Diasporan Constructs in Jessica Hagedorn's Dogeaters

Michael S Naidas[1*], Leif Mark G Buenio [2]
[1]*Adventist University of the Philippines*
[2]*Department of Education-Division of Cagayan, Philippines*
MSNaidas@aup.edu.ph

Abstract *- Diaspora refers to the displacement or expulsion of people from their homeland, leaving them "detached" from their national territory, often with a hope or desire to return if the homeland still exists meaningfully, resulting in multiple attachments to different homes throughout their journey, hence constructs related to their diasporan experience. The paper attempted to uncover diasporan constructs in Jessica Hagedorn's Dogeaters) utilizing Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin's The Empire Writes Back (2002) and Everett Lee's Theory of Migration (1966) and the novels' characterization, narrative technique, and significations were also considered. A phenomenological type of research was employed, particularly the descriptive-analytical approach in interpreting the novel under study. After careful evaluation and analysis, the study found that the novel echoes these diasporan constructs in the form of binaries: home vs exile; citizen vs transient; pure vs hybrid and dominant vs subaltern. Thus, as an extension, the researcher recommends looking into other novels and other literary genres using relevant literary or sociological theories to validate the findings of this study.*

Keywords: *citizen vs transient; construct; diaspora; dominant vs subaltern; home vs exile; postcolonial; pure vs hybrid*

I. INTRODUCTION

Diaspora refers to the forced or voluntary displacement of people from their homeland, leaving them disconnected from their place of origin—often accompanied by a longing or hope to return, if the homeland still retains meaning. However, some scholars argue that diaspora may diminish nostalgia for a singular homeland, as individuals often develop new roots in various locations. This leads to multiple attachments and a complex sense of belonging, shaping various aspects of the diasporic experience.

According to **Panopio and Raymundo (2004)**, such aspects can be seen as **constructs**—mental abstractions used to represent ideas, people, events, or objects that capture human interest. **Williams (1980)** expands on this by describing constructs as subjective conceptual frameworks rather than empirically proven realities. Often

unobservable, they serve as theoretical tools to interpret the world. The **Oxford Dictionary Online (2011)** notes that constructs offer shared meanings and a common language for clearer communication, though they can also be vague, imprecise, or even implicit.

Based on the understanding that constructs can be formed through theoretical or nominal definitions, especially when none previously exist, the student researcher chose to identify constructs representing **diaspora or exilic literature** through the analysis of a novel.

These constructs were derived from interpretations of the text and expressed using the concept of **binary opposition**. Borrowed from linguistics and developed by post-structuralist **Jacques Derrida (1967, 1971)**, binary opposition suggests that Western thought often organizes meaning through contrasting pairs. This is especially relevant in **postcolonial and diaspora studies**, where the dynamic between East and West, or dominant and subaltern cultures, plays a central role in shaping discourse.

II .LITERATURE REVIEW

In *The Empire Writes Back to the Center* (1989), Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define **postcolonialism** as encompassing all cultures shaped by imperialism, from the onset of colonization to the present. They assert that postcolonial literature arises from the lived experiences of colonization and establishes its identity by highlighting its tensions with imperial authority and by distancing itself from the values and assumptions of the colonial center. Postcolonial theorists maintain that a writer's colonial background inevitably influences the creation and interpretation of literary texts.

Whether spelled with or without a hyphen, **postcolonialism** refers to the act of reexamining historical, cultural, political, and economic experiences in countries that have been colonized or continue to deal with the enduring impacts of colonial rule. Postcolonial literature, therefore, is not limited to works written after the colonial period, but includes any writing that reflects the interaction between colonizers and indigenous cultures. These works often resist or question colonial ideologies from a position that straddles both the colonizer's and the colonized's worlds.

As a result, **postcolonial literature** becomes a space for challenging dominant colonial narratives. One of its key purposes is to deconstruct the systems of thought and language that colonizers used to assert control over much of the world. This means that reinterpreting and rewriting the colonizer's historical and fictional records is central to the postcolonial project. Rather than merely echoing colonial discourse, postcolonial texts serve as **counter-discursive** practices that offer alternative perspectives.

