

Deterritorialisations of Desire:

“Transgressive” Sexuality as Filipino Anti-Imperialist Resistance in
Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*

Rahul K. Gairola

Interrogating the Bildungsroman as the Sign of Eurocentric, Heterosexual Modernity

In *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (first published in 1987), Franco Moretti cites the bildungsroman genre of “development” and/ or “coming of age” narrative as a specifically European literary phenomenon that constitutes “the ‘symbolic form’ of modernity”¹. According to Moretti, the bildungsroman is the emblematic literary form that embodies a moment in Western development, prompting him to open his book with “Youth is, so to speak, modernity’s ‘essence,’ the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the *future* rather than in the past”². Offering a list of Western texts to push the notion that modernity and forwards-movement are specifically European traits immortalized in the bildungsroman, Moretti names his protagonists: Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet, Stendhal’s Julien Sorel, Brontë’s Jane Eyre, Balzac’s Rastignac, etc.

In rendering this list of European bildungsroman novels, Moretti claims that George Eliot’s *Felix Holt* (1866) and Gustave Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* (1869) are “the last masterpieces of the genre” and that the “late bildungsroman” replaces the classical model³. By 1914, argues Moretti, the bildungsroman genre fatally meets its demise as the youths of Europe respond to and die in World War I⁴. The end of this literary genre then, for Moretti, delineates a historical paradigm that centers the turbulent apex of European bloodshed in competing imperialist ventures at the turn of the century.

While it does offer a working model for thinking about the production of youth through and within modernity, Moretti’s historical rendering of the bildungsroman is conspicuously Western, white, and, given its romantic marriage plots, heteronormative⁵. In this vein, it also links together in a single process, national modes of identification with modes of self-identification within a particular aesthetic and history while eliding the very real material differences and social contradictions of the time. In other words, that aesthetic is of the unified, uninterrupted narrative while that history is one that heralds, even if unwittingly, the whiteness and heteronormativity, often even the bourgeois materialism, of its

characters. Missing from this genre are texts that offer narrative agency to those young persons whose developments do not conform to the discursive categories of the Western nation-state.

Lisa Lowe, in referring to Benedict Anderson⁶, observes that print culture has long been a site from which the citizen-subject socially coagulates, and where the bildungsroman in particular extols a unified subject in his or her development as an “ethical” (or properly assimilated) citizen-subject. As Lowe indicates, the bildungsroman as a genre presents a particular narrative, and one that is homogenizing, in which difference, otherness, can be reconciled through an ideal form of subjectivity within the rubric of the nation. She writes:

In both England and the United States, the novel as a form of print culture has constituted a privileged site for the unification of the citizen with the “imagined community” of the nation, while the national literary canon functioned to unify aesthetic culture as a domain in which material differences and localities were resolved and reconciled. The bildungsroman emerged as the primary form for narrating the development of the individual from youthful innocence to civilized maturity, the telos of which is the reconciliation of the individual with the social order. The novel of formation has a special status among the works selected for a canon, for it elicits the reader’s identification with the bildung narrative of ethical formation, itself a narrative of the individual’s relinquishing of a particularity and difference through identification with an idealized “national” form of subjectivity⁷.

In the frame of Lowe’s criticism, Moretti’s model additionally precipitates a crisis between the bildungsroman as modernity’s privileged sign and the very history through which the genre has emerged. For if the bildungsroman is unequivocally the “symbolic form of modernity,” it is highly unlikely that we can responsibly conceive this genre devoid of the cultural texts produced by silenced histories of race and class oppression - colonialism and institutionalized heterosexuality prominent examples among them. For, beyond the consolidation of capital via European industrialization and its entrepreneurship, Moretti’s celebratory narrative of Western development occludes the violence and racism fraught by colonialism, its implications and its effects within the margins of the “Third” World.

Indeed, the very demise of the bildungsroman during World War I seems to forget that this war was deeply influenced and impacted by colonies and the “Third” World. This reflects Rosemary Marangoly George’s intervening contention that “Over the last two centuries, the novel in the west has been read as having as its focus: love, courtship, seduction, female subjectivity, the home, and domesticity[...]. With the advent of colonial fiction, however, this literary genre’s implication in events of nation and empire can no longer be ignored”⁸. Moretti’s bildungsroman as such risks acting as an epistemological disciplinary technology⁹

for interpellating colonized subjects and people of color via the intellectual violence of Western pedagogy, producing in non-Western sites those variations of “mimicry men,” “brown-skinned Englishmen,” and black subjects donning white masks¹⁰.

This occlusion of non-white texts from the genre of youth development conveniently forgets that colonial texts, ironically, emerge as “development” narratives of the colonized within the very grammar of colonialism’s dangerously beneficent yoke. Moreover, Moretti’s parallel between youthfulness and European modernity reinforces the centuries-old myth that the non-West is ancient, frozen in time, and infinitely exotic¹¹. Finally, if the “symbolic form of modernity” is but European, Moretti buttresses the familiar notion that non-European nations are pre-modern in cultural production and critical thought, condescending to Non-European writers while lingering in Orientalist thinking that re-invokes imperialism as the judicious producer of the world’s “worthwhile” knowledge¹². Underlying such “worthwhile” knowledge is not only the process of assimilating youthfulness into the social order, but also that the process as successfully produces specifically racialised and sexualised narrative subjects.

I would thus argue that the maritime capitalism and the racially-coded others produced by colonialism against the backdrop of the Western imperium *must* have shaped the historical conditions under which the category of “genre” has consolidated the bildungsroman into an enclosed sign-system and eminent sub-genre of the realist novel to “teach” non-white peoples from early on how to be good, precocious subjects. In this vein, we must here pause and recognize the ramifications of such an exclusive genre. A stable model of knowledge, the “bildungsroman” genre as a European epistemological phenomenon analogizes the general state of Western nation-states with the forwards-development of the individuals who comprise them. In contrast, the exclusion of non-Western texts symbolizes the anti-development of postcolonial youths that in larger strokes has characterized the whole of the “Third World” as pre-modern and backwards.

