

What is it about “violence” that forces us to examine the awkwardly oblique relationship that masculinity shares with a larger cultural understandings and consumptions of violence? The media images of male hysteria of rage, revenge and rampage and of musical machismos ultimately question masculinity as a performative and linguistic arena which, before referring outside itself to some comparative or competitive space of the feminine or woman, first relies on its own self-referentiality, auto-reflexivity, and culturally endowed symbolism and signification.

The protagonists of *La haine* and *Rodrigo D* offer newer forms of resistance to the oppressive forces of the political and social landscapes subtly choreographing a dexterity of words and performative inflections that Harry Callahan and mariachis before him have already solidified through the very repeatability of phrases like: “Go ahead, make my day”? How—if at all—is masculinity related to violence? Perhaps the ultimately masculine enterprise is not the action viewed within these films, but is likely our invocation and pursuit of the masculine, scratching a larger furrow in the trenches of repetition, of gender tropes, and of historical and discursive babblings which seek out to create a tautology of gender?

It seems to me that we have been caught up in masculinity as a solipsistic (knowledge of oneself) site of knowledge, by backing out of social engagements through our rejection of empirical data, on the one hand, and by scrutinizing the poststructural nexus of complicity to this trenchantly overused word “difference”, on the other. There is evidence that masculinity and femininity operate in a very culturally specific and pointedly corporeal manner has been demonstrated to us as early as 440 BC with Electra and Medea, characters whose wrath might be called feminine or maternal as much as they might, when presented with the likes of Oedipus or Hypolytus, be labelled as masculine just as easily. Is the transgressive of masculinity a non-violent, gentle softness that some masculine arenas embody? I think Vigo’s schoolboys wildly floating amidst the sea of feathers as the ultimate transgression of this fiction of gender.

Or is the transgressive merely the border that masculinity embodies as a sign which cancels itself out—that to be masculine one must always be in a signifying state of pointing out and simultaneously overriding the obstacles that get in the way of this performance. As such, Rodrigo’s search for a guitar and his “way out”, the carnivalesque of the *carnales*, and *La haine*’s response to cultural violence are, all in their own way, responses to systemic violences.