In relation to migration, **Everett Lee's Theory of Migration (1966)** identifies four major categories that influence both the decision to migrate and the process itself:

1. **Factors at the area of origin**, or *push factors*, which drive people to leave their home regions.
2. **Factors at the area of destination**, or *pull factors*, which attract individuals to a new place.
3. **Intervening obstacles**, such as physical distance, transportation issues, migration costs, cultural or ethnic barriers, and personal challenges.
4. **Personal factors**, which refer to how individuals perceive the push and pull forces and how this shapes their migration choices.

Lee further breaks these factors down into three classifications: **pluses** (pull factors), **minuses** (push factors), and **zeros**, which represent neutral elements that balance the competing influences.

He also outlines **seven key principles** related to migration:

1. **Migration is selective**, depending on how individuals respond to origin and destination factors as well as to obstacles.
2. Those who migrate due to pull factors are typically **positively selected**, as they choose to move based on perceived opportunities.
3. Migrants driven by overwhelming push factors may be **negatively selected**, or not selected at all if the whole population is affected.
4. Migration patterns from a single origin may be **bimodal**, meaning some migrants respond to pull factors (positive selection), while others respond to push factors.
5. The more difficult the journey, the stronger the **positive selection**, since only the more capable tend to overcome obstacles.
6. Migration is often linked to **life-cycle stages**, sometimes functioning as a rite of passage.
7. Migrants tend to have **intermediate characteristics** between the populations of their origin and destination, as different traits influence responses to push and pull factors.

With these theoretical foundations in place, the paper sought to identify **diasporic constructs** within Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, a novel representing the Filipino diaspora. It further aimed to show how these constructs are reflected and expressed throughout the narrative.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a **qualitative research design**, specifically employing the **thematic analysis** approach—a method used to examine qualitative data, typically drawn from textual sources like interviews or written narratives. The process involves a detailed and systematic

examination of the data to identify **recurring themes**, including patterns, ideas, and topics that appear frequently.

Although there are several ways to conduct thematic analysis, the most widely used framework is the **six-phase process** developed by **Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke** for psychological research. This process includes:

1. Becoming familiar with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Identifying potential themes
4. Reviewing those themes
5. Defining and naming them
6. Producing the final report or analysis

As noted by **Caulfield (2023)**, thematic analysis is highly adaptable and can be applied across various disciplines and research topics. In this study, it served as the basis for interpreting the **diasporic constructs** present in the selected literary text.

The primary material analyzed was **Jessica Hagedorn's novel *Dogeaters***. The researcher's thematic reading was guided by the theoretical perspectives of **Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989)** and **Everett Lee's *Theory of Migration* (1966)**. Using these frameworks, the study examined how *Dogeaters* reflects diasporic themes through its **character development, narrative structure, and thematic content**.

The thematic analysis enabled the identification and development of specific **diasporic constructs** as they emerged from a close reading of the novel, thus shaping the core of the research findings.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bloemraad (2017) defines **constructs** as mental abstractions used to represent ideas, people, organizations, events, or objects that capture human interest. **Williams (1980)** expands on this by describing constructs as conceptual frameworks or theories that are typically subjective and not based on direct empirical observation. Because they are often intangible, constructs are generally understood as abstract ideas rather than observable phenomena.

Braziel (2018) emphasizes that constructs offer a **shared language and common meaning**, enabling clearer communication among scholars and readers. However, despite their usefulness, constructs can also be **vague or ambiguous**, and in some cases, they may remain unstated. For this reason, constructs must be made **explicit** so they can be analyzed, critiqued, related to other ideas, clearly defined, and tested when necessary. This is achieved through

theoretical or nominal definitions, which offer clarity by using synonyms or descriptive terms to articulate the intended concept.

