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## Body, Melancholia, and Coming-of-Age Narrative: The Gendered Politics in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*

Rie Makino

### Abstract

In Jessica Tarahata Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, the portrayals of gendered and class politics through two protagonists - Rio Gonzaga and Joey Sands - reveal new Filipino/a nationalism that transcends the nation-state apparatus. In the context of her novels, U.S. imperialism is an ideology that provokes colonial violence through global capitalism. Against this ideological force, each protagonist constructs resistance through cooperation and interaction with others. Rio Gonzaga, the upper-class Filipina, is considered in many ways the reflection of Hagedorn herself. Thus, the novel can be read as a self-criticism, which reveals the difficulty of constructing an autonomous local/national Filipina identity under the complex layers of colonization. The final scene, in which Rio, discovering her radical feminist identity (implying also that she might become aware of her lesbianism), leaves the Philippines and migrates to the United States, is in sync with the writer's autobiographical element. Juxtaposed to this female protagonist, the text presents localized masculinity, as represented by Joey Sands, a working-class male prostitute, interacting with the narratives of other subaltern female characters. This local male character attempts to make amends for Rio's absent presence throughout the novel. This paper analyzes parallels between the two protagonists and explores Hagedorn's narrative strategy of criticism of her own transnational subjectivity (Rio) in contrast to Joey's national subjectivity.

### Introduction

In *Dogeaters*, Filipina American writer Jessica Tarahata Hagedorn articulates her diasporic perspective to criticize U.S. influence in the Philippines. The setting of this novel is the Marcos era (1965-86) when the Philippines was under U.S. political control. One might view the tragic struggle of the Philippines through General Emilio

Aguinaldo, who escaped from Spanish colonization by the “heroism” of the United States; yet, this situation culminated in his submitting the Philippines to U.S imperialism. Because of the Spanish–American War in 1898, the United States interregnum in Filipino politics was reinforced by blurring the distinction between colonialism and imperialism. Robert Young stresses imperialism as an ideological concept in contrast to the practical system of colonialism(17): “[i]mperialism was a dynamic, never a static system, and reflected in its international basis the expansive process of production and consumption that mature capitalism had introduced into the world economic structure” (31). In Hagedorn’s novels overall, and *Dogeaters* in particular, U.S. imperialism, intertwined with the global power of capitalism, becomes an ideological influence—neocolonialism—on the formation of national subjects in the Philippines.

The postcolonial resistance to U.S. imperialism in the Philippines is embodied in the struggle against two types of Western colonization: Spanish and U.S. dominations. Landing in the Philippines in the mid-sixteenth century, Spanish Catholic priests played a major role in subjugating the natives through their missionary work. Against this colonial domination, the Filipino resistance in the mid-nineteenth century was led by the elite *mestizos*. U.S. imperial politics after the Spanish–American war, however, was more insidious than this Spanish domination. President William McKinley, under his rhetoric of “benevolent assimilation,” justified U.S. colonialism. The Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century was split between these two “fathering” nations while simultaneously in need of constructing its national identity. Under the U.S influence, Filipinos were divided into two groups: “civilized” and “wild.” While the civilized tended to adhere to Spanish rules, thus following the Christian doctrine, “the wild” who were outside this religious category (such as Muslims and animists) were considered subjects more likely receptive to “American-style athletic competitions” (Rafael 197). The tension between former Spanish colonization and U.S. “benevolent assimilation” continued even after WWII.

In her novel *Dogeaters*, Hagedorn questions the concept of nation, specifically the Philippines under U.S. control, by describing the gendered politics of the novel’s central female and male characters. *Dogeaters* portrays numerous characters of different classes and genders: upper-class politician’s daughters, a waiter who aspires to be an actor, a Filipino gay male movie star and his bodyguard, the general’s protégé who plans the Senator’s assassination, the Senator’s “beauty queen” daughter, and a working-class male prostitute and hustler who becomes a cultural guerrilla. Among these characters, an upper-class girl, Rio Gonzaga, and a working-class male prostitute, Joey Sands, are key to Hagedorn’s project of representing national resistance to U.S. imperialism. Their adolescent, ongoing subjectivities underscore their roles as Filipina/o characters with flexible national consciousness in search of decolonization.

