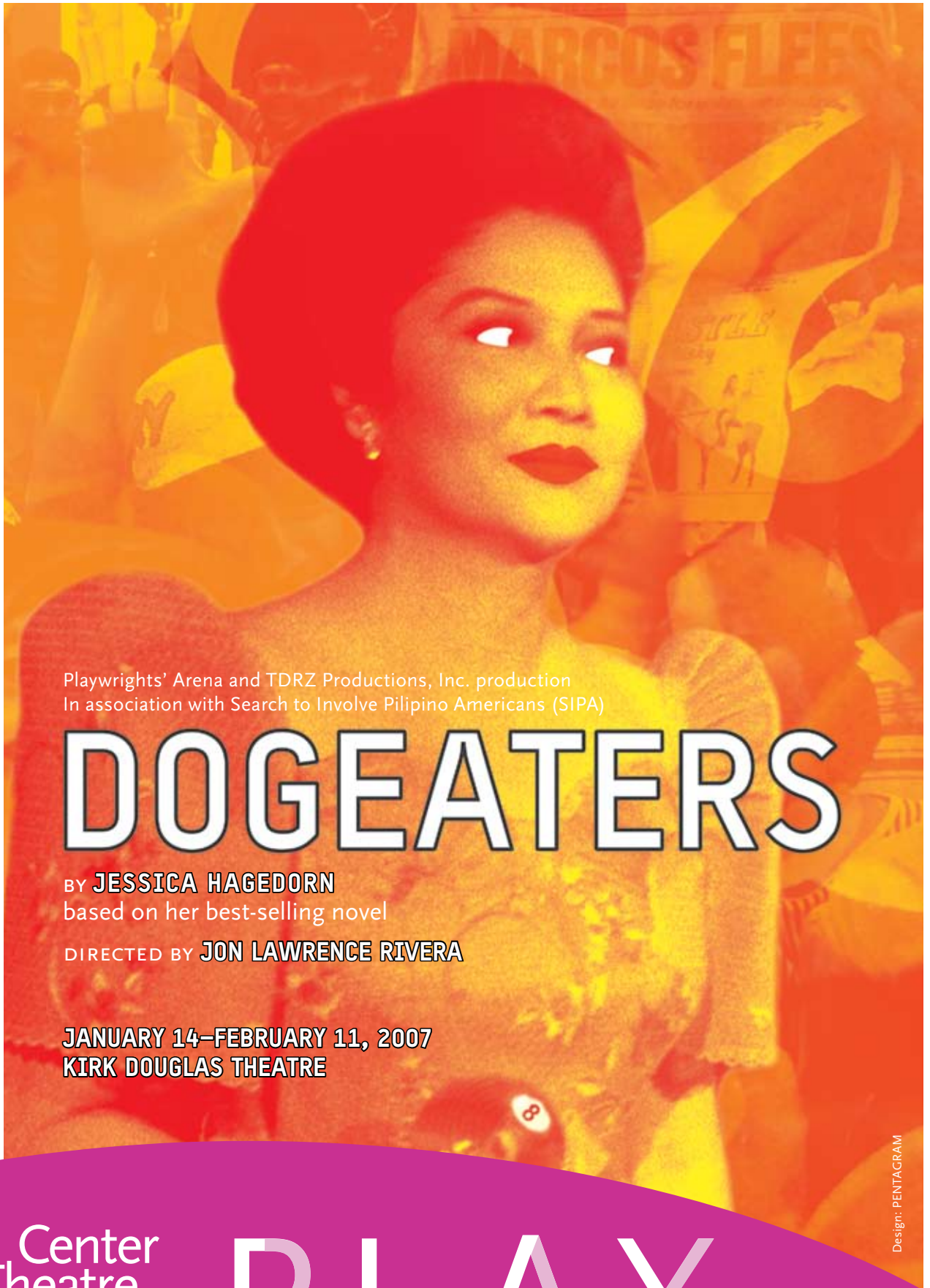


DISCOVERY GUIDE



Playwrights' Arena and TDRZ Productions, Inc. production  
In association with Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA)

# DOGEATERS

BY JESSICA HAGEDORN  
based on her best-selling novel

DIRECTED BY JON LAWRENCE RIVERA

JANUARY 14–FEBRUARY 11, 2007  
KIRK DOUGLAS THEATRE

Design: PENTAGRAM

 Center  
Theatre  
Group  
L.A.'s Theatre Company

P.L.A.Y.  
PERFORMING FOR LOS ANGELES YOUTH

# How to Use this Discovery Guide

## CENTER THEATRE GROUP PRESENTS

Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, directed by Jon Lawrence Rivera at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. In the style of magical realism, this groundbreaking play puts two 1980s soap opera stars/talk-show hosts in front of the "cameras" and delivers a festive yet frightening collage. *Dogeaters* keeps things moving from nightclub to country club to billy club as life in the Philippines unravels at the end of the Marcos regime. The revelations we witness are sometimes shattering, but they are sheathed in irony, as if viewed through the Vaseline lens of popular culture. The result is a unique theatrical experience, at once sobering and exhilarating.