From the student critic's analysis of the texts, several key constructs emerged: **home vs exile**, **national vs transnational** (closely aligns with **citizen vs transient)**, monocultural **vs multicultural** (echoes the contrast in **pure vs hybrid)** and center vs periphery (dominant vs subaltern). To maintain **clarity and avoid redundancy**, the student critic chose to consolidate overlapping constructs, streamlining the analysis while preserving the core ideas.

• Home vs. Exile

One of the most prominent social constructs explored in the novel is the binary of **home versus exile**, a recurring theme in diaspora and exilic literature. Bienvenido Santos effectively employs this theme to portray the struggles and experiences of Filipinos in America, particularly in short stories like *The Day the Dancers Came*, *Scent of Apples*, *The Man (Who Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*, and *The Volcano*. Similarly, Barayuga (1998) explored this theme in her study of five novels by Filipino-American authors, while Hidalgo and Legasto (2014) examined it in their review of works by postcolonial Filipino women writers. The same motif appears in Vietnamese-American feminist literature, as highlighted in Qui-Phiet Tran's studies (as cited by Barayuga).

Jessica Hagedorn's novel *Dogeaters*—a work that reflects postmodern ambiguity—echoes this same longing through characters entangled in complex and often contradictory situations. These longings are typical of expatriate literature, where characters yearn for a sense of "home" while remaining rooted in exile.

Rio, the novel's narrator, exemplifies this tension. Her fragmented sense of identity and history prevents her from claiming either the Philippines or America as home. After being taken to the U.S. by her mother following her parents' divorce, Rio makes occasional visits to the Philippines but never feels truly at home in either country. She admits feeling most at peace in airports, always in motion, and expresses this exile poignantly when she says:

"We fly around in circles... in futile attempts to reach what surely must be heaven" (Hagedorn, 1990, p. 247).

This metaphor captures her deep, yet futile, desire for a sense of belonging. Her existential limbo illustrates the psychological exile experienced by many diaspora characters—those endlessly searching for home yet finding none.

Other characters in the novel reflect similar displacements:

- **Daisy Avila**, though not geographically displaced, lives in exile as a woman exploited for her beauty. She reclaims a sense of purpose and identity by joining the underground resistance, defying both her parents and societal expectations.
- **Joey Sands**, a biracial character with a troubled past, lacks a traditional family and home. His only sense of belonging comes from his uncle's shack in Tondo. Like Rio, he seeks meaning and acceptance, which he finds—perhaps accidentally—through involvement in political resistance.
- Rio's relatives also represent this theme. Torn between identities—Filipino, American, and even Spanish—they embody the confusion and fragmentation of diasporic identity. For example, Rio recounts that long before her mother took her to North America, her brother became a faith healer, and her father decided to move permanently to Spain. Another relative openly supported Franco, flying the Falangista flag outside his home.
- **Isabel Alacran** is also in a constant state of exile. Though she travels widely, she never feels at home—frightened by New York, uneasy in Paris, yet somewhat comfortable in Rome and Madrid. Her restlessness further demonstrates the elusive nature of "home."
- **Senator Avila**, though physically in his house, becomes emotionally and politically imprisoned due to the scandal surrounding Daisy's beauty pageant victory. His home becomes a space of exile.

The theme of **home and exile** thus emerges as central to diasporic narratives. Women novelists, in particular, highlight how characters experience deep displacement due to cultural, social, or political pressures, often involuntarily. This dislocation fosters a persistent longing for "home"—not always as a physical return, but more often as a psychological or emotional reconciliation. Yet such a return is complicated; the home they remember may no longer exist in the same form, making the return feel impossible.

This brings us to another related construct: **citizen vs. transient**. To be at "home" often equates to being a **citizen**, someone with rights, belonging, and identity. In contrast, to live in exile is to be a **transient**—a temporary, rootless figure. Citizenship implies national belonging and a stable identity, while transience suggests impermanence, disconnection, and often a lack of legal or cultural acceptance.

