# "Where do I go? What do I choose? Lipstick, rosary or gun?" The Analysis of Gender Representations in Jessica Hagedorn's Dogeaters through Brechtian Alienation Effect

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## Abstract

This paper discusses how, in *Dogeaters* (1990), Jessica Hagedorn depicts scattered and disintegrated representations of gender in order to show the rather constructed nature of gender identity. This is mainly in response to nationalism as a gendered discourse in which constructions like family are manifested as natural and innate. It will be argued that for this purpose, like some other feminist playwrights, Hagedorn uses Brechtian techniques, mainly Alienation Effects, in a non-linear narrative with occasional shifts in the language from English to Tagalog (vernacular Filipino) which create a sense of fraction and defamiliarising in the reader and audience.

Key*: Brechtian Theater, Alienation Effects, Gender, Philippines Feminist Theater, Nationalism*

## Introduction

The establishment of PETA (Philippines Educational Theater Association) by Cecile Guidote-Alvarez in 1967 can be marked as one of the momentous events in the Philippines' theatre history, followed by the foundation of Repertory Philippines (REP)

by Zeneida A. Amador, Filipino artistic director, in the same year. The fact that both PETA and REP were run by women shows the significant contribution of women in the theatre of the country. Also, among the women in power, Imelda Marcus was highly desirous of sponsoring cultural activities and in particular theatre and cinema and her daughter participated in a few PETA productions as an actress. However, in the following years and after the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, a large number of PETA artists, including Cecile Guidote-Alvarez, were compelled to leave the country in exile due to the censorship and pressure from the Marcos regime.

From the beginning of the establishment of PETA, theatre practitioners started staging Brecht's works: in 1970, two productions of *Good Woman of Setzuan* were staged in English and Filipino languages and in the following years, *Mother Courage and her Children*, *Galileo* and *Man is Man* were among the repeatedly staged works of Brecht in PETA. This led to adapting his techniques (mainly borrowed from Asian Theatre) in plays and on stage since many of the feminist playwrights and directors found Brecht useful in showing the 'constructedness' of gender. As Elin Diamond observes, if we understand gender as an ideology defined as "a system of beliefs and behaviour mapped across the bodies of females and males, which reinforces a social status quo" (1988, p. 82) and therefore is subjected to change, we will appreciate Alienation Effects denaturalising and defamiliarising what is shown to be normal and acceptable by ideology. However, beyond the discussion of how some feminist playwrights applied an Alienation Effect to show the deconstruction of gender, this paper will discuss the orientation of nationalism as a gendered discourse and its ventures to naturalise particular constructions such as family and consequently imply the subordination of women to men.

To locate *Dogeaters* among other modern works in the Philippines theatre, it is necessary to discuss language as well as immigrant theatre. English drama in the Philippines started to flourish mainly by promoting an educational system by American colonisers with English as the language of instruction. Unlike Spanish colonisers, who were not very eager to teach and use their language in schools and confined Spanish language to convents and churches, American colonisers sent teachers to teach English and consequently promote their culture. Schools were encouraged to use English, especially in literature and drama classes. As a result, in a decade following 1901, Philippines stages were mainly the host to plays in English as well as the works translated into Filipino languages. Moreover, some of the local playwrights started writing in English and mounted their works for Filipinos. The first play written in English, *A Modern Filipina* by Jesusa Araullo and Lino Castillejo, was published in 1915 and staged at the Philippines Normal College. The plot is somewhat revolutionary as it is about an independent young woman dealing with her suitors. Doreen G. Fernandez argues that although early plays in English were "awkward of language and minimal in dramatic import", they were written by educated authors who "could have propelled the sarswela"[1] towards contemporary ideas and issues, were writing in English, and not in the vernaculars, not in the language of the sarswela, and not in sarswela form" (1998, p.89). This was also the time when the term "legitimate theatre" started to be used. "Legitimate theatre" refers to a kind of theatre performed on indoor stages as an event in itself, in contrast with the plays performed on temporary outdoor stages as part of a religious festival, for instance (Brandon, 1967). This resulted in the emergence of the concept of paying for a ticket to see a theatrical

performance and creating resources for practitioners which made them able to hone their craft and stage more work for theatre goers.