This Discovery Guide has been created to increase your enjoyment of *Dogeaters* by exploring its contexts – historical, literary, linguistic and cultural. At the end of each section you will find opportunities to respond to the play's themes, events and characters.

Vocabulary words are in **bold** type. You will find their definitions within each section.



A rural talent and beauty pageant on Palawan Island in the southern Philippines in the early 1980s. (Photo by Tom Conelly)

Provide an overview of the play's historical and dramatic events

## OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE

Explore the relationship between the play's kaleidoscopic vision and its staging

Review Jessica Hagedorn's life and work as a celebrated Filipina/American artist

Examine the power of language to evoke a multilayered cultural context onstage

Offer resources to broaden and deepen your response to the play

# SYNOPSIS

## Dogeaters

**DOGEATERS, SET IN THE TROPICALLY** seductive but grimly oppressed Philippines of 1982, begins and ends with the silent figure of Senator Avila, leader of the opposition to the regime of Ferdinand Marcos. His presence in these key scenes is the playwright's signal that dictatorship and martial law are underlying concerns of her play; they form the ominous center around which all of the frenetic action in *Dogeaters* takes place.

The master and mistress of ceremonies for much of the drama are Nestor Noralez and Barbara Villanueva, **putative** talk-show hosts and soap opera stars. They set the tone for their "show" by airily dismissing the assassination that takes place in the opening scene and then proceeding to interview 19th century explorer and author Jean Mallat. "Have you sold the movie rights yet?" coos Barbara to the writer, who was long dead by the time movies were invented.

There is a dreamlike quality to this world in which nothing is quite as it seems. The play ushers us into the **torpor** of the tropics, the poisoned sleep of a nation lulled into **stupefaction** by soap operas and a sense of helplessness in the face of tyranny. It is *bangungot*: the Filipino concept of the perfumed nightmare, and the sleep aids the characters use include everything from beauty pageants to heroin. "Let us wake!" cries Senator Avila, but he cannot awaken even his own daughter. She is in love with a revolutionary, and she does not want to open her eyes.



Manila, capitol of the Philippines, from the air.

Couples in love are important in *Dogeaters*, beginning with Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos and Ronald and Nancy Reagan – the first four names we hear. Yet almost all of the couples we meet are off somehow: deluded by false images of beauty and success, devastated by each other's betrayals, lured into the edgy boredom of pornographic sex or simply killed. This is a play in which the action moves from a male prostitute and his threatening pimp, to an interview with the First Lady, to a lonely man and woman in a movie theatre, to an

**THEY HAVE THE GREATEST RESPECT FOR SLEEPING PERSONS, AND THE GREATEST CURSE THEY CAN PRONOUNCE AGAINST ANYBODY IS TO WISH THAT HE DIE IN HIS SLEEP. THEY CAN NOT ABIDE THE IDEA OF WAKING A SLEEPING PERSON, OR WHEN THEY ARE OBLIGED TO DO IT, IT IS ALWAYS DONE AS GENTLY AS POSSIBLE; THEY CARRY THIS REPUGNANCE SO FAR THAT ONE CAN HARDLY EXPECT THEM TO WAKE UP A PRIEST OR DOCTOR TO COME TO THE AID OF A SICK PERSON.**

— Jean Mallat, *The Philippines*

# SYNOPSIS

## Dogeaters

uncle who tortures his niece. A beauty queen is kidnapped, a building collapses and is rebuilt on the corpses of its workers, a man is shot and our announcers breezily exclaim, “Dat’s entertainment!”

The world of *Dogeaters* may circle an abyss, but it is fast, fabulous and often amazingly funny as it follows a nation’s near-disintegration. Our guides, those fading fantasy broadcast stars, are echoed by the orphaned and abandoned teen Joey Sands. This son of a long-gone American G.I. is determined to be a deejay and even more determined to get away from the abusive “uncle” to whom he is not even related. Like everyone we meet, he has a dream.

Call *Dogeaters* a river of dreams, or call it—as Nestor does—“a **vaudeville** of doomed love, shameless desire, dreams and longing.” By any name, it is a torrent of colorful characters whose **kaleidoscopic** motion gives us a picture of a diverse and struggling culture about to dream itself awake.

### Vocabulary

**Kaleidoscopic:** Having a constantly changing set of colors, shapes or events

**Polyglot:** A mixture or confusion of languages

**Putative:** Commonly accepted or supposed; assumed to exist

**Stupefaction:** Overwhelming amazement or consternation

**Torpor:** A condition of mental or physical inactivity; lethargy

**Vaudeville:** A stage entertainment offering a variety of short acts; variety show

## Speaking in Many Tongues

Imagine a country of more than 7,000 islands and 116 languages and dialects. Now add the languages of its Spanish and American conquerors. Welcome to the Philippines, proudly independent now and pleasantly, if confusingly, **polyglot**. Tagalog (pronounced tuh-GAH-log), sometimes called Pilipino, serves as a primary language for many. A majority of Filipinos also speak English (many weave the two together and speak “Taglish”), and older Filipinos may be fluent in Spanish as well. A single sentence often has three or four languages in it.