Irene Bloemraad (2017) supports this view in her essay "Citizenship and Pluralism: Multiculturalism in a World of Global Migration." She defines citizenship as both a legal status and a call to participate in a shared political and social system. **Frantz Fanon** (2021) echoes this idea, describing national culture as the collective effort to affirm a people's identity and survival. However, Fanon also warns that as global connections deepen, these national identities can give way to broader solidarities—an idea foundational to **transnationalism**.

Fanon and Bloemraad both suggest that transients or immigrants often struggle to assimilate because they lack the cultural grounding that comes with citizenship. Without a stable home, they remain in limbo—**outsiders**, caught between worlds. This condition, where borders seem impermeable and identity feels fragmented, is central to the multicultural, diasporic, and transnational characters in *Dogeaters* and other works of postcolonial literature.

National vs. Transnational (Citizen vs. Transient)

In *Dogeaters*, characters are often forced—either by choice or circumstance—to take on roles as **transient or transnational figures**, reflecting the instability of their identities and positions in society.

Take **Rio**, for example. After moving from Manila to Chicago, she finds herself unable to fully identify with either the Philippines or the United States. She doesn't claim citizenship in either place. Instead, she feels most comfortable in airports, constantly in transit, almost as if she belongs more to the world than to any one nation. Her dream metaphorically reveals this restlessness and longing for a true "home," describing her as flying "in circles… in futile attempts to reach what surely must be heaven" (Hagedorn, 1990, p. 247)—a symbolic reference to the elusive nature of home.

This theme is echoed in her grandfather's death. Dying in an American hospital in Manila, he dreams of "Chicago" on his deathbed—a moment that reflects not just personal longing but also the pervasive American presence in the Philippines. His death by *bangungot* (a traditional Filipino nightmare) is both ironic and symbolic: he becomes the first white man to die of this supposedly local affliction. Yet, an American doctor dismisses it as mere superstition—a reflection of colonial attitudes that trivialize Filipino beliefs (p. 112).

Lola Narcisa, Rio's brown-skinned, gray-eyed grandmother, represents the uneasy fusion of East and West through her marriage to a white man. She is depicted as a subdued and almost invisible figure—living quietly, listening to radio dramas, disconnected from the world around her. She embodies the image of a **transient or transitional character**, not fully belonging, despite being within the confines of her "home."

Other characters also illustrate the shift from **transience to citizenship**, particularly **Daisy Avila** and **Joey Sands**, whose experiences with the underground movement transform their identities.

Before her political awakening, Daisy was the daughter of Senator Avila and winner of the Ms. Junior Philippines pageant. However, she quickly rejected the pageant's ideals, impulsively married a foreigner, and later divorced him. Following a traumatic kidnapping and rape, Daisy found purpose by joining the underground resistance. Her journey shows how someone who once drifted through life without clear direction eventually develops a strong national consciousness—moving from being a transient figure to one rooted in her people's struggle.

Joey Sands, similarly, begins as a figure disconnected from any stable identity. Homeless, bisexual, and engaged in sex work with clients of various nationalities, he embodies the transnational and marginal. However, after witnessing Senator Avila's execution, he is forced into hiding and eventually joins the underground movement— primarily as a means of survival. This reluctant involvement ultimately transforms him, too, into a figure tied to

national identity, despite his personal doubts. His transition from a carefree hustler to an underground activist mirrors the transformation of transitory characters into engaged citizens during politically repressive times like Martial Law.

From these examples, we can see that **the construct of citizen versus transient**, like **home versus exile**, plays a central role in *Dogeaters*. In fact, these two constructs are closely connected. "Home," "citizen," and "national" all imply rootedness and belonging, while "transient" and "transnational" suggest detachment, mobility, or fluid identity. The novel seems to argue that characters, especially those shaped by diaspora, colonization, or trauma, begin in a state of dislocation but eventually find meaning and identity through struggle— transforming from floating, uncertain beings into grounded, politically aware individuals.

Through this transformation, Hagedorn illustrates how displacement—whether forced or chosen—can be a catalyst for personal and national awakening. What starts as a fractured identity becomes a more solid, defined self, capable of claiming place and purpose.