In *Dogeaters*, the portrayals of gendered and class politics through these characters reveal new Filipino/a nationalism that transcends the nation-state apparatus. In the context of Hagedorn's novels, U.S. imperialism is an ideology that provokes colonial violence through global capitalism. Against this ideological force, each protagonist constructs resistance through cooperation and interaction with others. The character of Rio Gonzaga is considered in many ways the reflection of Hagedorn herself. Thus, the novel can be read as a self-criticism, which reveals the difficulty of constructing an autonomous local/national Filipina identity under the complex layers of colonization. The final scene, in which Rio, discovering her radical feminist identity (implying also that she might become aware of her lesbianism), leaves the Philippines and migrates to the United States, is in sync with the writer's autobiographical aspect.<sup>1</sup> Juxtaposed to this female protagonist, the text presents localized masculinity, as represented by Joey Sands, interacting with the narratives of other subaltern female characters. This local male subject attempts to make amends for Rio's absent presence throughout the novel. Therefore, this paper analyzes parallels between the two protagonists and explores Hagedorn's narrative strategy of criticism of her own transnational subjectivity (Rio) in contrast to Joey's national subjectivity.

## I . Nation and Melancholia: Theoretical Frame

Globalization is not a dynamic consisting of the colonizer/colonized dichotomy. Rather, it consists of interactions between consumer/colonized and producer/colonizer. According to Arjun Appadurai, the United States is no longer the center of capitalism but, instead, is "one mode of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (31). Therefore, U.S. globalization is mitigated by the local resistant subjectivity of each Third World nation that reconstructs, subverts, and internalizes the hegemonic image while mimicking this dominant power. Repetition and mimicry, as Homi Bhabha puts it, become local resistant tactics under the concept of globalization. Appadurai's theory of globalization, however, is challenged by Chinese American anthropologist Aihwa Ong's gendered perspective toward capital mobility and migration. Preferring the term transnationalism to globalization, Ong points out the subject position of the localized —the poor and the women—in current transnational studies (11). Her research is based on the diaspora of elite Asian businessmen—Chinese men—who combine Confucian doctrines with U.S. capitalistic practices. Although she terms these elite men "flexible citizens," Ong's perspective toward mobile/transnational men is critical.<sup>2</sup> The outcome of transnational business delineates a power structure in which transnationally mobile men establish marital or extramarital relationships with local women who depend on the men's economic support for survival. From her

anthropological viewpoint, Ong points out the essentialist, gendered politics that exists between transnational men and local women in the current manifestation of global society.

Although acknowledging such gendered politics in the field of social science, Hagedorn attempts fictionally to reverse its dynamics in *Dogeaters*. The novel presents a new gendered frame—female transnationality and male locality—to articulate local masculinity while criticizing the pitfalls of radical feminism. The intersubjectivity between female transnationality and male locality consists of the literary relationship between two peripheral subjects—a working-class prostitute, Joey and an upper-class politician's daughter, Rio. In so doing, Hagedorn includes radical criticism of her reflection (Rio) within a frame of subversion; the elite characters are victims of neocolonialism haunted by perpetual national melancholia, but the working-class figures seize the chance to transgress nation-state politics by overcoming the neocolonial condition. Rio Gonzaga perceives a neocolonial force yet cannot act. This passivity creates melancholia based on the inability to articulate autonomous Filipina nationalism. Joey Sands also exhibits melancholia stemming from the loss of his cultural roots. The difference between these melancholic subjects, however, is their process of dealing with loss. In contrast to Rio's pervasive, haunting melancholia, Joey undergoes several phases that eventually heal his state of mind. This working-class male character demonstrates a psychological development through his coming-of-age narrative by confronting, digesting, and resolving his neocolonial circumstances.