As Doreen Fernandez points out in her article *Philippines Drama 1972-1984: Theater of Indirection*, after few decades and with the mastery of the language, the number of playwrights writing in the English language increased (1984, p. 373). In the 1940s and 1950s writers like Jorge Bocobo, Carlos P. Romulo and Vidal Tan wrote plays in English with a focus on social issues. Primarily, for most of the practitioners in that time, theatre was a means of education to bring awareness to the masses. Severino Maontano for instance, who is among the most distinguished playwrights who staged more than 200 performances as director, mostly educational, around the country in about a decade (1953-1964). Other playwrights such as Wilfrido Ma. Guerro wrote more than a hundred plays concerning the middle class educated youth including *Three Rats* (1947) and *Wanted: A Chaperon* (1948) considered as the first psychological plays in the history of the Philippines (Fernandez, 1984, p. 373).

However, during Marcos' presidency (1960s and 1970s) and with the rise of the nationalist movement, vernaculars such as Tagalog and Cebuano became more popular and they started to replace English as the national language of theatre. Filipino vernaculars flourished and became so popular that only a few playwrights such as Nick Joaquin and Elsa Martinez continued to write in English. In the late Marcos regime, vernaculars were fully employed in the street theatre of the time. This, however, was not the case for the playwrights who had moved out of the country.

As mentioned earlier, following the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, a large population of Filipinos, including theatre playwrights, actors, and directors fled the country, mostly to the US. By the end of 1990s, the number of Filipino immigrants reached 2.4 million, suggesting the existence of various Filipino communities mostly in coastal regions. Angela-Dee Alforque in her article *Transnational Stages: Prospectus for a Filipino American Theater* argues how this immigration led to " confronting diversities" as well as "negotiat[ing] issues of racial, ethnic and national identity in the wider context of contemporary American society" despite marginalisation of Filipino American studies in their educational system (2000, p. 120). Therefore, the artists in exile played an essential role in making Filipino-American studies accessible by the creation and production of culturally distinct theatrical representations (Brandon, 1967). Those immigrant artists like Cecile Guidote-Alvarez (PETA founder and director), Linda Faigao Hall (playwright) and Jessica Hagedorn (poet, novelist, and playwright) started opening new theatre groups and companies to write and stage plays, after residing in the States. Famous among these groups are Ma-Yi Theatre Company and National Asian American Theatre co. (NAATCO) which are both located in New York City. Ma-Yi Theatre was later the home for adapting and staging *Dogeaters*.

## ***Dogeaters*** **in the Light of Gender Discourses**

Dogeaters is a satirical soap opera set in Marcos-era Philippines filled with fast-changing events in the daily lives of its characters. The play illustrates Filipino society in the time of Marcos as torn apart by the pressure of class, sexuality, and race as seen through the eyes of two characters residing in two extremes of society: Joey, an Afro-

Filipino hustler and male-prostitute, and Rio, a California-resident *mestiza* from a wealthy family. As the playwright explains "with the exceptions of two scenes in Act Two, most of the action takes place in 1982, in the teeming urban landscape of Manila" (Hagedorn, 2015, p.6). *Dogeaters* has 31 characters although performed cross-cast with fewer actors. The play consists of 33 scenes alternating between a radio serial called *Love Letters* and the daily life of the characters, creating a sense of volatility for a society in transition. The play is filled with allusions to contemporary political events (General Avila's assassination resembles Senator Aquino's assassination), political characters (Imelda Marcos), and even art events (Manila Film Festival).