*Dogeaters* immerses us in this layered speech. Its characters speak several languages at once, just as people do in the Philippines, and we know immediately that we are in another country because we have the alien’s experience of bewilderment. We are listening in tongues, taking in the whole exotic feel of the Philippines through our ears.

We are also hearing what is not said. Among the many kinds of communication in *Dogeaters* – media-speak, deejay patter, telephone conversations, the heavy-handed corporate and military innuendo of the golf-course and the chismis (gossip) spoken everywhere – only prayer, the statements of Senator Avila and the speech of the revolutionaries sound candid; everything else is hinted-at, hushed, half-true or blatantly false. Rio Gonzaga, arriving from America to visit her family, says, “Don’t I have to go through customs?” and is silenced by her father’s terse whisper: “I took care of it, hija.”

## Cast of Characters

Many actors in *Dogeaters* play multiple characters. Their primary roles are listed here.



**(ORLANDO PABTOY)**

Nestor Noralez and Barbara Villanueva:  
Soap opera stars who emcee the play



**(LIZA DEL MUNDO)**



**(RAMÓN DE OCAMPO)**

Joey Sands:  
Orphan son of an  
American G.I. and a  
Filipino prostitute



**(ALBERTO ISAAC)**

Senator Avila:  
Leader of the opposition  
movement against the  
Marcos regime

“Uncle”:  
Pimp who gives Joey  
a home but controls  
him with drugs



**(ESPERANZA CATUBIG)**

Daisy Avila:  
Beauty queen; Senator  
Avila's daughter



**(ELIZABETH PAN)**

Rio Gonzaga:  
Filipina who lives  
in California but  
has come home  
for a visit



**(GINO AQUINO)**

Santos Tirador:  
Revolutionary  
fugitive; Daisy  
Avila's lover



**(FRAN DE LEON)**

Trini Gamboa:  
Young female  
ticket-seller at  
the Odeon movie  
theatre



**(ANTOINE REYNALDO DIEL)**

Romeo Rosales:  
Aspiring young actor  
and waiter



**(IVAN DAVILA)**

“Perlita” Alacran:  
Nightclub owner  
and drag queen



**(ROBERT ALMODOVAR)**

“Chuchi” Alacran:  
Wealthy businessman,  
powerful and dangerous;  
Perlita's cousin

**Cast of Characters** (...continued)

Many actors in *Dogeaters* play multiple characters. Their primary roles are listed here.



**(NATSUKO OHAMA)**  
**Imelda Marcos:**  
 Former beauty queen; wife of Ferdinand Marcos, corrupt and ruthless president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986



**(GIOVANNI ORTEGA)**  
**Chiquiting Moreno:**  
 Imelda Marcos' beautician



**(DOM MAGWILI)**  
**General Ledesma:**  
 Head of the Philippine military



**(CHRISTINE AVILA)**  
**Leonor Ledesma:**  
 The general's wife; a devout and pious Roman Catholic



**(GOLDA INQUITO)**  
**Pucha Gonzaga:**  
 Rio's Cousin



**(MINERVA VIER)**  
**Lolita Luna:**  
 Soft-porn movie star



**(ED RAMOLETE)**  
**Mang Berto:**  
 Shaman/Snake catcher



**(KENNEDY KABASARES)**  
**Man with Guitar:**  
 Companion to Santos Tirador  
**Steve Jacobs:**  
 Reporter for *The New York Times*, based in the Philippines



**(NICK SALAMONE)**  
**Father Jean Mallat:**  
 19th century Jesuit priest and explorer; the author of a scholarly book entitled *The Philippines*  
**Rainer Werner Fassbinder:**  
 German film director who died of a drug overdose in 1982  
**Bob Stone:**  
 American journalist and novelist; author of *Dog Soldiers*

# Questions & Exercises

## ACTIVITY *Dogeaters*

1. When she was first asked by a director to turn her award-winning novel *Dogeaters* into a play, Jessica Hagedorn had some serious reservations. “I could see it as a film,” she said, “but for the stage? It’s so big and busy and dense.” How have Hagedorn and director Jon Lawrence Rivera used elements of theatre art and craft (set design, costumes, lighting, sound or dialogue, for example) to make the ideas accessible to the audience? Choose one (or more) of these elements and write an essay describing how and why it is effective.

2. *Dogeaters* has a wide array of characters: some fictive, some real, some famous, some long deceased. Robert Stone is an American journalist and novelist. Rainer Werner Fassbinder was a German film director. Father Jean Mallat was a 19th century Jesuit explorer. Why has Hagedorn included these real people in her play? Research one of them, and discuss with your group or class what the audience learns about the playwright’s ideas simply from her inclusion of this real character.