As such, the narrative form of “the bildungsroman” and its exclusion of non-European texts crystallizes the familiar mode of othering whereby non-Western societies and peoples are devoid of the ways and means of sophisticated cultural and intellectual production, in one sense reifying colonialism’s foundation conceit that it is a benevolent and necessary vehicle, that it is indeed the “white man’s burden” for lifting into the light those “Third World” unfortunates sitting in darkness¹³. This gives rise to a few questions: is the bildungsroman a genre purely conceived with youthfulness in mind, or is it also thinking of youthfulness with and through racial prerequisites? Can the same be inquired in regard to sexuality? Is a “youth” always ever just that, or can a “youth” emanate many aspects of

“youthfulness” that are less about an essential conception of age and more about social situations and how one is perceived at varying historical junctures?

Reading the Counter-Bildungsroman as a Decolonizing Novel

Scholars challenging the persistent residue of Eurocentric and heteronormative thinking have heavily criticized this version of a fossiliferous non-West. As Kum Kum Sangari observes, “The linear time of the West or the project of modernity did not simply mummify or overlay the indigenous times of colonized countries, but was itself open to alteration and reentered into discrete cultural combinations”¹⁴. In critiquing the agendas of major, or dominant, literatures, David Lloyd writes,

Predicated on the notion of universality, this aesthetic [of the major literature] both legitimates and transmits the ethnocentric ideology of imperialism...the primary feature of any literature that is to be defined as minor is its exclusion from the canon, an exclusion that may on the face of it be as much on the grounds of purely aesthetic judgments as on those of racial or sexual discrimination.¹⁵

Sangari’s and Lloyd’s criticisms of the West’s (re)casting of the non-West brings into sharp relief the stakes for developing an alternative model for non-Western literary productions that recognize and chart out the developments of youths in non-Western spaces. Perhaps of the utmost urgency is the need to name non-Western characters with narrative agency, whose lives are not ultimately molded by colonial and/or heteronormative ideologies, and to offer all readers literary representations that recognize non-Western personal developments, and which allow non-white readers to imagine their own lives beyond systems of knowledge which resort to colonial and racialized epistemologies.

In forging rebuttals specific to Moretti’s rendering of the bildungsroman narrative, Lowe further argues that:

...the sites of minority or colonized literary production are at different distances from the canonical nationalist project of reconciling constituencies to idealized forms of community and subjectivity[...]. Even those novels that can be said to conform more closely to the formal criteria of the bildungsroman express a contradiction between the demand for a univocal developmental narrative and the historical specificities of racialization, ghettoization, violence, and labor exploitation.¹⁶

Additional scholarship by Patricia C. Chu and Rachel Lee rebuts the Eurocentric, male-centered bildungsroman through readings of Asian American texts that re-think marriage plots, or provide literary readings of feminist nationalisms¹⁷. In this way, Chu and Lee crucially identify moments where women characters of color secure narrative agency as active subjects and catalysts of

narrative that resist the racial and gender formations that have historically attended the oppression of women of color. But such a process, at times, ironically delineates the marginalisation of other characters – chiefly male characters. Though I am sympathetic to them, a weakness of these interpretations is that the crux of Chu and Lee's arguments depends on gendered readings conducted at the expense of non-heteronormative agency, particularly of queer male characters. Thus these readings unwittingly undermine an effective criticism in moving towards the opposite pole of a gender binary (male/female) that flips gender discourse rather than troubling or displacing it.

In contributing to that arsenal of what Lowe calls the "decolonizing novel,"¹⁸ I would like to propose a model of re-thinking both Eurocentrism and gender that can be called a "counter-bildungsroman." I offer this alternative model to recognize development narratives that stem far beyond the Eurocentric parochialism of Moretti's model, and to turn to texts that do not neatly fit into the imperial fictions that colonial educators taught as classic novels throughout the non-West. My model also aspires to rattle the foundations of the Eurocentric history that Moretti's paradigm espouses through its elision of non-Western others, and builds on the work of Chu and Lee while also trying to sidestep heterosexual gender ideals for both men and women.

As indicated by word "counter" that precedes "bildungsroman," I develop this model precisely to use Moretti's model in speaking about the development of youth while also subverting the pervasive constellation of privilege that attends its Western discourses. Indeed, in proposing to "provincialize" European thought and hegemonic history, Dipesh Chakrabarty writes, "European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought...may be renewed from and for the margins"¹⁹. Chakrabarty's notion helps us to think of ways that we can utilize Western modes of thinking to recuperate historically elided subjects, thus using Western thought in a bid to undermine its privileged conceit.