*Nationalism as a Gendered Discourse*

The discussion of the importance of gender in the construction of the discourse of nationalism is essential in this work. Although the nationalistic movements in the Philippines appeared in different eras of history, we only focus on the late 1960s radical nationalists stressing on social justice for urban working class. To break down the discussion of nationalism in this paper, we start with what Benedict Anderson uses to define a nation: an "imagined community". In theorising this, Anderson emphasises the possibility of imagining a relatively "coherent national community" (2006, p.5). On the other hand, Partha Chatterjee, quoted in Bodden (1993), argues that, to a great extent, nationalists use creative acts to "formulate, propagate and defend the new possibilities of nationalism" (Bodden, 1993, p.25). She strongly advocates the notion of "imagining" national communities which implies its constructedness and is interested in knowing "how discourses and ideologies of nationalism are articulated in specific texts of specific historical moments […] and how national ideology operates" (Bodden, 1993, p. 26).

But how are nationalism and gender discourse related? Among the key elements of nationalist discourse lies the recourse of family with the purpose of naturalising its particular constructions of community and belonging. Therefore, as Anne McClintock argues, "nationalism is constituted from the beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without the theory of gender power" (McClintock, 1993, p. 62). McClintock elaborates that tracing the images of family in national narratives, we can see the implication of subordination of women to men. She continues that "the rope of family is also connected to the notions of genesis and chronological development, ideas that imply that those in authority within the family have a right to formulate, direct and control that development" (Bodden, 1993, p.27).

*The Deconstruction of Gender Representations*

The researchers found an urgent need to address how women have largely been portrayed through their personal and domestic issues in theatre, which mostly means representing them through a partial, and not a full-scale, view of their lives. On the other hand, considering the power relation in Filipino society that imposes the subordination of women to men, the Feminist perspective can help scrutinise the context of this marginalisation of women and how it was represented on stage. As one half of the society, women's representation in relation with men as well as in relation with themselves should not be neglected. Moreover, the possibilities to go beyond the female/male binary opposition should be explored, including how theatre as a medium

with high capacity for *representation* is able to show that gender is a performance and that it can lead people to find different possibilities to represent femininity.

As mentioned before, a large number of feminist playwrights such as Cecile Guidote-Alvarez have employed Alienation Effects and non-linear structure in order to break the totally ordered structure of plays, as both feminist and Brechtian theatre are considered "alternative" to the mainstream theatre known as realism at that time. Alienation Effects as one of the main Brechtian techniques is "designed to free socially-conditioned phenomenon from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today", through a representation "which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p.61). According to Brecht "the A-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking and unexpected" (qtd. in Brayshaw & Witts, 2013, p.108). The point of Brecht using different techniques to distance his audience from the familiar was to help them think objectively about what seems natural and reflect on their judgement. To achieve this goal, he used techniques such as non-linear structure, use of slides, music (used not to enforce but to contradict the actions), dance, noise and voice, cross-dressing (widely exploited by Feminists), use of puppetry and also parody, pastiche and genre manipulation. In this paper, we will discuss how, in *Dogeaters*, Jessica Hagedorn repeatedly uses some of these techniques in order to create a sense of fraction and defamiliarisation in the audience embodied in various levels like characters, language and scenes structure. Through these techniques, besides scattering the traditional gender images/roles which have been reproduced by patriarchal institutions in the society, she also tries to deconstruct the firmly established representations of national identity and how both nationalism and colonialism use mechanisms to suppress women.

*Dogeaters* was structured with scenes alternating between characters' narrative and a television talk show which is non-conventional. Hagedorn believes that a linear structure would not serve to convey the concepts she wishes to create in her plays. She explains how by not choosing a "straight narrative" and instead switching between narratives and media clips — a radio play, movies, and newspaper articles — she tried to describe the culture more accurately by benefiting from gossip columns, for instance, which were characterised with a florid and over-elaborated English, wobbly grammar and terribly pretentious tone that were omnipresent in every Tagalog newspapers. As she elaborates in her interview:

> A traditional narrative structure couldn't do the culture justice: Filipino newspapers have their own over-wrought style, especially the ones in English. And, the newspapers in Tagalog are completely sensational, they feature murders and very provincial news. It's that class number again, they assume that people who don't speak English are not interested in what's going on in the world, so they feed them brutal crime - photographs of gory, gory things shown up close. That flavor had to be in the [play]. The found items helped describe the culture much more accurately than if I had tried to force them into a straight narrative -