Monocultural) v Multicultural (Pure vs Hybrid)

From the outset, *Dogeaters* presents a cast of characters already immersed in **hybrid** and **multicultural** identities. The members of Rio's family, with ties not only to the Philippines and the United States but also to countries like Spain, exemplify the practice of cultural hybridity. Rio herself admits early in the novel that they are a "family of opportunists" (p. 6), reflecting a complex blend of cultural allegiances driven by both survival and desire.

This hybridity is evident in the way characters consume and idolize American pop culture. Rio, her cousin Pucha, and others in their social circle are shown to be infatuated with American cinema and celebrities. Pucha, for example, swoons over Hollywood stars, mimicking their mannerisms and style. Mickey expresses a desire to see Elizabeth Taylor naked, a testament to his obsession with American beauty standards. Isabel Alacran lives as a jetsetter, moving through elite global spaces, reflecting an identity shaped by transnational privilege.

Rio's own character embodies a deep sense of cultural dislocation. After leaving Manila for Chicago, she finds herself unable to fully claim either Filipino or American identity. Instead, she gravitates toward a cosmopolitan existence, identifying not with nations but with the in-between spaces—airports, journeys, and transitions. In a dream, she envisions herself "flying in circles… flapping and beating her wings in futile attempts to reach what surely must be heaven" (Hagedorn, 1990, p. 247)—a metaphor for her longing for a stable sense of home, which remains elusive.

This hybridity is also dramatized in domestic spaces. Rio's act of listening to Filipino radio dramas with Lola Narcisa and the household servants highlights the contrast between generations and cultures. While Lola Narcisa and the servants represent a more traditional, monocultural attachment to Filipino melodrama, Rio straddles both local and Western cultural

spheres. Her simultaneous engagement with Filipino and American media places her at the intersection of these worlds, showcasing **cultural hybridity in its most lived form**.

Gender and sexuality further expand the novel's exploration of hybridity. Characters like **Eugenia/Eugenio**, a hermaphrodite and former performer, and **Joey Sands**, a bisexual sex worker, challenge rigid gender binaries and represent the fluidity of identity.
Eugenia/Eugenio, as both male and female, becomes a symbolic figure of cultural and gender blending. Their androgyny serves as a metaphor for how colonial and postcolonial influences have blurred the boundaries of a once "pure" Filipino identity.

Joey Sands' character reflects another layer of hybrid identity. In a society steeped in **Filipino machismo**, Joey's bisexuality is radical. Traditionally, queerness has been marginalized, seen as shameful or even as a societal "plague" (*salot*). Yet, Joey is a central figure in the novel, and through him, Hagedorn challenges the dominance of heterosexual, male-centered narratives. Joey's sexual and cultural fluidity—engaging with clients of various nationalities—marks him as both a literal and symbolic representative of a **transnational, multicultural Philippines**.

Linguistic hybridity also plays a crucial role. Characters such as **Pucha Gonzaga** and **Cora Camacho** often speak in code-switched or "broken" English, mixing it with Tagalog. Though often mocked for their awkward grammar and misused vocabulary, their speech reflects a deeper truth: **language itself becomes a site of cultural negotiation**. Their imperfect English, layered with Filipino expressions, mirrors the hybrid identities of many Filipinos navigating colonial legacies and global modernity.

The novel's **multilingual nature**—featuring English, Spanish, Tagalog, Ilocano, and Bisaya—reinforces this hybridity. The inclusion of various Philippine languages alongside English not only complicates the reading experience but also reflects the linguistic diversity and layered identities of the Filipino people.

Formally, *Dogeaters* resists traditional narrative structures. Its **non-linear plot**, **multiple narrators**, and **fragmented storytelling** all contribute to a hybrid form that rejects the linear, unified narrative typical of Western literary conventions. This structural experimentation mirrors the **multicultural, postcolonial condition** of the Philippines—a nation shaped by centuries of colonization, global capitalism, and diasporic movement.

