

UC Irvine

Humanities Honors Theses 2022

Title

Explorations of Blasianness Through Mixed Race Narratives in Postmodern Literature

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8ns0181n>

Author

Jones, Jalen

Publication Date

2022-07-15

Peer reviewed

EXPLORATIONS OF BLASIANNNESS THROUGH MIXED RACE NARRATIVES IN
POSTMODERN LITERATURE

BY
JALEN JONES

THESIS COMMITTEE:

NANCY MCLOUGHLIN, PHD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

JULIA H. LEE, PHD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

SPRING 2022

Abstract

This study is an exploration of mixed race narratives in postmodern literature, specifically in its iterations of Blasianness. In exploring the literary representation of Blasian individuals, this research does not seek to impose a concrete definition on what it means to exist at the intersection of Blackness and Asianness. Rather, it implores the implications of representing Black/Asian mixedness as it has manifested thus far via literary fiction.

Because of the newness of its presence in the popular imagination, we have yet to form a developed vocabulary for thinking about multiraciality as it pertains to Blasianness; a central goal of this study is to extend us towards remedying that epistemological shortcoming. Adding to the burgeoning field of Critical Mixed Race Studies, this paper dissects the limits and possibilities of Blasian representation by interrogating modernity, racialization, and what critical mixed race studies theorist Michele Elam calls the anti-Bildungsroman—an alternative coming-of-age narrative that positions mixed race characters as periphery to an assimilationary arc. Using the resulting framework alongside the narratives of Lisa Countryman from Don Lee's *Country of Origin* and Joey Sands from Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, I argue that the representation of Blasians in postmodern literature complicates how we imagine racial being in ways that are both limiting *and* expansive.

Acknowledgements

No matter how long I make this acknowledgements section, I know that it will forever be criminally too short. Thank you first to my mom and dad for raising me into the person I am, and for loving and encouraging me the whole way here. You've shown me what a home can be, even when the world is tearing at the seams.

I couldn't have accomplished this research without the time and space necessary—thank you to the Summer Undergraduate Research Program and the Humanities Honors Program for your generous funding and support.

Thank you to my irreplaceable thesis advisor Julia Lee for keeping my head on straight, and for giving me a glow-in-the-dark map every time I grasped for straws I couldn't see. Your guidance led me to forge the armor I needed to make this paper possible. I am forever grateful for your flexibility, patience, and heartening support. I couldn't have asked for a better mentorship.

Thank you to Nancy McLoughlin for believing in me constantly, and for always being a life raft. You have done the Humanities Honors Program so much justice; no one else could have gotten us through the apocalypse two times over. This thesis would not have been completed if not for you.

My gratitude goes out to my honors cohort, for sticking it through alongside me! I am especially grateful for my cohort buddy Alexis K., who has been an anchor throughout this whole process; you kept me grounded and sane, with every text message and soft conversation. I can't wait to read your book someday. Francisco—thank you for knowing what I needed to hear each and every time, and for reminding me always that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Let's keep making up the words to get there.

Ron, Lauren, Talon, Kierah, Miyabi, and Lucas, thank you for being the community I needed, and for making my last year of undergrad filled with enough laughter to make my ribs tough. Alexis T.—thanks for living in my Google Calendar, and for philtering my soul. You were the best thesis writing companion! Thank you Weston for giving me a landing zone every time my up-so-high thoughts came crashing down. And of course, thank you Ian, Nathan, and Kirsten for being here every step of the way. There truly aren't enough words.

Lastly, thank you to my sisters Kalia and Khloe for being the reason I knew I had to finish this. This is for us!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction: Locating Blasianness in the Study of Racial Mixedness.....	6
Chapter 1: Narrating Race through the (Anti-)Bildungsroman.....	13
Chapter 2: There's No Place (Like Home): Belonging, Delusion, and Death in Don Lee's <i>Country of Origin</i>	21
Chapter 3: You Can Take The Blasian Out The Boy...: Disposable Blasianness in Jessica Hagedorn's <i>Dogeaters</i>	32
Conclusion: Make it Real.....	44
Bibliography.....	49

Introduction: Locating Blasianness in the Study of Racial Mixedness

At the 1996 Multiracial Solidarity March, Charles Byrd—founder of *Interracial Voice*, the self-proclaimed “Voice of the Global Mixed-Race/Interracial Movement”—cited the multiracial ideal as “a future of racelessness through assimilation into the American mainstream” (Sexton 266). Multiraciality has long been touted as being indicative of a potential, idealized future. Early accounts of this go as far back as 1925, when Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi—an Austrian-Japanese philosopher and the Count of Coudenhove-Kalergi—heralded miscegenation as emblematic of modernity, declaring that: “The man of the future will be of mixed race. Today's races and classes will gradually disappear owing to the vanishing of space, time, and prejudice. The Eurasian-Negroid race of the future... will replace the diversity of peoples with a diversity of individuals” (Matusitz and Davidson, 861). The reactions to claims of a “mixed race future” have been diverse, and ironically have left us with mixed results. There are of course those who have been opposed to the idea of miscegenation due to concepts such as racial hygiene and the Kalergi Plan¹, but America’s immigration and miscegenation history—with its carefully curated image as the melting pot—has more or less championed the narrative of a mixed race future.

Though initially in reference to ethnic mixture as opposed to racial mixture, the United States had become popularly recognized as a melting pot since the play *The Melting Pot*, written by Israel Zangwill, was first staged in 1908. Already in this depiction we can see the yoking between multiculturalism and futurity, as Zangwill’s play illustrates a utopian depiction of cultural intermixing that signals a hopeful future for American citizens. This multiculturalism in America has widely been cited as the product of the immigration rhetoric that America had

¹An anti-semitic, white nationalist conspiracy theory that misappropriated Coudenhove-Kalergi’s concept of “the race of the future” to claim victimization of white people at the hands of progressive immigration policies and a supposed, genocidal Jewish elite.

been known for—rhetoric that had once encouraged people from around the world and various cultures² to come to the U.S., in hopes of attaining economic stability and, if one worked hard enough, the American Dream. 85 years later, America is still seen wrestling with this brand: in TIME Magazine's November 18th, 1993 Special Issue, readers are confronted with a paradoxically familiar, yet unfamiliar face of a woman plastered onto the cover. Cited as "The New Face of America," the issue reveals that the woman, with her lightly tanned skin, dark hazel eyes, and auburn-brown hair, is in fact a computer-generated composite made from a mixture of faces from several different races. The issue's subtitle, "How Immigrants Are Shaping the World's First Multicultural Society," simultaneously accomplishes two things. It first accentuates that the cover girl and ambiguous, mixed-others alike are the result of America's reputation as the welcome mat for immigrants; however, it also does the work of reinforcing the tie between American multiculturalism (and more explicitly, race mixing) with modernity. Pulling from Maurice Beebe's "Introduction: What Modernism Was," modernity is the condition of being modern, with modernist poet Ezra Pound's phrase "Make it new" often cited as defining this movement to signal the newness of the times (1067). The inclusion of the word "first" in the TIME Magazine Special Issue's subtitle should be noted in particular, as it posits America and its mixed-race children as pioneers of a future that society has long been on the verge of. With this comes a question: how has this notion of mixed race modernity held up for mixed race people in American literature, especially as we move beyond the Civil Rights Era and into the twenty-first century?