> which I wasn't interested in writing at all, anyway. I thought the [play] as a form could use some sort of loosening. (Meer, 1991)

Having more than one storyline, Hagedorn chooses non-linear structure to alienate the audience from the familiarity and predictability of a narrative in a straight line and to create dramatic irony and sense of objectivity. As an illustration of her scene-in-scene technique, is the example of Act 2/Scene 4 when Daisy (the daughter of a government opposition called General Avila) goes to confession at Baclaran Church. At the same time we can hear the Uncle (Joey's guardian who abuses him sexually) and Lieutenant Carreon (one of General Ledesma's man) discussing about the General Avila's murderer while we see Joey on the stage waking up from a bad dream. This technique is used by Hagedorn to engage the audience more mentally and break the emotional engagement as it is not easy to discern the scenes without fully focusing on the plot details. This is the point in which Daisy as one of the major female characters is struggling to locate herself in this mainly run-by-men game of politics. She is depicted as a rather desperate woman who feels a dreadful guilt and cannot choose to follow her father's way, her lover's or her religion.

> Daisy: Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, I have been frivolous and vain, thinking only of myself and my carnal desires. My careless actions may have contributed to my father's death. I don't know where to turn.
>
> Uncle: What I have is going to cost you. You are recognised Lieutenant Carreon.
>
> Carreon: Impossible. (Beat) Give me a name.
>
> Uncle: You think I'm stupid? How do you think I've survived this long?
>
> Daisy: I'm in love with this man, Father: He thinks only of helping others, yet he believes killing is sometimes justified.
>
> Carreon: I could kill you right now.
>
> Uncle: But you won't. (*Beat*) Make me an offer, Lieutenant—and he's yours.
>
> (*Lieutenant Carreon whispers in Uncle's ear. Lights down on Uncle and Lieutenant Carreon. Lights up on Joey asleep in Uncles shack in Tondo.)*
>
> Daisy: Where do I go? What do I choose? Lipstick, rosary or gun? I know that religion and revolution don't mix, but it's never been that simple for me. My father always said that...
>
> *(Joey wakes from a bad dream, disoriented, parched with thirst and nauseous. He crawls to a large metal water drum in the cornet drinks and washes his face. He ruinmages through Uncle few belongings, and finds a balisong hidden in the trunk.)*
>
> …..my faith and my belief in God are being tested.

I don't know what to do.

Beside the non-linear structure, Hagedorn employs narrators to create a sense of objectivity and distancing. She uses two minor characters, radio and screen stars Barbara Villanueva and Nestor Noralez as the play narrators. "[T]hey introduce key players in the drama as well as provide historical background for those in the audience unfamiliar with the history of the Philippines politics", (Bacalzo, 2001, p.642) which helps foreground the historical aspects of a social feminist play.

Through these narrators, the playwright draws the audience's attention to certain social and historical issues, such as the French colonisation of the Philippines in the nineteenth century or the colonisers' lack of knowledge about Filipinos, which have been overlooked and neglected for a long time. An example is the scene in which Barbara and Nestor have a talk with the nineteenth century French Jesuit priest Jean Mallat, who comes to their program to introduce his latest book about the history of Philippines. Despite the audience's expecting to listen to a sermon, it turns to an absurd sequence that "overcomes any tendencies towards preachiness and heavy didacticism" (Bacalzo, 2001, p.642), packing the scene instead with elements of surprise, especially when Father Jean expresses that he came to plug his new book, a fact that is reminiscent of colonisers' intentions. At the same time, this signifies a severe criticism of colonisers and their policies. Barbara and Nestor both criticise the priest with comic effects created in the scene.

Nestor (*To audience*): But seriously, folks. Let's have a big hand for (*Showing off a lavish coffee table book*) —the author of the bestseller The Philippines— nineteenth century French Jesuit priest. . . Jean Mallat!