In essence, *Dogeaters* is a novel steeped in **hybridity**—not just in content, but in form, language, identity, and ideology. It reflects a world where cultural boundaries are blurred, where characters exist between nations, genders, languages, and traditions. In doing so, Hagedorn not only portrays the Filipino experience under globalization and postcolonialism but also affirms **multiculturalism** as a dynamic, evolving reality in contemporary life.

Center vs the Periphery (Dominant vs Subaltern)

One of the most prevalent binary oppositions in postcolonial literature is that of **dominant vs. subaltern**—a reflection of the ongoing clash between those in power and those on the margins. The concept of the **subaltern**, popularized by theorists like **Ranajit Guha** and **Gayatri Spivak (2020)**, refers to individuals or groups who are silenced or marginalized within social, cultural, political, and historical narratives. In this framework, subaltern voices are often overshadowed or completely erased by dominant discourse.

Edward Said (1978) argues that postcolonial texts often present a liminal space, where characters and political figures exist "between domains, between forms, between homes and between languages." *Dogeaters*, as a postcolonial novel, encapsulates this dynamic tension between the dominant and the subaltern in both character relationships and narrative structure.

The Dominant: U.S. Imperialism and Filipino Elites. In *Dogeaters*, the **dominant force** is represented primarily by the United States and its enduring influence on Filipino culture, politics, and identity. This dominance seeps into the consciousness of characters such as **Rio's family**, who, though Filipino, have internalized American values and elitist ideals. Rio refers to them as a "family of opportunists" (p. 6), underlining their willingness to align with dominant forces to gain social status.

This elite alignment is demonstrated through their preferences: Rio and her cousins idolize American films and celebrities, favor U.S.-made products, and disregard local art forms such as Tagalog films, music, and soap operas. In this way, they not only reflect the cultural hegemony of the West but also actively perpetuate it within their own society, becoming local agents of the dominant ideology.

The Subaltern Within the Home. Countering this dominance is the **"bakya" crowd** within the family—the marginalized, lower-class, or traditional voices embodied by characters like **Lola Narcisa**, Rio's maternal grandmother. She prefers the simplicity of salted eggs and dried fish, eats with her hands, and finds comfort in listening to Tagalog radio dramas with the house help. Together, they represent the **subaltern**, those who maintain local customs and values, and who remain largely unheard within elite spaces.

Rio occasionally crosses the divide, partaking in the subaltern world despite her mother's disapproval. In doing so, she becomes a kind of **cultural mediator**, reflecting the tension between inherited dominance and cultural authenticity.

The Subaltern Speaks. A significant moment of **subaltern agency** occurs when Lola Narcisa asserts herself before the American doctors treating her dying husband. As they prepare to intervene, she exclaims, **"DON'T TOUCH HIM!"** (p. 16), a bold outcry that shocks everyone present. Once silent and invisible, she suddenly takes center stage, demanding recognition not only as a wife but as a subject with a voice. Her outburst symbolizes the

subaltern's attempt to reclaim agency and resist colonial authority—even within deeply personal, domestic contexts.

Dominant Capital vs. Subaltern Labor. The novel also mirrors this binary through the **Alacran family**, affluent owners of SPORTEX, and their exploited employees. The Alacrans embody capitalist dominance, growing wealthier at the expense of their labor force. **Trinidad** and **Romeo Rosales**, two low-wage workers, represent the subaltern class—overworked, underpaid, and voiceless.

Trinidad, despite her hardships, remains loyal to the Alacrans, internalizing her subordination. Romeo, on the other hand, attempts to challenge the dominant structure by requesting a promotion. His request is mocked and ultimately denied. Later, he becomes a **scapegoat**, falsely accused of assassinating Senator Avila and is disappeared—his literal silencing reflecting the subaltern's systemic erasure.

State Power as the Ultimate Dominant Force. Beyond individuals, the novel portrays the **Philippine government**—corrupt, militarized, and allied with foreign interests—as the true embodiment of dominance. The government's efforts to suppress dissent are illustrated through the **assassination of Senator Avila**, a prominent opposition figure, and the **kidnapping and abuse of Daisy Avila**, who is imprisoned, interrogated, and raped.

