



Bromance Representation in Popular Korean Drama: A Korean Odyssey Drama in Online Video Streaming Sites

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Abstract

This research is trying to explore the representation of bromance (brother romance) in South Korean popular drama, A Korean Odyssey. Using qualitative method, Roland Barthes semiotics, researcher unleash how the depiction of bromance fighting against the masculine doxa. In this research, we found that bromance depiction fights against masculine doxa using gender fluidity. Where the two main man character is depicted with both feminine and masculine character. The feminine value in the depiction of bromance relationship are emotional closeness, emotional support, and thoughtfulness between male players in the story.

Keywords: Bromance Representation, Media Ideology, Korean Drama, Masculine Doxa, Gender Fluidity

Introduction

Media with a variety of technological developments is still a place where power fighting and struggling happened, there is so many ideologies battle. Various ideologies and values try to establish their position in society through the media (Long and Wall, 2012). Strengthening the position through the media becomes important, because the media can reach wide audiences. In addition, the media is a powerful socialization agency (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014). Dominant ideologies such as patriarchy that echo the image of masculinities are widely represented in the media since the early days. Masculinity is said as a dominant value or doxa in society (Bourdieu, 1998), because it is widely represented in the media and also being reproduced and run continuously in society. This internalization of values, beliefs, and cultural norms is then used to develop self-awareness (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014), inherent in the individual.



The role of masculine gender voiced by this patriarchal view is said to give psychic pressure to some men. Men experience the pressure because they are not able to express their emotional side or their feelings (Robinson et al, 2017). Masculine values that exist in the community is considered to be a doxa against male. Masculinity is considered as an absolute value that must exist in men. This masculinity is spreading almost all over the world, especially countries that apply patriarchal values. But as time goes by, resistance to masculinity increasingly surfaces.

Broadcasting media through widescreen movies since 2006 has begun to show depiction against the doxa of masculinity (Feilden, 2010; Sargent, 2013; Vaughan, 2015). Which then brings up a new term in a society known as bromance or brother romance. Bromance movie or film show their audiences about intimate friendships between straight men. The increasingly intimate, emotional, and credible nature of bromances said gives young men a new social space for emotional expression, beyond traditional heterosexual relations (Robinson et al, 2017). So it is said that the concept of bromance can help release the pressure of masculine doxa that exist in society.

The existence of bromance concept represented in the media is said making people more internalize the value. Robinson et al (2017) found that the presence of bromance depiction makes youth more able to express their feelings. So they can channel emotions through close friendship with same-sex, but not afraid of homosexual or gay labels. In contrast to the period before the depiction of bromance, when masculine depictions are still strongly represented many assumptions that male relationships that are too close between male are homosexual relationships.

Feilden, 2010; Sargent, 2013; Vaughan, 2015; Robinson et al, 2017 saw the depiction and construction of bromance in Western media. Since 2006 Western media began to describe bromance. That way we can know the internalization of bromance values have been presented to the public. Now these values began to be depicted in the media production of other countries. Given that the hollywood movie aired worldwide. It is interesting to know how to describe bromance in Asian media with patriarchal value. Especially in the up-and-coming South Korean production drama.

The purpose of this study is to explore how bromance construction against the masculine doxa depicted in A Korean Odyssey drama. This research will explore the representation of bromance in A Korean Odyssey drama. Also will explore how the resistance and efforts from bromance against the masculine doxa depicted in the drama.

Literature Review

Bromance in Media Society Perspective

Media is an integral part of people's lives today (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014). In a day, there is always exposure from the media to us whether intentional or not. This media exposure gives some value into our minds. Although everyone interprets it differently, but media is said to be a means of socialization. Which means through media



we learn and internalize values, beliefs, and cultural norms that are then used to develop self-awareness (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014).

When viewed from a classical perspective, what is in the media is a true picture of reality. So people can see and know about what happens through the media. However, it is different from the interpretive perspective, which sees reality in the media as a construction. That is the reality that there is a result of media construction. Then, again with a critical perspective. This perspective sees a power relation in the media. So what the media describes can be a fake, which is limited to the reality that a particular group wants to realize by the power they have over the media (Long and Wall, 2012).

