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DREAMING THE NATION

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Most, if not all Filipino critics based in the Philippines, will approach a text by a Filipino American not just with disguised hesitancy but with suspicion as well. The explanation for this attitude ranges from the critics' issues with the subject-position of Filipino-American writers to intended audience. This paper argues that works of Filipino-Americans and Filipinos based in the United States could be read more meaningfully given the chance and must not be reduced to a simple evaluation such as this. It asserts that because of their subject-position and penchant for examining notions of identity and roots, Filipinos in the US bring in diverse perspectives to the study of imaginations of nation in literature. For example, novels like Jessica Hagedorn's Dream Jungle *could be read as disruptions of colonial and imperial narratives. Among the other questions this paper raises about the novel are: What imagining of the Philippines does the narrative have? How does it constantly negotiate its imagining of the nation and the multifarious issues imbricated in nationness? Is it possible that in the spaces of this novel's problematic negotiations lays possibilities of interrupting the seemingly seamless discourse of the nation?*

Elizalde's death brought it all back to me, opening up Pandora's box of rich, intoxicating material... Why was he drawn to that jungle in the first place? What had he really been searching for and why did I find it socompelling? Proving or disproving the Tasaday myth was not my main concern. Elizalde and his lost tribe of forest dwellers were merely catalysts for my explorations, in Dream Jungle, *into the myths of history, cultural identity and the secrets buried within my mongrel family... Filipino, Spanish, Irish-American, German, Chinese. We were a fatalistic bunch, our own lost tribe, prone to fits of melancholy and wild exuberance. Right at home in the hybrid, fatalistic, anything-is-possible Philippines.*

Jessica Hagedorn, "Ghost Town," *Time*

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Thus says Jessica Hagedorn in her article in the *Times Special Double Issue* entitled "The Asian Journey Home: Returning To Our Roots." Most, if not all Filipino critics based in the Philippines will approach a text by a Filipino American not just with disguised hesitancy but with suspicion as well. One finds fearfully problematic, the penchant of Filipino-Americans and Filipinos based in the United States for writing about the Philippines, a dubious attempt to recover romanticized notions of identity and roots. Not a few claim that Jessica Hagedorn's latest novel, like other novels in English by Filipino writers in the United States, cannot be included under the rubric of Philippine Literature. Explanations range from subject-position (i.e., how can these Filipinos in the US write about the Philippines?) to intended audience (i.e., these writers write for an American audience). The first, I could more or less understand, but the second, I find frustratingly ridiculous.

To say that Filipino-Americans and Filipino writers in the United States cannot possibly render the Philippines in their works because they do not live the realities of our miserable nation, is to assume the transparency language—that it is even possible to come up with a "correct" and "true" picture of the Philippines—and political correctness of literary works by writers based in the Philippines. One just has to name a few works both in Filipino and English, to refute this assumption. As for the issue of intended audience, one could also counter-argue that those who write in English but are based in the Philippines are, by default, writing for an international audience.

I refuse to reduce the works of Filipino-Americans and Filipinos in the United States to the passport of their writers; to use their citizenship as a requirement for inclusion in Philippine Literature is quite myopic. These writers, American citizens, dual citizens, or whatever, have never avowed their "Filipinoness," whatever this means to them and to us based in the Philippines. For practical reasons, they cannot be shunned because they continue to write about the Philippines, and not to include them is to ignore a large body of works that has likewise dialogued not just with our literature but likewise with our history and historiography. If one is concerned with the imaginations of the nation in literature, then one has to confront the works of Filipino Americans and Filipinos in America because more than the writers based in the Philippines, they seem to be obsessed with the problems of identity and nationness.

This orientation and their strong sense of "exile" is an ineluctable result of their "historical experiences in America of making community and is informed by neocolonial relations between the Philippines and the United States" (Hau 2005, 225). One likewise has to consider how these works "in" and "about" exile figure in the larger framework of Asian-American literature which is mainly concerned with the Asians' experiences of immigration and settlement in America. This, notwithstanding their being able to "selectively make it into the canon of Philippine literature as signifiers of Filipino 'diasporic' writing" (Hau 2005, 225).

On the discursive level, these works have to be analyzed in terms of their vexed configurations of the nation and identity vis-à-vis their writers' subject-positions in America. Here, we are referring to representations of the Philippines and the critical reading of such representations.

> That imagined communities can do and have impact on geopolitical space points to the need to reflect critically on the kind of Filipino American identity politics, that grounds itself on commonsensical notions of "Filipinoness" but is in fact mediated by historically specific and ideologically motivated social discourses. Representations of the "Philippines" in relation to "America" must open themselves to accountability, not least in the assumptions that inform their epistemological frame and the choice that make such representations possible (Hau 2005, 223-224).

When Hagedorn for example, talks about *Dream Jungle* and her explorations of her mongrel identity, is she in fact celebrating the nation's hybridity, which is not at all a cause for celebration among the 80 million Filipinos who have to reconcile their existence with the hopeless state of the nation? Critic Azade Seyhan raises important questions as regards writing outside the nation: "What happens to the memory of a nation outside (without) the nation? How is national identity transformed in the modern world that exists in a state of perpetual geopolitical shifts?" (2001, 20)

For purposes of discussion, I will refrain from using homogenizing categories in referring to Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*; I still feel uncomfortable dropping concepts such as "ethnic," "exilic," "migrant," or "diasporic" in referring to works by Filipino-Americans or Filipinos in America. At most, Hagedorn's novel could be considered "migrant" or "diasporic" but the

latter term, no matter how accommodating and flexible it has become, continues to bear a specific political and religious history. The numerous terms used in conjunction with writing outside the nation "cannot do justice to the nuances of writing between histories, geographies, and cultural practices" (Seyhan 2001, 9). In order to avoid the dangers of classifying works, I will consider the specificity of *Dream Jungle* as a novel written by a Filipino woman who left the Philippines in 1962 when she was thirteen years old, as a result of a family scandal. Suddenly cut from the Philippines—Hagedorn's mother took their family to San Diego, then to San Francisco—Hagedorn found solace in reading and writing poems and stories and watching movies. "Writing," she recalls, four decades hence, "became a form of remembering, reading and movie watching, a means of escape and understanding... I dreamed incessantly of the house we left on Old Santa Mesa Street. It was a mother of a house, full of history" (Hagedorn2003, 35). As for her seeming obsession with the nation, Hagedorn gives us a glimpse of her relationship with the Philippines: "After my initial cathartic visit [in 1974], I kept going back—once, twice a year. The Philippines wormed itself into the forefront of my consciousness. I surrendered to my new muse and couldn't write enough about it. This unsettling country was familiar, yet not" (Hagedorn 2003, 35).