Judith Butler gives us a clue to analyze the melancholic symptoms of Hagedorn's characters under complex cultural and gendered politics. Influenced by Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, Butler expands this theory, focusing on her analysis of melancholia. Freudian psychoanalysis defines two types of grief: mourning and melancholia. Mourning is a temporal emotional loss overcome by the passage of time, whereas melancholia stems from a psychological trauma based on feelings of loss that can never be fulfilled; thus with melancholia, an individual suffers perpetual dissatisfaction and depression. In both mourning and melancholia, a person who confronts grief may undergo two types of identification with the lost object—introjection and incorporation. For example, in the case of a child who loses its mother, introjection is an act of internalizing the value of the mother that leads to the formation of its superego. In the event, the child recognizes the fact of losing its mother by representing her as a value. By contrast, melancholia never allows the child to accept the loss of the loved object. Therefore, identification with the object takes the form of incorporation: the process in which the lost object is preserved on the surface of the body by rejecting the loss. Butler expands the concept of incorporation as a significant phase for her gender theory. She explains, "If it [an incorporate space] is not literally

within the body, perhaps it is *on* the body as its surface signification such that the body must itself be understood as an incorporated space”(86). To express this concept differently—grief appears on the body in some way to represent one’s loss. The lost object in Butler’s theory is the sexual norm with which one wants to identify, yet complete identification can never be achieved.

In their coming-of-age narratives, Rio Gonzaga and Joey Sands embody Butler’s theory of melancholia. Both are haunted by feelings of loss caused by their dislocations. Moreover, at first, they do not know what they lack: Rio, her radical female identity that is unfit for the Philippines; Joey, the loss of his cultural roots, his “whore” mother whose miserable life he does not want to admit. For both Rio and Joey, melancholia stems from denigration of the lost objects. Unaware of her lesbianism, Rio incorporates by cutting off all of her hair “to celebrate” her first menstruation (236). Identification with lesbianism is reinscribed on the surface of her body in the form of gendered performance. Likewise, Joey incorporates his “whore” mother onto his body—his male prostitute’s beautiful, feminine physique. The difference between Rio and Joey, however, is defined by the plotline: Joey’s search for an ethnic national identity manifests the two psychological phases of incorporation and introjection, while Rio’s search leaves her in a state of perpetual incorporation. Thus, Hagedorn establishes a defamiliarizing strategy to criticize Rio as an upper-class transnational female subject by contrasting Joey’s dramatic transformation as a successful case of decolonization.

In *Dogeaters*, two social classes—the upper and working class—are able to defy moral restrictions through their extreme wealth or poverty. The upper class exploits the standing between the Philippines and the United States, and the working class lives in the impoverished, underworld Philippines; yet, both classes construct a new, (trans) national consciousness. The peripheral subjects search for a common locus of interclass conflict that contests neocolonial Philippines as a nation-state and, in so doing, provides a resource for their Filipina/o identity formations.

## II. Invisible Daughter and Her Local American Father: Rio Gonzaga

Describing the relationship between women and nation, Nira Yuval-Davis argues that women’s positions are highly significant yet simultaneously excluded from the political sphere (26-38). Women within a nation’s patriarchal and militant system are mere bodies under state control, existing to reproduce human beings for military/national forces, while men engage in more intellectual activity, constructing and protecting cultures. Under such a militant/nationalistic system, diverse forms of femininities are restricted by essentializing woman as (hetero)sexual partner and reproducer.

In *Dog eaters*, then, the striking difference between Rio Gonzaga and the other female characters is Rio's dislocated femininity that cannot fit into her neocolonial circumstance. Nowhere in the novel does anyone describe her physical characteristics. In other words, her physical existence is suspended. This implies that although she is situated at the center of a group, she is never deeply involved in any activity. She observes others rather than living her life, and this passive onlooker stance eventually desexualizes her gendered position. To borrow Butler's expression, gender is an act of reiterating the prescribed, sexed positions under social regulations. The world of *Dog eaters* presents several heterosexual femininities designated by the nation-state—mother, wife, daughter, and mistress—that Rio does not want to, or cannot, reiterate.<sup>3</sup> Her first-person, but self-detached narrative shows her inability to refigure her body as a visible Filipina in the nation. She perceives herself as an absent presence, a specter that does not exist in society as a lived subject.