² Although America's immigration rhetoric was alluring for many different cultures, America had typically only desired future citizens to immigrate from European countries. Though this was evident in America's racially-exclusionary politics, such racism was not always apparent to those who were enticed by the pro-immigration rhetoric.

To answer this question, I will examine literary examples that include or focus on mixed-race Asian and Black—Blasian—characters. Although there has been relatively little representation of Blasian individuals in literary fiction, an increasing number of works with Blasian characters have emerged within just the past few decades. Because of the newness of its presence in the popular imagination, we have yet to form a developed vocabulary for thinking about multiraciality as it pertains to Blasianness. Literary representations of Blasians can provide an entry into thinking about the ways that race is understood in the United States.

Throughout this paper, I will use the term “Blasian” to refer to those of Black and Asian ancestry—Black referring to those of African and African American descent, and Asian referring to those with South, Southeast, and East Asian ancestry. A more familiar term used to refer to this group of people is “Afro-Asian”; however, to signal my focus on those who are mixed-race, I land on the more singular term Blasian, which more explicitly emphasizes the mixture of both lineages into a singular body.

The two novels I will focus this paper on are Jessica Hagedorn’s novel *Dogeaters*, published in 1990, and Don Lee’s novel *Country of Origin*, published in 2004. *Dogeaters* jumps between 1950s and 1980s Manila, and delves into a variety of characters’ lives as a way of exploring how American neo-colonialism has impacted and fractured the Philippine cultural-political landscape. Fragmented narration is utilized throughout much of the novel, jumping from each character’s perspective. The character I am most interested in is Joey Sands, a Black Filipino male prostitute, who relates sexuality with survival as he navigates exploitative relationships, his image, and his ideas/fantasies of what he believes to be his home country. Lee’s *Country of Origin*, similar to Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*, explores multiple characters, jumping from different perspectives throughout the novel. Lee’s novel is set in Tokyo in 1980 and focuses on

the disappearance of Lisa Countryman, a half-black, half-Japanese woman who was adopted by an African American couple as a child. Other main characters include Tom Hurley, a half white, half Korean embassy official who claims to be “Hawaiian”, and Kenzo Ota, a neurotic and socially outcast police detective assigned to Lisa’s case. Each character’s relationship with race and identity influences their experiences and decision-making—bringing individuals such as Tom to dismiss their racializations, while others such as Lisa (who visually appears as racially ambiguous, and at times white passing) are consistently challenged in regards to their loyalty to their race(s) and countries of origin.

These two novels, despite being written in the 1990s and early 2000s, are set in the 1950s and the 1980s—a gap of about 40 years and 20 years respectively. These two novels illustrate the Blasian experience, and how said experience reflects how Blasians inhabit hegemonic conceptions of modernity and multiraciality. Given frameworks and narrative arcs that are popularly heralded as signals of modernity, such as the Bildungsroman, as well as what we will later on be acquainted with as the Ethnic and the Anti-Bildungsromans, I argue that these novels counter notions of mixed race individuals as signs of a liberal, race-blind utopia; indeed, the novels reveal how these ideas are harmful to Blasians as they navigate their identities and places within their communities.

It should be noted that exploring the Blasian experience is important as it provides us with an understanding of modernity’s construction of race. Myra S. Washington theorizes in her book *Blasian Invasian: Racial Mixing in the Celebrity Industrial Complex* that the relationship between Blasians and modernity may be better imagined as *postmodern*. Writing specifically about the African American, Japanese, and Korean mixed race fashion model and CEO Kimora Lee Simmons, Washington asserts that “The image projected by Simmons takes a postmodernist

turn by flattening difference and making it impossible to distinguish the ‘artificial from the real’” (55). Extending her argument to Blasians in general and their relationship with racial categorizations and boundaries, Washington continues: “This is how the Blasian brand functions, by demonstrating the impossibility of drawing boundaries or parsing out separate racialized categories” (55).

A similarly ambivalent play with self-representation is brought into consideration through the example of the Canadian-American actress Rae Dawn Chong. Washington cites Chong as “the first star to claim a Blasian identity publicly” through her rejection of the monoracial identity urged onto her. However, this refusal of monoracial identity did not result in an unabashed embrace of her Blackness and Asianness—in fact, she was commonly positioned by the industry as “neither Black nor Asian/American,” suggesting an ushering towards the racelessness that is imagined as the product of enough racial mixing taking place. Even though she *was* in fact cast in many films throughout the “multicultural 1980s and 1990s,” the actress recognized that her appearances and acting roles in media “did little to challenge the racial hegemony of Hollywood”—what I argue is also a result of the achieved “racelessness” status that was reluctantly, yet inevitably embraced by the actress (Washington 34-35).

Seemingly as a reaction to the racelessness that was thrust upon her, Black Hollywood³ showed great resistance in including her in Black roles and media; Chong explicitly declared herself as not a “Blacktor” due to her exclusion from Black Hollywood productions and her subsequent constant pressure to prove that she was “enough” racially (Washington 35). However, Chong can be seen embracing her multiraciality and Blasian identity throughout her interviews

³ Black Hollywood, as opposed to Hollywood, refers to the subset of filmmakers and actors that produced explicitly Black media—largely as a reaction to not having a place in mainstream Hollywood due to their ethnic and racial deviation from the white norm.

that followed the election of President Barack Obama.⁴ Although this fluctuation between racelessness and a championing of her racial identity may seem to suggest an equivocation or exploitative racial capitalism, I conclude alongside Washington that Chong's negotiations of her racial identity are "actually indicative of the difficulty in placing Blasians within the U.S. racial system, not of Chong's uncertainty" (36).

Returning to the argument of this paper, this mediation of representing Blasianness showcases the tendency for Blasian identity and representation to be 1) doubted in its authenticity, because of the rigidity of US racial hierarchies and 2) evacuated of Blackness and Asianness in lieu of an encouraged racelessness instead. Unlike those who navigate the color line through the negotiation between whiteness and non-whiteness, those of (and faithful to their) Blasian identity are not granted this vacillation between oppressed and non-oppressed racial identities. Blasianness therefore further complicates our approach to critiques of what it means to be mixed race, as it brings into perspective how an experience can be shaped when contradicting racialized narratives are imposed onto them, and yet neither of which are directly or pointedly privileged.⁵

It should also be noted that the texts brought into focus in this thesis are written by Asian American writers, none of whom are Blasian themselves. Though it would be undoubtedly generative to be able to also pay close attention to fictional texts authored by Blasian writers (who would of course have the most accurate insight and most imperative perspective when it comes to investigating the Blasian experience and regurgitating that through a properly

⁴ Washington asserts that the election of President Barack Obama was the first moment when multiracial identity was most declaratively recognized as a valid identity across the entire nation.