What promise does a novel like *Dream Jungle* hold in terms of its being a product of a pocket of Third World in a First World? What imagining of the Philippines does the narrative have? These are some of the questions I would like to address in my analysis. Suspicious as I may be of the ideological implications of a novel written by a Filipino accused of fetishizing the Philippines in her first novel entitled *Dogeaters*, I would like to give the novel a chance by focusing on moments of the text that could be read as disruptions of the colonial and imperial narratives. *Dream Jungle* then, presents life "on the hyphen," a metaphor used by the Cuban-American critic Gustavo Perez Firmat in describing the lives of hyphenated peoples such as Chicano-Spanish, Turkish-German, and Algerian-French; aptly put, "a hyphen simultaneously separates and connects, contests and agrees" (Seyhan 2001, 14). The hyphen in *Dream Jungle* is what makes it a narrative that constantly negotiates its imagining of the nation and the multifarious issues imbricated in nationness. Perhaps in the spaces of the novel's problematic negotiations lie possibilities of interrupting the seemingly seamless discourse of the nation.

At first glance, one could dismiss *Dream Jungle* as another

Hagedorn novel capitalizing on Third World miseries in order to gain fame in the United States. The very cover of the book—an image of a dusky Filipina with half her back turned towards us— which Hagedorn says she borrowed from a Jonathan Best collection, is already a give away. Isn't that collection of pictures so commonly used by Philippine scholars to illustrate how the Americans worlded or orientalized the Philippines? Making the cover more suspect is the branch of ilang-ilang flowers slightly covering the Filipina. Absolutely another fetishism of the Philippines. Besides, this novel about the Tasaday hoax is surely, to one's mind, another attempt of the writer to claim an authentic identity for the Filipino people.

But the novel proves to be more complicated that what it seems to be. Yes, it does revisit the old issue of the Tasaday and Manuel "Manda" Elizalde, Jr., who, according to Hagedorn, she met and interviewed in 1974. But the novel is neither celebratory of the possibility of having in the Philippines, a group of noble savages. Nor does it present us with a categorical or clear presentation of the Tasaday. *Dream Jungle* hovers in between these two extreme positions and it is in doing so that it makes possible a critique of the nation, ethnicity, gender, and history.

A brief background on how and when the Tasaday came to inhabit the world's consciousness will help us "appreciate" the extent of the controversy and how, the story of the "Lost Tribe" is one that seems very appropriate for fiction. It was on July 16, 1971 that NBC News' David Brinkley announced that,

> The outside world... after maybe a thousand years has discovered a small tribe of people living in a remote jungle in the Philippines. Until now, the outside world didn't know they existed... and they didn't know the outside world existed. Their way of living is approximately that of the Stone Age. Their society is so primitive they don't even know about fighting wars... or even about fighting among themselves (Hemley 2004, 3).

Flashed on the screen was a map of the Philippines with southern Mindanao as the specific spot where the "Lost Tribe" was discovered. Jack Perkins, relaying a report from newsman Jack Reynolds, described the tribe, their living conditions, physical attributes, and tools. Five years earlier, the Tasaday was "discovered" by Dafal, a hunter from a local tribe, who reported his find to Elizalde, head of the tribal affairs, and later

known to the hill people as Tao Bong (Good Man). A picture of the young Elizalde—with sun glasses and a "cigarette dangling from his mouth"—was shown as Perkins continued to report how he and the anthropologist Robert Fox met the Tasadays; "It was a meeting between centuries," as Perkins prophetically described the encounter (Hemley 2004, 4).

Only fourteen years old at that time, Tom Hemley, the American professor of English and author of the book *Invented Eden: The Elusive, Disputed History of the Tasaday*, recalls how he was fascinated by the NBC feature:

> I remember shots of them in the dense jungle gathering food, bathing in a rushing stream, the sounds of birds all around, and I remember feeling awed by the idea that such a group might exist... Romantic of course, but this was TV, and I was fourteen. I wasn't alone. Millions of Americans ogled the Tasaday from their Barca Loungers, their dinner tables, their beds, their poolsides. Lawrence Wellek, *Bonanza, Bewitched*, all offered comfortable alternate realities to lose oneself in, but none as enticing as the Tasaday. These people were real. They lived in Eden. Viewers felt they had visited a fantastic place that made Vietnam War vanish, that made the modern state vanish, that made the past ten thousand years of human progress (which seemed at times more like human decline) vanish (2004, 6).

I quote extensively this reaction of Hemley because it gives us an idea of how the Tasaday was received by the American public and how this in turn fed into the politics of the "Lost Tribe." Too, Hemley's description makes us think whether or not Hagedorn, already based in the United States when the "discovery" was made, likewise shared the public's fascination. She did in fact, after interviewing Elizalde in 1974, return to the Philippines, hire an interpreter-guide, rent a jeep, and purchase all the necessary equipment for trekking the "dense, jungly, leech-infested mountains" where the Tasaday tribe lived. Hagedorn recalls the trip: "Zack [another writer based in the US] grins at me. This is the other Philippines. Untainted. Non-English speaking. The real Philippines. Which is a nostalgic cliché, romantic bullshit, I know—yet I surrender to its spell. I am suddenly deeply moved and deeply happy" (2003, 38). She was, just as the American audience, enamored with the giddy sense of possibility of finally meeting a people uncontaminated by civilization, a possibility of an "authentic ethnicity." But Hagedorn, though she indulged in her romantic

notion of the "real Philippines," was aware of the silliness of the cliché. This sense of doubt, I believe, is the undercurrent of the narrative of *Dream Jungle.*

The novel opens with an excerpt from Antonio Pigafetta's account of Magellan's expedition. Entitled "Primo Viaggio Intorno Al Mundo," the entry narrates the expeditioners' encounter with the people of the Islands of Ladroni (i.e., of thieves)—their way of living, physical appearance, and character. This short description of the Ladroni, a name given to the people by the Spaniards who found their ways "thievish," is immediately followed by a chapter entitled: "Zamora: 1971." Unlike Pigafetta's account which "freezes" the image of the Ladroni as passive people—"each one of those people lives according to his own will, for they have no seignor"—"Zamora: 1971" opens with a dramatic encounter between a modern-day conquistador, the fictionalized Manuel Elizalde, and the "noble savages."