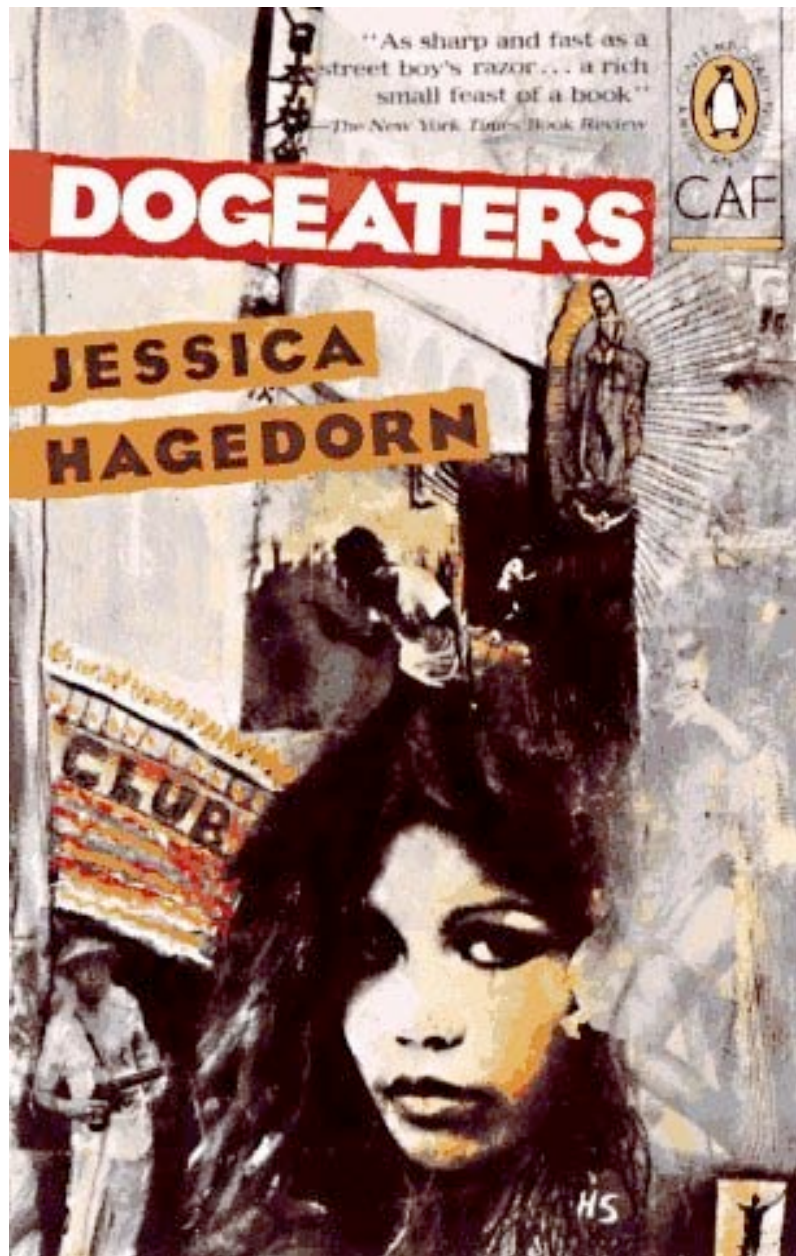
In placing Moretti's model in the margins to formulate my own, let me delineate four key characteristics of the "counter-bildungsroman": 1) its characters and plots are mostly non-Western, and often include non-Western words and phrases to displace English language; 2) it is not "classical" or "late" as in Moretti's model, but instead might be considered "contemporary, post(-)colonial"²⁰; 3) it disrupts the linearity of traditional Western narratives by using multiple narratives and/or windows of memory; and 4) in appropriating the otherness directed towards post-colonial peoples, it extends such otherness by presenting the possibility for non-heteronormative sexualities in queered spaces, or allows

narrative agency through sexualities and corresponding spaces that are best described as rhizomatic configurations²¹.

These four characteristics are related to the bildungsroman's sweeping task of narrating the formation of youth, but are openly "counter" to it as they name tactics in both narrative and form that disrupt the hegemony of the nation-state through cultural circuits. Specifically, this disruption of the nation's hegemony is accomplished through my attention to the categories of race and sexuality - perhaps the two most deployed categories for othering peoples in traditional modes of European and American colonialism, as well as the cultural imperialism of American capitalism. Additionally, I formulate my model of the "counter-bildungsroman" not as *the* definitive paradigm for rebutting the bildungsroman, but rather to offer a tactical reading process for alternative texts whose protagonists and themes stand in stark contrast to the limited odes to Western modernity.

While the aforementioned four characteristics do not mark the outer limits of the "counter-bildungsroman," they are helpful in analyzing Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990) as a "counter-bildungsroman" while establishing a process of identifying other narratives that offer the same potential for "transgressive" social characters to effectively confront the hegemonic ideologies of the West while offering readers the same potentials. I name Hagedorn's novel a "counter-bildungsroman" to demonstrate that, on the one hand, it tracks the development of a young man, but, on the other hand, this development is not of the state-sanctioned, normative brand that Lowe's earlier critique problematizes. Indeed *Dogeaters*, indeed, "development" of the character of Joey occurs only in opposition to the state-sanctioned development of capital and politics within urban poverty, drug use, prostitution, and queer subculture.

I will hereon examine moments in Hagedorn's novel where the above four characteristics empower a narrative critique of Western imperialist ideologies while, by extension, problematising the imperialism of Moretti's model in delineating a monolithic literary canon for (European) youth development. This empowerment, I argue, arises from a body politics of non-heteronormative sexuality that catalyses events in the novel as it simultaneously shapes and is morphed by specific social spaces like a queer disco/bar. Such morphing of social spaces immediately resists the dominant ideologies that attempt to interpellate such spaces while carving out new modes of belonging for Filipino others.



Articulations of Nation-State Resistance in *Dogeaters*

Dogeaters offers a media-packed panorama of 1960s Manila during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and his notoriously lavish wife Imelda²², flinging characters into intersecting scenarios narratively disrupted by radio snippets, newspaper blurbs, and talk show scenes. In juxtaposing these myriad forms of Filipino media against the “official” metanarrative of the US, Hagedorn includes a fragment of an 1898 speech given by United States President William McKinley in which he espouses the Americans’ responsibility to “uplift and civilize and Christianize” Filipinos²³. Indeed, this fragment of McKinley’s speech demonstrates

his ambitions for Americans to imagine the trans-Pacific potential of their “manifest destiny” for westward expansion, stretching all the way to the Philippines while simultaneously justifying American colonization of it.

While the novel’s pervasive references to American cultural imperialism and its affects on powerful characters in the novel might tempt the reading that the novel testifies to the dominance of American corporate culture in the Philippines, an analysis of the character of Joey at the nexus of this counter-bildungsroman demonstrates its political investment in queer sexuality as a form of decolonization. As a half-black, half-Filipino *mestizo* (a person of mixed-race ancestry), prostitute, thief, junkie, DJ, bastard, and sexual transgressive, Joey seems an unlikely narrator. Yet I believe it is precisely this hyper anti-heroism that renders him a hallmark of the counter-bildungsroman vis-à-vis Moretti’s model of the Eurocentric bildungsroman.