The state also orchestrates Romeo Rosales' execution, labeling him the assassin to cover its own tracks. Through these actions, the regime maintains power by ensuring the subaltern remains silenced, fragmented, and afraid.

Resistance: Speaking Through Silence. Despite being trapped in systems of oppression, characters like **Joey Sands** and **Daisy Avila** demonstrate how **resistance** can emerge even from positions of marginality. Joey, a bisexual sex worker and witness to Avila's murder, is unable to speak openly but finds voice through action—joining the underground movement alongside Daisy, Horacio Santos, and Clarita Avila.

Their participation in the **revolutionary underground** marks a shift: they may be voiceless in the traditional sense, but their very act of resistance **becomes speech**. Their silence turns into defiance; their absence from public discourse transforms into an assertion of political agency.

Daisy, in particular, is a complex subaltern figure. Her rejection of the **Junior Miss Philippines** crown alienates her from both state and society. Instead of fulfilling her role as a symbolic figure of beauty and nationalism, she challenges it—first by rejecting public expectations, then by withdrawing from elite society entirely to join the resistance. She articulates the fractured nature of the nation, observing that Filipinos are **"a fragmented nation of loyal believers, divided by blood feuds and controlled by the Church"** (p. 100).

The Colonized Psyche. Senator Avila, Daisy's father, offers one of the most powerful articulations of the Filipino subaltern condition. He laments:

"We Pinoys suffer collectively from a cultural inferiority complex... We are a nation of epics, descendants of warring tribes... baptized by Spaniards and Americans... united only by our hunger for glamour and our Hollywood dreams" (p. 102).

His words encapsulate the legacy of colonization and the internalized inferiority that drives the Filipino elite's emulation of the West—while also highlighting the psychological subjugation of the broader populace.

Rebellion of the Marginalized. Resistance to dominance also manifests in moments of raw revolt. In a climactic scene, the **golf caddies and waiters** at the Alacran estate—fed up with elitist mistreatment—physically attack the wealthy golfers. Their cry, **"I gonna kill you with your own shit!"** (p. 180), symbolizes the explosive breaking point of the subaltern—a violent reclaiming of dignity from years of humiliation.

Language as a Site of Power and Resistance. Even language in *Dogeaters* reflects the dominant/subaltern binary. **Pucha's refusal to accept Rio's narrative** is not just personal—it signals a deeper resistance to dominant forms of storytelling and memory. Pucha, often ridiculed for her flawed English, represents a subaltern voice struggling within the language of the colonizer.

Moreover, the novel itself subverts linguistic dominance by **hybridizing English** with Tagalog, Spanish, and regional Filipino dialects. This multilingualism disrupts the "purity" of English, allowing the subaltern to appropriate and reshape the colonial language. Characters like **Pucha** and **Romeo**, despite their "bad grammar," write in English with a uniquely Filipino touch—marking the **language as no longer that of the colonizer, but of the colonized** who have made it their own.

V. CONCLUSION

Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* stands as a powerful postcolonial narrative that captures the deep fractures of Filipino identity in the wake of colonialism, neocolonialism, and authoritarianism. Through its fragmented structure, multilingual prose, and diverse cast of hybrid, marginalized, and resistant characters, the novel explores the complex interplay between domination and subjugation, home and exile, citizen and transient, and the colonizer's language versus the native voice. Hagedorn masterfully portrays how colonial legacies persist—not only through political and economic structures but also through cultural aspirations, gender expectations, and internalized inferiority.

Yet, *Dogeaters* is not simply a tale of oppression—it is also a narrative of survival, subversion, and agency. By giving voice to the subaltern, challenging linear storytelling, and

hybridizing language, Hagedorn reclaims space for Filipino narratives to emerge on their own terms. In doing so, the novel resists the simplification of identity and history, presenting instead a nuanced portrayal of a nation still negotiating its place between the past and the present, the East and the West, the dominant and the silenced.

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