> How to explain that moment when Zamora Lopez de Legazpi first laid eyes on them? Zamora's gaze was steadfast and shameless. O they were beautiful, powerful, strange! Their fierce, wary eyes scrutinized him in return, taking in the brown, unruly curls on his head, the scraggly beard on his pale, unshaven face, the muscular arms and small, compact body that was, surprisingly, no taller than theirs. He had walked into a dream. Someone else's dream—perhaps Duan—but now stolen and claimed by Zamora. The landscape of that dream—vast, ominous, shimmering blues and greens—was simply part of the loot. (5)

One gets easily lost in the novel—the reader, conscious of the fictive nature of the narrator still tries to figure out whether the Tasaday/Himal (i.e., the fictionalized Tasaday) is a hoax—after reading this opening paragraph which in fact already betrays the ideological underpinnings of the novel. Note, for example, the comparison of encounter between the Ladroni and the Spanish conquistadors with that between Zamora and the Himal. Whereas Pigafetta's account reads: "They are as tall as we, and well built," (4) the description of Zamora vis-à-vis the Himal reads: "[Zamora's]... muscular arms and small, compact body... was, surprisingly, no taller than theirs [Himal's]" (5). Both physical descriptions refer to the similarities of built but there is something parodic in the way Zamora's body is compared to those of the Himal. This 20th century conquistador who is no taller than the "natives," is, in fact, a bogus; Zamora steals another one's

dream, that of Duan's— "the elfin, toothless man of uncertain age, who... claimed to be a datu, a chieftain descended from a long distinguished line of datus," (7)— who reported to him the existence of the Himal people. Zamora treats Duan as a lowly being and ultimately eclipses his role in the expedition he embarks on. The tension is already apparent in their first trip to Lake Ramayyah in Cotabato del Sur, a lake considered sacred by the Himal. Duan leads Zamora

> ... into the heart of a remote Himal village at the base of Mount Taobo, a grand, forbidding mountain. In the Himal language, Mount Taobo literally meant "mountain of the human being"... Zamora Lopez de Legazpi stood in the shadow of the spectacular cordilleras surrounding... That day he was a conquistador without an army, a rich man without his posse of bodyguards, photographers, doctors, PR flacks, cooks, and servants. That day his only friend was Duan, a man he did no trust... (6)

Upon seeing "all that green," Zamora surrenders himself to the

> Humid, pulsating, unforgiving, alive with predators and scavengers... God's trees, so ancient and huge they obscured sky and sun. Such cliché's he felt, such reverence and awe. *A tingling in the loins, a fire in the belly you can only imagine.* Ilang-Ilang, waling-waling. Pungent perfume of wild, monstrous lilies and orchids in bloom. Pungent perfume of heaven, stink of fungus and mildew, bed of earth. Voracious green of dampness and rot. Green that lulled but also excited, green of exhaustion and thorns. Enchanted green of Lorca the poet. *Ominous green of Mindanao rain forest.*

Zamora would gladly die here, alone. (9)[italics mine]

The description of Zamora's sexual elation is typical of the highly gendered colonial discourse. The masculine conquistador meets the feminine land/forest, enchanted, mysterious, wild, but sweet. Yet the narrative, while it seems to indulge in such fetishizing of the virgin forest, simultaneously disrupts this with subtle critiques of Zamora's insufferably shameless character. The "tingling in the loins, a fire in the belly," is obviously an allusion to W.B. Yeats's "Leda and the Swan," a poem about the violation of Leda by Zeus. The narrative calls attention to the very nature of Zamora's "discovery" of the Taobo and the possible implications

of his expedition.

The novel thus lays the groundwork for how the story of the Himal people is overdetermined by politics, economics, media, personal ambition, greed, corruption, and people's desire— perhaps subliminally—to recover a "lost" and "pure" identity. From the very beginning of the narrative, the reader is introduced to tints of politics in every level of Philippine reality. The novel's structure more than provides the backbone of the narrative; it drives the development of the plot. Each chapter is a point of view—the major characters are allotted chapters where they reveal their thoughts and involvement in the controversy. Yet this is not the typical postmodern confluence of multiple versions of truth. *Dream Jungle*'s chapters and voices do not offer versions from which we could choose. They more or less allow us a glimpse of partial "truths" as regards the Himal controversy (i.e., how its narrative is a product several narratives, both produced in the Philippines and abroad). Echoing this idea is Hemley's assessment of the race for the "authentic"—as seen in the numerous conferences sponsored by anthropological associations which betrayed their ideological predispositions— which became ostensible among academics who either wanted to prove or disprove the Tasaday's existence. In the first chapter of his book, Hemley posits:

> This book then is an investigation not only of the Tasaday controversy but of the language we use to describe others. The story of the Tasaday is as much about us (the industrialized world), who we perceive ourselves to be, as it is about a band of twenty-seven or so souls in the Philippines who became stand-ins for the world's hopes, dreams and fears (2004, 8).

But *Dream Jungle*, though it does partially share Hemley's sentiments, is more critical of the whole controversy, and ultimately takes a resisting stance. It is not just caviling of the politics behind the construction of the Himal narrative but is likewise suspicious of the very masculine nature of narratives. This, we see in how the narrative interrogates the stories of Zamora, the anthropologist Dr. Cabrera, and the implied imperial narrative embedded in the movie *Napalm Sunset* and its major actor Vince Moody. Everything is, as the novel declares, "part of the loot" (5).

Providing the antithesis to Zamora's character is Rizalina Cayabyab

whose voice is heard right after Zamora's is presented. "Rizalina: 1972" begins with

> You don't know me but that don't matter, because I gonna tell you. This all happened long ago, but not so long that I don't remember. My name is Rizalina, and when this story begins, I am ten years old. Is a beautiful name diba?...
>
> ....
>
> Me, Rizalina. Born into a life of shit, but nevertheless voted best number one elementary student in all Sultan Ramayyah. Champion speller, speed-reader, and secret keeper. Okeydokey fluent in English, as you can tell by now. Loves the word "nevertheless." ... Voted "most likely of anyone" to graduate from school, until that piece-of-shit boat was blown around by winds and toppled into the raging sea (14).

From her smattering of English we learn that Rizalina "Lina" Cayabyab comes from a long line of servants; she is the daughter of Sixto Cayabyab, who "was a sometime fisherman, pedicab driver, ditchdigger, and carpenter. A loser of a man, Sixto sexually abused Lina who was fortunately made of tough material and was thus able to survive the trauma. Lina narrates: 'My baboon self observed my father beating my girl self and listened calmly to the thump of his hand, the whoosh andslap of a thin strip of leather or tree branch whipping my flesh. I felt no pain'" (16).

When the ship Rizalina, her father and two brothers take to Manila capsizes, she is the only survivor and eventually ends up as a servant in the Zamora mansion where her mother has been working for quite some time. The master of the house takes a liking to her—as he does to all servants—and lends her his books. It is in the mansion that Lina sees Bodabil, the Himal child who Zamora had taken to Manila. This proves to be a crucial point in the narrative because we see here the encounter between a woman from Lake Ramayyah, the Himal Bodabil, and the modern-day conquistador. Lina asks: "The jungle boy, sir... that boy... in the little house?" She could not find the right words:

> "That boy... well..." I stammered, unable to get the right words in English out of my mouth. He was glaring at me.