⁵ This is not to equate the experiences of Blackness and Asianness. Although both races are oppressed, their histories of oppression are incredibly different from one another, and typically, if not always, those of Asian descent are less so oppressed than those who are Black. My goal is not to hierarchize these two oppressed identities alongside each other, but instead to see how these two identities in particular shape the experience of individuals who embody both.

representative literary form), there was simply no text of this sort available. As such, I have resorted to texts authored by those who have likely lived adjacent experiences being Asian American, and must trust that their depiction of Blasianness is the most accurate representation of the lived experiences of Blasians so far possible.

Chapter 1: Narrating Race through the (Anti-)Bildungsroman

The Bildungsroman is a literary genre that depicts a young protagonist coming of age—via their search for belonging, as well as through their psychological and moral development throughout the narrative. This emphasis on such personal, individual development in the Bildungsroman novel deceptively seems to encourage individualism, which focuses on the individual (i.e. human independence, freedom) over the collective. These changes that signal progression from childhood to adulthood are essential—not in how they commend the individual for their uniqueness and personal endeavors that deviate from their society, but rather in how they emphasize how the individual finds their fit within society. As Enrique Lima so precisely explains in his article “The Uneven Development of the *Bildungsroman*: D’Arcy McNickle and Native American Modernity”:

In its European heartland the Bildungsroman narrated the story of an individual coming to terms with his or her own socialization, either because the individual’s desires coincided with what society required or because the individual had to renounce his or her desires in order to be absorbed into what Georg Lukács describes as ‘the world of convention’... The European *Bildungsroman*... made socialization the ultimate endpoint of individualism (291).

However, Lima goes on to argue that this literary genre—in its most typical form—is unfit for ethnic narratives. Using McNickle’s important Native American novel *The Surrounded* as an example, Lima challenges us “to rethink theories of the genre that have focused primarily on European examples” and “account for what individualization and socialization have meant” for ethnic individuals (and specifically in McNickle’s case, Native American peoples) (292-293).

What particularly prevents ethnic narratives from properly assimilating into the classical Bildungsroman is the genre's inextricable relationship with modernity. Youth—an essential starting point for protagonists of Bildungsroman narratives—becomes a signal of modernity; it is “modernity's ‘essence’, the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the *future* rather than in the past” (Lima 294). Fundamentally, youth is optimistic in that it sees possibility and hope, in both what the future has to offer the individual that is coming-of-age, as well as in the society that they are being socialized into. This is not to suggest that with the end of one's youth, they are suddenly no longer modern—“after all, we get old” (Lima 294). Contrary to what the average literary scholar may think of when they imagine “modernism,” the argument here is that Bildungsromans do not emphasize individuality by the end of their narratives; alternatively, it is the act of growing older and becoming more mature that validates the stability and “correctness” of the society surrounding the Bildungsroman protagonist. With proper maturation of the Bildungsroman protagonist comes a sense of closure by the end of the novel, therefore solidifying the ultimate, ideal endpoint of modernity: in the case of the Bildungsroman, one of utter socialization.

Socialization proves to be problematic in the case of the ethnic narrative. Unlike the white individual who searches for belonging in society (which easily provides a place for them once properly socialized), a seamless social integration is much more difficult when there are ethnic edges to smooth out. The existence of the ethnic subject brings in a community that opposes the eurocentric modernity that is being so subliminally encouraged onto our characters. Unlike what the white imagination typically encompasses, these ethnic individuals (along with their communities) do in fact exist, and do in fact bring along with them their own maturation processes—and because of the casualties of colonialism, these individuals are coming-of-age not

in “their own” communities, but in eurocentric societies that tend to peripheralize them. To make up for this difference, Lima establishes the ethnic Bildungsroman—a subgenre that instead “narrates the story of a young man whose agonized socialization into a fragmented community results from the omnipresent colonial interventions” into ethnic life (296).

Ib. “Days of Being Mild”: The Ethnic Bildungsroman

To help in our understanding of the ethnic Bildungsroman, I consult Xuan Juliana Wang’s short story “Days of Being Mild.” The short story centers around an unnamed Chinese protagonist, a so-called “Bei Piao” who lives in the “packed streets of the Zhongguancun district of Beijing” with his other Bei Piao friends (20). The protagonist of “Days of Being Mild” describes a Bei Piao as “twentysomethings who drift aimlessly to the northern capital” (Wang 22). At the beginning of the story there are clear glimmers of the Bildungsroman genre that shine through the protagonist’s positionality within the narrative; he is young, feeling displaced and peripheral to society, and places a glaringly obvious emphasis on an American (white) sense of individualism:

We are the generation who awoke to consciousness listening to rock and roll and who fed ourselves milk, McDonald’s, and box sets of *Friends*. We are not our parents... We come with uncertain dreams but our goal is to burn white-hot, to prove that the Chinese, too, can be decadent and reckless... we are very good at being young... We are marginally employed and falling behind on our filial-piety payments, but we are cool. Who’s going to tell us otherwise? (Wang 22).

As is what happens with the classical Bildungsroman narrative, the protagonist undergoes a psychological and moral development throughout the story; the reality of “growing

up”—needing to make money, sustain oneself, pay back ones filial-piety, etc.—bludgeons him and his friends until he can no longer run away from it. The end of the story shows the friend group disbanding, with the protagonist picking up his visa to go to the United States (where his father is giving him oil rigs to manage so that he can finally make a living for himself). But this is an *ethnic* Bildungsroman, not a classical Bildungsroman.

As I have already noted, the ethnic Bildungsroman, though sharing many similarities to the classical Bildungsroman, differentiates itself in that it depicts an *agonizing* socialization into a fragmented community (as a result of colonial intervention). At the end of Wang’s short story, the protagonist is clearly dissatisfied with his designation into socialization. A heavy undertone of sadness, loneliness, and pain is riddled throughout the protagonist’s description of each character’s (and his own) departure from the group. In addition to his own moving to Louisiana, the protagonist’s friend Sara decides to go home to America and his friend Gangzi (after realizing ““there is nothing for [him there]”) sells his cameras, clothes, and cellphone to ensure he never comes back to live the Bei Piao lifestyle (34-35). As the train arrives in order to pick up Gangzi and officially break apart the friend group (and their youthful, trailblazing, individualist Bei Piao lifestyle), the protagonist laments:

Everyone on the platform has his or her own confession to make, but when we open our mouths, the train arrives, just in time to keep out shameful secrets to ourselves. Someone is about to give away the mystery of loneliness and then the train comes. A reason for living, the train comes, why she never loved him, the train comes, source of hope, the train comes, train, lifetime of regret, train, never-ending heartache, train, train, train, train, train. (35-36)

In the final paragraph of Wang's short story, the protagonist narrates how a song of Brass Donkey's—a rock band that was emblematic of the individualistic *Bei Piao* lifestyle that the protagonist is in the midst of leaving behind for socialization—plays in his head. Their lyrics (and the last lines of the story) read: “Do you want to be an individual? Or a grain of sand.” (37). The protagonist of the story, agonizing over his forced socialization into U.S.-centric society, mourns the loss of his individualism that was necessary in his coming-of-age.

