWR is able to paint the picture of Islam in the Philippines focusing on the unique situations of Muslims within Mindanao through the rido and the militarization of the region. This is further deepened with the use of Wang’s paper on Ethnic Boundary and Literature/Image Representation.

The first constraint is geographical, which highlighted the distinct lifestyle of Satra as Muslim in Mindanao. The idea of rido and how it is solved through distinct mechanisms like negotiations between women. The local terrain also affects their culture when the river acts as a boundary between the feuding families their movement is affected. The most evident geographical divide is when characters separate their land from the country, such as the scene where the Bangsamoro Basic Law was being discussed. Another is the gun selling scene when the men agreed to fight for their land against the government.

The social boundary within the movie is felt with the language and experiences. The language used is Tausug which lights the culture separate from the normal Filipino. The separation is also seen when the Muslims work in the forest even though there was a town near them. While they did interact with the locals there it appeared mostly for business. Moreover, we observe that children, like Hassim did not attend regular school meaning interaction with others was limited.

This shows that WOTWR was able to show Muslims within the Philippines through implied messages and explicit conversations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend that future research regarding film representation be taken into deep consideration due to different factors that must be well-thought out in order to avoid prejudicial or biased testimonies in the study. An in-depth, comprehensive, and careful gathering of resources must be done, especially when tackling film representation where it could involve cultures, traditions, and identity. For instance, in conducting a study about the presented Chinese culture in a popular children’s movie “Mulan”, one must be cautious about the papers and previous research they can find both online and in books or journals. Looking into the writers’, authors’, or researchers’ bibliography, awards, achievements, and even their college degrees may be of good use in pursuance of this research.

It is suggested that certain lenses be used to view the study, this way the research can be conducted with direction. For example, when pursuing a study about representation of Southeast Asian cultures shown in a Hollywood movie which is produced by non-Southeast Asians, it is best to use an approach that is supported by previous research about Southeast Asian cultures in films.

One may also find empirical research helpful. Studies conducted by researchers who personally observed, experienced, or worked in the interested field of future researchers could be used as one of their main references so that the study will not solely rely on analytical evidence. Discretion must be observed all throughout the research process, particularly when studying about film representation of cultures, traditions, or identity. Misconceptions, biased perspectives, and stereotypes may transpire if statements, declarations, and even questions are not thoroughly and concentratedly thought of by the researchers.

Lastly, conducting an interview with the film’s director and producer Sheron Dayoc would contribute largely in this study. This would allow the future researchers to view the film from an insider’s perspective as well as have the insight of the director itself on the events that happened behind the scenes. This would also contribute to conducting the close read of the film because the process would be easier and faster if the director was consulted.

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