> Finally he spoke. "He's a Taobo, Lina. Not a jungle boy. 'Tah-o-boh.' They're a lost tribe from the mountains around Lake Ramayyah. Right by where you used to live. Have you heard of the Taobo?" (33)

Lina asks again: "... may I, can I... ask? How... did the tribe lose its way?" (35). Caught off guard, Zamora laughs and replies:

> ... The Taobo aren't 'lost' in the way you are thinking, Lina. What I mean is, they were unknown to us until my recent... uh, discovery. And therefore—he cleared his throat—"they are lost." (34)

The self-proclaimed "discoverer" of the Taobo is obviously irritated at the impudence of his young servant whom he immediately orders to leave the room. The seemingly naïve question of Lina turns Zamora's narrative of conquest and discovery on its head. Having lived in the area of Lake Ramayyah herself, the young girl finds incredulous the way Zamora describes the Taobo people; "lost" is not an accurate description for a people who have always been in the mountains around Lake Ramayyah.

If one takes a look at the 1960s and 1970s, one would understand how the Tasaday and the belief that they could provide us a "window into the past," so easily captivated the world. These times witnessed an increase in interest in the model of the "original affluent society" presented by anthropologist Marshall Sahlins. Prior to this, there was the 1965 "Origin of Man Conference" at the University of Chicago, which was followed in 1966 by "Man the Hunter Conference." The latter brought together respectable anthropologists in the area of extant small-scale societies around the world. Before the "Man the Hunter Conference," the leading theory held that our ancestors lived "'nasty, brutish and short'" lives. This was debunked by Sahlins's theory which claimed that the Paleolithic man had a better life than the Modern man obsessed with making money and acquiring things.

The Tasaday of Elizalde and Fox perfectly fit Sahlins' model of a people who "spent several hours in food production and the rest [,] sleeping or enjoying... life in other ways" (Hemley 2004, 28). This is the same emotional and intellectual climate that allowed Zamora to be a sought-after figure in and out of academe. And it is this contaminating desire to historicize, narrativize and "anthropologize" a people which Lina

inadvertently questions.

It is Lina's character that is most defiant, not just against Zamrora's (i.e., Spanish) "colonial" project but also against Vince Moody's (i.e., American) "imperial" discourse. She leaves the Zamora mansion and morphs into the prostitute Jinx and ultimately leaves the country to start anew. But let me not preempt my discussion of her figure and analyze first the "colonial" encounter between Bodabil and Zamora.

Interspersed in Zamora's narrative about his family, are snippets of his first few meetings with the Taobo. Noticeable again is the underlying derision by the novel of the encounter. Zamora's claims sound ludicrous but then one could read "resistance" in the movements of Bodabil. In whatever way one chooses to read Zamora's account, there seems to be a palpable tension in his very own narrative. Take for example, the first time he is introduced to the Taobo by Duan:

> Tapping his chest, Duan said, "Duan." He pointed to the trembling boy, repeating his question in Himal. "Bagat maglam?"
>
> Suddenly the boy tapped his chest and scrunched up his face to look like Duan. "Bodabil!" the boy shouted... I pointed to myself, declared my name: "Zamora." ... I pointed to each one of them, but they were still too shy and fearful to speak. *Bodabil then surprised us by stepping up and imitating my slightly bowlegged stance, the way my arms hung down, never relaxed—and my quizzical expression...* Then he warbled to the shadowy forest, perhaps to coax the rest of them of hiding. (69) [italics mine]

Zamora's account could be easily dismissed as another imperial exoticism by Hagedorn catering to an American audience. But I would like to posit a possible alternative reading. What does one make, for example, of Bodabil's stance? His mimicking of Zamora's actions? In several parts of the novel, the Taobo boy is depicted the most easily attracted to Zamora and the outside world; he is at times obsequious, gullible, "so ready to please, so easily manipulated" (52). But is he a cardboard figure of the so-called noble savage? Not quite. Bodabil's manipulated" (52). But is he a cardboard figure of the so-called noble savage? Not quite. Bodabil's figure is a parody of Zamora's. In the chapter "Zamora: 1971," the third person narrator tells of Bodabil, "a born clown with a talent for mimicry" and his

first meeting with Zamora. The boy cranes his neck to get a better view of the Spaniard who was singing softly.

> Bodabil hooted and warbled in response, either in appreciation or *in mockery* of his singing...
>
> "Don't be afraid," Zamora whispered in English. *He felt foolish—for why English?* ... (11) [italics mine]

More than once does the narrative open the possibility of Bodabil's making fun of Zamora. Here we are reminded of Homi Bhabha's mimicry which "is a strategy of colonial power/knowledge emblematic of a desire for an approved, revised Other (it is also a strategy of exclusion through inclusion that purports to accept the 'good native' all the better to exclude and denounce the 'bad natives')" (Childs and Williams 1997, 129-130). As such, mimicry is ambivalent and destabilizes the colonial rule because it relies on "resemblance," that is, "on the colonized becoming like the colonizer;" it simultaneously expects the colonized to remain different. Mimicry thus displaces the "authoritative discourse" because the "colonizer sees traces of himself in the colonized: as sameness slides into otherness" (Childs and Williams 1997, 130). Bodabil's movement disturbs Zamora's sense of power and this parodic imitation is not lost on the latter. Thus, in the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized, if we follow Bhaba's framework, the colonized is not always totally helpless, and the colonizer, not always completely powerful.

When Zamora discovers that the Taobos speak to Duan in his tongue, the Spaniard orders Duan to teach him the language. The modern-day conquistador obviously distrusts his interpreter and would like to speak directly to the Taobo. But again, the narrative presents the vexed nature of language vis-à-vis "colonialism."

> Duan taught Zamora *bino-bino* for "welcome"; *maladong*, for "companion"; *lagtuk*, which either meant "penis" or, with a slightly different intonation, "frog." Over and over Duan repeated the crucial phrase for Zamora to say: Ago mong Data, for "I am your spirit father." *Zamora had underestimated the wicked complexity of the Himal language. Nuance was everything. There were clicking words and gasping words, words that were quick intakes of breath, words that were harsh sighs of longing. One had to be careful about tone and inflection,*

> *to get it just right. Otherwise words could mean the exact opposite of what was intended...* (11-12)[italics mine]

Given the treacherous nature of Himal, how does one like Zamora ever get to fully fathom, moreso, narrativize the Taobo? The intractability of the symbolic order is a site of contestation and traversals. Keenly aware of such, the all-mighty Zamora will, at one time or another, be at the mercy of his "native" interpreters. Describing how Duan spoke with the Taobo, Zamora recalls that

> Duan persisted in his rat-a-tat melodious language. Perhaps he said that we mean the Taobo no harm, or perhaps that we were shit-eating bastards from a faraway kingdom, not to be trusted... how would we ever know (67).

