



## Semiotic Analysis of Some Selected OPM Songs

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the cultural values on nationalism as conveyed in some selected OPM songs, specifically the songs of Freddie Aguilar such as “Anak” (Child); “Bulag, Pipi, at Bingi” (Blind, Mute, and Deaf); and “Siya ang iyong Ina” (She is your mother); “Pulubi” (Beggar); and Mindanao. Specifically, this study utilized semiotic analysis which aimed to determine the different meanings of the songs which entail the four cultural values on nationalism such as family solidarity, love for social justice, love for peace and order, and concern for national unity. Theory on Musical Equilibration, Musical Theory, Music Semiology, and Gellner’s Theory on Nationalism serve as the theoretical bases and the reasons of the conception of this endeavor. This is descriptive and qualitative in nature for it utilized analytical and interpretative method of research which was reinforced by closed analysis of interpretation. The study revealed that all the five songs of Freddie Aguilar depict some cultural values on nationalism such as family solidarity which is found in the songs “Anak” and “Siya ang iyong Ina”, love for social justice in the songs “Pulubi” and Bulag, Pipi, at Bingi” and love for peace and order and concern for national unity, and love for social justice in the song “Mindanao”. The composer of the said songs emphasizes the importance of cultural values on nationalism which encompasses the feelings of cultural pride that people have in a society.

*Keywords: semiotic analysis, cultural values, nationalism, family solidarity, social justice, national unity*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Song is an important part of daily life. The exploration of song helps a researcher understand different peoples of the world because their interest, longings, and hopes are found in their song. The writing of a good song requires great simplicity of grammatical structure, meaning, and feeling. It can be written from a heart which genuinely feels the emotion it is expressing. To write a song is likely the same as establishing emotional integrity for it is the unifying element where humans find adequate expression and inner satisfaction for feelings. It is a sort of looking glass from which people would be able to mirror the soul of a nation. It is the necessary ingredient in all ceremonies such as in: wedding, baptismal, death, worships, festivities, games, dances, and other occasions which express joy, wonder, and sorrow. Nationalism is a feeling of devotion and loyalty to a land or people. It arises from shared feelings and experiences among the people. This may include a common language, culture, religion, social order, historical tradition or physical descent. The feelings of common background and destiny become nationalism when they are stressed by some process of education (Abeleda, 1992). Furthermore, the development of nationalism must be anchored in the conservation and further strengthening of our desirable cultural values. Among the cultural values are: love of country, family solidarity, respect for law and order, concern for national unity, appropriation and neighborliness, Filipino tenacity in the pursuit and defense of national ideals, love of peace and order, and love for social justice, and the democratic way of life (Zaide, 1986). It is on this regard that the

contention of the study is to find out the meanings and messages of his songs and further seek to identify whether all of those mentioned cultural values on nationalism are manifested in Freddie Aguilar’s songs.

This study is limited to five selected songs of Freddie Aguilar such as “ Anak”(Child); “Bulag, Pipi at Bingi”(Blind, Mute, and Deaf) “Siya ang iyong Ina” (She is your Mother ); “Pulubi” (Beggar); and Mindanao which depicted some cultural values on nationalism such as love for peace and order, family solidarity, love for social justice and concern for national unity.

### 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory of Musical Equilibration says that music can convey any emotion at all, not just merely volitional processes, the musical listener identifies with. Then in the process of identifying the volitional processes are colored with emotions. The same happens when we watch an exciting film and identify with the volitional processes of our favorite figures. Here, too, just the process of identification generates emotions. These volitional processes have something to do with the phenomena which early music theorists called "lead", "leading tone" or "striving effects". If we reverse these musical phenomena in imagination into its opposite (not the sound wants to change - but the listener identifies with a will not to change the sound) we have found the contents of will, the music listener identifies with. In practice, everything becomes a bit

more complicated, so that even more sophisticated volitional processes can be represented musically.

Another theory which support this study is the Music theory which is frequently concerned with describing how musicians and composers make music, including tuning systems and composition methods among other topics. Because of the ever-expanding conception of what constitutes music, a more inclusive definition could be that music theory is the consideration of any sonic phenomena, including silence, as they relate to music. Music theory as a practical discipline encompasses the methods, concepts, composers and other musicians use in creating music. The development, preservation, and transmission of music theory in this sense may be found in oral and written music-making traditions, musical instruments, and other artifacts (Baroni, 1983).