3. Plays and movies often portray the United States as a mix of many cultures. *West Side Story* is one famous example. How many others can you think of? List three and write a brief paragraph describing the cultures represented and how each is viewed in the story.

L to R: Elizabeth Pan and Christine Avila



Liza Del Mundo



L to R: Giovanni Jose Ortega, Ivan Davila, Nick Salamone



Production photos from the 2004 Playwrights’ Arena production of *Dogeaters*. (Photos by Michael Anthony Hermogeno)

# Dogeaters: A Unique Play, Uniquely Challenging

**IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE**, form follows function. In Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*, the form of the play follows the features of post-colonial Filipino culture. Its many characters from every level of society have lives that overlap and intertwine, from the box-office ticket seller, the waiter, the prostitute and junkie to the revolutionary, the beauty queen, the senator, the sadistic general and the president’s wife, as if all were swimming in one giant fishbowl. Their speech is made up of several languages, their culture of many influences, and overlaid like a gloss is the art and **artifice** of performing, for nearly all of these characters are “on” all the time; under the terrors of dictatorship, pretense has become a way of life. In this fishbowl even time circles around, bending back upon itself, confusing us. True, this is what life was like in Manila in 1982. But how, in such a chaotic atmosphere, can the play **cohere** for us?

Acclaimed director Jon Lawrence Rivera says, “I envisioned the play being performed in the round, with the audience surrounding the stage as the uniting factor, and the play itself the focal point.” Because the Kirk Douglas Theatre has a **proscenium**-type stage known as an end stage, he achieves this unity by seating part of the audience on the stage itself, and by extending the stage into the first few rows of the audience. In this way, like Hagedorn, he creates a marriage of form and function, the audience becoming part of the action as well as observers of it. “Directing *Dogeaters* has been a highlight of my career,” Rivera says. “It was a huge challenge, but Jessica and I loved and respected each other, and everything has followed from that great working relationship.”

## Vocabulary

**Artifice:** Trickery; subtle deception

**Cohere:** To hold together; to form a united or orderly whole

**Myriad:** A vast number; countless

**Proscenium:** The wall or arch in a theatre that frames the stage for the audience

**IT’S NOT A MINIMAL STORY. THERE ARE MANY, MANY, MANY LAYERS OF THE STORY: THE EFFECT OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY AND FAITH. VIOLENCE, THE LOVE AFFAIR WITH VIOLENCE. AND CARNALITY. DEEP SPIRITUALITY AND DEEP CARNALITY. A SENSE OF MELANCHOLY PERVADES. AND THERE’S THIS ENTERTAINMENT FAÇADE, SHOW BIZ, EVERYTHING’S ALL RIGHT, WE’RE GOING TO SMILE THROUGH HELL IF WE HAVE TO. BUT I THINK THERE’S A GENUINE JOY, TOO, A SENSE THAT NO MATTER WHAT, EVEN IF MY STOMACH’S GROWLING, I’M GOING TO DANCE. THAT’S WHAT I WANT TO LEAVE PEOPLE WITH AT THE END OF THE PLAY. AFTER ALL THIS, PEOPLE STILL KNOW HOW TO LIVE.**

— Jessica Hagedorn, in an interview with Don Shewey, *The New York Times*, 2001





Jessica Hagedorn

**MULTI-TALENTED AND ARTISTICALLY** fearless, Jessica Hagedorn exemplifies the many gifts her native Philippines can bestow. She was born there in 1949 and moved to America in her early teens, a budding artist arriving in the right place at exactly the right time: San Francisco in the 1960s. The city and its people provided scope for her talents, and she responded in the **myriad** languages of art. An award-winning novelist, Hagedorn is also a widely published poet, a well known playwright and a performance artist, editor, screenwriter, filmmaker, lyricist and a diva who led a rock band, The Gangster Choir, for ten years. *Dogeaters* is based on her first novel, which won the American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Award.

### Pentimento: A Layered Vision

Pentimento—from the Latin for ‘repentance’—is a painter’s term for what happens when a canvas is re-used and one painting is painted over another. As time passes, the top layer becomes transparent, revealing the layer or layers beneath. In *Dogeaters*, even the title is an example of this. Originally a scathing American epithet for Filipinos, used especially by the U.S. sailors who were based in the Philippines, it is now turned around and pointed back at its originators, and rings in our ears as a sample of the shameful way some Americans behaved as colonizers.

Jessica Hagedorn uses this transparency of layers to effect in *Dogeaters*, showing us a country whose culture has been built up layer upon layer by repeated conquest—and showing us also the lasting effects as the influences bleed up through the layers: the emphasis on class, the absence of a unifying national identity, the pervasive pornography, yet also the richness and color that have resulted from layers. “To me that’s the beauty and strength of the culture,” Hagedorn has stated—“that it’s mixed.”