*(Mallat enters. Barbara squeals with excitement. Applause.)*

Mallat: Merci. You may call me Father Jean.

Barbara: Okay, Father Jean. Now tell us. . . (Deadpan) have you sold the movie rights yet?

Mallat : (*Perplexed*): What?

*(Nestor and Barbara start laughing.)*

What…

*(Barbara pokes Mallat in the ribs.)*

Barbara: Joking-joking lang!

Mallat: 1 don't know what is a "movie." I am here to plug my book.

Nestor: Of course you are! But seriously, Father. Are you one of those conquistador types obsessed with finding paradise?

Mallat: You must be confusing me with Magellan. I'm French, not Spanish or Portuguese. They were here first, remember?

Nestor: 1521.

Mallat: That is correct. Whereas I came in 1846. I loathe the Spanish, don't you? Almost as barbaric and smelly as we French. But stupider really. Thought they'd found India.

Barbara: Why is everyone always searching for India? India's overrated. (*Beat*) Did you have fun, Father Jean? You know . . . measuring skulls and buttocks and teeth foraging for alien specimens...

Mallat: Of course I did! Wouldn't you? It was the most fun I ever had.

Barbara: Make us kuwento narnan, Father Jean.. . What was it like seeing us for the first time?

Mallat: Like falling in love, Barbara. Love, yes. That's exactly it. The Philippines was totally unexpected.

God's surprise, if you will. The Spaniards never fully appreciated this melancholy paradise, but I did. Such mystifying, hallucinogenic beauty. Flowers the color of blood and the size of fists. . Who needs foie gras when you've got mangoes and bananas?

Nestor and Barbara: Control yourself.

By Barbara and Nestor using comic effects, the scene reminds the audience how the colonisers have had a far-fetched perception of their colonised people, their culture and lifestyle. In this scene, Jean Baptiste Mallat (1808-1863) who is a historical character and the writer of *Les Philippines* (1846) confesses the ignorance of the colonisers (both Spanish and French) and their lack of awareness about the Philippines when he says: " they thought they'd found India". Hagedorn also tries to show the sentimentalism of Mallat in describing the Philippines when he says "such mystifying, hallucinogenic beauty…", which feels explicably at odds with what comes later in the play.

Along with using a non-linear narrative and presenting parts of the story through the two narrators, Hagedorn also makes use of a soap-opera-like storyline accommodating several different concurrent narrative threads with interconnect or independent stories. Being highly influenced by radio serials, especially *Love Letters*, Hagedorn employs their style of narrative in several ways especially to comment on the events in the play and also to show the relationship between Rio and her grandmother. In her 1994 interview for the Audio Prose Library published in Bonetti, Michalson, Sapp, & Stowers(1997), Hagedorn talks about her obsession with radio serials and explains why she uses soap opera in the torture scene where Daisy Avila, a beauty pageant contestant who later denounces the pageant and gets involved in political activities, is being tortured and eventually raped by general Ledesma and his men. Hagedorn employs the

soap opera as a foreground to a highly excruciating happening in the background. In the interview, she explains:

> Did you notice torture scene in *Dogeaters*, when the soap opera is used as foreground to a very painful happening in the background? That was the most difficult [part] to write for me. I think torture is so loaded, you know, that it's hard to make it effective and the radio drama was the way to manage to get through it. For me, it worked very well (Bonetti, Michalson, Sapp, & Stowers, 1997, p.219)

The play contains two main plots that run parallel throughout. The first plot revolves around the assassination of Senator Avila who is one of the government opposition critics, reminding the audience of Aquino's assassination in Manila Airport in 1983. Unlike Aquino's assassination, the murder has one witness: Joey, a street hustler, homosexual and drug addict, who accidentally witnessed the murder and, despite his political ignorance, ends up hiding out in the mountains and asking guerrilla fighters to save his life. This suggests how unlikely it is to stay away from the political incidents of one's society and how anything personal can be political regardless of your social class. To strengthen this, in a parallel storyline, Hagedorn uses Rio an upper-class girl who lives in the States and comes back to attend her grandmother's funeral in the Philippines. Her own narration of her life story is full of signs of differences between lower class and upper-class Filipinos.