Music semiology is the study of signs as they pertain to music on a variety of levels. Following Roman Jakobson, Kofi Agawu adopts the idea of musical semiosis being introversive or extroversive--that is, musical signs within a text and without. "Topics," or various musical conventions (such as horn calls, dance forms, and styles), have been treated suggestively by Agawu, among others. The notion of gesture is beginning to play a large role in musico-semiotic enquiry. Signs, meanings in music, happen essentially through the connotations of sounds, and through the social construction, appropriation and amplification of certain meanings associated with these connotations. The work of Philip Tagg (*Ten Little Tunes, Fernando the Flute, Music's Meanings*)-provides one of the most complete and systematic analysis of the relation between musical structures and connotations in western and especially popular, television and film music. The work of Leonard Meyer in *Style and Music* theorizes the relationship between ideologies and musical structures and the phenomena of style change, and focuses on Romanticism as a case study (Ashby, 2004).

Gellner's theory of nationalism was developed by Ernest Gellner, he discussed nationalism in a number of works. His theory focused on the political and cultural aspects of that transition. Furthermore, its focus is on the unifying and culturally homogenizing roles of the educational systems, national labor markets and improved communication and mobility in the context of urbanization. He thus argued that nationalism was highly compatible with industrialization and served the purpose of replacing the ideological void left by both the disappearance of the prior agrarian society culture and the political and economic system of feudalism, which it legitimized (Middleton, 1990).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

Descriptive qualitative was utilized to provide analytical and interpretative method of research which was reinforced by closed analysis of interpretation. Moreover, this is focused on the semiotic analysis of Freddie Aguilar's selected songs. The prime purpose of the descriptive qualitative study is to provide an accurate description of the statuses or characteristics of a situation or phenomenon. Furthermore, its focus is not to find out the cause and effect relationship but rather in giving the meanings of each of the five songs, how are these meanings reflected in the songs and their implications to the Filipinos.

#### 3.2 Research Questions

The focus of this study is to investigate and present the semiotic analysis on some selected songs of Freddie Aguilar which were all

translated into English. Specifically, this answered the following questions after the data had been gathered, analyzed, and interpreted:

1. What meanings are conveyed in the five selected songs of Freddie Aguilar?
2. What cultural values on nationalism are reflected in the five selected OPM songs?
3. How are these cultural values on nationalism reflected in each of the OPM song?
4. What implications can be drawn from these cultural values on nationalism to the Filipinos?

#### 3.3 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher has observed appropriate procedures to bring this study to success. First, a thorough study of Freddie Aguilar's five (5) selected songs such as: "Anak" (Child); "Bulag, Pipi, at Bingi" (Blind, Mute, and Deaf); "Siya ang iyong Ina" (She is your mother); "Pulubi" (Beggar); and "Mindanao" were analysed to present a clear description of this study and to attain its objective. All the songs were translated to English with the help of a prominent translator Marconi Stephen Joni. After the translations, have done, the songs were carefully read and critically analysed focusing on the meanings they conveyed which also support cultural values on nationalism.

### 4 DISCUSSIONS

The song "Anak" or "Child" depicts the cultural value placed upon children in the Filipino setting. The Filipino culture provides that marriage should eventually lead to parenthood and that the gap of marriage to parenthood is prescribed by society. As such, it is problematic for a couple to not have children on their first two years of marriage. A couple ("mag-asawa") will not be considered a family ("mag-anak") without the element of a child ("anak").

It is noted the changing cultural value placed upon children in terms of economic, psychological and social rewards and based on other factors such as the children's gender, birth orders, as well as the decline in fertility transition. One of the "values" of children is instrumental assistance, which is the help children would offer to their parents, economically, financially, domestically and socially. Marxist notions would claim that having children meant having hands to toil the field during the feudal times. In the modern society, however, it is middle-class children's schooling is the investment. After studying, children, especially older ones, are expected to provide financial assistance to their parents for their other siblings' education, as the Filipino's notion of *utang na loob* would suggest, to pay back their parents for their efforts.

Likewise, the disvalues of children are the financial costs they incur (such as for education or throughout their lifespan), the restriction on parents in terms of professional mobility, health considerations and parental responsibilities, and the costs of children to social relationships (such as marriage). Majority, or three out of four, of the disvalues of children in Bulatao's article had something to do with "costs". This is also evidenced by the study of purchase decisions in 60 families in Metro Manila where it was found out that children are important components of decision-making in terms of influencing the selection of goods.

According to Zelizer (1985:7), microeconomic theories of fertility could help explain the changing values of children to society,

which is taken into terms of the utility that parents acquire from their children. Thus, children who choose to rebel by not finishing schooling, running away from home or disobeying parents' wishes would prove to be of less utility, or "wasting" the investment that their parents made. This was the case in Freddie's personal life as reflected by the lyrics of the entire fifth stanza *Hindi mo man lang inisip / Na ang kamilang ginagawa'y para sa iyo / Pagka't ang nais mo masunod ang layaw mo / 'Di mo sila pinapansin*.