In a sense, Rio's narrative reveals an immature general perspective toward Filipino men. Most male characters in *Dog eaters*, except Joey Sands, appear consistently as superficial: they are either merciless villains who reinforce class, sexual, and racial prejudice or vulnerable, emasculated victims of U.S. capitalism who cannot escape cultural imperialism.<sup>4</sup> If, as Giovanna Covi asserts, we consider Rio as the central intelligence in *Dog eaters*, the portraits of these male characters are imaginary creations of the sarcasm she has imbibed as an upper-class Filipina intellectual.<sup>5</sup> Like a lady who looks down on working and middle-class people from her small window, Rio literally "looks down on" the male characters; therefore, she cannot find a connection to other, multiple layers of society.<sup>6</sup> Although through our view of *Dog eaters* as Rio's microcosmic, imaginary world, she directs this multi-vocal drama, she ends up with a limited, gendered status that never allows her to transcend the passive role.<sup>7</sup>

For Rio, the United States becomes a resource for her transformation from a subaltern woman to a Filipina American who has the power of language to recollect her adolescence. However, her transnationality is accomplished through her abandonment of the Philippines as a hopeless nation. Rio's lesbian identity and her eventual choice of celibacy constitute resistance to nation-state hegemony; she leaves her nation by assimilating into a new circumstance, the United States, which has the capacity to accept various types of female identities. By this logic, Hagedorn avoids female bonding such as the mother-daughter relationship and, instead, focuses on cross-gender relation—father-daughter—as the anti-imperial locus of a new national bond that connects the protagonists with the postcolonial Philippines.

In *Dog eaters*, the relationship between Filipina femininity, represented by Rio, and white American masculinity, represented by her American grandfather Whitman Logan, is framed by complex racial power structure. Whitman's character is unique

in that he maintains a colonizer's traits; yet, those traits no longer constitute the hegemonic power of U.S. control because of former colonizers' assimilation into the Philippines. In other words, the hegemony of white American masculinities is contested in transnational contexts. On this point, Charlotte Hooper's analysis of white masculinities under globalization provides insight into the complex representation of Whitman Logan. Hooper, in *Manly States*, explores how the condition of "hegemonic masculinity" (in Hooper's framework, Anglo American, white, and elite masculinity) under globalization is now in the process of transformation: "There is no simple movement from one kind of hegemonic masculinity to another... These moves have often been contradictory, some pulling one way and some pulling another, and some even undermining hegemonic masculinity altogether" (158). The hegemonic forms of gendered subjectivities, according to Hooper, can lose central authority in international/global relationships.

In *Dogeaters*, the power to dissolve white American hegemonic masculinities is activated by Whitman Logan's spontaneous interactions with Filipino female protagonists. Whitman stands as a new, local male subject—personifying anti-imperial American masculinity. Hagedorn carefully chooses the name Whitman from a nineteenth-century American transcendentalist poet, Walt Whitman, who addresses various male representations: American fatherhood, free spirit, and homo(bi)sexuality. Because of its symbolic masculinity, Rio considers Whitman Logan, her American grandfather, not her intimate relative, but rather a collective image of classic American men: "I associate with old American men and my grandfather Whitman, whom I love" (14). From Rio's perspective, Whitman, while representing old America as the nation of freedom, also embodies the decay of America as a colonial empire. On his deathbed at the hospital, he struggles with the mysterious Filipino malady *bangungot* (14). Whitman's physical pain is symbolically invaded by Filipino postcoloniality. In Allan P. Isaac's expression, Whitman's pain from the Filipino malady indicates "the Filipino postcolonial imagination that claims American bodies and culture... To fit its needs and reality, the postcolonial imagination must continually deform and disfigure 'America' to the breaking point in order to tell its stories" (154). Whitman invokes and internalizes the colonized power over his body as retribution. However, the legal will that he leaves for his Filipina daughter Dolores and granddaughter Rio reflects his apologetic sympathy toward his subaltern female relatives who are leaving their nation to live in the United States. Rio's life in the United States is promising because of Whitman's economic support. His final words, "Chicago, Chicago, Chicago" (16)—a location symbolizing U.S. capitalism—are a Dreiserian dénouement indicating that although he possesses capitalistic support for his Filipina(grand)daughters, relocation is the only way to save them.<sup>8</sup> Whitman, though his existence is consistently spectral, stands as a

powerful supporter who encourages his subaltern female family members.

The male connection with her grandfather becomes an intervention for Rio's identity construction. Rio's promising future is not achieved through her own will but is accidentally given as "a gift" by this American grandfather. In the process, Rio is saved from the miserable destinies of other Filipina characters in the Philippines. Nevertheless, these conditions reinforce the controversial racial and class power structure, as Spivak notes, of "[w]hite men saving brown women from brown men" (121). Rio's perpetual melancholia stems from the ironic racial and class politics that allows her no choice but to rely on U.S. imperialism during the process of constructing her female autonomy.