Later, however, the narrative takes another twist and feeds the reader's suspicion. The anthropologist Cabrera watches how Bodabil follows Zamora around, "shyly touching and hugging him, calling Zamora *Amo Data*, or Spirit Father." He analyzes the language, finds nothing spectacularly different between the two languages, and exclaims: "Anyone with half a brain can recognize the similarities of these people's language with Tagalog" (52).

FROM PIGAFETTA TO NAPALM SUNSET

When Rizalina leaves the Zamora Mansion, she works as a bar girl (a.k.a. Jinx) in the Love Connection, in Ermita. It is here where the American actor of the movie *Napalm Sunset*, Vincent Moody meets her. The different threads of the novel are neatly tied when we discover that *Napalm Sunset* is being shot in Lake Ramayyah and that Jinx—through the "machinations" of Moody— becomes one of the numerous support staff (i.e., helper) in the huge production. The reader likewise discovers that Jinx has a baby daughter by the jeepney driver she had met while still connected with the Zamora mansion.

It is in the weaving of the stories that we see another imperial narrative. If the first part of *Dream Jungle* presents the colonial enterprise of Zamora who is no different from Pigafetta, the second part is another layer of imperial narrative—that of the United States. It is no coincidence that this part, entitled "Napalm Sunset" alludes to Francis Coppola's

Apocalypse Now shot in Pangasinan in the 70s. The novel successfully posits the rich and complex implications of *Napalm Sunset* vis-à-vis Philippine American relations.

In an interview by Karin Aguilar-San Juan, Hagedorn shares her thoughts on the relation between the Tasaday/Taobo and *Apocalypse Now/ Napalm Sunset.*

> It was 1974. The world was desperate to believe in a tribe of innocent primitives and a "lost Eden." And the Vietnam War was still ranging. Ding! The Vietnam War. Why did *Apocalypse Now* make me uneasy? What was it about the movie that intrigued me? I wasn't sure I even liked it the first time I saw it. Having been filmed in the Philippines made it more compelling, of course. I was also curious about the whole Heart of Darkness mythology, the white man going into the interior of a place and finding "darkness." Why is it they always find darkness? (2004, 1)

Too, the irony of the Philippines as stand-in for Vietnam is difficult to miss. Shooting the film in the Philippines seems to have partially completed the cycle of the imperial narrative in the last decades of the 19th century to the early decades of the 20th century. One appreciates the ideological implications of *Apocalypse Now/Napalm Sunset* by tying it to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* which, in the words of Chinua Achebe, "projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe... a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (1987, 1379). A colonial narrative which has greatly influenced not just English fiction but Europe's view of Africa, *Heart of Darkness* used the continent as a physical and psychological space for the white man's realization of himself—personal, spiritual, and political. But it is always a journey towards a realization of the dark continent's treacherous nature corruptive of white man's nature. Hence, Hagedorn's question: "Why is it that they always find darkness?"

The lead actor Sebastian Claiborne who plays the role of commander, claims that the latter is "essentially... a good man"; it is the world that is simply not ready for a character like him:

> "Blood is spilled in the name of beauty, love, that self of connection to self. Primal self. The commander's madness comes out of a kind of

> stoic purity, a great sadness. That's why the tribesmen worship him. They are the ones, ironically who can appreciate..." (243)

Claiborne is *Heart of Darkness*'s Kurtz whose madness is not of his own doing but that of Africa. And in *Napalm Sunset*, as it is in all imperial narratives, nobody asks the question as to why Claiborne or Kurtz is in the Dark Continent in the first place. When the journalist Paz Marlowe interviews Tony Pierce, the film's director, he explains his fascination for the Vietnam War: "...it makes us uneasy. It's a dirty little war, full of dirty little secrets. Do you know anyone personally who got drafted, Miss Marlowe? Anyone who died or went mad? This particular war is not heroic, not simple..."(215).

But perhaps the cruel irony in the film which posits the Conradian theme, is the appropriation of the "natives" (i.e., the Himal) in a movie that could very well be about them and their "darkness." When Claiborne throws a party where he invites the entire cast and crew,

> ... some Himal people showed up... the[y]... have agreed to play Montagnard tribesmen in the movie..., demanded horses, caribou (sp?), and cash in exchange for their work... The Himal have never seen a movie, nor do they seem interested. A lovely, proud people who came down from the mountains to attend Claiborne's grand fiesta (278-279).

As Pierce shamelessly puts it: "The beauty of a location like this is that it offers you everything you need. Beach, ocean, jungle, lake, mountains, waterfalls, cheap labor—" (247).

Overlaying this imperial narrative is the turbulence of Philippine politics in the 1970s. The escalating insurgency problem (e.g., the MNLF) in the country is felt by *Napalm Sunset*'s crew whose director Pierce finds it frustratingly difficult to shoot because "every day the government sends... different helicopter pilots Tony hasn't rehearsed with, so he has to start all over again, and the next day, the same thing happens" (276).

And it is the juxtaposition of virtual and real wars that likewise provides the backdrop of the Taobo's so-called discovery. In Fritz "Fritzie" or "Chino Magbantay's narrative, we learn of how the Philippine President and Zamora use the Taobo for political purposes. He narrates that as far

as his uncle was concerned, Zamora's expedition will greatly benefit his administration.

> My uncle's popularity had slipped at an alarming rate... The mountains crawled with guerillas; the military was paranoid and restless. Rowdy students demonstrated in the capital's street... Tomorrow, martial law would be declared. Finally an end to chaos...
>
> ... I could almost hear my uncle's brilliant, calculating mind clicking away—turning nothing into something, good into bad, loss into profit... Surely there would be some way to turn this "discovery" of Zamora into public-relations coup... Legacy of lies, grandeur of delusions. Embellishments and manipulations. Sleights of hands... (59)

And thus becomes stronger Zamora's claim to fame. Provided with helicopters, soldiers, and medical personnel, Zamora is also named president of the Indigenous Minority People's Foundation (PIMF). Years later, Zamora is accused of having been spy for the government and that he was not really protecting the tribes but actually "gathering information about the leftist rebels hiding in the mountains. That guides and translators like Duan and Aket were nothing but spies" (172).