As a queer Manila mestizo in contemporary times, Joey far from emulates the racial, sexual, and historical prerequisites of Moretti’s youthful European protagonists. Moreover, the sexual transgressiveness embedded in the novel that attends his overlapping identities of prostitute and queer boy (who fucks and fantasizes about both men and women), combined with other deviant characteristics, clearly distinguishing him from the Eurocentric heteronormativity of Moretti’s model. Lee’s model, like Moretti’s, also engages a brand of essentialism in overdetermining Joey’s sexual identity as “gay” in support of her feminist reading. In arguing that the novel orbits around narratives of Filipina desires²⁴, Lee tags Joey as a “sexual servant”²⁵ and asserts a number of times that Joey’s erotic identity as homosexual is “clearly delineated”²⁶.

While it is evident that Hagedorn more often than not depicts Joey in homosexual relations with men, Lee’s assertions overlook the non-homonormative gestures made by Joey with a female prostitute and later towards the *bomba* actress, Lolita Luna. Lee also overlooks the capitalistic relations, the very real ways and means of subsistence, that form and shape Joey’s sexuality and his engagement with and detachment from them. This is important for, as both a prostitute and a thief, Joey eludes the normative codes of “ethical” capitalism in engaging in acts that are illegal in the very effort to acquire subsistence capital.

In one passage, love and money compete with one another, giving readers a glimpse into the choppy thought process of our prostitute protagonist. After having sex at the age of ten with a “weary,” female prostitute whose movements are “slow and lumbering, like an ox’s”²⁷ while his drugged steward “Uncle,” watches, Joey reveals:

I've had my share of women since, but they don't really interest me. Don't ask me why. To tell you the truth, not much interests me at all. I learned early that men go for me; I like that about them. I don't have to work at being sexy. Ha-ha. Maybe it's my Negro blood...For me, men are easy. I'm open to anything, though. If I met a rich woman, For example...If I met a rich woman, a rich woman who was willing to support me...TO LOVE ME NO MATTER WHAT...You'd better believe I'd get it up for her too...Be her pretty baby. I know how to do that. Make them love me even when I break their hearts, steal, or spend all their money...Maybe I'm lying...The truth is, maybe I really like men but just won't admit it. Shit. What's the difference?²⁸.

In the preceding passage, Joey's formation begins at the age of 10 with a sexual experience with a female prostitute – a very unlikely point of formation for the youths in the texts selected by Moretti. It also demonstrates not only that we cannot assume Joey has a clear-cut “gay” identity, but implies that the “truth” of any singular sexual identity exhibits tendencies of essentialism by eliding the class and power relations, among others, that underpin it. Rather, Joey's fluctuating sexuality reflects Deleuze and Guittari's proposition that the rhizome characterizes multiplicity as it asignifies desire rupture²⁹. For Deleuze and Guittari, the rhizome is a model of shift and change, and it defies the crystallization of identity for it always marks de- and re-territorialization of desire.

This notion is helpful when re-thinking the identity politics of queer desire and its potential as a radical form of decolonization politics. Deterritorialized by desire and capital, Joey's very sexuality can be considered a rhizomatic process, rather than a crystallized identity, that counters modes of Western imperialism that manifest through queer sex on the market. While many arguments, especially in feminist theories, have viewed being sexually desired as the transformation of the subject into an object, I here want to read desirability and mestizness as the out-of-bounds agents of some wily political tactics that coalesce in Joey in the context of this novel. This, for me, marks one of the differentials of identity politics between heteronormativity and non-heteronormativity.

Such subversive identity politics of desirability and mestizness are reflected in the very way in which Hagedorn documents the sexual secrets about Joey as told by him. As Lee astutely notes of the novel's form, “Hagedorn's thwarting of traditional linear, realist narratives that purvey the ‘truth’ stylistically parallels her text's thematic critique of U.S. imperialism”³⁰. Moreover, the broken flow and insubordination of “proper” grammar in the above passage exemplify Hagedorn's tactics for deterritorializing and deferring meaning as a narrative strategy that reflects theme and characterization throughout the novel's form. In other words, the novel's themes manifest in its very form where narrative itself is disrupted through article snippets, shifting narrative perspectives, political poems, etc. Hagedorn's play with narrative form reflects the complexity not only of Joey, but

of all the characters and the competing, intersecting pulls, fears, desires, etc. that they must represent.

Such play reflects Terry Eagleton's Marxist notion that "Forms are historically determined by the kind of 'content' they have to embody; they are changed, transformed, broken down and revolutionized as that content itself changes"³¹. In this manner, the telling of the story exhibits a politics of narration that resists a single metanarrative – that of the capitalist nation-state – that stabilizes the production of meaning. All this is to say that queer sexuality, as mirrored in the form of the narrative, strategically disrupts the hegemonic trajectories of the capitalistic ventures produced by Moretti's Western modernity, as well as the normative modes of narration in the European bildungsroman.

The passage from the novel I earlier excerpted also disrupts the logic of a stable mode of racial identification. Joey's sarcastic remark attributing other men's attraction to him to his "Negro blood" in contrast to his *mestizo* appearance renders unstable the visual field. In other words, not only is Joey's "true" race not clear in the visual field as a result of his mixed racial background, but it is that very mixed blood, hidden within the body rather than indexed upon it, that sexually attracts instead of repels. It is important here to note that this is a very different discourse from scientific racisms emboldened by eugenics and/or the measuring of blood to delineate people of color as inferior others. Like his sexuality, then, Joey's racial identity is also rhizomatic, fluctuating between the perceptions of others and his own willfulness in revealing his racial background and/or as passing as other in transactions beneficial to him³². This point lends credence to Vicente L. Rafael's elegant observation that, "Mestizeness is the capacity, among other things, to speak in different registers, as if one's identity were overlaid and occupied by other possible ones"³³.

Joey's sexual background, like his racial background, is mixed and thus, I would argue, mitigates against his placement in any normative category. Rather, as an anti-hero of the counter-bildungsroman, Joey Sands ("Mr. Heartbreak" according to disco owner Andres Alacran) can be likened to a queer trickster figure³⁴ privileged as first person narrator, yet whose tales are concurrently disrupted and decentered by his own pauses and contradictions in thinking, as well as throughout the novel's overall nonlinear form. As a queer trickster figure, Joey's allegorical importance in the novel as a figure whose racial, sexual, and political identities converge and lend impetus to the plot come into sharp relief, namely in specific locales. Likewise, the theme of youth is no longer forced to the forefront of the novel, but is rather rendered indivisible from race and sexuality. In this manner, the racial and sexual formations that interpellate Joey in the novel are also indivisible from the spaces within which they occur – failure to recognize

this risks underestimating not only the logic of the nation-state's hegemony, but also the sites and modes which must be engaged to resist such logic.

