



Straitjacket Sexualities: Unbinding Asian American Manhoods in the Movies

Celine Shimizu

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Depictions of Asian American men as effeminate or asexual pervade popular movies. Hollywood has made clear that Asian American men lack the qualities inherent to the heroic heterosexual male. This restricting, circumscribed vision of masculinity—a straitjacketing, according to author Celine Parreñas Shimizu—aggravates Asian American male sexual problems both on and off screen.

Straitjacket Sexualities: Unbinding Asian American Manhoods in the Movies looks to cinematic history to reveal the dynamic ways Asian American men, from Bruce Lee to Long Duk Dong, create and claim a variety of masculinities. Representations of love, romance, desire, and lovemaking show how Asian American men fashion manhoods that negotiate the dynamics of self and other, expanding our ideas of sexuality. The unique ways in which Asian American men express intimacy is powerfully represented onscreen, offering distinct portraits of individuals struggling with group identities. Rejecting "macho" men, these movies stake Asian American manhood on the notion of caring for, rather than dominating, others.

Straitjacket Sexualities identifies a number of moments in the movies wherein masculinity is figured anew. By looking at intimate relations on screen, power as sexual prowess and brute masculinity is redefined, giving primacy to the diverse ways Asian American men experience complex, ambiguous, and ambivalent genders and sexualities.

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