Values such as concept of bromance are also represented in the media. We can see bromance in a Korean Odyssey drama. Bromance is a term that denotes the power of intense emotional connection between heterosexual men (DeAngelis, 2014). Such emotional attachment can be expressed physically. Although they express their closeness through physical activity, they are not involved in romantic relationships. So the category of bromance is different from gay, which is a romantic relationship between two males.

The depiction of bromance in the media can be the result of the dominant value that exists in society, or vice versa. It is said that unconsciously, the media can instill a dominant value to its audience. Until the dominant value becomes part of the values and norms of society (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014). The description of bromance in the media becomes important, because from the media community can internalize the value. As it is known that the media is a powerful socialization agency (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014). Bromance is an expression that breaks the norm that masculine gender constructs are designated for men (DeAngelis, 2014). Especially in the case of masculine men should not express their emotions, both towards the opposite or same sex.

Bromance as Resistance to Masculine Doxa

According to Bourdieu (1977), there are some beliefs embraced by society. Such as the belief that comes from orthodox Christianity. The beliefs derived from divine rule in the past were much followed by humans, thus known as orthodox beliefs. The orthodox beliefs held by the church and the government to regulate the society, in some periods had its dark period. That is the time when science is considered a sin. However, this dark period then ended. So there is a time of enlightenment where science is growing rapidly. In this period the heterodox trust grew, which was the opposite of the orthodox belief (Bourdieu, 1977). This heterodox belief is more emphasized in science, so it is not so religious. Which religious teachings are considered to be disappointing by the mishap and the misuse of church and kingdom against the people of Europe.

Over time, the use of power with heterodox beliefs produces certain ideas and ideologies. The formation of values and norms that exist in society made by a handful of people can be a truth. Truth or reality made through that power, then taken for granted



by society and manifested in everyday life. Thought or ideology that became accepted by the public then known as doxa (Bordieu, 1977). Doxa is the point of view of a ruler or dominant who declares himself and implements himself as a universal point of view (Bordieu, 1980). This doxa point of view is based on the ideals and ideologies of the rulers of the time. With so many male rulers of the time, making the doxa rooted in patriarchal view.

This patriarchal view plays a major role in creating a distinction of roles between women and men which then generates gender construction in society. The masculine and feminine gender views born from a patriarchal perspective are present in society and become dominant thoughts. The masculine construction is present and dominates in society (Bordieu, 2001). Masculinity as explained by Butler (2007) is a social construction, that becomes doxa in society. This Doxa has the structure or process Bordieu (1980) sees as an integrated cognitive structure within the performer in accordance with the objective structure and ensures the belief in the existing order. The purpose of doxa is to create an action, in which case the participant tends to be directed by the interests of the dominant party, the intent and the feeling, depending on the position and understanding of the whole situation.

The dominant position of doxa is a limited vision and comes from participants who occupy dominant positions, in the fabric of conflicting positions within the structure of society, and certain ritual structures as if the vision were universal (Bordieu, 1980). The dominant view which is a doxa is said to have an opponent. In the case of doxa about gender division, becoming masculine and feminine from a patriarchal point of view, feminism becomes the opposing view. By saying gender is not an absolute thing. Yet it is merely a social construction (Butler, 2007).

These dominant masculine values are curbing and disadvantageous in some aspects for men who are attached to the masculine gender. So in the fight against masculine doxa that exist in society, present the concept of bromance. Bromance has values that are in contrast to the masculine value. It is a term that denotes the power of intense emotional connection between heterosexual men (DeAngelis, 2014).

Bromance is an expression that breaks the masculine construction norms devoted to men. Especially in the case of masculine men should not express their emotions. Both against the opposite sex and same sex. The bromance concept which is the resistance of the masculine doxa sees the existence of gender fluidity. Gender fluidity can be seen from gender performativity. Gender performativity was expressed by Butler (2007) as a way to carry out resistance to gender values constructed by society, who saw the subject as subject. Not subject as the object of value constructed by society.