Parental roles emerged also as the theme of the songs "Anak" and "Siya ang iyong Ina" as they elaborate on the moral authority exercised by parents to their children in the Philippines. The lyrics of the former said that parents are the child's 'light' and that give valuable advices: "*At ang kamay nila ay iyong ilaw / ... At ang payo nila'y sinuway mo*" and the latter emphasized that it is the mother who is always at her child's side to take care of her/ him always: "*Magmula nung bata ka, ay 'di ka niya binayaan, lagi siya sa 'yong tabi di humihwalay sa 'yong piling*".

Similarly, The Child and Youth Welfare Code (1976) stated that it is the parents' right and obligation to discipline their children for them to form a good character. This is in line with another value of children, which is psychological appreciation, parents see their children as an incentive to succeed, to be responsible and moral because they have someone who looks up to them.

Another factor that drives parents to guide their children is that children's behavior is often seen as a reflection of their upbringing. In communities where family ties are close and neighborhood gossips are unavoidable, children carry more than the names of their family. They also carry the reputation of their parents as parents. As such, parents usually discipline their children in various and contextualized ways, which can cause tension within the relationship of the child and the parent, especially during the adolescent years. Adolescence may thus be considered as one of the most difficult periods in a child's life because while they are trying to assume the status of an adult, they are still seen as children, as illustrated by the lyrics: "*Ngayon nga'y malaki ka na / Nais mo'y maging malaya.*" (*Anak*) "*Di mo man lang pinansin ang kanyang mga bilin*" (*Siya ang iyong ina*).

Rojas (1998) enumerated the variables affecting parent-adolescent relationship strain and cited complexity in social structure as one. Davis claims that the lesser institutionalization of parental authority, confusion and inconsistency in child-rearing practices resulting to the confusion of standards and the existence of authorities outside the home contributes to the relationship strain between adolescents and their parents. These characteristics of strict child-rearing practices and at the same time less attention to moral guidance is pronounced in the urban poor that the relationship strain in adolescence is more evident in urban areas. The double standard in terms of child-rearing is also expressed in the song: *Sa gabi napupuyat ang iyong nanay / Sa pagtimpla ng gatas mo*. The mother is expected to nurture the child while the father is to provide and discipline him or her.

The third song "Bulag, Pipi, at Bingi" emphasizes that all individuals should enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and social privileges in doing so, physically impaired persons will receive fair and just treatment. The composer further elaborates the breaking of barriers such as ensuring that individuals fulfill their societal roles and receive what was their due from society. Moreover, he also argues that physically-impaired

are not different from those able-bodied persons for there are some of them who are considered blind because they are blinded by power and wealth, considered mute for not speaking the truths, and considered deaf for not hearing and helping the cries of his/ her countrymen.

The fourth song "Mindanao" depicts the horrible and tremendous effects of war in Mindanao which resulted to massive destruction of human lives, economy, society, dreams and ambitions of future. The composer of the song wants to convey his listeners the importance of peace and order for it unites religions and culture, incorporating values of security and harmony together with justice and respect for the human dignity. While peace undoubtedly, is one of the most universal and significant of human ideals, it is described as "one of the most positive symbols having meant for the whole humanity", the ways that we think about peace and how to attain it are often diffuse and content-dependent. Indeed, peace is the dream of every generation, the goal of every civil society.

Finally, the last song "Pulubi" embarks on love for social justice -- that all individuals should be treated equally regardless of their economic status and social standing. Not all of us are fortunate enough, others suffer because they cannot keep abreast with the fast-changing world and the increasing rate of population which results in too many people, but does not achieve good education, leads to increasing rate of unemployment in our country and eventually creates beggars on the streets and mendicants living in ghettos.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The five songs of Freddie Aguilar depict some cultural values on nationalism such as family solidarity which is found in the songs "Anak" and "Siya ang iyong Ina", love for social justice in the songs "Pulubi" and "Bulag, Pipi, at Bingi" and love for peace and order and concern for national unity, and love for social justice in the song "Mindanao". The composer of the said songs emphasizes the importance of cultural nationalism which encompasses the feelings of cultural pride that people have in a society. Family solidarity is included in the nationalism for family is the primary institution to develop the attitudes of individuals and the performance of each family member in the society that is learned at home. Furthermore, love for social justice, national unity and love for peace and order are essential to realize the vision of having a non-violent, quiet, peaceful and orderly way of living. It is through reviving these cultural values on nationalism that peace will be feasible, attainable and will no longer remain as a dream of every generation and a goal of every civil society. To live peacefully and harmoniously is the best legacy that we can pass on to our children and to the next generation to come.

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