More confluence of events, interests and motivations likewise made it possible for the Tasaday "discovery" to flourish. Marcos himself, much fascinated with tribal Filipinos, was "obsessed with the search for a common Filipino identity, a link with an ur-Filipino" (Hemley 83). The much-controversial *Tadhana* (actually written by a pool of professors from the University of the Philippines) was published, and Imelda, for her part, capitalized on the myth of Malakas and Maganda and commissioned artists to paint her and Marcos as the mythical first couple. Elizalde and Marcos forged an expedient political alliance. While the latter provided Elizalde with institutional support, the New Society was in turn, projected to be fully-accepted by the entire population of the Philippines, including the indigenous people (Hemley 2004, 83-84).

The novel's rich overlay of imperial narratives calls attention to a carnival of follies, the perversity of Philippine realities.

IMAGINING THE PHILIPPINES: TRANSGRESSING THE BOUNDARIES OF NATIONAL CONTAINMENT

Looming over all the fractured narratives is Rizalina's figure; together with Zamora, her character holds the novel together as her personality morphs in every chapter. It is so easy to typecast her as the woman-as-nation trope, Filipinas incarnate. And Hagedorn's claim in an interview with Aguilar-San Juan confirms the plausibility of this reading.

> ... I found the image that was finally used in a book edited by Jonathan Best... a collection of photographs taken during the early days of the American colonization of the Philippines. The one we chose is called "Anonymous Visayan Beauty," a sepia portrait taken in 1904 by an American photographer... I thought the young girl in the picture was so haunting and beautiful and could be Rizalina, but also not. She could also be the Philippines... beautiful, waiting, fierce presence... when you think of a dream jungle, I think seduction and danger have to be part of its allure. Now, what seduction means to you, there's the interesting challenge for an artist right? (2003, 4)

Who else could the woman in the cover be but Rizalina? Curiously, Hagedorn's description of her is similar to Zamora's description of the rain forest of Mindanao when he first beholds its lush greenery. And if Rizalina figures as the nation, the "luscious jungle" coveted by male colonizers in particular, what then is the ideological implication of such trope used in the novel?

Let me briefly touch on the problematic nature of women's subject-position vis-à-vis the nation, before I argue how Rizalina's character in *Dream Jungle* manages to circumvent the containment of this woman-as-nation trope.

Much could be said about the dangers of metaphorically using woman to signify the nation because elevating her on a pedestal to represent the nation has not really improved her material position in society. On the contrary, the woman-as-nation trope elides the various contradictions in the formation of the nation as much as it has concealed the complex relation of women to the nation and state.

The complexity of women's insertion in the nationalist discourse

may be seen in the range of portrayals from "victims of backwardness" to "icons of modernity or privileged bearers of cultural authenticity." This range of changing images more or less compromise women's full participation in national development. Those who join in nationalist movements are obliged to defend their participation in terms of patriotism and "self sacrifice to the nation." Whatever form their activities take— from civic to political— these are "legitimized as natural extensions of their womanly nature and as duty rather than right" (Kandiyoti 2000, 1493).

Unfortunately, whenever women are used to stand in as markers for difference—national, ethnic, and religious—their "emergence as full-fledged citizens will be jeopardised" because whatever rights they might have acquired during one stage of nation formation, will be threatened and "sacrificed" in the name of "identity politics" in another stage (Kandiyoti 2000, 1496).

Ostensibly, in the nationalist discourse, women find themselves burdened with similar responsibilities which have tied them to the patriarchy. On the symbolic level, when their sexuality is used to embody the nation, women are again reduced to the passive feminine in the power relations among nations where the stronger masculine states overpower and exploit the weak feminine states. This gendering of the latter is not only strong in colonial/imperial narratives but also in nationalist discourses and other writings on the nation, including those in literature.

How else then to read the "haunting," "beautiful," and "fierce" Rizalina who Hagedorn says could represent the Philippines? In the novel's symbolic production, Rizalina is another fetish. But somehow, the most obvious readings are usually the least-thought-of and the least nuanced. Though the narrative of *Dream Jungle* may deploy the trope, its operationalization does not come to full fruition; Rizalina as Philippines is defiant of containment of any narrative. She refuses to suffer the indignity of being an abused child, escapes her seeming destiny to be a servant but only to land a job in a bar. Another monkey wrench is thrown into the plot when she leaves the Love Connection Bar and becomes the girlfriend of the America actor Vince Moody. Where then is the defiance in the life of Rizalina, a woman who escapes one form of servitude only to end up in another? Isn't her hooking up with the American the most obvious form of colonial servitude? Perhaps it is. But one must carefully look into the

dynamics of this relationship.

Vince could never fully comprehend Rizalina/Jinx, moreso completely have her. When he finally convinces her to join him in his pension house, Vince makes love to her and says: "Don't you know how much I love you, Jinx?" He hates himself for desiring her so much whereas she, unmoved by his words, just "lay there limply, making no move to escape." Frustratingly, he kept on

> ... fucking her in a joyless frenzy. I longed for her to make a sound, any sound at all. To surrender and utter the word "love." In English, in Tagalog, in Bisayan, in whatever goddamn language she chose to speak (166).

But he does not hear the word and is "on the verge of tears" (166).

In Lake Ramayyah, Vince, sees Jinx grieve for the changes in her homeland and is tempted to express his love for her. But he hesitates: "Should he run the risk of losing her by declaring it out loud? *I love you JinxLina. Whoever you are*" (185). He wants to be with Jinx at the end of the day but she tells him that she will be visiting her daughter Yeye whom she had entrusted to the care of Aling Belen. Is Jinx a classic formulation of Oriental beauty? No. Vince knows that she is simply being "blunt and truthful" (185).

Relieved to see Jinx again, Vince could only say: "I was worried... How's the baby?" Lina answers mechanically, but he continues: "Promise me you won't disappear again like that." He gets no response so he takes "her by the hand and pull[s] her toward him. He gazed into her face. Tried to read but couldn't" (263).

Despite their physical intimacy, Vince never gets to possess Lina. She is consumed by images of tigers after she sees the tiger Shiva which Pierce flies in for the shooting. Day-Glo orange fur, jet-black stripes; these are the animal's colors that haunt Lina's consciousness. She draws the beast with eyes closed and would use both her right and left hand to move "the stubby pencil around the paper's surface as if she were guided by some spirit." Could she be this "tiger in motion, leaping out of the bush or out of the water. Ready to attack. Graceful and sinuous, every muscle outlined" (270). The image is an intertext of Adrienne Rich's "Aunt Jeniffer's Tigers,"

a poem about the repressed tigers of a woman who comforts herself by creating a tapestry with tigers threatening to prance out of the cloth.