# Questions & Exercises

## ACTIVITY

### *Dogeaters*

1. The Philippines of Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* is a former colony and has a broad mixture of ethnicities, cultures and languages. (Hagedorn herself is Spanish, Filipino, Chinese and Scottish-Irish-French.) The United States is also a former colony and a famous "melting pot." List five similarities and five differences between Hagedorn's Philippines and the current-day United States.
2. *Dogeaters* has many thematic strands. Sleep and dreams, beauty, show business, the nature of love, the price of integrity (and the cost of not having it) are but a few. Select one such theme and describe in a short essay how it is suggested or evoked onstage through the use of set, costumes, lighting and sound design.
3. As you have read and seen, *Dogeaters* is a multi-layered play with elements that overlap and intertwine. In the spirit of form following function, create a collage of words and images from magazines and newspapers that expresses your experience of the play.



# Fake Glamour, Real Dictatorship

**THE PHILIPPINE archipelago** is a stretch of islands a thousand miles long that has drawn travelers for 25,000 years, beginning with a wave of newcomers from Asia who arrived on foot, by way of land bridges that are now submerged. The first seafaring immigrants were maritime Indonesians who began arriving in 3,000 B.C. Trade routes eventually brought merchants, explorers and immigrants from throughout the Near and Far East, and with them came their languages, religions and cuisines.

The first recorded visitor from the West was Ferdinand Magellan, who arrived in the 16th century and began the process of unification, claiming the islands for Spain and naming them for Spain's crown prince, Phillip II. The

Philippines would remain a colony, first of Spain and then of the United States, for four hundred years. Briefly occupied by the Japanese during World War II, the Philippines reclaimed its independence as a democracy in 1946.

By then, a young man named Ferdinand Marcos had been convicted and jailed (in 1939) for the assassination of his father's political rival, had appealed his case to the Philippine Supreme Court and, acting as his own defense attorney, had obtained an **acquittal**. He had also served in the Philippine Armed Forces during World War II, been taken prisoner by the Japanese and survived the Bataan Death March. A puffed-up military/political biography, three terms in the Philippine Congress and a term in the Senate led





This has been the official Malacañan Palace portrait of Ferdinand Marcos since 1986; the portrait he selected for himself was lost during the People's Power Revolution.

to a landslide victory in his run for the presidency in 1965 and to re-election in 1969.

Marcos showed his truest colors early on. Unwilling to accept the two-term limit of the presidency and unable to obtain a revision of the constitution, he declared martial law. The ensuing 15 years were deadly: Marcos silenced the free press, seized privately owned lands and corporations and jailed or assassinated his rivals. His first lady, Imelda Marcos, a former beauty queen, provided a distraction for the people and established a cultural **ambience** that was relentlessly superficial. It is this that Hagedorn parodies most mercilessly in *Dogeaters*. In the play, when Imelda is questioned by journalist Bob Stone about the assassination of one of her husband's opponents, she talks about astrology, her shoes, her great beauty, the actor Anthony Quinn and her great beauty again. Then she says, "Excuse my husband for not being available, okay, Bob? This is one of his golf days."



Official portrait of Imelda Marcos, First Lady of the Philippines, 1965-86.

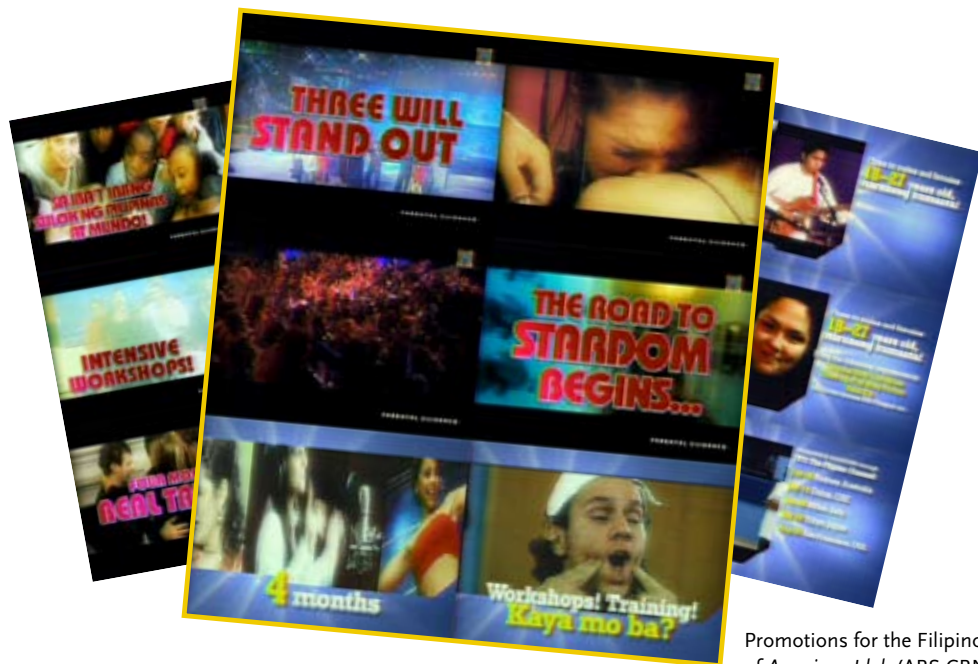
## Vocabulary

- Acquittal:** The judgment of a judge or jury that a person is not guilty of a crime as charged
- Ambience:** The special or distinct atmosphere surrounding a person, place or thing
- Archipelago:** A large group of islands
- Guerrilla:** Member of an irregular military force, usually operating in small independent groups that are capable of great speed and mobility

