

THE PORTRAYAL OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE FILM *FERDINAND* (2017): A PERFORMATIVITY ANALYSIS OF MASCULINITY

PENG GAMBARAN STEREOTIP GENDER DALAM FILM FERDINAND (2017): ANALISIS PERFORMATIF MASKULINITAS

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Abstract

This study analyzes gender stereotypes in the animated film Ferdinand (2017) directed by Carlos Saldanha. The research focuses on how masculinity is socially constructed through the experiences of Ferdinand as the main character. The research used a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected from dialogues, character actions, and cinematographic elements that represent masculine stereotypes. The findings show that masculinity in the film is associated with physical strength, aggression, dominance, emotional suppression, and the role of becoming a fighting bull. These stereotypes are repeatedly reinforced by the environment in Casa del Toro through verbal pressure and social expectations. However, Ferdinand challenges these expectations through his peaceful personality and rejection of violence. The study concludes that masculinity in the film is socially constructed rather than natural. Through Ferdinand's character, the film criticizes rigid masculine stereotypes and offers an alternative representation of masculinity based on empathy and individuality.

Keywords: film analysis, gender performativity, gender stereotypes, masculinity

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis stereotip gender dalam film animasi Ferdinand (2017) yang disutradarai oleh Carlos Saldanha. Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana maskulinitas dikonstruksikan secara sosial melalui pengalaman Ferdinand sebagai tokoh utama. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan dari dialog, tindakan tokoh, dan unsur sinematografi yang merepresentasikan stereotip maskulin. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa maskulinitas dalam film berkaitan dengan kekuatan fisik, agresivitas, dominasi, penekanan emosi, dan peran sebagai banteng petarung. Stereotip tersebut terus diperkuat oleh lingkungan Casa del Toro melalui tekanan verbal dan ekspektasi sosial. Namun, Ferdinand menantang ekspektasi tersebut melalui kepribadiannya yang damai dan penolakannya terhadap kekerasan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa maskulinitas dalam film merupakan konstruksi sosial, bukan identitas alami. Melalui karakter Ferdinand, film ini mengkritik stereotip maskulin yang kaku dan menawarkan representasi maskulinitas alternatif yang didasarkan pada empati dan individualitas.

Kata kunci: analisis film, maskulinitas, performativitas gender, stereotip gender

Introduction

Gender stereotypes have become an important issue in media representation because films often shape society's understanding of masculinity and femininity. Through repeated portrayals, media can reinforce traditional gender expectations and influence how individuals are expected to behave in society. According to Judith Butler (1999), gender is not something natural or fixed, but a social construction formed through repeated actions and social expectations. This idea explains how masculinity and femininity are continuously produced and maintained through everyday behavior, language, and cultural norms. In many films, masculinity is commonly associated with aggression, strength, bravery, and dominance, while emotional sensitivity and gentleness are often considered incompatible with masculine identity. The issue of gender stereotypes is also strongly represented in animated films. Although animated films are often associated with entertainment for children and families, they still carry social messages related to identity, behavior, and cultural expectations. One animated film that presents this issue is *Ferdinand* (2017), directed by Carlos Saldanha. The film tells the story of Ferdinand, a bull who rejects violence and prefers living peacefully among flowers despite social expectations that bulls must become aggressive fighters. Through Ferdinand's experiences, the film presents a conflict between individual identity and traditional masculine expectations imposed by society.

Several previous studies have discussed gender stereotypes in media. Santoniccolo, Trombetta, and Rollé (2023) explained that media representations continue to reinforce traditional gender roles and contribute to the persistence of stereotypical expectations. Another study conducted by Nisa (2022) analyzed gender stereotypes through the dialogue of characters in the film *The Intern* and found that male

characters were commonly represented as dominant and assertive, while female characters were portrayed as emotional and nurturing. In addition, Husna (2017) examined gender performativity in the film *Moana* using Butler's theory and showed how the protagonist challenged traditional gender expectations through leadership and bravery. These studies show that media frequently constructs and reinforces gender roles through characters and narratives.

However, most previous studies focused on human characters, while research discussing gender stereotypes through non-human animated characters remains limited. This research offers novelty by analyzing how masculinity is represented through an animated animal character in the film *Ferdinand* (2017). The study specifically examines how the film constructs masculinity through physical appearance, behavioral expectations, occupation, and punitive consequences experienced by the characters. In addition, this research applies Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to analyze how masculine identity is socially constructed and maintained through repeated expectations and social pressure. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the portrayal of gender stereotypes in the film *Ferdinand* (2017) and examine how the main character challenges traditional masculine expectations. This study is expected to contribute to discussions about gender representation in animated films and provide a deeper understanding of how media constructs masculinity through narrative and visual representation.

Method

This research used a qualitative descriptive design to analyze gender stereotypes in the film *Ferdinand* (2017). The primary data source of this research was the film itself, while supporting data were obtained from books and journals related to gender stereotypes and gender performativity. The

research focused on scenes, dialogues, character behavior, and cinematographic elements that reflected masculine stereotypes.

The data were collected by watching the film repeatedly, identifying important scenes, and taking notes on dialogues and visual representations related to gender stereotypes. The selected data were categorized into several aspects, namely physical appearance, behavioral expectations, occupation, and punitive consequences.

The data were analyzed using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. The analysis focused on how masculinity was socially constructed through repeated actions, social expectations, and interactions between characters in the film.