Lina sees the beast even when she has sex with Vince:

> Her eyelids flutter, then opened wide. Tigers danced on the walls and ceiling, on the bed of tangled sheets on which she and Moody thrashed and moaned. Pagodas of tigers, floating islands of tigers. Pouncing, roaming, prowling. Out of the sea of tigers rose her tiger-faced mother, father, and twin brothers. Rose a glaring Zamora Lopez de Legazpi. As hard as she tried to distract herself, Lina was unable to shake her mind free of its multiplying visions. Tigers in trees, trees of tigers. Tigers with tigers. (272)

Lost in the vision of tigers, Lina fails to hear Vince's pronouncements of his love. She is completely absorbed by the images: "Lina who was not Lina now but something or someone else" (272). In Hagedorn's matrix of images, the "alluring" and "taunting" Rizalina is the Philippines; but, she is also "fierce." One among the nation's tigers, lurking, waiting.

After having sex, Vince takes his chance and asks: "Shall I stay here with you and Yeye?... What do you want?" Lina finally speaks: "Maybe I go back to Manila. Maybe I go with you to the States." In a seemingly unemotional manner, Vince replies: "I don't know if I'm ever going back" (273).

If we work with the woman-as-nation trope, then we could surmise that the nation Lina embodies is one that refuses containment *by* and *in* any narrative. Not by the narrative of patriarchy, nor by the narrative of nationalism. In fact, she is the very negation of the symbolic image of the woman-as-nation; she is a victim of sexual abuse, a prostitute who hooks up with an American, and eventually abandons the nation for greener pastures. The next time the reader hears of Lina, she is in Santa Monica, Los Angeles and agrees to meet Zamora's trusted right-hand man, Sonny Limahan. From their conversation, we discover that Lina stays in Vince's old house, the actor having had decided to stay in the Philippines. Sonny tells Lina of Zamora's death and her mother's request that he look for her in the States. Aside from saying that she has a job, Lina does not tell Sonny much. "I stay near the beach" is all she adds. "I am happy now, I want to stay happy" (312).

What happens to the woman-as-nation trope in *Dream Jungle*? It crumbles. The narrative successfully ruptures the metaphoric use of women to embody the Philippines and in doing so, lays bare woman's fraught relationship with her very own nation. She is raped by her very own father, falls prey to foreigners in order to survive, and is eventually forced to leave the country to find a better future. Instead of effecting a containment of the contradictions in the discourse of the nation, *Dream Jungle* reverses the use of the woman-as-nation trope and ultimately turns it upside down which inescapably heightens the issue of women's subject-position in the Philippines.

Curiously, it is Vince who stays in the Philippines. But then, he is an American—and an actor to boot—who could afford to live comfortably in the Third World. And ironically, it is Lina who leaves and finds a better life in the First World, right in the belly of the beast. What logic could be more perverted than this? But is it really a twisted logic? Not at all if one considers the geopolitical relations between the United States and the Philippines: Lina remains a Third World woman in the First World United States, still a product of the asymmetrical relations between two nations.

And indeed, Rizalina/Jinx/Lina is the face of a woman that is a constant reminder of women's subject formation inside and outside the borders of the nation.

THE JOKE'S ON US: POSTMODERN DRIVEL OR POSTCOLONIAL RESISTANCE?

Kalokohan. Origin: probably Malay (*ka*), Hispanic (*loco*), Chinese (*han*). Your guess is as good as mine.

Why would Zamora do it? A man this rich, smart, handsome, this set for life—why bother? ... The simple arrogance of it all is beautiful, di ba? So inventive, outrageous, playful, and inherently Filipino.

Dr. Amado G. Cabrera, Department of
Anthropology and History, UP Diliman

So, is the Taobo people or not? They are, according to Dr. Cabrera—professor of anthropology at the UP Diliman—during his

first interview with Paz Marlowe, a journalist for the Groove Rocket, a music/popular magazine in the United States. "The Taobo are real, Paz. Real people who live in the rain forest" (271). Later however, the same anthropologist delivers a speech entitled "Jokes on Us: The Sacred Mysteries of the Taobo," denouncing the "discovery" as a hoax. "The Taobo exist, but are fake. PIMF was a money-laundering scam. Zamora Lopez de Legazpi Jr. was a gangster, a poet, and an exploiter of our dreams," he claims (306).

Does Paz get to the bottom of the Taobo story? No, she doesn't, even as she interviews the American photographer Forbes who is writing a book about the Taobo. "My book is about the truth... How could people say they were actors, faking everything? Goddamn. Was I just dumb and blind?" (206) She does not arrive at any conclusion and instead remembers how back in 1971 or 1972, she herself watched the PBS documentary on "Forgotten Tribes in the Philippines."

Is the novel, thus, just another postmodern enchantment for the multiplicity of truths? Is *Dream Jungle* simply a celebration of postmodern's problematicization of access to the "real"?

Though Hagedorn and her character Paz are both enamored and awed by the Philippines they left and have been forever haunted by their country's shadows, the narrative of the novel bears the political and historical burden of the Philippines. Notwithstanding the two women's tendency to exoticize, and despite the seemingly postmodern fondness for the reel and the real, *Dream Jungle* as a postcolonial novel achieves to be a political interrogation of the Third World condition.

Though some of the techniques used in the novel are postmodern—one could hardly deny this considering Hagedorn's cultural milieu and crowd in San Francisco Bay Area—the effect in the narrative is political. The many narratives affirming and contesting the Taobo, the irony in shooting a Vietnam film in the Philippines, the entries from the diary of Pigafetta—all these betray the "imposition of an imperial culture and truncated indigenous history which colonialism has meant to many nations;" they likewise "negotiate (often parodically) the once tyrannical weight of colonial history in the conjunction with the revalued local past" (Hutcheon 1995, 131).

Thus, the intractable narrative is not simply verbal/structural

gymnastics but a result of the multi-layered colonial narratives in the multi-layered colonial narratives in the Philippines. With *Dream Jungle*'s several points of view, one gets not, the multifarious "truths" (i.e., in the postmodern sense) in our "extravagant culture," but the multiple narratives that feed into the discourse of colonialism and imperialism—from the Spanish conquest to Martial Law. This is not arguing for the inevitable foundering of "truth" but for the resistance against the "massive imperial centre and its totalizing system." Take for example "Zamora in the Year 2000." This is the last chapter where he frustratingly lambasts everybody, especially his wife and daughter for not remembering him. The chapter opens with Zamora, in a Ziploc placed in an urn, describing himself: "I have no nose, but I can smell. No eyes, but I can imagine. No ears but I hear everything. I am sick of this stifling darkness, the metal odors permeating my ashes and bones." The narrative, up to the end, deprives him of a definite place to speak from; as he is ash, he is neither here nor out there in the beyond. The conquistador of all conquistadors is reduced to a pathetic voice ranting and raving about the ingratitude of everybody. "*Puñeta kayong lahat!*" he shouts.