Ic. Days of Being Mixed: The Anti-Bildungsroman

It may be tempting to funnel mixed race Bildungsroman narratives into this same category of what Enrique Lima establishes as the “ethnic Bildungsroman”—as having an identity that stands at the intersection of more than one racial identity insists that at least one (if not both, or all) of these races be periphery to the standard in a postcolonial society (standard as in, what is European or white). After all, mixed-race individuals, via their implied multitude of cultures, already immediately fit the bill that is existing within a “fragmented community [resulting] from the omnipresent colonial interventions” (Lima 296). This assumption, however, is problematized by Michele Elam in her book *The Souls of Mixed Folk: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium*, during which she exposes how the mixed-race Bildungsroman protagonist, though similarly peripheral at the start of their narrative, are never able to come of age as one would normally expect one to in either the classical or ethnic (non-mixed) Bildungsroman. Rather, Elam categorizes a new subgenre, one that is outside of both the classical *and* ethnic Bildungsroman genres: the anti-bildungsroman. In the anti-bildungsroman, “characters do not come of age by coming into society. Rather, their experiences critique the racial and economic basis by which individuals are incorporated, and... abandon the social contract altogether” (127).

Elam furthers her differentiation between the mixed-race Bildungsroman protagonist and other Bildungsroman characters, stating that “Unlike the protagonist in either the European or the indigenous”—what I interpret as emblematic of the monoracial, ethnic—“bildungsroman, the protagonist in the mixed race bildungsroman is often represented as not requiring social education” (126). In essence, the mixed race character is *already* modern, even prior to what would be a necessary socialization in the case of classical or (mono)ethnic Bildungsromans. These mixed race characters still seek a “coming of age” by way of searching for their belonging or stable place within a society, but according to Elam’s definition, there is no place to be found.

Returning to Xuan Juliana Wang’s “Days of Being Mild” with this in mind, we can focus on how the journey of the main protagonist of the short story compares to the experiences of JJ—“the tall, dark-skinned half-Nigerian from Guangzhou, who is loudmouthed and full of swagger” (23). From the comparatively little light that is shed onto the character, readers are able to piece together that JJ, is of course also a Bei Piao, and regularly shaves his head, drinks, and writes and performs for his small band Frisky Me Tender. Like the rest of his and the protagonist’s friends, JJ is indeed peripheral to their society—yet this applies even more so to JJ, specifically as a result of his mixed race Blasianness: “JJ cuts in. ‘Dude, today a cabdriver point-blank asked me how big my dick was.’ We listen to that story instead. Being a half-black Chinese guy, JJ is used to attention” (Wang 24). The narrator states that JJ is used to such ostracization, and the fact that he makes it a point to distinguish JJ’s placidity in comparison to the others (who are also seemingly ostracized due to being Bei Piaos) is significant. This can be interpreted as information that lends JJ as a character that is markedly more precocious than the other friends—perhaps as a result of the experiences he has faced due to being Black and Chinese.

Later on in JJ's narrative, the protagonist reveals more of his observations of JJ, characterizing JJ as psychologically and morally developed (and thus more in-line with Elam's definition of the mixed race Bildungsroman character). According to the protagonist, "Unlike everyone else, [JJ] doesn't seem to want to make it big. He says he just doesn't see the use of being a hardworking citizen" (28). Here, JJ is showcased as an individual who is already modern, already developed in his psyche—he even understands the futility in searching for assimilation and belonging into their society's dominant ways of life. There is no fitting in for JJ, and he himself later admits that in his own ambitions (which the main protagonist recounts):

"I am not writing for record labels. I just want to write music for the humiliated loser, the guy that gets hassled by the police, the night owl with no money who loves to get drunk," he says. I don't know if he knows that his description doesn't include someone like me, but we toast to it anyway (Wang 28).

In this proclamation, JJ not only distances himself from the dominant customs of society, but also from other transgressive individuals such as the protagonist ("his description doesn't include someone like me," states the protagonist). JJ is aware of his inability to fit into society, just as Elam claims the mixed race character is (either consciously or subconsciously) aware of their inability to fit in as well.

Comparing JJ's "coming of age" narrative journey with the main protagonist's even further, we come to the final pages of the short story once again. The friend group is breaking apart, as they are finally (and agonizingly) socializing into the society that they had so-far and so-longly been peripheral to; the protagonist picks up his visa to move to Louisiana, Sara decides she will be going home to the States as well, their friend Gangzi extinguishes any possibility of him coming back to live the Bei Piao lifestyle, and JJ... is given nothing new to his narrative.

This ambiguity in future is unique to JJ, and all that we are provided in the final pages of the story in regards to JJ is that “Out of nowhere JJ says, ‘I’m not sure if I actually like drinking coffee’”—a comedic aside that slights readers who may have hoped for more closure for their (and my own) favorite character (Wang 36). There is no change, no psychological or moral development, and certainly no coming-of-age socialization that happens for JJ. Thus, JJ’s narrative—having met all the qualities given to us by Elam—firmly crystallizes itself as an anti-bildungsroman.

The anti-bildungsroman exists for Blasian characters—and not just on its own, but even whilst grinding against the tempting grain of the ethnic Bildungsroman narrative at the same time. But unlike the mixed race narratives that Michele Elam had addressed in her book, JJ was not Black and white—instead, he was of Black and Asian descent. Is there perhaps something unique to the Blasian coming of age tale that would not be present in the anti-bildungsroman stories of other, *non*-Blasian mixed race characters?

**Chapter 2: There's No Place (Like Home): Belonging, Delusion, and Death in Don Lee's
*Country of Origin***

Lisa Countryman is doomed from the very beginning of *Country of Origin*. Even though she is one of the novel's protagonists, the very first chapter of Don Lee's 2004 novel *Country of Origin* depicts the final moments leading up to Lisa's death:

She wasn't breathing. Her airway was blocked. Oh, God, she wasn't breathing. She tried to cough, to get up, to grab her throat, but she could do nothing, she couldn't move, she was already losing consciousness... This can't be happening, she thought. I can't die like this, not like this. The pain in her chest began to ease, but she instinctively knew this meant neither relief nor rescue, but finality... She felt embarrassed, and stupid, and terrified, and very, very alone. She had no family, no one who would really miss her. Was she really going to die like this? She wondered what would happen to her body, where she would be buried, if anyone would claim her. She was not quite twenty-five years old. (Lee 25).