Representation

Liz Wells (in Long and Wall, 2012) defines representation as the way in which individuals, groups, or ideas are portrayed. According to her, this portrayal is influenced



by a certain consciousness, the depiction in the text of the media does not fully describe the innocence or purity of mere depiction. The portrayal of individuals, groups, or ideas in the media has been shaped by certain parties to have meaning appropriate to their purpose for influencing the thinking of their audience. Thus, society should not simply accept the meaning of the media picture. Because in media depictions, there are certain ideologies that form a representation. The ideology that exists in the media is a hidden idea, both through portrayal and narrative, presented as a truth (Long and Wall, 2012). Media as a channel of representation of values or ideology is then a battle arena. Media becomes the realm of battle because it has power. The vortex of power attached to the media and which can be created by the media becomes so attractive that the media itself becomes the domain of ideological struggle. Media can make a person come to power, as an agent of power, and the media itself has power (Long and Wall, 2012). To see how ideological battles are in media text representations, we can use some methods to dig them. One method to explore the meaning behind media representation is semiotics.

Roland Barthes Semiotics

The word semiotics comes from the Greek word semeion, which means sign or *seme* meaning sign interpreter. Semiotics comes from the classical and scholastic studies of the art of logic and poetics (Sobur, 2003: 17). Semiotics is a study of signs. The study of signs and everything related to it, the way it functions, its relation to other signs, its delivery and its acceptance by those who use it (Kriyantono, 2010: 265). The sign does not stand alone, but is part of a system. The system will give meaning to the existing sign.

The meaning given by the system to the mark can be either denotative or connotative. The meaning of denotative is the real meaning of the hafia or eata and is the first level system. While connotative meaning is the original nature of the sign that has many sides and is the second level system. To determine the meaning of this connotation requires the reader's activity in order to provide the right meaning. Furthermore there is a myth in this theory. Myth is the meaning of connotation associated with the ideology or thinking of a particular system. Semiotics Roland Barthes emphasizes the importance of the role of the reader.

Research Methodology

The research method used is qualitative by using Roland Barthes semiotics. In this research will be taken some scenes from the drama A Korean Odyssey. That is a scene in which two male cast members depicted have a bromance relationship in one scene. Nor when there is a picture that tells the closeness of the two figures. That is the scene tells complaints about the feelings or romantic relationship they have, the scenes help each other against the enemy, as well as scenes featuring femininity such as the use of skin care products by male players. From the various scenes, then will be seen in relation to the masculine doxa.

Result

Storytelling While Crying Scene Table

Scene	Shot	Visual	Narration
	CU	A man stares at sauce in tears	"Why are you crying?"
	MS	The man's friend asked, trying to dig why the man was so sad	"You are so frustrated that you can not eat Sam Jang? Well, maybe so. You have 3 days 3 nights make this sauce, but can not eat it "
	BCU	while staring at the sauce while telling his friend about his sad feelings	"When I think I'm eating Sam Jang, I'm so sad. She will not be in this world if I eat her right? "
	MS	The man's friend tried to understand the feelings of his friend who was so sad	"Hey, hey, if your heart breaks apart. Why did you keep the sauce back? "

	BCU	The man's friend tried to understand the feelings of his friend who was so sad	"I will eat Sam Jang when I can release this geumganggo bracelet"
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Denotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
A crying man holding a bottle of sauces, while another man asked him why he was crying.	A man who shares his sad feelings with a male friend.
The man who hold the bottle tells his sadness about a woman could be disappears from this world because of himself.	

At first level significance or denotation level, the denotative meaning of the scene is a scene that shows a man sharing his sad feelings through a story while weeping.

Connotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
A man who shares his sad feelings with a male friend.	Displays that men can share feelings and show their feelings to same-sex peers, which is the feminine side. So that men are not only described as masculine, but also feminine.

At the second level of significance, the above scenes show that in normal male friendship relationships with other normal men, it can show emotional feelings and aspects like crying. Scenes that illustrate that men can show their sadness through crying to male friends show a feminine side in which men also have a mutually attentive and emotionally supportive nature to each other in a friendship relationship.