While Lee conducts an interesting reading of Rio Gonzaga as a queer character given her access to the cinema house³⁵, Rio is nonetheless part of a heterosexual, bourgeois familial nucleus with access to cinema houses, shopping centers, and maids. Additionally, Rio does not occupy or work the explicitly queer space of the queer disco with the skill and calculated grace that enables Joey to narratively make up for such a lack of familial "stability" and privilege. We might here acknowledge that access to such a space, as with the cinema house, involves a kind of privileged movement (where here, such privilege may mean being queer), but it is only in this space that a number of highly charged political stakes push forward in the novel as characters collide in a socially transgressive arena. Within the space of *CocoRico*, Andres Alacran's disco club, Joey's ability to elude the categories of "gay" as well as "sexual servant" become clear. Yet how can we think about this space in relation to race and sexuality?

Michel Foucault prescribes principles of what he describes as a "heterotopic" site, two of which are immediately relevant: 1) it juxtaposes "in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible"³⁶; and 2) that it is "not freely accessible like a public place[...]. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures"³⁷. We can think of the queer disco as a queered heterotopia given its ability in the novel to serve as the most subversive yet politically charged geography of resistance. Not only does it draw in gay men and other queer characters, but it also becomes the stage for a constellation of other characters to converge upon and engage in gestures with one another, two of which are drunken *tsismis* (Tagalog for gossip) that signifies "insiderness," and opportunistic flirting. Indeed, gossip and flirting are but two of the "certain gestures" that Foucault's model mentions.

Perhaps equally important a gesture in this nonheteronormative space are the harsh critiques, mediated by the loosening tongues of alcohol consumption, various characters make of one another and of the dictator and his wife. This constellation of characters in *CocoRico* is varied, and represents a significant identity sampling of Manila: Joey, Rainer (a renowned German filmmaker in Manila for the city's first international film festival)³⁸, the celebrated hairdresser of the First Lady, Chiquiting Moreno, Andres (the owner of *CocoRico*), Lolita Luna (a diva-esque movie star itching to escape the Philippines), and Tito Alvarez and Nestor Norales (two lesser-known entertainment personalities) all make cameos in this scene. One moment in the queer space of the disco in which gossip and poking fun of American celebrity posturing occurs is when, ironically, Luna and Nestor begin to exchange insults and Chiquiting intervenes. Hagedorn writes:

Chiquiting Moreno saves the day. “I’ve been to the *real* Studio 54 – the last time I went to New York, with Madame’s entourage. You should see the pink lights in the toilets! Sooo flattering! *Naku*, I ran into Bianca Jagger coming out of the men’s room with Halston. *Dios ko*, I was speechless... ‘Bianca,’ I said to her, ‘you look fabulous.’ ‘Do I know you?’ she said to me. *Talagang bruja! Aba*, I gave her the same look, up and down. ‘Everybody knows me,’ I said, ‘everybody who’s anybody knows Chiquiting Moreno...’”

“*Itsura lang*,” Nestor chimes in, relaxing a little.

“*Bola ka naman*, I don’t believe a word you say,” Lolita says.

“*Ay, hija* – that’s your problem,” Chiquiting sniffs. We all laugh, including Lolita, the tension temporarily broken³⁹.

Entirely narrated by the watchful Joey, the above passage demonstrates how Chiquiting, a queer Filipino hairdresser, playfully critiques the American cultural imperialism embodied by Bianca Jagger and Halston, as well as the space of Studio 54 in New York City – both, perhaps, geographies of bourgeois Western queerness. This critique of, even resistance to, American cultural imperialism interfaces with the form of the novel precisely in the disruption of the linguistic hegemony that English would normally have in the ideological landscape of the sentence. In other words, Hagedorn’s use of Tagalog and Spanish phrases intertwined throughout Chiquiting’s anecdote, as well as Nestor and Luna’s responses to him, clearly demonstrate a mode of communication in which the humor and sting of insult within the anecdote cannot possibly be conveyed without the use of multiple languages. In this sense, the mix of English, Tagalog, and Spanish in the above passage reflects the mixed subjectivity of Joey’s “youth” (which we might even here suggest consists of many “youths” instead of a singular “youth”), as well as the heterogeneous, downright screwball clash of characters in *CocoRico*. While the aforementioned passage demonstrates a kind of “insiderness” between these Filipino characters in the queer disco, it also allows readers, with many pages of such dialogue in the novel, to gradually learn the phrases contextually and expect them in particular situations. In this sense, the non-English phrases are integral to the production of anti-imperialist meaning within the narrative style of the novel, for, as in Frederic Jameson’s concise words, “Form itself is but the working out of content in the realm of the superstructure”⁴⁰.

A number of ideological spaces, as emblemized by the characters, unfold in the space of a few pages in the chapter titled “Paradise” – as ironical mapping of a space on top of the queer disco. Hagedorn’s title choice is here notable, for given the political violence and social chaos in greater Manila, as well as the Western-styled capitalism embodied by Filipino corporations SPORTEX, *CocoRico* indeed

seems paradisiacal. This includes Joey's non-heteronormative sexuality, Rainer's desire to sexually possess him, Luna's coquettish behavior with Rainier as a means of starring in his next film and her critique of the First Lady, Tito's anger with Lolita for implying he is queer, and Nestor's cruising of a Chinese mestizo. All these gestures within the heterotopic site of the queer disco demonstrate, I would argue, signifying practices that invoke a play of ideological spaces and the identity politics that attend them.