## Movie Madness

**JESSICA HAGEDORN HAS SAID** that her life was shaped by movies. The flourishing Philippine film industry of her childhood produced dramas, musicals and comedies which she went to see every week; in more recent years it has been limited almost entirely to action movies and hard-core pornography. She also saw the big, beautiful Hollywood imports, with their glamorous stars and exotic settings (e.g. snow scenes, pine trees) – seductive and dreamy films or “hyper-ugly, hyper-violent” ones – all on a scale that was as foreign as the settings.

Marcos dreamed of making it a glittering annual event to rival the Cannes Film Festival, and under her direction a huge building was constructed for the new Manila International Film Festival, which is a central event of the play. During the construction process, part of the building collapsed, and scores of workers who had been pouring concrete were buried alive. Imelda ordered the survivors to continue building on top of the buried workers, and the construction was completed three hours before the first film was shown.



Promotions for the Filipino version of *American Idol*. (ABS-CBN)

She was not alone in those theatres of her childhood. An entire culture seems to have been seduced by them, and in *Dogeaters* the characters dream of being stars, or dream that they are stars, or hope that what is happening to them is no more real than action on a screen. “All this death,” says Rio. “Like a bad movie.”

Manila has been host to an annual film festival for many years. The original intent was to spotlight Southeast Asian filmmaking talent, but Imelda

The structure declined into dilapidation after the Marcoses fled in 1986. It was widely believed to be haunted by the spirits of the dead construction workers, and it sat empty for 12 years. It was then purchased and restored to its former purpose – sort of – by a consortium of Asian investors who turned it into the home of the Amazing Philippine Theatre, which opened in 2001, showcasing “the best of Filipino gay talent” in a variety stage show.

# Timeline: The Philippines

**10th Century to 16th Century C.E.** – Trade routes bring visitors from China and Arabia

**1521** – Spain sends Ferdinand Magellan on a voyage of exploration, ordering him to convert all native inhabitants of “new lands” to Christianity

**1543** – The Spanish name the newly discovered islands after Crown Prince Phillip II

**1898** – The U.S. takes control of the Philippine archipelago at the end of the Spanish-American War. **Guerrilla** warriors protest this new colonizing, but they are subdued and the U.S. works to prepare the Philippines for independence

**1935** – The self-governing Commonwealth of the Philippines is established, with full independence scheduled for 1945

**1939** – Ferdinand Marcos is jailed for the 1933 murder of his father’s political rival

**1940** – Marcos successfully appeals his conviction before the Supreme Court

**1942** – Japan invades the Philippines. American and Philippine troops under General MacArthur retreat. MacArthur leaves, vowing to return, and 70,000 troops surrender. Only 500 survive to be rescued at the end of the war

**1944** – MacArthur returns; his 174,000 troops are joined by an equal or greater number of Filipino guerillas

**1945** – The islands are liberated

**1946** – Philippine independence is proclaimed. The U.S. offers funds for rebuilding, in exchange for a 99-year lease on its military bases there

**1949** – Marcos, elected to represent his home province in the Philippine House of Representatives, is the youngest member ever to join the House

**1953** – Marcos is re-elected. Using his political power for personal gain, he quickly becomes a multi-millionaire

**1954** – Marcos marries Imelda Romualdez following an 11-day courtship

**1965** – After three terms in the House and a term in the Senate, Marcos is elected president



1 Protest following the assassination of Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino. (Los-Indios-Bravos.com) 2 Manila skyline as seen from Ninoy Aquino International Airport. (Photo by Aaron Molen, 2003)

**1969** – Marcos is elected for a second four-year term, but economic growth slows, violence and crime increase and Communism makes gains

**1970** – Student demonstrators try to storm the presidential mansion (the Malacañang Palace)

**1972** – Marcos declares martial law after a supposed attempt on the life of the Defense Minister (later revealed as having been staged by the military). All opposition figures are held in military compounds while Marcos takes complete legislative power

**1973** – The constitution is amended to allow Marcos to remain in office indefinitely, ruling by decree

**1976** – The constitution is amended to allow him to rule by decree after lifting martial law

**1981** – Marcos proclaims the end of martial law, and then “wins” a rigged election

**1982** – Imelda Marcos stages the Manila International Film Festival

**1983** – Opposition leader Benigno Aquino, returning to the Philippines after three years in exile, is shot in the head as he arrives at Manila’s airport. His funeral becomes the largest demonstration in Philippine history. His widow begins the People’s Power movement

**1986** – Corazon Aquino stands for president against Marcos, but loses in another rigged election. This time even Marcos’ cabinet members and armed forces rebel, and Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos flee to Hawaii while Corazon Aquino is sworn in as president. The Marcoses are said to have taken with them more money and gold than the amount of the Philippine national debt