From the outset *Country of Origin* declares itself incompatible with the typical Bildungsroman narrative. One of the main characters is dead, and is therefore unable to achieve the socialization and individualism that is supposedly emblematic of a true coming of age narrative. But in what ways does the representation of Lisa Countryman structure itself as a critique of the Bildungsroman narrative, and possibly fit into the anti-Bildungsroman? Does Don Lee's novel label Blasian existence (as represented through Lisa Countryman) as something that is merely incapable of fitting into our society? To answer these questions, I consult select scenes from *Country of Origin* that demonstrate the novel's positionality within the conversation between Blasianness, the Bildungsroman, and the anti-Bildungsroman.

As I had priorly mentioned, the Bildungsroman is a literary genre that “[narrates] the story of an individual coming to terms with his or her own socialization” (Lima 291). In the case of Lisa Countryman, this knowledge settling into her does in fact take place, but rather than reveal how she fits *into* society, her enculturation and socialization end up doing the complete opposite—revealing how she will never be able to fit into society, and then leaving her to die when she refuses to accept such a fate. Similar to the protagonist of Michele Elam’s anti-Bildungsroman, Lisa has no reason to pursue socialization into her society—it would be completely useless to attempt to do so, since “the protagonist in the mixed race bildungsroman is often represented as not requiring social education” (Elam 126). Unlike the protagonists in the anti-Bildungsroman, however, Lisa sets herself on this journey *anyways*; Lisa seems to be aware of the fact that she has no hope for true belonging (the distance between herself and the other Japanese characters in the novel is palpable even through the language being used—*nisei*⁶, *gaijin*⁷, *kurombo*⁸, and *ainoko*⁹ are common Japanese words that are slung toward Lisa throughout the novel, undeniably bifurcating Lisa and her ability to belong in Japan), and yet, her entire reason for being there in the first place must take root in the fact that she has a semblance of hope that she is, in fact, seeking for her belonging in that country.

At the time the novel takes place, Lisa Countryman is a 24 year old Ph.D. candidate in cultural anthropology, who has made the decision to go abroad to look for her birth mother under the guise of dissertation research. Born in Japan to a Japanese mother and African American military serviceman, Lisa was put up for adoption and raised by African American parents in the United States. Although she grew up in the US, she is unable to find a sense of belonging within

⁶ Second generation; A person born outside of Japan to Japanese parents.

⁷ Informal word for “Westerner” or “foreigner”.

⁸ Derogatory word used to describe those of African ancestry; equivalent to “nigger” in the English language.

⁹ Child in between. Mixed race child.

her American family. The extent of Lisa's alienation is revealed when Lisa and her sister Susan argue over their inheritance after their parents both died suddenly:

Susan had never suspected that Lisa, in fact, had been jealous of her, that she had wanted to look like her, truly and unquestionably black, that she had wished, more than anything, she could call Richard and Lenore her real parents. (253).

Lisa's desire is for the ease of homogeneity or monoraciality. Because of her mixed race, her Blackness is not only questioned by all of those who she interacts with, but also by herself. In this way, Lisa exemplifies an anti-Bildungsroman protagonist—she has long understood her place in society as overwhelmingly peripheral to the hegemony that is encouraged and embraced. Lisa does not belong, either in America nor Japan.

Lee highlights Japan's eschewing of American values associated with individuality and its failed attempts at "racial diversity," writing:

Like the rest of the world, Japan prized its homogeneity. It was all very orderly and predictable, unambiguous, and very reassuring, the dictates of the group, the importance of tradition, the building of *seron*—consensus. Without *seron*, there was anarchy, the disintegration of society, such as what was happening in America today... the race riots, the sixties, hippies, free love, marijuana, rock and roll, the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy... What had they expected, with their self-indulgence and immorality and rampant consumerism? (Lee 131).

Although Lisa's belonging in her American family is obstructed by her origins in Japan, even when she *does* attempt to find belonging by tracking her roots, this act is evidently futile. It is explicitly stated in the novel that Lisa was given up for adoption *because* of her roots—the fact that she is a child of mixed race. Lisa's birth-mother, who is revealed to be a *zainichi*

Korean—“ethnic Koreans who were permanent resident aliens of Japan, remnants of the colonization of Korea from 1910 to 1945”—, is believed to have been completely reasonable in her decision to give up Lisa for adoption: “it seemed almost charitable that Lisa’s mother had left her at the orphanage door. She would have been saddled with the worst stigmas imaginable: a half-breed, a bastard child, a dirty Korean, a nigger.” (Lee 257). Whether she was adopted by an American family, or had stayed in Japan and lived her life with her mother, she is made out as doomed from the very beginning.

It is undeniable that this inability to find her place is rooted in the fact that she is mixed-race Black and Asian. For example, Kenzo—the policeman investigating Lisa’s case—reacts with an immediate understanding to her abandonment once he finds out Lisa’s biracial identity:

Of course... How stupid of him. To bear a *shiseiji*, a love child, who was also *konketsu*, mixed-blooded, especially if some of that blood was black, was extremely shameful. Lisa Countryman had been abandoned. (Lee 234).

Such an unsentimental reaction emphasizes that Lisa’s rejection from her parents was the norm for mainstream society—they were merely following the correct logic of the social script. Lisa too was always conscious of the fact that her racial identity was what blocked her from feeling any semblance of belonging. Early on in her search for details about her biological parents, Lisa Countryman meets an African American officer named Omar. After he tells her that he can’t find her any further information about her or her family (since she is, after all, “a Navy brat, a Third Culture Kid,” or as Lisa concludes, “a cliché”), the two have a slightly flirtatious conversation introducing themselves to each other (65). When Omar accuses Lisa of not wanting to date him because he’s Black, “Lisa [is] taken aback” (66). “I’m part black,” she follows up, “depressed

he couldn't tell" (66). This conversation reminds Lisa once again of her permanent alienation from any particular racial category. As the narration reveals shortly after their talk, Lisa's feelings of estrangement are not new phenomena:

She was never black enough, or Oriental enough, or white enough, and everyone always felt deceived if she didn't announce her ethnic taxonomy immediately upon meeting them, as if not doing so were a calculated sin of omission, as if she were trying to pass. But just as often, when she did claim racial solidarity with a group, people didn't believe her, suspecting she was merely trying to appropriate the radical-chic color of the month.
(67)

It is easy to conclude that Lisa has started her journey towards belonging at a dead end—she does not have anywhere to go, any identity that she can claim belonging in and is “excluded from even applying,” as the novel puts it (67). But Lisa continues her journey toward the dream of belonging. Why?