Nowhere is such play more evident than in those gestures exchanged between Joey and Rainer, who is the quintessential outsider in the insider space of the disco due to his white foreignness. Given his dizzying fame and easy access to the Manila elite, Rainer embodies Western capitalistic utopia and its ability to purchase love when it enters the space of the so-called Third World (sexual tourism, among other things). Aligned with the Western bourgeois social status of the Bianca Jagger and Halston lot, he stands beyond the linguistic and social insiderness of the Filipino characters at *CocoRico*. Joey, in contrast, represents the destabilization and subversion of the very racial and economic conditions that have underpinned European colonialism. These two thus serve as multiple character foils for each other while also representing themes in the narrative.

We can think of the gestures exchanged between Rainer and Joey as signifying practices within *CoCoRico* that produce tension between the consumerist utopia unsuccessfully promised by Western capitalism and the dystopia it generates through sex and labor exploitation in the frame of queer sexuality. Let us examine this notion through the politics of looking. Whereas Joey's act of observing in the previous passage is accomplished passively, the way he looks at Rainer is aggressively calculated. Though Rainer's eyes are transfixed by the sexiness of Joey's erotic exoticness, Joey masters Rainer in a dance of gazes as he performs coquettishness by rolling his eyes while thinking: "Poor guy probably thinks I'm stupid, just because I'm poor and pretty. They normally do, at first. I live for that look of surprise on their faces. These foreigners especially – they think they can say anything off the top of their heads, that I'll let it go by me and won't remember later. They're the dumb fucks, if you ask me"⁴¹.

This thought occurs to Joey in the disco while he is taking a break from spinning records and looking seductive on the dance floor, and is immediately followed by an indictment of Rainer by the disco owner, Andres: "Did you know how many workers were crushed to death when part of your film center fell on top of them [...]. They were rushing to build that so-called cultural center where your censored films are being shown – for the first and probably the last time – to a big-shot audience"⁴². The irony of this moment is clear: the critique of an institutional space that literally crushes poor laborers is articulated by a queer character from a

queer space where the identity politics of white, capitalist hegemony are indicted, then scrambled through a play of queer desires. Such a play of queer desires, in fact, becomes the site from which Joey's racialised impoverishment confronts the white elitism of Rainer.

Reading the renowned German filmmaker as a symbol not only of racial privilege as a bourgeois European but also a catalyst for the death of Filipino workers, we see that part of Joey's development, as a young prostitute of color, in this counter-bildungsroman includes his erotic check of Rainer rather than the German's control of Joey as a Western sex client⁴³. That is to say, Joey's mixed race combined with his youth creates the ways and means through which he, as a queer sex worker, resists erotic exploitation at the hands of Rainer's orientalist romanticism and sexual tourism. We access this shift in socio-erotic dynamics in a passage where Joey thinks to himself in first-person, "I go home with Rainer in the chauffeured BMW the government has provided...I've never been in such a fancy car. I've never been to a mansion in Forbes Park. I guess I have scored with the German."⁴⁴

Here, as I have been arguing, queerness becomes an ideological site for a radical politics of privilege redistribution and resistance within the spatial site of the queer disco club. While being desired has often been read as being objectified for another's pleasure⁴⁵, the anti-hero of Hagedorn's novel here demonstrates that such a reading also posits a homogenous model of sex where the power dynamics of desire flow only one way in victimizing one partner or the other. It is Joey's desirability that is his asset, and which in a sense interpellates Rainier's erotic imagination by playing on the filmmaker's sexual desire for the queer mestizo. We additionally see how the racial and sexual mix that constructs Joey as a kind of trickster figure also troubles the very circuits of class status through his assertive seduction of Rainier, and of normative flows of capital by selling his desirability and being a thief. Whereas, in the collapse of Rainer's film center, the poor workers' lives are sacrificed for the "big-shot audience" of Manila, Joey is the poor Filipino sex worker who stands to benefit from the attention showered on him by the big-shot German filmmaker in the queered heterotopia of *CocoRico*.

Joey also deploys queer sexuality (and desirability) in subverting Lolita Luna's public snubbing of him at the disco. While the movie star intentionally ignores him and flirts with Rainer, Joey thinks: "I'd like to fuck her [Lolita], one of these days. Then I can say, 'My list is complete. I've fucked a *bomba queen*.' What do I care – the night is young. She can play her silly games, act like a moviestar. She can dance for him [Rainier], make him laugh, touch him all she wants, but I already know the German's mine"⁴⁶. This passage suggests that Joey is not purely "gay," and that his sexual attractions oscillate along an axis plotted by wealth and

fame, here with both filmmaker and moviestar, themselves living portraits of the film and media blitz that dots the cinescape of the novel's plot.

In this way, the pervasive references to American cultural imperialism through Hollywood's hegemony are subverted as the counter-bildungsroman's transgressive anti-hero uses the film director's desire for him and the actress' non-desire for him as a way for making up, in his sexual allure, for what he financially and socially lacks in the circuits of fame and capital that socially boost Rainer and Luna. In maintaining a racial and sexual identity that is rhizomatic in being transgressive, Joey can be read as a youth who drifts in and out of a number of social scenes that benefit him, make him important, and even save his life. I say rhizomatic in being transgressive to highlight that it is not simply a single transgressive sexual act that makes Joey such an eminent figure of resistance in the novel, nor a single socially transgressive attribute (drug use, prostitution, etc.).

Rather, it is the rhizomatic movements of his sexuality, the pervasiveness and variation of transgression itself, that permit him, unlike any other characters, to exercise a degree of autonomy that empowers him and steers him toward political dissidents in exiting the capital city by the end of the novel. This movement of his sexuality catalyzes his actual physical movements -- from the heterotopia of *CocoRico*, to the Forbes Mansion, then out of Manila and into the countryside, Joey's urban migrations are always shaped and motivated by the motions of his libido. Joey's libido, in other words, allows him to blow off Lolita Luna, rob Rainier, witness the murder of Senator Domingo Avila, betray Uncle, and finally join a clan of anti-dictator rebels – all plot kernels that shape Joey into the unequivocal anti-hero of *Dogeaters* as counter-bildungsroman⁴⁷. While “young” in the scheme of Western time measurement, Joey also exudes a raw wisdom on account of his rough edges and exposure to the Manila underworld of sex and drugs in narrating many scenes.