**1988** – Marcos is indicted in New York on racketeering charges

**1989** – He dies of a heart attack while in exile in Honolulu

**1990** – Imelda is acquitted of all charges

**1991** – The Philippine Senate declines to renew the U.S. lease agreements on its military bases

**1993** – Marcos’ embalmed body is returned to the Philippines and placed on permanent display in his home town

**1995** – Imelda Marcos is elected to the Philippine House of Representatives



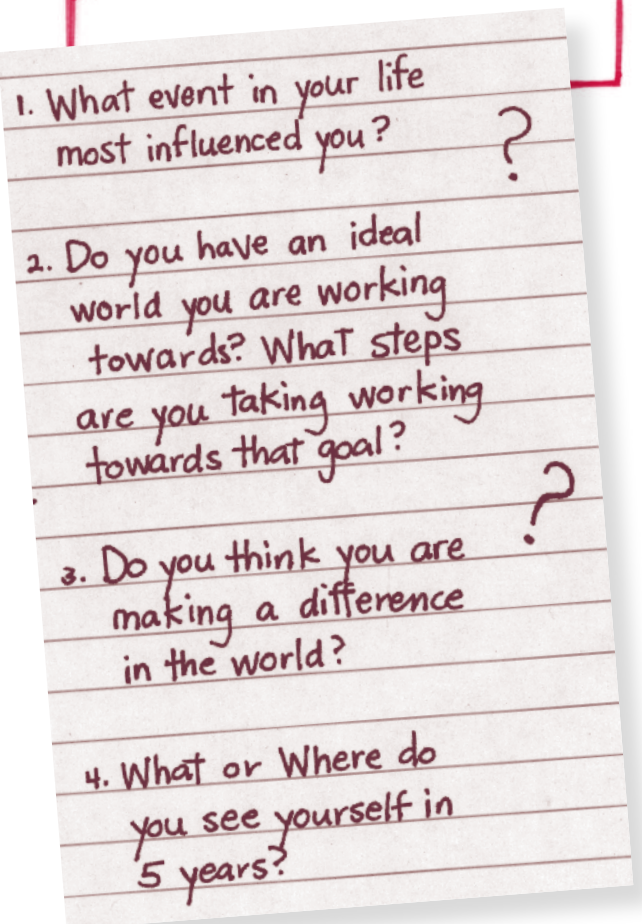
3 Malacañang Palace, official residence of the president of the Philippines. 4 A company of the New Peoples’ Army, 1986. (Courtesy of International Network for Philippine Studies, josemariason.com) 5 Benigno Aquino was killed in 1983 by an alleged assassin, who was shot by Aquino’s military escort. Investigations later concluded that a member of the escort had in fact shot the senator. (Photo from RPN-9TV broadcast by Jon Voltaire B. Aquino)

# Questions & Exercises

## ACTIVITY

### *Dogeaters*

1. Choose a public figure – political, theatrical, historical, artistic or religious – whose actions have had a profound impact on your life, positive or negative. Write a fictional interview with that person focusing on how and why he or she made the choices that led to this impact.
2. Jessica Hagedorn has been sharply criticized by some Filipinos for the title and content of *Dogeaters*, which depicts Filipino life in a frequently unflattering light. Yet perhaps paradoxically, this play – which opened in one of New York’s most prominent theatres – was groundbreaking, and gave more exposure to Filipino arts than any play ever has. What have you learned from it? Has it altered your perception of Filipino life, history or culture? Discuss with your class or group your pre-show conceptions or misconceptions and what the play has taught you.





Interested in knowing more about the people, literature, or history of Jessica Hagedorn's play *Dogeaters*? Here are some books, websites and films to check out.

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**WEBSITES:**

[www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/g\\_l/hagedorn/hagedorn.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hagedorn/hagedorn.htm)

Click on "About Jessica Hagedorn" for Kay Bonetti's interview with Hagedorn, conducted in 1994 (which means that the references to *Dogeaters* refer to her award-winning novel of the same title) and other articles.

[www.donshevey.com](http://www.donshevey.com)

Click on the link for "articles," then the link for "theater" to find the article titled "Jessica Hagedorn and *Dogeaters*." This 2001 article and review, prompted by the New York City premiere of the play, covers the translation of the novel into a stage play, the nature and success of the production and the playwright's intentions.

[voices.cla.umn.edu/vg](http://voices.cla.umn.edu/vg)

Voices from the Gaps: Women Artists and Writers of Color, a project of the University of Minnesota, provides a detailed summary of Hagedorn's life, an analysis of some of her work and a partial bibliography of her publications and performance pieces.

[www.enotes.com/contemporary-literary-criticism](http://www.enotes.com/contemporary-literary-criticism)

Biographical information on Hagedorn, a summary of her major works through 2004 and a précis of the critical responses to these works are offered - just follow the alphabetical links.