And most ignominous of all is the cremation of Zamora's body. Afraid of nothing but fire, his bloated body is finally shoved into the incinerator. "Pathetic," he exclaims. "All that is left of me, yo, ako, I, Zamora Lopez de Legazpi Jr.: not much more than a sandwhich bag, *puñeta kayong lahat*!" (320).

Zamora's effacement is a resistance against the narrative of conquest. The narrative's refusal to accord him anything is part of the postcolonial agenda to refute the imperial/colonial narrative. Undeniably, Zamora comes from a long line of imperial narratives, so to speak. Where else did his wealth originate from but from the exploitation of the Philippines? Where else does his Father Don Flaco get his money to orchestrate his phenomenal burial procession but from his "millions and billions, stocks and bonds, leverages and buyouts, World Bank and IMF loans, black-market scams, kickbacks, and ransoms, his share of Yamashita's gold" (290).

But as much as the novel effects a disruption of the colonial and imperial narrative, it does, too, present the politics of the search for the "authentic," the "indigenous," or the "noble savage." This agenda, as the novel implies, is fraught not just with personal interests, but with political,

economic, and cultural interests. Behind the heated debate among anthropologists, for example, is some form of anthropological voyeurism. As Hemley puts it, "there's inevitably in them a bit of the colonizer" (2004, 200). And, the Taobo, as the Tasaday, was also a product of both a rich man's extreme sense of primitivism and a president's obsession for the indigenous. As Hemley notes, whether or not the Tasaday came from the Metal Age culture depends greatly on one thing: "belief." Thus, "you had to believe Dafal first of all, and you had to believe the Tasaday. And you had, above all, to believe Elizalde" (2004, 29).

From the Spanish colonial narrative, to the United States' imperial narrative, to the colonial tinges of anthropology. All these locate the postcolonial Philippines within their vortices. Yet, *Dream Jungle* warns that some forms of postcolonial response to the colonial narrative could be problematic too, as post-independence leaders like Ferdinand Marcos, consumed by the idea of tribal Filipinos, latch on to the idea of a common Filipino identity. Easily manipulable, notions of the "indigenous," "authentic," or "tribal" could prove an effective political tool in the hands of national leaders.

A POSTCOLONIAL ENGAGEMENT

It may be said that writers in my position , exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.

Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

Again, I return to one of the major issues confronting a critic of a Filipino-American narrative — and this is how to negotiate the text which is some kind of an imagining of the nation by someone so physically distant from the everyday vicissitudes of a Third World nation. Why even bother then? To this dismissive question, I reply: "And why not?" Exilic writer Salman Rushdie speaks of their uncertain position which inevitably result in fictions and imaginations of India. These imaginings too, occur in narratives of those not based in the Philippines because their fictions are

ineluctable imaginations of the nation as well. What those in the Philippines can purportedly claim, however, is a sense of community with the Filipinos—though this is likewise contentious given the position of the middle class writer in English—and perhaps a "closer view" of the realities. Hagedorn's feverish and stimulating Manila is not quite the Filipinos' (i.e., those based in the Philippines) filthy and abject city.

Dream Jungle cannot escape the contradictions that characterize the Philippine novel. As critic Carol Hau explains, this genre is fraught with quite a number of paradoxes: its solitary act of writing and reading, its premise of public accessibility, and its practitioners being middle-class writers. As a narrative by a Filipino based in the United States, *Dream Jungle*'s impalpable ironies and paradoxes are heightened by the writer's subject-position in a First World setting. In an interview with Kay Bonetti, Hagedorn talks about her struggle to find the genre that would capture what she wanted to say about the Philippines, which, according to her, she always "carr[ied] around" (Interview, 24). The novel, thus, is part of her way of confronting her "demons of identity," her condition of being "mixed-blood," and the question of where her allegiances lie (Interview, 20). It is a narrative of the writer's own negotiations with the vexatious nature of her identity.

Reading *Dream Jungle* vis-à-vis Hagedorn's essays and interviews throw into high relief the complexities of postcoloniality and how these have to be constantly configured and reconfigured. There are no pat answers to issues of identity and allegiances as there are no simplistic approaches to texts. As my analysis showed, the narrative does crack at several points and apparently carries the historical disjunctions of the nation's postcoloniality. The tenuous and mutable nature of "nationness" and "Filipinoness" are something we, based here in the Philippines, do not have an exclusive right to.

Unfortunately, coming to terms with the ghosts of their (i.e., the Filipinos in the US) identities has been problematic because their dislocation has made them suspect. And understandably so. Physically and linguistically rooted in the United States, they have, unlike the nationalist exiles, more or less refused to come back. Despite their alliances with Philippine social movements and their nostalgia for the Philippines—this is what obviously afflicts Hagedorn—Filipino-Americans are likewise "haunted by assimilationist anxieties" (Rafael 2002, 371).

Indeed the subject-position of the Filipino writers abroad presents a nexus of problems. Rafael goes as far as comparing their ambivalent relationship with the nation-state of their ancestry with that of the earlier generation of nationalists; like the nationalists of the nineteenth century who neither felt quite at home in the Philippines or in Spain, the Filipino-Americans find themselves "arriving but never quite resting on a 'Filipino' identity embedded in, but constantly at odds with, other identities" (Rafael 2002, 371).

It is precisely this absence of a determined notion of national identity and the condition of "constant departures and arrivals, of movements both physical and imaginary" (Rafael 2002, 371) that enables *Dream Jungle* to confront the tensions and torsions of identity, gender, and the nation. And it is the narrative's uncertainty that pushes the reader to debate with history. Though the narrative may be read as one that assumes a conservative political agency, the novel definitely does more that metaphorically gloss over national ailments. It in fact, brings together the various ways by which the Philippines, as a gendered nation, is inserted in imperial narratives.

The novel maps out what Gayatri Spivak calls the "itinerary of silencing," to see what narratives clash with each other, "which one rises and which one falls, who is silent, and the itinerary of the silencing rather than the retrieval." And because we, as critics and readers are predisposed to narrate, "one shouldn't think we are somehow outside waging war" (1990, 31-32); the activity we engage in when we narrate and narrativize could very well be considered part of the battle for meanings. As a postcolonial critique, *Dream Jungle* heeds this caution and paves the way for polyvocality, a multiplicity of dissenting voices that rise and fall. The narrative safeguards itself against simplistic renderings of colonial and imperial narratives by simultaneously grafting them onto national narratives.

As a postcolonial narrative, *Dream Jungle* registers the contradictions of its production and reception—its transgressions of the symbolic economy of which it is a part. Made possible by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation which granted Hagedorn a Fellowship in Fiction in 2001, the novel ironically undermines the narrative of imperialism which provided its condition of possibility.

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