Perhaps tragically, Lisa never recognizes that belonging is a dream. Returning to comparing Lisa as an anti-Bildungsroman character, she begins her narrative taking on the qualities of one (her consciousness of her perpetual displacement and inevitable unbelonging), but unlike the protagonists of the mixed race stories that Elam brings into perspective, Lisa seems to reject her displacement. She does not settle on the notion that she is unable to find belonging, and she ironically keeps trying to find it anyways. As was established in the very first chapter showcasing Lisa's death, however, readers go into the novel already knowing the truth—Lisa, no matter how hard she tries, is on a journey to nowhere. One of the closing chapters ends just as the first chapter does, showcasing that Lisa dies. But in this second iteration, it emphasizes the fact that this entire time, Lisa never gave up on her dream:

she felt her heart slow down, then jiggle, and just before it stopped beating, the film began to unreel... she stood on the deck of the USNS *Hayford* with her parents—her birth parents... Lisa looked up at the faces of her father and mother—she knew their names all of a sudden, Bobby and Miyako... As they passed under the Golden Gate Bridge, Lisa imagined what her mother must have been feeling right then, seeing the United States... A land where all was possible, where truth prevailed, goodness was rewarded, and beauty could be found in the meeting of outcasts... We are orphans, all of us, she thought. And this is our home (Lee 314-315).

Lisa's dying thoughts are saturated with dramatic irony. She dreams of the belonging that she never had in her life, giving it to herself instead of admitting, in finality, that it was to never be realized. She finally achieves a link to both of her parents, naming them in order to exemplify that she knows them (and thus her roots, her history) fully. Rachael Peckham argues in "Identity Anxiety and the Power and Problem of Naming in African American and Jewish American Literature" that rewriting history via naming "[offers enforced diasporic people] a way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation," but also that such an act "is fraught with contradiction" due to these individuals' "struggle to know themselves within nomenclatures" that contradict such an imperative (32). The "nomenclature" in Lisa's case is her dream of "modern America": "A land where all was possible, where truth prevailed, goodness was rewarded, and beauty could be found in the meeting of outcasts" (Lee 315). Lisa celebrates America, and the American Dream even though her own experience of America has never matched the ideal she clings to.

Lisa may seem foolish for this gullibility, but I interpret this depiction of Lisa's journey as a more humanizing iteration of the mixed race Bildungsroman. The anti-Bildungsroman,

where mixed race characters are acknowledging their permanent unbelonging and settle into it as the story ends, is limiting. It frames these characters, and in turn mixed race people, as being able to out-logic the human desire to belong. But I argue that this feeling to belong never goes away, and neither does the search for said belonging. Don Lee showcases this through his depiction of Lisa; she is well aware of the fact that she isn't able to belong, and yet the need to belong doesn't suddenly absolve with this knowing. To exemplify this, Lee inundated Lisa with hopeless romanticism with the single narrative that fed her that somehow she could still find a place that would dissolve her loneliness—the American Dream. Lisa illustrates how one can simultaneously know they'll never belong, and yet still “[want] to recognize where she came from. She wanted to know who she was. She wanted to have a history” (255). This leaves Lisa in a tragic cycle, where she is constantly left convincing herself that she has somewhere to go, even though deep down she is aware that she doesn't. This tragic cycle then ends with Lisa's tragic fate in her death—yet this fate is tragic for the reader, not for Lisa. Lisa's final thoughts are optimistic, and though delusional, she is able to end her life on the final, self-convincing note that she had somewhere to belong: America. Lisa's journey towards belonging is best explained in Kenzo's thoughts on America, when he critiques another mixed race character, Tom:

Handsome or not, it couldn't have been easy for [Tom], being a *haafu*. From personal experience, Kenzo knew about the state of racial equality in America. It was sound in theory, but not in practice. It was a glorious dream, but just a dream. It would never work (130-131).

This American Dream is the very same one that pulls Lisa Countryman along on her journey.

In addition to her Blackness that rerouted her life since her birth, Lisa's unbelonging could perhaps be chalked up to be a result of her racial ambiguity. Like the scene we encountered

earlier with Omar, there are many other points throughout *Country of Origin* where characters are constantly questioning Lisa's race. In fact, the other main characters who are looking into her case ever since she went missing do not know what race she is for a majority of the novel. Readers are first given a glimpse into the true nature of Lisa's racial ambiguity early on, when she fears that she is being insulted by another Japanese girl on the train, as she had been in her early childhood years in Japan:

Monkey. Lisa Countryman heard her say it... and she thought at first that the girl was talking about her. But no, the Japanese schoolgirl and her friend, who were sitting opposite Lisa on the subway, hands covering their mouths as they giggled, were looking down the car at an African man in a dashiki. *Saru mitai*, they whispered. He looks like a monkey. It had been years since anyone had thought definitely that Lisa was part black... Before then, she had heard it all, from whites and blacks alike, neither of whom cared for her peculiar mix: gook monkey, bamboo coon, chigga jigaboo, dim-sum casco yellowbone chinkamo slope-head nine-iron UFO ping-pang yangmo buckethead (Lee 19).

This passage pointedly siphons out Lisa's racial ambiguity as a separation from her Blackness. When she was younger and more easily perceived as racially mixed with Black, her Blackness was what had singled her out into a single identity. Even though she was being insulted, this certainty in how she was perceived by others placed her belonging unquestionably into Blackness. When puberty had changed Lisa's appearance to have lighter skin and straighter hair than she did as a child, she was no longer placed into the "Black" racial category by others.

Her Negroid and Asiatic features blended together and repudiated each other, fading both ethnic distinctions... People now mistook her for Italian, Israeli, Hawaiian, French, Native

American, Russian, Lebanese—*something*, some sort of exotic dark mixture, but not really dark, not a real darkie, not—God forbid—black. When people presumed to ask, “What are you?” they discounted black, they didn’t want to believe black, because black was too threatening, too uncomfortable, it wasn’t a *fun* color (Lee 19).

Lisa acknowledges that her Blackness is not often benefitted to her because those who perceive her do not *want* to imagine her as so. In Michelle Elam’s reading of Emily Rabetou’s *The Professor’s Daughter*, Elam comes to the same conclusion about the main character Emma (who is also ambiguously biracial, with a Black father and a white mother): “Her biracial appearance obscures her from the vision of others in Ellisonian fashion because others see what they imagine, project upon her” (133). Elam also concludes from Rabetou’s novel that “[looking] like us” is “the requisite for entrance into an exclusive ‘club’” (133). Similar to Emma in *The Professor’s Daughter*, Lisa’s ambiguous biracial appearance blocks her from entrance into any “exclusive clubs,” and therefore she is never able to find belonging through her Blackness (or any racial identity at all, for that matter). Lisa is conscious of her difference from other biracial individuals who are less ambiguously perceived. She laments that these other mixed race individuals—who championed the phrase “Cross-Fuck for a Better World!”—were blessed because they “at least *looked* like they were mixed.” According to her, they were identifiable as something, and could therefore “seek membership” to which she was “excluded from even applying” (Lee 67). Here lies another emphasis of the unplaceable nature of Lisa’s Blasianness.