[www.curtainup.com/Dogeaters.html](http://www.curtainup.com/Dogeaters.html)

At this Web site containing theatre reviews, Elyse Sommers' review of *Dogeaters* calls it a "stunningly animated crazy quilt of Philippine history" and discovers a "Brechtian flavor" in it.

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Google offers a cached version of Bruce Weber's review of *Dogeaters*, entitled "Ordinary Living in a Mardi Gras of Corruption." To access it, type the title of the article inside quotation marks and click on the word "cached."

[www.time.com/time/asia/2003/journey/philippines.html](http://www.time.com/time/asia/2003/journey/philippines.html)

Hagedorn's essay, entitled "Ghost Town," which she wrote for *Time Magazine* on the way she is haunted, as an expatriate, by her memories of life in Manila

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand\\_Marcos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_Marcos)

Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, offers a brief survey of Marcos' life, politics, writings and regime.

[findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2278/is\\_1\\_29](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2278/is_1_29)

This Web site provides access to the Spring 2004 special issue of the literary journal *Melus*, featuring a number of articles on Filipina/American literature.

[www.genders.org/g36/g36\\_mendible.html](http://www.genders.org/g36/g36_mendible.html)

Genders online journal, issue 36 (2002), accessed at this site, features an article by Myra Mendible entitled "Dictators, Movie Stars, and Martyrs: The Politics of Spectacle in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*."



### BOOKS:

***Dogeaters: A Novel*** by Jessica Hagedorn  
(Pantheon Books, 1990)

The novel on which the play is based

***Burning Heart: A Portrait of the Philippines***

by Jessica Hagedorn with Marissa Roth  
(Rizzoli, 1999)

Marissa Roth began photographing the Philippines in 1987, when she was sent there as a photojournalist by the *Los Angeles Times*. This book pairs her photography with Jessica Hagedorn's poetry about her homeland.

***The Gangster of Love*** by Jessica Hagedorn  
(Houghton Mifflin, 1996)

Nominated for the *Irish Times* International Fiction Prize, this autobiographical novel closely parallels many of Hagedorn's experiences as the leader of The Gangster Choir, a West Coast rock band that moved east.

***Going Home to a Landscape: Writings by Filipinas***  
edited by Marianne Villanueva and Virvinia Cerenio (Calyx, 2003)

A collection of prose pieces and poetry by contemporary Filipina writers, *Going Home* displays the wide range of their literary work and illuminates their experiences as émigrées.

***America's Boy: The Rise and Fall of Ferdinand Marcos and Other Misadventures of U.S. Colonialism in the Philippines***

by James Hamilton-Paterson (Henry Holt, 1999)

A portrait of the 21-year rule of Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda: their public mythology, their sources of power, their connections with the U.S. and their eventual decline and flight. (Also published as *America's Boy: A Century of Colonialism in the Philippines* and as *America's Boy: The Marcoses and the Philippines*.)

### FILM & VIDEO:

***Imelda*** directed by Ramona Diaz  
(Independent Television Service, 2004)

Banned in the Philippines when its subject obtained an injunction (later lifted), this documentary about Imelda Marcos was made with her cooperation and assistance, and offers a candid portrait of the former first lady whose nickname was "The Steel Butterfly." It won the Sundance Film Festival's award for Best Cinematography.

***Fresh Kill*** directed by Shu Lea Cheang  
(Independent Television Service and The Airwaves Project, 1994)

Written by Jessica Hagedorn, *Fresh Kill* shows the scavenger existence of two young lesbian parents raising a child under challenging circumstances on New York's Staten Island, which is threatened with nuclear-waste contamination.

***The Pink Palace*** (television series)  
directed by Jessica Hagedorn  
(Oxygen Network, 2000)

Created by Hagedorn and John Woo (of Woo Art International), this animated series of seven-minute episodes follows the lives of a Filipina mother and daughter living in a housing project in Oakland, California.

***Philippines, My Philippines***

directed by Chris Nash (Stoney Desert, 1988)

A documentary showing what happened in the Philippines after the fall of the Marcos regime, when high hopes were dashed as social conditions declined, poverty grew and the Aquino administration struggled against Communist rebels, vigilantes and even factions of the military; meanwhile tourists flocked to the islands, viewing them as a "sexual Disneyland."

# ABOUT P.L.A.Y.

**NOW IN ITS 36TH YEAR,** Performing for Los Angeles Youth (P.L.A.Y.) is Center Theatre Group's award-winning youth theatre and theatre education program. P.L.A.Y. serves more than 35,000 young people, teachers and families annually through a variety of performances, residencies, discount ticket programs and innovative educational experiences. P.L.A.Y. offers programs that allow young people, teachers and families to attend productions at the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatres for low or no cost. P.L.A.Y. is dedicated to artistic excellence and innovation in its theatrical productions and to the development of young people's skills and creativity through the exploration of theatre, its literature, art and imagination.

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## FUNDER CREDITS

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*Maraming  
Salamat!  
(Thank you very much!)*



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