### III. Local Son and His Subaltern Mother: Joey Sands

The critique of U.S. imperialism in *Dogeaters* does not merely deny U.S. culture but rather subverts its central authority through the characters' combination of resistance and assimilation. Instead of deploring their colonized condition, the resistant characters take a complex route "to celebrate our Otherness, our difference" (San Juan, 7), with admiration for U.S. influence. Hagedorn exposes U.S. cultural imperialism's corruption of the Philippines while presenting a strategy for subverting its hegemony through the marginalized characters. Among them, Joey Sands succeeds in articulating his Filipino national identity with the help of subaltern mother figures. The construction of his national identity is revealed through a coming-of-age narrative in which he rediscovers his mother's memory and recognizes that postcolonial resistance is not based on a militant and masculine national narrative.

Joey Sands is a complex figure who appears to use his homosexuality as a site of postcolonial resistance. Even so, he eventually discovers that his sexual orientation is not freely chosen but forced upon him by circumstances. In portraying Joey's national identity, Hagedorn challenges the general concept that nationalism in a dictatorial nation is masculine and militant. Rachel Lee and Viet Thah Nguyen comment on Joey's "homosexual" masculinity on the basis of the Filipino tradition that accepts homosexuals as the cultural group *bakla*: "the queer body serves as an ideal postcolonial subject that demonstrates the ways by which legacies of the colonial era can be critiqued and overthrown" (Nguyen 126) and naturally defined as one visible form of male local/national resistant subject in the Philippines (Lee 101)<sup>9</sup>.

My argument, however, challenges their interpretations, which emphasize Joey's nationalism within male homosexual discourse. I would rather see his homosexuality as a mask to conceal his melancholia and his nationalism as constructed with the support of subaltern female characters. His relationship with his dead mother, Zenaida, is a revised Oedipal bond through which Joey integrates the dysfunctional maternal



memory into an autonomous bond to his nation. Rio remains perpetually melancholic always in a state of Freudian incorporation, but Joey experiences a psychological awakening that overcomes his melancholia.

Joey's melancholic state of mind stems from the lost object, his mother, Zenaida, who commits suicide and abandons him because of poverty. According to Joey's surrogate father, Uncle, Zenaida is simply a pathetic prostitute, "desperate, half-crazy, unable to feed me[Joey]and herself those last few months"(42)and thus chooses death as the solution. Devastated, Joey rejects Zenaida as if she did not exist: "I don't want to remember anything else about my sad whore of a mother. I've heard enough"(43). Instead, Joey feels greater intimacy toward his African American GI father whom he has never met and who actually abandoned both Joey and his mother. Calling himself "GI baby, black boy, I am the son of rock 'n' roll, I am the son of R and B"(205), Joey's postcolonial resistance is associated with his father's African American militancy and masculine characteristics. As his friend Andre clearly asserts, "You're lucky you have Negro blood... a little black is good for the soul"(34). Relying on the absent paternal American side of his cultural heritage, Joey attempts to expel the memory of his Filipina subaltern mother as his invisible and shameful part.

Although he attempts to expel his mother's memory, Joey's melancholia, resulting from her loss, is ironically carved on his body. Yet, he does not know the reasons for his grief. For instance, his unusual excretions represent the inability to digest his Filipino culture. He once confesses, "Sometimes I shit all day long. I wonder where all my shit is coming from, especially when I don't eat. I don't eat for days, sometimes. How come I shit? It's scary at first. Then it feels good. Good shit cleans out my system. I get rid of everything"(145). Such image of excretion overlaps the death scene in which Zenaida's body is found in the river, "a watery grave black with human shit, every dead thing and piece of garbage imaginable"(42). Obviously, he considers his maternal culture, in Julia Kristeva's term, "abject," a substance that he expels from his psyche even though it returns to haunt him like a specter. At a symbolic level, Joey "devours" his Filipina mother as his incorporation, but his melancholia remains in his body like hysteria.