Lisa’s final thought is the closest that she gets to acceptance and belonging: “We are orphans, all of us, she thought. And this is our home” (Lee 315). Ironically, even though Lisa’s mixedness with Blackness is one of the main factors that set her on a path incapable of belonging, through her death she is able to find a “home” in something that undeniably exudes

one of the main constituents of how Afropessimism frames how Black people are socially dead—through Natal Alienation. According to *Slavery and Social Death*, by Orlanda Paterson, Natal Alienation marks a disconnect from traditional kinship traditions and cultural heritage. Lisa's declaration that she has found a home through her identity as an "orphan"—an individual who does not know their lineage due to the death of their parents—fits her neatly into this quality. The other two constituents of social death, Gratuitous Violence and General Dishonor, are evidently also applicable to Lisa's characterization throughout the novel. The fact that she is killed (and killed twice, matter of factly—once in the beginning of the novel, and once in the end) is evidence of the fact that Lisa experiences gratuitous violence. The deep tragedy of this is the fact that Lisa did not have to die. She did not have to go on this (literally) dead-end journey to Japan, and her death is alluded to being an accident—although she was drugged by Mojo so that she would have sex with him, it seems that he did not mean to induce her into an overdose. Lisa had only died because she had taken an abundance of drugs beforehand in order to numb the pain she was in after finding out she had come to Japan, searched at length for her biological ties, found her birth mother, and *still* did not get the acceptance, belonging, or home that she was hoping for. Beyond the General Dishonor that she is treated with throughout the novel (the insults slung at her as she was a child, the constant critiques on her physical features, and the negligence of her missing-person's case by Tom and many others who were supposed to be working towards finding her), it is most clear how she is given dishonor through how her body is disrespected even after her death. Lisa's case never truly reaches a proper conclusion besides being missing and presumed dead. However, Kenzo, one of the detectives set on her case, eventually matches X-ray scans he had gotten of Lisa's broken bones (given to him by Lisa's adoptive sister, from back when they were younger) to scans of bones that were found

underneath a building that had been constructed over her body. The narrative gives no respect to Lisa, not throughout her life, and not even in death. In retrospect, Lisa fits into the very Blackness that cut her out of society—the same Blackness that subjects her to social death. Don Lee’s representation of Lisa in *Country of Origin* complicates prior iterations of the mixed race anti-Bildungsroman protagonist, while also giving readers a representation of how this character may be simultaneously subjected to the constituents of Social Death.

Chapter 3: You Can Take The Blasian Out The Boy...: Disposable Blasianness in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*

In the first chapter in which he appears in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, Joey Sands is depicted as living a playfully precarious lifestyle. Immersing readers into his life as a DJ and prostitute at the CocoRico bar, he details his life: how he coyly teases his boss, Andres, the owner of the bar (and how Andres is well aware of Joey's allure for CocoRico's many visitors); how he spends his nights coming home to his less than ideal father figure, Uncle (no biological relation), along with another orphan sex worker named Boy-Boy; and how, despite being quite popular with his clients (who are, more often than not, foreign to the Philippines, and very rich) and receiving many gifts from them, "[he] never keeps what's given to [him] as a gift" (37). Joey states "I like to let them know how little their trinkets are really worth, what kind of dope I bought with their money. It's a warning, my philosophy of life—keeping things slightly off-balance. It's how I survive" (37). Reminiscent of Elam's mixed race anti-Bildungsroman protagonist, Joey is aware of his para-societal positioning. He refuses to get attached to the trinkets of affection and wealth that his clients give him because he is aware of the rules of his position. Nothing in his life is permanent or stable, and in order to survive, Joey is sure to maintain his disillusionment with materialism. Reminiscent of Lisa Countryman from *Country of Origin*, Joey Sands is still fallible to his hopelessly romantic dreams of a better future:

I'll have it all worked out, soon. I know I will. I have to. I'll hit the jackpot with one of these guys. Leave town. I'll get lucky like Junior. Some foreign woman will sponsor me and take me to the States. Maybe she'll marry me. I'll get my green card. Wouldn't that be something?... Soon. Everything will change, soon (40).

And just like Lisa, at the heart of Joey's heartbreaking naivete is the fantasy of a place that he'll never see actualized: America. Investigating the parallels (and/or differences) between Joey and Lisa may prove generative in seeing how the Blasian experience is encompassed and subsequently represented to readers.

Lisa Countryman and Joey Sands share many similarities: beyond their Blasian racial identity, both characters are the offspring of an African American serviceman and an Asian woman native to the country in which the story takes place. Because the U.S. military is heavily dependent on the exploitable labor of working class people of color, many of the men that would be sent to sites of American neo-colonialism were Black. This then placed these men into areas of contact with the people of these countries—places that, because of U.S. militarism, were interpreted as both readily available and usable. The resulting outcome was many relationships between Black and Asian women, which—when the U.S. was done with its military occupation of each respective place—would inevitably leave the resulting children still in the same, unstable position as their mothers and fathers (lower/working class, racialized, and exploited), but now without any connection to their fathers, meaning inherently broken ties to their racial and ethnic identity. We can see again the ways in which Orlando Patterson's concept of Natal Alienation appears consistently, and is inherited by both Lisa and Joey through their Blackness spelling an end to any ties to their kinship and cultural heritage. Perhaps not so coincidentally, Lisa's comfort in calling herself an "orphan"—a comfort that suggests that she is most accurately described by a label that inherits Natal Alienation—ties her to Joey, who is also completely disconnected from his father in the same way that Lisa is, but is also, by definition, an orphan due to the death of his mother. When asked about if he had a father, and whether he was American, Joey responds "SHEE-IT, man... I don't even have a *mother*" (Hagedorn 72). Even

with its intuited removal from Blackness (due to the characters being Asian as well), it is still circumscribed by the social death that Blackness entails.

Central to both Lisa and Joey's narratives are the ways in which they are perceived visually—namely in regards to their sexuality, and existence as sexual objects. Although it is not as essential to her survival as much as it is for Joey, Lisa involves herself in sex-work in order to make ends meet during her time in Japan. Working at hostess club named The Musky Club, she is constantly other-ized and exoticized by her appearance that outs her as a *gaijin* (a foreigner). But despite her nose being “like a black person's” and her “Negroid lips,” her foreign appearance is simultaneously part of why she was hired at The Musky Club in the first place (Lee 106). As the owner of the club tells her, “Your Japanese isn't bad, but don't use it... This is known as a *gaijin* girl club. Men come here to meet *gaijin* girls, understand? It's part of the fantasy. Just act like a dumb American, and you'll do fine.” (Lee 102). Even though Lisa's African American and racially ambiguous features are picked out by her customers, these features are notably fetishized at the same time. For Joey, this racial-sexualization is taken to the extreme—“the fantasy” that Lisa must confine herself into can be compared to what Joey calls his always-present, always-alluring “Joey Taboo.” During a typical interaction with another one of Joey's johns, Hagedorn writes Joey's perspective:

“You're kind of young, aren't you?” the American once observed. But I could tell he was fascinated, just like all the rest of them. Joey Taboo: my head of tight, kinky curls, my pretty hazel eyes, my sleek, brown skin. “Where's the little GI baby?” he'd ask Andres, if I wasn't around (72-73).