Talking While Using Skin Care Scene Table

Scene	Shot	Visual	Narration
	MLS	A man (Ma Wang) enters the room and finds his friend (Oh Gong) using his cream	-
	MCU	The man is then angry because his friend wearing without permission. Also vent his annoyance because no one congratulated him for his success.	"No wonder why my cosmetics quickly run out. It turns out you are always wearing it. Do not use my possessions as you please. "
	CU	Oh Gong do not listen to anger. But say good bye. Then he complained about his feelings of hurt by being denied the woman he liked.	"Congratulations Ma Wang for the award you got. You are amazing"
	CU	The man was moved, he was happy because his friend was the only one who congratulated him.	"You know?"
	CU	The man told his friend how to use the cream correctly.	"Tap it gently in this area"

	CU	The friend then tells his complaints that the woman he likes does not like him.	"Ma Wang, Sam Jang said she (Seon Mi) does not like me. I do not know it feels so painful to hear it say it "
	CU	The man then calms his friend with the fact that his feelings are tied from the bracelet he is wearing. Then give a mask to wear his friend to the area under his eyes do not look swollen.	"You know about it from the beginning. You just do not like it. Oh no, your eyes look puffy. Here, wear this mask before bed so your eyes are not puffy "

Denotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
The man standing is applying skin care to his face at random with a sad face	Two men chattering, expressing their feelings for what happened while applying facial care products.
Another man who came later was angry because his friend used his skin care. Then his friend congratulated him, he immediately felt happy. Then help apply skin care to his friend's face by gently patting on the cheek.	
His friend then told him about his sadness which was then responded with emotionally supportive facts.	
The man gives face care products in the form of masks so that his friend's eyes are not swollen.	

In the first level of significance or Denotation Level, the denotative meaning of the scene is a scene featuring a man helping his friend to apply skin care while chatting. Both are fully dressed.

Connotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
Two men chattering, expressing their feelings for what happened while applying facial care products.	Showing the closeness of the relationship between the two men, as well as showing the feminine side of the male.

At the second level of significance or Connotation Level, the above scenes show the closeness of the relationship between the two men, that is how they can empathize with each other's problems. And displays the feminine side of men with the scene using skin care. So it is concluded that the connotative meaning of this scene is that the bromance relationship has an emotional closeness that shows emotional support and attention, and can share things that are feminine.

Lift Scene Table

Scene	Shot	Visual	Narration
	LS	A man pull another man who faints into the elevator	Baack songs play, the lyrics saying do not want to lose someone
	BCU	A man was in the elevator with another man	

	BCU	The hands of a sick man holding his chest being hugged by another man	
	BCU	Hand of man squeezing with his fingers	

Denotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
A man hugged another unconscious man	A man helps his unconscious friend.
A worried facial expression, chest-holding hands, and fingers that squeeze tightly	

In the first level of significance or Denotation Level, the denotative meaning of the scene is a scene that displays a man helping his unconscious friend by hugging him. Then take him into an elevator.

Connotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
A man helps his unconscious friend.	Concern and emotional closeness between two men who are close friends.

At the second level of significance or Connotation Level, the above scenes show the closeness of the relationship between the two men. Big close up shooting technique that shows the expression of a man when embracing his ill friend illustrates how strong the relationship or the emotional connection that is shared and shared by both. Taking pictures of the fingers that move squeezing tightly also shows how the helpful man is

concerned with his friends who are experiencing distress. The emotional elements featured in this scene highlight so much emotion and concern, which are rarely shown on the depiction of male-male relationships.

Oh Gong Packing Scene Table

Scene	Shot	Visual	Narration
 <p>Right? You still love her, don't you?</p>	MS	Two men talked at the dinner table. On the table there is a small suitcase	"You still love her right? Then why did you choose to leave? "
 <p>If I wanted to, I could make her stay by my side</p>	CU	A man tells his feelings	"Yes, I still love him and want to meet him every day, but he wants a normal human life, so I'd better go"
	CU	A man was sad and crying at the words of his friend	"So, you really fell in love"

Denotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
Two men sitting at the dining table and chatting with each other	Two friends who are sharing stories
The one man tells a story with a wry face, the other man sees it with a glazed eye that then tears	

At this denotation level, there can be seen the denotative meaning is to show a picture of friendship through scenes of telling stories and listen to complaining.

Connotation Level

Signifier	Signified
Two friends who are sharing stories	Showing deep emotional affinity, with empathy to the feelings and conditions of their friends. One can become sad and cry when he heard their friends is hurting.