Many critics believe that Rio is closest to Jessica Hagedorn. Dan Bacalzo explains this in the production of the Public Theater in 2001.

> This character [Rio] seems closest to the playwright's own life. In a sublime costuming decision, designer Brandin Barón has made the actress playing Rio (Kate Rigg) resemble a young Jessica Hagedorn. Several of Rigg's vocal inflections and onstage mannerisms also mimic those of the playwright. (Balcalzo, 2001, p. 642)

Using different narrators in the play, Hagedorn tries to expose the audience to fracture the realities of the Philippines society. With Rio, who is the third narrator of the play, we can see the world of the play from an outsider point of view. This is another break in the narrative: "Everything has changed, and nothing is different" (Act 2, Scene 16), though she is not necessarily the most trusted narrative "Rio got it all wrong", Pucha, the cousin, complains.

In the discussion of gender and sexuality in *Dogeaters*, it is necessary to argue the traces of Filipino nationalism. *Dogeaters* shapes its world in a nationalistic atmosphere and foregrounds the historical events during the Marcos regime that eventually led to his overturn. As Savitri Ashok discusses in *Gender, Language, and Identity in Dogeaters: A Postcolonial Critique* (2009) nationalism, as can be seen in the

revisionary history of the play, uses the same binary paradigm that the oppression by colonialists was based on. This is the same manner by which the patriarchy justifies its endeavours.

> If the imperialist patriarchy justified its colonizing endeavors by presenting the conquered as the different, savage, inferior and exotic other, nationalism involves a concerted attempt at the recovery of the manhood lost in colonization, projecting woman as the other, to be gazed at, tamed, conquered, and enjoyed. Nation building in postcolonial Philippines becomes a search for recovering a lost masculinity for the indigenous men of power. (p.432)

Hagedorn tries to draw attention to the anti-women tendencies embedded in nationalism. In other words, by breaking the binary representations of virgin/whore, Hagedorn tries to disturb the patriarchal images of women, while at the same time reproduce and replicate them (as we have these binaries in characters of Pucha and Leonor Ledesma, for instance) to show how not only colonialism, but in the same manner nationalism, has the tendency to show only two images of women as legitimate and valid. The female figures in Filipino postcolonial society portrayed by Hagedorn embody the "patriarchal contradictions [and] brings together the dichotomized icons of idealized femininity and degraded whoredom, of feminine plenitude and feminine lack" (Ashok, 2009, p. 639-640)

In creating her characters, Hagedorn puts the feminist slogan of "the personal is political" in the spotlight suggesting that the sexual relations between two sexes in the play which should be seen as personal implies a political meaning and this can bring us to the point that the inequality in power relations between the genders "points to a much larger national malaise" (Ashok, 2009, p. 645).

As Michael H. Bodden argues in his article "Class, Gender, and the Contours of Nationalism in the Culture of Philippines Radical Theater", although radical nationalism was the main pillar of the resistance against Marcos, it "contains […] serious areas of disagreement and social division particularly in relation to the issues of class, gender and ethnicity" (p.25). Hagedorn implies these disagreements by showcasing female characters across a wide spectrum as well as showcasing the suppression of some because of their lower social class. In representing these characters, while Hagedorn typifies Daisy Avila, for instance, as enacting "the explosive violence of neo-colonial, nationalist patriarchy", she also creates the character of Rio's grandmother, Lola Narcisa, as "the subaltern who cannot speak and is deeply in shadow. However, beside showing how nationalist patriarchy pushes Daisy to the point of suppression, Hagedorn also gives Lola a space in Rio's fantasy to come out of her deep shadow and have a voice.