As a strong reaction against subaltern women whom he considers abject, Joey constructs a homosexual identity. Like his dead mother, the abject image of an elderly Filipina woman reappears in the scene of his first sexual contact—with a Filipina prostitute who has an "ox-face" and "sour smell"(44). As a ten-year-old boy who has just been through the traumatic death of his mother, Joey is forced to have sexual relations with this prostitute under the supervision of Uncle, his surrogate father. Joey, whose hair is shaved by Uncle, feels vulnerable in front of this huge "ox-woman" who wears "bloody lipstick"(44). His narrative of this encounter evokes images of rape: "Her broad, ox-face and dark, bloody lipstick repulsed me. I turned my face away, wouldn't let her

kiss me” (44). The experience is so traumatic that it changes his sexual preference: he begins to prefer men. Joey’s statement, “For me, men are easy” (44), serves as an excuse for his inability to understand the female psyche that resides, traumatically, behind the ox-woman’s blank face. Joey’s queerness, therefore, is never portrayed as anti-imperial resistance. Rather, he is simply a victim of Uncle’s plan to commodify his body as an exotic product. Joey simply performs his designated, sexed position as a gay prostitute and deludes himself into concealing his melancholia. Toward the Filipina women—Zenaida and the prostitute—Joey uses the same strategy of deleting their memories while reinforcing male bonding: he thus trusts Uncle’s story about Zenaida and his own homosexual preference. The trauma caused by these subaltern women takes a complex form that overwhelms Joey. In other words, older, stronger women—mother figures—emasculate the previously heterosexual Joey.

In body politics, however, it is not Joey’s supposedly homosexual mind but his queer appearance as a performative body that represents an anti-imperial masculinity. For example, in front of his German customer, Joey thinks, “I’m the statue of a magnificent young god in a beautiful garden” (132), accepting that he is a commodity, an object—a statue—for his customer. Joey continues, “Maybe he’s [the customer is] God the Father, lost in paradise. He can’t get over how perfect I am; he can’t get over the perfection of his own creation” (132). Using his body, Joey challenges Western hegemonic masculinity. However, Joey’s perceived superiority not only indicates a rejection of this colonial subject—the German—but also scatters his authority. Joey accepts the hegemonic position of the German customer by imbuing him with the Christian image of God the Father. By identifying Joey with a Filipino pagan god, Hagedorn utilizes his homosexual body to de-center Eurocentric masculinity. In so doing, Hagedorn also stresses Joey’s belief that his homosexuality is a mere Filipino product for white European customers.

Joey’s queerness, not based on his spontaneous anti-imperialism, serves as a strategy to conceal his melancholia.<sup>10</sup> His unusual excretions and identification with a statue reflect a psychological condition in which he cannot consider his body as part of himself. Joey’s melancholia is thus rooted in his absent sense of body. Hagedorn portrays Joey’s process of overcoming melancholia through the act of eating. Eating is to recognize the object (food) and then internalize it. Symbolically, digesting is an act of recognizing or understanding that one has lost the object and melancholia is rooted in our inability to accept that we have lost (eaten) the object. One of the psychological symptoms of melancholia is that we do not even know what we have lost, and thus we are perpetually haunted.

In the chapter called “Hunger,” Joey has an epiphany; he reconstructs his identity by digesting the memory of his mother after witnessing Senator Avila’s assassination. Hagedorn overlaps Joey’s epiphany with the nation’s crisis (151). For the first time, Joey

feels his life threatened, and he perceives danger with his entire body: “I see everything. I want to scream, concrete sidewalk pressed against my face, my face twisted as I snatch one more glance at the blood in the lobby, imaginary gun pressed against the back of my head by imaginary assassins, my flesh burst open” (151). He begins to think about protecting his body from this life-threatening circumstance, and the epiphany comes to his body as intense hunger: “Joey suddenly thought of food. Something in a brown, tangy sauce poured over hot, steaming rice. Some kind of spicy meat, maybe chicken or goat. He thought of how the rice would fill his burning stomach, easing the pangs of hunger he was beginning to feel again” (195). To underline his emerging national subjectivity, what occurs to him as nutritionally satisfying is Filipino food, not American food that he prefers.