As such, Joey emanates what M. Jacqui Alexander has dubbed an “erotic autonomy as a politics of decolonization”⁴⁸, and is more politically charged in tandem with Lee's reading rather than against it. Alexander's notion of a body politics that is capable of emanating a politics of decolonization is important in not only tracing into the past the ways that heteronormative sexualities have been complicit with certain terrains of colonial discourses (namely, post-colonial nationalisms), but also the ways in which movement itself can be a “queer” process through which the body moves through a number of performative windows. As Joey shows us, these performative windows “open up” both sights and sites whose transgressive multiplicities simultaneously trouble Filipino hegemony and US cultural imperialism.

In Conclusion: Future Directions for the Counter-Bildungsroman

While Moretti's model falls short for its Eurocentrism and essentialisation of "youth," Lee's reading essentialises gender difference and undermines what is otherwise an important feminist reading of the novel, given its insistence on giving women of color narrative agency. Although Lee's interpretation of Joey as a strictly "gay" figure fortifies her particular reading, this interpretation risks defaulting on a binary that female must oppose male when tallying the stakes of gender equity. Both cases, however, conduct readings that limit the possibilities of Joey to disrupt not only the normative institutions of sexuality, capital, and the state, but also the normative ways of telling a story within the institution of the novel. This does not mean, however, that my own propositions are not problematic.

While I cannot say that Joey's form of control is justified since a polarity of identity politics is flipped rather than displaced⁴⁹, there is indeed a flipping of narrative agencies where the disenfranchised protagonist of color has the upper-hand over the European capitalist – not because of his class status or wealth, but rather for the desirability that his mixed race and seductive sexuality spark in Rainer and other characters. I want to acknowledge that although the "counter-bildungsroman" and the rhizomatic identity politics it champions risks merely flipping and thereby reinstating the Occident/ Orient and Queer/ Straight binaries, such a paradigm nonetheless deserves a mode of re-thinking whereby transgressive characteristics offer myriad ramifications for resisting Western hegemony while delineating radical differences in heterogeneous "Third" World geographies.

It is also crucial to recognize that at some level, Joey's objectification of Lolita Luna precisely because she is a *bomba* movie star is also problematic. This is because it rings a patriarchal tone, even within non-normative sexualities that are rhizomatic and defy *both* the heteronormative and homonormative models of desire that feed into and support Western-style capitalism⁵⁰. Indeed, with the absence of explicit female-female desire in the novel, it is difficult to speculate the contours of the counter-bildungsroman across gender lines. Finally, though I have been arguing that Joey's socio-economic transgressiveness is a source of anti-heroism and radical development that runs counter to state and capitalist interests, I make this claim precisely in the context of Hagedorn's narrative and novel – a wider claim of transgression as a counter-colonial must tackle social issues including domestic violence, labour exploitation, homophobia, institutionalized racism, etc.

Perhaps then, in concluding, it is most useful to meditate on Alexander's concept in tandem with Moretti's model and Lee's readings, for if indeed sexuality can emanate a politics of decolonization, scholars must further re-think and push the body politics of resistance in affronting interpellative projects of nation-states while also engaging in historiographical projects that trace back rhizomatic sexualities as a radical form of decolonizing politics. This also demands the refusal to read genres of "youthfulness" as sequestered from the racial and sexual discourses that underlie them when being critical of privileged genres like the "bildungsroman" and its fellow canons beneath the elite sign of Western literature.

While the model of the "counter-bildungsroman" is certainly not limited to what I have briefly here outlined, it not only demonstrates how Moretti's model can rest on limited foundations, but that additional studies into the constitutive nature between race and sexuality during and after World War I are necessary in further understanding the deep imbrications between them and the very conceptions of youthfulness in the West. Indeed, such deterritorialisations of desire within the othered body of the racial and sexual transgressive lead to geographical deterritorialisations that have significant effects in the novel's plot through the intersecting reformulations of sexual desire and space. Hagedorn perhaps best sums up the identity politics forwarded by the "counter-bildungsroman" model in describing her socio-political stakes in the novel:

I'm an underdog person, so I align myself with those who seem to be not considered valuable in polite society. I think for a lot of so-called postcolonial peoples, there's a feeling of not being quite legitimate, of not being pure enough. And to me that's the beauty and strength of the culture – that it is mixed.⁵¹

Hagedorn's notion leads us to recognise that non-whiteness and non-heteronormativity can be thought of as benefits rather than losses⁵² in straight, Western society. And it is precisely this benefit of being a postcolonial, mixed-race youth beyond the purveyance of the nation-state and its erstwhile colonizer (the US), of being a non-valuable underdog and symbol of lawlessness, which shapes Joey as a "counter-bildungsroman" anti-hero in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*.

Rahul Gairola is a Doctoral Candidate in English and Critical Theory at the University of Washington, Seattle, where he also teaches. He has also studied at Pembroke College, Cambridge (UK), the School of Criticism & Theory at Cornell University, and Rhode Island College (US), where he taught for two years while completing an MA in English (with Distinction). He has published in scholarly journals including Amerasia, Comparative Literature, Jouvert, South Asian Review and Journal of Commonwealth & Postcolonial Studies, and in edited collections including Madonna's Drowned Worlds, Literature, Gender, Space, and Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies. He has presented a wide range of scholarly papers in a number of countries.

Acknowledgments: I delivered this paper at the April 2005 British Arts & Humanities Research Board (AHRB) Aesthetics and Politics in Postcolonial Studies conference at University College, Northampton, UK, and benefited from comments offered there by Anna Bernard, Lydia Saleh Rofail, and Timotheos Roussos. I am very grateful to Estelle Noonan at the University of Sydney (Australia) for her invaluable revision suggestions, and also to my two anonymous readers for the same. I also thank Reinhard Isensee at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany) for taking the time to critique the paper while I attended his German cultural history seminar in summer 2005. I began writing this paper at the University of Washington (US) under the direction of Kate Cummings and Chandan Reddy, who have given me astute guidance for many years and continue to intellectually sustain me. Though no longer in Seattle, I am still influenced and shaped by the brilliance and humor of Matthew Harrison and Todd Tietchen. Finally, Matt Tobin's wily street smarts and sensibilities inspired the work herein, and are always a welcome source of grace and wit.