Result and Discussion

1. Result

The result show that gender stereotypes in the film *Ferdinand* (2017) are represented through dialogue, character interaction, and cinematographic elements. Four categories of gender stereotypes were identified based on the analysis, namely physical appearance, behavioral expectations, occupation, and punitive consequences. The findings indicate that masculinity in the film is strongly associated with aggression, physical strength, dominance, and emotional control. At the same time, the film also presents resistance toward traditional masculine expectations through Ferdinand's peaceful and empathetic personality.

a) Physical Appearance

Physical appearance refers to the way masculinity is associated with body size, strength, and dominant physical characteristics. In the film *Ferdinand* (2017), this stereotype appears when Valiente humiliates Bones because of his small body size.



Figure 1. Valiente headbutts Bones, causing him to fall

Source: *Ferdinand* (2017)

The scene at 00:03:30 shows Valiente insulting Bones in front of the other bulls. As shown in Figure 1, Valiente positions himself proudly while Bones becomes the target of humiliation because he is physically smaller and weaker.

Valiente: "You're never gonna get selected. You wanna know why? Cause you're a puny bag of bones, Bones."

The dialogue shows that masculine value is measured through physical appearance and strength. Bones is judged not because of his personality or ability, but because his body does not fit the masculine standard expected in Casa del Toro. This reflects how masculinity is socially constructed through visible physical dominance. According to Judith Butler (1999), gender is produced through repeated social norms and expectations. In this scene, Valiente's statement reinforces the belief that a masculine body must appear strong and dominant in order to gain recognition from others.

b) Behavioral Expectations

Behavioral expectations refer to the social pressure placed on male characters to behave aggressively and violently. This stereotype appears when Ferdinand refuses to fight Valiente after being pressured by the other bulls.



Figure 2. Valiente pressures Ferdinand into a fight

Source: *Ferdinand* (2017)

The scene at 00:04:00–00:04:23 shows Ferdinand being challenged by Valiente while the other bulls encourage violence. Figure 2 illustrates the tense confrontation between the two characters.

Guapo and Bones: “Fight! Fight! Fight!”

Ferdinand: “I’m not gonna fight you, Valiente.”

Valiente: “Aw, flower bull is scared. Then fight. That’s what bulls do.”

The dialogue presents aggression as a natural masculine behavior. Ferdinand’s refusal to fight causes him to be mocked and treated as abnormal. The phrase “That’s what bulls do” suggests that violence is considered a required masculine performance rather than a personal choice. Butler (1999) explains that gender expectations are maintained through repeated social pressure and public regulation. In this scene, the chanting and ridicule function as social mechanisms that pressure Ferdinand to follow dominant masculine behavior.

c) Occupation

Occupation refers to the expectation that male characters must perform specific social roles associated with masculinity. In the film *Ferdinand* (2017), bulls are expected to become fighting bulls, and this role is treated as a natural destiny rather than a personal choice. This stereotype appears when Ferdinand’s father advises him about his future in Casa del Toro.



Figure 3. Ferdinand worries about his future

Source: *Ferdinand* (2017)

The scene at 00:06:14–00:06:23 shows Ferdinand expressing uncertainty about becoming a fighting bull while his father insists that fighting is the only possible future for them. As shown in Figure 3, Ferdinand appears worried and uncomfortable, while his father speaks confidently about the expectations placed upon bulls.

Ferdinand’s Father: “You’re gonna get in that ring, and you are gonna be the champ.”

Ferdinand: “Can I be a champ without fighting maybe?”

Ferdinand’s Father: “Oh, Ferdinand, I really wish the world worked like that for you. But that’s just not how it is for us.”

The dialogue presents masculinity as a socially assigned role connected to occupation and responsibility. Fighting is treated as an unavoidable future for male bulls, while Ferdinand’s alternative perspective is dismissed as unrealistic. The phrase “that’s just not how it is for us” suggests that masculine identity is inherited and maintained through social expectations across generations. According to Judith Butler (1999), gender is formed through repeated norms and expectations that regulate how individuals should behave within society. In this scene, the expectation to become a fighter reinforces the belief that masculinity must follow a predetermined social role.

d) Punitive Consequences

Punitive consequences refer to the social pressure and emotional punishment experienced by characters who fail to perform traditional masculinity. In the film *Ferdinand* (2017), this stereotype is represented through Guapo's anxiety before entering the bullfighting arena.



Figure 4. Guapo vomits before the fight
Source: *Ferdinand* (2017)

The scene at 00:44:00 shows Guapo vomiting before entering the arena because of fear and nervousness. Figure 4 illustrates Guapo's physical distress while he still attempts to convince himself to appear strong in front of others.

Valiente: "You think you got what it takes, Guapo? Then show that to El Primero."
Guapo: "Oh, I will. I'll show him who the real champ is around here. Keep it together, Guapo."

The dialogue demonstrates how masculinity is connected to endurance, emotional suppression, and public performance. Although Guapo is physically overwhelmed by fear, he still forces himself to perform strength because weakness is considered unacceptable for male bulls. This reflects how masculine expectations can create emotional pressure and psychological burden. Butler (1999) explains that gender norms are maintained through social regulation and repeated expectations. In this scene, Guapo experiences pressure to conform to dominant masculinity despite his emotional and physical condition.

Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze the portrayal of gender stereotypes in the film *Ferdinand* (2017) through the categories of physical appearance, behavioral expectations, occupation, and punitive consequences. The findings show that masculinity in the film is socially constructed through repeated expectations that associate male identity with physical strength, aggression, dominance, and emotional restraint. Using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, this research reveals that masculine identity is maintained through social pressure, verbal regulation, and punishment toward characters who fail to follow traditional masculine standards. However, the character Ferdinand challenges these dominant expectations by presenting an alternative form of masculinity based on empathy, gentleness, and nonviolence. The innovation of this research lies in its focus on gender stereotypes represented through non-human animated characters and the integration of narrative and cinematographic analysis to examine how masculinity is visually and socially constructed in animated film.

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