At this connotation level can be seen a sign of deep emotional proximity. That can feel what is felt by others who have a close relationship. In this emotional scene it can be seen how empathy is an emotional support in which femininity in this friendly relationship is seen.

Ma Wang Shoot by 99 Misery Scene Table

Scene	Shot	Visual	Narration
	CU	A man was lying on the floor with his eyes closed	"Ma Wang, Ma Wang, open your eyes" Am I dead? Why did the bastard call me? I heard her voice (mind voice Ma Wang)
	MS	A man helps another man to wake up	"Welcome back Ma Wang, you did it. I thought you were dead after hited by 88 shot "
	MS	A man pointed at his chest as he said	"I received 10 shots for you, because otherwise you could die. Bang, bang, bang, his shot me here "



Denotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
A man who was lying on the ground, his name's called by his friend	Accompany friends in difficult times
The friend helps the man to get up	

At this denotation level, it can be seen how a man is on his friend's side when he gets into trouble.

Connotation Level

<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Signified</i>
Accompany friends in difficult times	It is a picture of a friend's concern, that is when his friend has trouble. Shows both emotional and physical concern and support

At this connotation level, it can be seen that being next to a friend and caring for him when he is in difficult conditions is a form of emotional support

Discussion

The existence of a certain ideology in media that describes bromance with a concept against patriarchal doxa. Where the doxa said masculinity is closely related to men. This masculine doxa is present through continuous reproduction supported by quasi (Bordieu, 1977). From the beginning, masculine and feminine divisions stem from the division of tasks between men and women. From there, doxa appears in society with objectivity in age, gender, and others. The strength of the patriarchal role from the beginning made most of the doxa such as masculine values contained men's view and were simply taken for granted in society. So unconsciously considered as a truth, when in fact not.

Doxa about gender such as masculine and feminine is become a rule to judge male and female. Masculine is a trait for men while feminine for women (Long and Wall, 2012). So there is no possibility of femininity in men. Men who have a feminine nature, will be regarded as an aberration. However, in the above scenes, it is shown that in the bromance relationship, ie between heterosexual men, there are feminine values. Such as the emotional closeness is illustrated by close-up and over-shoulder shots that show the emotion and closeness of the relationship between the cast who is on the screen. The large number of close up and over shoulder shots shows how the two actors are portrayed as having a very close emotional relationship.

Another feminine value is when the actors play the skin care scene. The use of facial care products are identified with feminine values, because that activity is usually done



by women. Especially when one player put skin care to his friend, where the over shoulder close up shooting technique used. There are two femininity values in it. So here it is said that the description of bromance present in drama a korean odyssey is against patriarchal doxa saying men are only masculine. So the representation of bromance in this film is the presence of strong emotional closeness in the friendship of heterosexual men and the value of femininity in men. The form of resistance to the masculine doxa that exists is the existence of male femininity values such as the existence of the emotional supports and thoughtfulness. Which is showing the opposite of doxa. Where in the doxa, man is completely masculine.

But in this drama, they also still describes male masculinity. Like how they are not only sad and cry in difficult conditions, but also do something to work it out. There is still rivalry in their relationship. Like who is the strongest and who can solve problems better. Also the calling name of "thug" or "jerk" and so on which shows the closeness between men. They use the harsh word to call their friends. Like how the masculine doxa describe male, they are tough. Even when picking nickname. They do not use feminine-like calls like "hey sweet one". As a feminine doxa said. But using a more masculine call like "you jerk". They also can perform extreme actions such as receiving a shot for his friend. Which is so manly or masculine according to the doxa rooted from patriarchy.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is, in the depiction of bromance there are values of femininity in the form of emotional closeness, emotional support, and thoughtfulness in the relationship of two male players in the story. Femininity that exists within man is the fights against patriarchal doxa which states that men only have masculine traits. The portrayal of bromance in this drama brings the feminine element into a man who is also masculine. Such as thoughtful brave man and supporting both emotional dan physical by caring and fighting together. So we can see the real nature of feminine and masculine can be exchanged between male and female. Femaleis not always feminine, and maleis not always masculine. There lies gender fluidity in the portrayal of bromance between two male best friend.

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