However, the "national malaise" and the suppression is not only for female characters. Hagedorn also uses the homosexual relationship between Joey and Rainer Fassibinder, a German film director, to show how Joey, as the powerless side, hopelessly suffers from an unequal relationship. Hagedorn takes another step and created an explicit scene in which she uses the same-sex sexual relationship to depict how inequality is

embedded in personal relationships even when both sides are men. Moreover, she later uses Joey as a victim of one of the most shocking incidents of the plays — General Avila's assassination — suggesting how no one is immune from the political effects of these incidents in society. Joey and Rainer's affair is also a picture of an unequal relationship between the Philippines and the West in the time of Marcos and how the country was under American control. Joey spends the whole night with Rainer and instead is invited to breakfast in the morning (hotel breakfast). However, when Rainer is talking to a reporter, Joey steals his camera and leaves the hotel and this is the first time Joey is taking revenge in the play.

Above all, *Dogeaters* is a postcolonial feminist play showing how women as a sub-culture have been colonised on three levels, that is by patriarchy in the homeland, by colonisers from outside, and by those who have rebuilt the nation in the postcolonial era. Most of the women in *Dogeaters* have no power unless they are connected to the centre of power which is represented by the male characters. Daisy, for instance, is only in the limelight when her father is around. Yet after his assassination, she is tortured and raped. Notably, the character of Leonor, General Ledesma's "deeply religious" wife, is depicted as a constantly praying figure who begs for forgiveness for all the people and is represented as a woman highly bound to her husband.

On the other hand, Imelda Marcos, known as the First Lady, is in the centre of power. She is acknowledged and appreciated by patriarchy only because of her interest in beauty contests and fashion, as well as for her inviting film directors from around the world to her film festivals. Regarding the character of Imelda in the play, Juliana Chang notes how this image is the replacement of the "imperialist gaze" rather than the "nationalist gaze". In other words, Imelda's attempt to push women into beauty contests is part of patriarchy's attempt to deplete women form their subject positions by turning them into objects of the gaze. Therefore, in the name of nationalism but in the disguise of patriarchy, women throughout *Dogeaters* are encouraged to take object positions.

Moreover, it is Imelda's class position and her connection to the centre of political power which is her husband's government that opens the doors for her to have access to patriarchal power represented by Ferdinand Marcos. To emphasise this and to traverse meaningful boundaries in the patriarchal systems, we note that in some performances such as Bobby Garcia's production of *Dogeaters* in Manila (2007), Imelda's character is played by a male actor. Through this cross-gender casting, Imelda, who is a highly complicated figure in Philippines History and only a minor character in *Dogeaters,* is represented as a mirror of her husband's power or in other words a mirror of patriarchal power.

Hagedorn's use of Brechtian comic effects in depicting the character of Imelda and how in spite of being connected to the president of the country she only has the illusion of power is outstanding. In Act 2, Scene 10, when she is in an interview with Bob Stone and is asked about Avila's assassination, the audience expects a furious talk about politics though she ends up talking about astrology, cosmic forces, shoes, and beauty pageants. It goes as:

Imelda: Bob. Such a virile name. (Beat) What sign are you, Bob? May I call you Bob?

Stone: Of course. I'm sorry Madame. I don't see the point.

Imelda: Don't you believe in astrology? I do. Cosmic forces beyond our control, shaping our lives—

Stone: Let's talk about the assassination of Senator Avila. I understand a suspect by the name of Romeo Rosales was killed by the military a few days ago.

*(Imelda removes one high-heeled shoe and holds it up.)*

Imelda: Local made! (Beat) You see, they say I only buy imported products. But look, di ba, my shoe has a label that clearly says: "Marikina Shoes, Made in the P.I."! They accuse me of being extravagant, but I've owned these shoes for at least five years. Look at the worn heel And this beautiful dress I'm wearing is also local made, out of pineapple fiber, which we also export.

I am a nationalist when it comes to fashion.