¹ Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (New edition; London: Verso, 2000), 5.

² Moretti, 5.

³ Moretti, 12.

⁴ Moretti, 229.

⁵ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner offer the term “heteronormativity” to describe a “constellation of practices that everywhere disperses heterosexual privilege as a tacit but central organizing index of social membership.” This concept is not “anti-heterosexual” per se, but rather wants to name the inter-linked social and ideological institutions of the nation-state that disseminate inequalities to citizens who clearly do not fit into its rubric of belonging. See Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (1998), 555.

⁶ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991). We should here note that neither Anderson’s study nor Lowe’s, though I use both theorists here, specifically speak about queer texts or queer cultural productions in their studies though race, imperialism, and gender are indeed circulating themes in both books.

⁷ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 98.

⁸ See Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

⁹ My use of disciplinary technology comes directly from the work of Michel Foucault in describing the role of institutions in disciplining through surveillance to produce people as “docile bodies.” Considering his identification of the school building as a site of such disciplinary procedures for surveillance, I by extension implicate Moretti’s model as an epistemological discourse within colonial sites. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 172-177.

¹⁰ I here refer to Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86; Thomas Babington Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft et al, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 430; and refer to the title of Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

¹¹ I here rely on the overall corpus of Edward Said’s work, and on Sut Jhally’s *Edward Said: On Orientalism* (Media Education Foundation, 1998), video recording.

¹² Said names some of the very authors cited by Moretti as emanating a “consolidation of authority” through the fabric of the seldom-challenged institutions of marriage and private property in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 77. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” in *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (Autumn 1985), 243.

¹³ I here refer to Rudyard Kipling’s famous contention that colonizing non-Whites is the “White Man’s Burden,” and is the necessary benevolence of the West. I also refer to Mark Twain’s satirical essay, “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” which he published in 1899 for the occasion of the United States’ occupation and colonization of the Philippines following the Spanish-American War of 1898.

¹⁴ Kum Kum Sangari, “The Politics of the Possible” in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd, eds. (New York: Oxford, 1990), 244-5.

¹⁵ David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 20. See also Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Franz Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16.

¹⁶ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 100.

¹⁷ See Patricia P. Chu’s *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000), and Rachel C. Lee’s *The Americas of Asian American Literature: Gendered Fictions of Nation and Transnation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Lowe, 108.

¹⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

²⁰ I put the hyphen in parentheses to indicate that these novels are *both* post-colonial as arising from the ashes of pre-WWII colonialism and also postcolonial as tactical weapons against the residual ideologies of colonialism.

²¹ I take the term “rhizomatic” from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to describe a series of multiplicities and reterritorialisations that defy binary logic and the notion of a finite, fixed point. See *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 9.

²² It is important to note that Hagedorn’s characters are allegorical – she does not name Ferdinand Marcos outright as the country’s dictator and only refers to his wife as “The First Lady.” This allusion is obvious given historical parallels between the Marcos’ domination of the Philippines and moments in the narrative including the murder of the opposition leader Avila, the collapse of “The First Lady’s” new film center, and her extreme extravagance.

²³ Hagedorn, 71.

²⁴ Lee, 104.

²⁵ Lee, 86.

²⁶ Lee, 101.

²⁷ Hagedorn, 44.

-
- ²⁸ Hagedorn, 44-5.
- ²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1996), 9.
- ³⁰ Lee, 81.
- ³¹ Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1976).
- ³² For a study on “economies of visibility” and the disjunctions between race and gender, see Robyn Wiegman’s introduction to *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995).
- ³³ Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000), 167.
- ³⁴ Though I do not here fully pursue this notion, I intentionally use “trickster” to add elements of non-Western literature and analysis to the intellectual arsenal developed here. Traced to the Yoruba figure of Eshu, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. reads Eshu as a figure commanding interpretation in all its possible meanings at a verbal crossroads. See *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1995), 308-9.
- ³⁵ Lee, 99-102.
- ³⁶ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 25.
- ³⁷ Foucault, 26.
- ³⁸ Hagedorn’s fictitious character here alludes to Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the renowned German filmmaker whose experimental works depicted political and social corruption in postwar Germany.
- ³⁹ Hagedorn, 138.
- ⁴⁰ See Jameson, Frederic, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), 329. See also his *The Prisonhouse of Language and The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*.
- ⁴¹ Hagedorn, 133.
- ⁴² Hagedorn, 134.
- ⁴³ For an insightful reading of the (female) prostitute as a composite of racial and nonheteronormative threats, see Roderick Ferguson’s *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 8-10.
- ⁴⁴ Hagedorn, 141.
- ⁴⁵ A key text that argues such in the context of feminist psychoanalysis and cinema is Laura Mulvey’s renowned “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16.3: 6-18.
- ⁴⁶ Hagedorn, 139. See also page 136 for another instance of Joey wanting to sleep with Lolita Luna.
- ⁴⁷ Though I do not here develop this line of analysis, one can also argue that a synergy underlies the novel’s form that runs parallel to Joey’s rhizomatic sexuality (where the exchanges of capital are disrupted through queer erotics of prostitution that subvert the normative economics of capital) and thus render Joey a metaphor for the novel’s very form.
- ⁴⁸ Though M. Jacqui Alexander frames this term in the specific context of women of color in the Bahamas, I her transpose it to signify other groups whose sexuality is pathologized by the nation-state in its consolidation of disciplined citizens. See “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 63-100.
- ⁴⁹ I thank Anna Bernard for bringing this important critique to my attention.
- ⁵⁰ For a re-reading of the heteronormativity of Marxist thinking in the frame of a “queer of color critique,” see Roderick Ferguson’s *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 11-29.
- ⁵¹ Kay Bonetti, “An Interview with Jessica Hagedorn,” *The Missouri Review* 18.1 (1995), 2.
- ⁵² I borrow this notion directly from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. See Landry, Donna and Gerald Maclean, eds., *The Spivak Reader* (New York: Routledge: 1996), 5.