As a unique symptom, hunger signifies the power of survival and seeking salvation from God. Joey goes to the church only to discover that in its Eurocentric Christian ideology, Jesus is “definitely a white man, Charleston Heston in robes, with flowing white hair and matching beard” (190). Devastated by the appearance of this Christian God, Joey begins to associate his hunger with his dead mother who fed and raised him: “‘Zenaida, Zenaida,’ Joey whispered to himself, ‘Mother of God, my god, the bastard [Uncle] buried you’” (205). His hunger is his desire to digest his mother’s memory, to accept her existence. Joey’s hungry body is thus deeply related to his psychological need to reify his mother, forgotten and buried in his mind.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Joey’s local masculinity becomes symbolically associated with the mother nation, the Philippines, after he leaves his foster father, Uncle, and becomes a cultural guerrilla at the end of the novel (232–3). He literally exists underground to protect the Philippines from the intrusion of U.S. imperialism.

## Conclusion

The Filipino/a nationalism in Hagedorn’s two texts is delineated through two character types—upper-class transnational femininity and working-class local masculinity—each representing a peripheral class in the neocolonial Philippines under U.S. politics. In terms of national subject, Leslie Bow remarks, “[W]oman’s act of cultivating her national identity is an anathema; she is either integrated into her nation as a female subject within the frame of masculine nationalism or becomes a betrayer who ‘disrupt[s] the loyalties’ of this national narrative” (7). Bow notes that the masculine discourse of nationalism sees female transnationality as an act of “betrayals” because of women’s desire to assimilate into U.S. culture. Rio’s melancholia remains perpetually unresolved because she feels guilty for abandoning her nation.

The different ways of constructing the gendered national identities of each protagonist—Rio Gonzaga and Joey Sands—cannot but emphasize an essentialist

perspective on imperial class hierarchy. The novel exposes gendered politics on scattered national identity: Rio's invisible and, in Leslie Bow's term, "disloyal" nationalism that cannot survive in the Philippines, and Joey is a down-to-earth, localized subject as a Filipino cultural guerrilla. Their utopia is not the same: Rio, leaving for the United States; Joey, remaining somewhere in the Philippines. Thus, *Dog eaters* presents a gendered political split between a transnational woman and localized man as a narrative strategy for representing diverse models of anti-imperial nationalism. One can see Joey as an imaginary product of Rio's central intelligence; the creation of Rio's hunger to see the whole picture of the neocolonial Philippines. This politics, however, is both the novel's uniqueness and its pitfall: as an ethnic women writer, Hagedorn does not totally agree with the transnational mobility of radical feminist Rio, who abandons her nation; rather, she sympathizes more with Joey's awakening to visualize and re-memorize his subaltern mother's existence.

Moreover, gender is intertwined as a significant element in this paradigm of body and mind. Hagedorn disrupts the ideological binary between woman/body and man/mind through the combination of an intelligent adolescent female, Rio Gonzaga, who cannot find her female body in the Philippines and a male prostitute, Joey Sands, who succeeds in constructing a localized male body through his psychic journey. These gendered subjects destabilize the notion of the nation-state that restricts women to the role of a biological tool for reproduction and men to that of central, political organizers of culture.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In 1962, Hagedorn left the Philippines with her mother, leaving her father, a businessman in Manila, who had a love affair with a beauty queen.

<sup>2</sup> As a consequence of their extramarital affairs, these elite men's transnational mobility reinforces transnational hyper-patriarchy by causing dysfunctional families (Ong, 157).

<sup>3</sup> As for an analysis of the female characters in *Dog eaters*, Juliana Chang presents an insightful argument on the classification of ambivalent femininities—masquerade and hysteria—as “symptoms of global capital and neocolonial relations” (638). Chang avoids Rio's femininity in her character analyses because of this protagonist's transgressive gendered status. In fact, Rio belongs to neither of these classifications. Because of her detachment from her nation, she does not suffer from the hysteria demonstrated by Baby Alaclan's sweating and Daisy's weeping symptoms. Rio is also not classified into the masquerading femininity that Chang adopts from Joan Riviere's “performance of femininity that masks feminine claims to power and covers over other contradictions of patriarchy” (638). Rio's sexuality has transgressive elements; yet, this transgression is

triggered not by her femininity but by her sexless intelligence.