The notion of body in *Dogeaters* is another point which can be discussed in gender discussion: Daisy's condemnation of beauty contest embodies Hagedorn's fierce feminism. Daisy is dubious, "where do I go? What do I choose? Lipstick, rosary or gun"? (Act 2, Scene 4) and tries to get help from the priest when she goes to the church (Religion as another patriarchal institution) but she gets arrested instead and eventually turns to a rebel. Daisy's rape and torture is what she pays to stand against patriarchal power. Through the rape, Hagedorn shows how as in many societies, patriarchy decreases women to a body (physical entity) and tries to degrade their being. In brief, within the nationalistic movement of *Dogeaters'* world, we see the colonisation of female body to threaten women to submission and subjugation.

As a feminist playwright and an exile living in the States, Hagedorn could not emphasise more on the language to subvert and alienate the audience from the familiarity of a monolingual play. *Dogeaters* is mainly in English though with occasional language variations which sometimes makes it difficult for non-Filipino readers to understand the lines. The play is full of Tagalog (Filipino vernacular) phrases as well as what is called tsismis (gossip) in the country. By shifting between English (the colonial language) and Tagalog, the playwright re-evaluates the positions of subject (English) and object (Filipino). In Act 2, Scene 5, the conversation between Joey and Uncle is full of this shift:

Perlita: **Dios ko**! You almost gave me a heart attack.

Joey: I didn't know where else to go, Perlita. Pedro let me in.

Perlita: And where is that **tarantado**? Pedro! (To Joey) You look like shit.

> Joey: Senator Avila—
>
> Perlita: I know—
>
> Joey: I saw it happen.
>
> Perlita: Joking-joking **ka lang,** right Joey? Because if you're telling me the truth, then you're a fucking dead man….

Some critics argue that Hagedorn was not very successful in the infusion of Filipino into English and created a sense of lost for the English-speaking audience. Blanche D'Alpuget , for instance, discusses that "conveying its nuances to an English-speaking readership is a task Ms. Hagedorn has set herself but one in which she has not quite succeeded" (Ponce, 2012, p.20). on the other hand, critics like Gladys Nubla call this discussion "a misapprehension about Hagedorn use of Taglish in the [play]" and argues that Hagedorn's intent was not to translate the Taglish words to "make the indigenous culture easy to understand for Anglophone consumers" (2004, p.190). In her article, *The Language of Depathologized Melancholia in Jessica Hagedorn's Dogeaters* (2015), Hannah Ho Ming Yit calls this infusion "a strategy of resistance" both to counteract the gender and racial oppression of her subjects and to create "deliberate obscurity" to prevent "white agency from formulating authoritative misconceptions about the raced other" (p.20).

As mentioned earlier, Filipino infusion into the English makes it somehow unintelligible for the English reader to the point that is best suited to highlight the complexity of the play in which clarity is not a priority. By using a hybrid language and mixing English and Tagalog (also known as Taglish), Hagedorn privileges the Filipino audience and decentralises the monolingual English speakers in the audience. Although some critics believe that Hagedorn's writing in English testifies to the writer's collusion with the colonisers, Hagedorn not only does serve the English-speaking audience, but also strategically uses this shift to remind the audience of the Filipino society as a fragmented whole rather than a homogenous entity. She herself best describes this experience thus: "I set out to write on my own term and in the English, I claim as postcolonial Filipino" (Danger and Beauty, p.6)

**Conclusion**

While Jessica Hagedorn accommodated several alienation techniques to question the patriarchal binary images of women in *Dogeaters*, she also specifically targeted the anti-women tendencies embedded in the Philippines nationalistic movement which was the backbone of the resistance movement against Ferdinand Marcos especially after the declaration of Martial Law. Through showcasing female characters from different social classes and how these women are mainly the victims of political decisions of the Resistance Movement, Hagedorn draws the audiences' attention to the areas of disagreement in relation to gender and class contained in radical nationalism. Although the play was written only less than half a decade after the overthrown of Marcos' Regime, it seems to be successful in predicting the future of radical nationalism dealings with women issues in the society.

## Endnote

[1] A type of Spanish musical theatre, both spoken and sung

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