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FROM HERO TO SICARIO: A Lyrical Deconstruction of the Antagonist in Malique's "Ayuh"

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Abstract

This paper presents a detailed lyrical analysis of Malique's verses in the song "Ayuh," from the Polis Evo film soundtrack, arguing that the lyrics construct a multi-layered antagonist through a sophisticated synthesis of classical archetypes and contemporary metaphors. The analysis deconstructs two distinct but interconnected personas. The first is the "Mastermind," a vengeful figure resurrected from a past defeat. This persona is examined through its use of archaic Malay vocabulary (*sakti*, *daksina ke paksina*) and its psychological depth, portraying a character whose aggression masks a "fragile emotional state" (*emosi rapuhnya*). The core of this identity is the potent metaphor of "Kitol Al Iskariot," a new archetype created by fusing historical and religious symbols of ultimate betrayal. The paper then analyzes the lyrical shift to the second persona: the "Operator," an anonymous and unstoppable instrument of modern warfare. This identity is built through imagery of military hardware (*balaklava*, *logam hitam*) and cemented by cultural shorthand referencing both elite weaponry ("Bruno Steyr NATO") and the perfect synthesis of strategy and force ("Marco Polo Rambo"). Ultimately, this study concludes that Malique's lyrical craftsmanship demonstrates the capacity of hip-hop to serve as a medium for complex character development, effectively creating a compelling villain who is at once a product of timeless grievance and an embodiment of a modern threat.

*Bangkit dari bara lalu dihembusnya nyawa
Saktinya dan aksinya rencananya bencana
Daktina ke paksina negara dalam senggara
Maka pesta kerja raya lena senggama tergendala
Gara gugat-ganggu hantu dari dasawarsa lalu
Katanya tagih darah sahah justifikasi ragu
Emosi rapuhnya dipagar fasad jago sado
Dendam lama dicandu dibakar ego dan bravado bravo
Dia Kitol Al Iskariot
Dari hero ke Sicario
Dari Bari dia kembali cari ahli biro di kota dan Barrio
Jari-jarinya menari-nari cari tabur lari-lari Mario
Dari api dia menjadi-jadi satu di dahi dia kembali yo
Balaklavaku hitam
Badanku lapis kalis
Aneka logam hitam
Siapa yang mampu kalis
Bruno Steyr NATO woaah
Marco Polo Rambo go*

1. The Analysis

Malique's verse constructs its antagonist by first establishing a mythic and catastrophic presence. The opening line, "Bangkit dari bara lalu dihembusnya nyawa" (Rises from the embers, then life is blown into him), immediately evokes the imagery of a phoenix, a creature reborn from its own destruction. However, the passive voice "dihembusnya nyawa" suggests he is not self-revived but resurrected by an external force, like a djinn or golem summoned for a dark purpose. This supernatural origin is reinforced by the term "Saktinya", a word with deep roots in Malay and Sanskrit culture signifying a potent, mystical power far beyond ordinary human ability. This power is directed towards a singular, devastating goal: "rencananya bencana" (his plan is disaster). The scale of this disaster is conveyed using the elevated, poetic terms "Daktina ke paksina" (South to North), which, instead of modern directional words, employs archaic language to give the threat an epic, almost ancient scope. The consequence is national suffering, or "negara dalam senggara", where *senggara* implies a deep and prolonged state of misery. The societal breakdown is vividly illustrated by the line "Maka pesta kerja raya lena senggama tergendala", which lists the pillars of a functioning civilization—celebration, public works, peaceful sleep, and intimacy—and shows them all grinding to a halt, signifying a holistic attack on the nation's soul.

The verse then dissects the villain's complex psychology, identifying him as a "hantu dari dasawarsa lalu" (a ghost from a decade ago). This metaphor frames him not as a literal specter, but as a lingering, unresolved threat from the past whose grudge has festered over time. His mission is fueled by a visceral need for revenge, described as a craving for "legitimate blood" ("tagih darah sahlah"), yet this is immediately undermined as a "justifikasi ragu" (a doubtful justification). Herein lies the core of his character: the chasm between his self-perception and reality. This is powerfully captured in the line "Emosi rapuhnya dipagar fasad jago sado" (His fragile emotions are fenced by a facade of a muscular champion). This juxtaposition of modern slang like jago sado (a tough, muscular man) with the delicate concept of emosi rapuhnya (fragile emotions) paints a portrait of profound insecurity masked by hyper-masculine aggression. His long-held grudge is not just a motive; it has been weaponized into an addiction, where the old revenge "dicandu dibakar ego dan bravado" (is made into an addiction, burned by ego and bravado). The narrator's final, sarcastic "bravo" is a masterful touch, a theatrical flourish that dismisses the villain's entire persona as a fragile, ego-driven performance.