<sup>4</sup> De Manuel demonstrates excellent female character analyses in “Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*: A Feminist Reading”; however, I differ from her view that “[t]he men in this novel are generally a miserable lot. Still, there is no lack of charm among them” (27). Her argument does not focus on *bakla*-type characters. She somehow treats these in-between characters differently but still cannot see the full argument for the male characters.

<sup>5</sup> I agree with Giovanna Covi’s perspective of seeing Rio as central “maternity ... by ascribing a director to this dissonant chorus” (70).

<sup>6</sup> On this point, Myra Mendible insists on Rio’s passivity: “Yet throughout the pages of her narrative, she assumes the attitude of the spectator, observing but not acting on her environment” (292).

<sup>7</sup> Rio can be interpreted as Hagedorn’s autobiographical self. Hagedorn wanted to be an actress, yet as a Filipina woman, she recognized the limitations of roles she could get on stage. This is her starting point to engage in writing instead of acting. Hagedorn, “On Theatres and Performance” *MELUS* 16.3(1989-90) 13

<sup>8</sup> We can also parallel Rio-Whitman relationship in *Dogeaters* with that of Carrie and her lover, Hurstwood in Theodor Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*.

<sup>9</sup> On this point, Lee asserts, “Though queer subjectivity is seemingly allotted a privileged space in Hagedorn’s text, I would assert that it is only gay male subjectivity that enjoys this privilege ... once Joey becomes a nationalist hero, his homosexuality also goes ‘underground’” (101).

<sup>10</sup> Several critics clearly state that Joey Sands is “a homosexual prostitute” or “queer” (Covi 73; Doyle 1, Ling 328-331). Actually, designating Joey’s sexual orientation is difficult because his sexuality is flexible. His first traumatic heterosexual experience and then his autonomous unification with a cultural guerrilla, Lydia (Daisy), in particular, suggest this character’s transcendence of Western binary categorizations of homo- and heterosexual.

<sup>11</sup> Joey’s awakening traces a theoretical schema of Trinh T. Minh-ha in *Woman, Native, Other*. Minh-ha stresses the organic function of body in relation to mind. Her theory challenges the Western Eurocentric dichotomy that diminishes the function of body. The stomach, which she calls “tantien” or “hara,” represents the center of the human psyche and “directs vital movement and allows one to relate to the world with instinctual immediacy” (40). This “instinctual immediacy” not only indicates basic instincts but also is related to intellectual activities. Hagedorn articulates the flexibility of a localized masculinity in relation to this motherhood by depicting a male character who keeps his Filipino cultural heritage and thrives in neocolonial Manila under the strong influence of U.S. capitalism. Joey Sands is a successful embodiment of Hagedorn’s

local masculinity in his rediscovery of the subaltern female voice of his dead mother, Zenaida.

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## (要旨)

本稿ではフィリピン系アメリカ作家、ジェシカ・タラハタ・ヘゲドーンの代表作、*Dogeaters*の2人のフィリピン系登場人物—リオ・ゴンザーガとジョーイ・サンズ—のナショナルリズムが織りなすジェンダーポリティックスを論ずる。マルコス政権下で情勢不安定な1960年代フィリピンを舞台にした本作は、ポストモダニズム的手法で、数多くのキャラクターの声を並列、交錯させて物語が進んでいく。中でもヘゲドーン自身を投射させたと考えられる上流階級で13歳のリオ・ゴンザーガは作中において中心的な役割を担い、祖国フィリピンで自律的な女性の自我形成に苦しんでいる。これに対しヘゲドーンが同じ10代の労働者階級で男娼であるジョーイ・サンズをリオに並列させているのは興味深い。エスニック女性作家がその女性の中心的キャラクターに自身を投射するのは自然と思われるが、本作ではリオはヘゲドーンの自己批判的な主体であるのに対し、もう一人の主人公ジョーイは、その労働者階級の男娼という立場からリオの「囲われた庭」での上流階級的生活を批判している。フィリピンでの夢のない生活に倦怠感を感じたりオは故郷をあとにアメリカ合衆国へと向かうところで小説は終わるが、本作においてヘゲドーンは急進的なディアスポラのフェミニズムを無条件に奨励するのではなく、その根底にある階級の問題をえぐりだし、自己批判としてリオを提示しているのである。本稿では上記の問題を身体、メランコリア、そして成長物語という点から論じる。