The antagonist's identity is unequivocally cemented in the verse's most critical metaphor: "Dia Kitol Al Iskariot". This is not merely a comparison; it is a fusion, the creation of a new, compound archetype of absolute betrayal. By merging Si Kitol, the infamous traitor from the Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals) who symbolizes betrayal against one's own nation and people, with Iskariot (Judas Iscariot), the ultimate symbol of spiritual and moral betrayal in a global context, Malique crafts a figure of unparalleled treachery. This epic, historical identity is then violently modernized in the next line: "Dari hero ke Sicario". This transition charts his entire moral collapse, from a revered "hero" to a "Sicario," a term for a modern, ruthless cartel hitman. The fall from grace is both tragic and terrifying, grounding the mythical betrayer in a gritty, contemporary reality. This new identity as a hitman is brutally efficient, as he returns "cari ahli biro di kota dan Barrio" (to find bureau members in the city and the Barrio), systematically hunting the organs of the state. The use of the Spanish "Barrio" adds a layer of international grit to his operations.

The verse culminates in a series of cryptic yet vivid metaphors describing the villain's methods and return. The line "Jari-jarinya menari-nari cari tabur lari-lari Mario" is a brilliant piece of modern imagery. The "dancing fingers" evoke a puppet master pulling strings behind a screen—a digital phantom engaged in hacking, spreading disinformation, or coordinating chaos online. The comparison to the video game character Mario, frantically running and collecting rewards, cleverly suggests a chaotic, almost manic energy as he simultaneously dismantles society while grabbing for power or resources. His final resurgence is described as "Dari api dia menjadi-jadi satu di dahi dia kembali yo" (From the fire he becomes more intense/worse, one on his forehead, he returns, yo). The fire has not just reborn him; it has made him more extreme (menjadi-jadi). The phrase "satu di dahi" (one on his forehead) is a powerful, ambiguous symbol. It could signify his single-minded obsession, a metaphorical third eye of malevolent purpose, or even a mark of sin and damnation, like the Mark of Cain.

In a stark tonal shift, the lyrics then construct the persona of the physical operator, an anonymous instrument of force. His identity is deliberately erased behind a "Balaklavaku hitam" (My balaclava is black), a symbol of special forces, insurgency, and intimidation. He is presented as invulnerable, his body "lapis kalis" (layered to be resistant/proof), a direct reference to modern body armor. He is heavily armed with "Aneka logam hitam" (Assorted black metals), a menacingly poetic euphemism for a diverse arsenal of firearms. Having built this image of an unstoppable soldier, he throws down a gauntlet with the rhetorical question, "Siapa yang mampu kalis" (Who is able to resist?). Malique cleverly reuses the word kalis, twisting its meaning from "proof" to "withstand" or "defy," making the line a boast of absolute tactical superiority.

This operator persona is instantly credentialed through a rapid-fire sequence of cultural and technical shorthand. The line "Bruno Steyr NATO woah" serves as a concise and powerful declaration of his arsenal's quality. Bruno (referencing Brno) signifies classic, high-quality European firearm manufacturing; Steyr points to the iconic Austrian rifle used by elite forces worldwide (including Malaysia's); and NATO confirms that his equipment is of the highest military-grade standard. It is a trinity of authenticity. The verse climaxes with the ultimate synthesis of skill: "Marco Polo Rambo go". This line defines him as the perfect warrior by fusing two potent archetypes. He embodies the strategic mind, intelligence, and navigational cunning of Marco Polo with the raw, untamable combat prowess and one-man-army capabilities of Rambo. He is the complete package—brains and brawn—a perfect weapon whose activation is signaled by the final, chilling command: "go".



Figure 1: Mind Map of the Lyrical Analysis

The mind map that visually deconstructs the lyrical analysis into a logical tree structure, making the complex ideas easy to navigate. At the very center is the main trunk of our topic: Lyrical Analysis of "Ayuh." From this core concept, four primary branches extend, each representing a major analytical framework or lens through which to view the lyrics: Linguistic, Character, Cultural, and Psychological Analysis. Each of these main branches then sprouts smaller, more detailed branches that contain the specific evidence and key concepts. For example, the "Character & Archetypal Analysis" branch leads to leaves like "The Fallen Hero" and "The Betrayer," while the "Intertextual & Cultural" branch points to specific allusions such as "Si Kitol," "Rambo," and "NATO." This branching structure allows you to see the big picture at a glance and then follow any path to explore the intricate details that support the main analytical points, showing how every small detail connects back to the central theme.



Figure 2: Lyrical visualized by Generative AI

Using ChatGPT with DALL·E image generation capabilities, a prompt was given to visualize the meaning behind Malique's powerful and politically charged verse from the song "Ayuh", featured in the film Polis Evo 3. The prompt aimed to capture the essence of a lyric that narrates a fiery resurrection, betrayal, fragile masculinity masked by bravado, and the transformation of a national hero into a dark, militarized figure—drawing on imagery of Kitol, the infamous Malay traitor, and Judas Iscariot, symbolizing vengeance and chaos amidst digital and national collapse. The generated image is a hyperrealistic, cinematic digital portrait of a charismatic Southeast Asian man in black tactical gear, emerging through swirling embers and smoke. His calm yet sinister smirk conceals emotional fragility, with a ghostly second face behind him hinting at betrayal. His fingers dance mid-air, suggesting manipulation and chaos, while the backdrop shows the Kuala Lumpur skyline—Petronas Towers barely visible under a crimson sky, signifying national turmoil. The lighting is high-contrast and fiery, emphasizing his transformation from fallen hero to a vengeful force. The visual output successfully translates the lyrical symbolism and emotional complexity into a striking, cohesive image that amplifies the layered meaning of the original verse.

2. Reference

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