Joey defines his “Taboo” (and, in turn, his sexual allure) in relation to the features that signal his Blasianness/Blackness—his hair, his eyes, his skin. Those who Joey has sexual encounters with

are evidently sexualizing him based off of the phenotypic manifestations of his Blasianness, but also off of how his Blasianness serves as a representation of America's neo-colonization. The American John asks for Joey by referring to him as a "little GI baby"; evidently, part of the fantasy that is so sexually alluring for Joey's clients is how Joey is a manifestation of the Asian cultural landscape fragmented by America's violent imprint onto it. If a "taboo" is something that is forbidden or socially deviant to a culture's customs, then Joey's "Joey Taboo" is his socially and sexually deviant *body*—his curls, his eyes, and his skin that emblemize the ways America's military occupation of Asia has disrupted it in a deliciously forbidden way. Blasianness as it is lived in this capacity is revealed as a precarious position—one that teeters on the tightrope between being a sexually deviant, fetishizable body, and being a physical representation of the U.S. empire's violent retilling of Asian landscapes.

Joey's clients aren't the only ones who fantasize over America's influence, as he himself repeatedly demonstrates the ways in which the American dream has intoxicated his psyche. Joey's surname—Sands—exemplifies how inextricable Joey's being is from America's influence. There is no mention of Joey's mother or father's last names, and Joey instead took his last name from the name of a casino in Las Vegas—"The Sands"—that an American client of his told him about. Referring once more to "Identity Anxiety and the Power and Problem of Naming in African American and Jewish American Literature," Peckham reveals that "choosing other names... becomes a conscious act of defining one's personal identity within the context of the overarching cultural, racial identities" (44). The fact that Joey bases his inherited name off of a site that is exemplary of American culture emphasizes how Joey has inherited America's influence not only bodily (through his deviant physical features from Philippine standards), but also psychically. "Do you like it?" Joey asks the reader, "Like a crooner, don't you think?" (72).

Joey is clearly concerned with emphasizing his Americanness, as he regularly takes pleasure in the ways he is deviantly alluring because of his African American traits. He tells the reader that he enjoys that men “go” for him, and that he “doesn’t have to work at being sexy” for his male clients, likely because of his “Negro blood” (44). America’s tempting grasp on Joey’s psyche is further encapsulated through his interactions with his favorite client: an American serviceman named Neil. Despite his usual apathetic feelings with most of his clients, Joey finds himself very attached to Neil, who when stationed back in America sends Joey a postcard depicting the Sands Casino in Las Vegas. Although Joey had declared earlier that he never keeps any of the souvenirs that his clients give him, Joey breaks this rule to keep Neil’s postcard in order to “[carry] it around for days after that, maybe months.” (77). Not only that, but Joey also eventually comes to ask Andres to write a letter to Neil on his behalf.¹⁰ He spends a great deal of time contemplating this hypothetical letter, confessing that he wants the letter to be perfect before he actually dictates it to Andres to be written out. As he finishes romanticizing, he dreams that Neil will write him back with a letter professing the future they will live out together in Vegas or L.A. Neil, in Joey’s eyes, is his access to America—the one person who will bring Joey to break from his precautionary “philosophy of life” that keeps him at a healthy detachment from his relationships. Even though Joey is aware of the rules of his precarious position as a Blasian person living in a racially oppressive society, he slips back into an illusion that there is a just, liveable future for him once he sees America as accessible (through Neil).

Joey’s splitting between Asia and America is best exemplified at the climax of the novel, when Joey is perpetually living in a heightened fear for his life. Joey—who is in hiding due to being a witness of the murder of a leftist Philippine civil rights activist—not only fears those who want to ensure he doesn’t testify as a witness, but also the person he has depended on for

¹⁰ Joey does not know how to write, and so he has Andres do his reading and writing for him.

housing and survival: Uncle. Having just woken up delirious and fatigued in Uncle's room for an unknown amount of time (presumably after being drugged and taken hostage by Uncle, whose incentive is to turn Joey in to the people who murdered Senator Avila for profit), Joey quickly comes to the conclusion that Uncle has betrayed him. Thinking to himself in Uncle's shack, Joey has no doubt that Uncle has deemed his life disposable; all Uncle needed was the monetary incentive. As Joey ruminates over his new-found hatred for Uncle, the narration eventually reveals that Joey had long been aware of the inevitability of Uncle's betrayal. Hagedorn writes that he "had been waiting for this all his life... It had been his destiny, and he welcomed it" (204). Joey's consciousness is illustrated as being astutely aware of the disposability of his life, and how said disposability is merely a fact of his existence; it was bound to happen. This once again reiterates his position within the confines of the Black experience of social death.

However, Joey complicates his experience of psychic social death by sentimentalizing his ancestral ties to his mother, father, and personal history immediately after. The narration continues to illustrate Joey's spiraling thoughts, noting:

He had expected betrayal, but was not ready for despair and anger at being betrayed. In his way, he loved [Uncle]. *Zenaida, Zenaida*, Joey whispered to himself, *Mother of God, my god, the bastard buried you*. He had not said his mother's name in years, and steeled himself against the tears welling up inside him. He was disgusted by his own sentimentality; he had never considered himself capable of self-pity, terror, or yearning for his long-deceased mother. He had always felt cheapened and humiliated by the memory of her, *Zenaida*, and his unknown father. And so his litany went: *GI baby, black boy, I am the son of rock'n'roll, I am the son of R and B, I can dance well, you can all go to hell! Putang Ina Ko!* (205).

Through this scene Joey is attempting to locate his belonging, wondering whether he should find alignment through his hardships and struggle for survival (encompassed by Uncle), the cultural history of his home country (encompassed by his mother, Zenaida), or the limitless possibility of where he could be (as encompassed by his unnamed Black father). Joey interprets the facets that culminate into his multifaceted self—his status as a GI baby, as a Black boy, as a “son of rock’n’roll,” etc.—and struggles to conceive of it all inhabiting concisely into one, singular body. Not only must his perception of himself accommodate all of his various identities, but also his connections to his ancestors that have influenced his life experiences. The resulting affect—Joey’s painful, yet still sentimental attachment to those who preceded him—is an experience that has been theorized as unique to those of mixed Asian identity. In his article “Feeling Ancestral: The Emotions of Mixed Race and Memory in Asian American Cultural Productions,” Jeffrey Santa Ana theorizes the precarious, emotional states that mixed-race Asians such as Joey must inhabit as they navigate the concurrent racialization and commodification that others impose onto them. He states, “To be mixed race and Asian American is to experience feeling ancestral”—what he defines as “the dialectic between the celebratory color blindness of racial mixture in global commerce... and cultural memory in the empathetic and often painful identification with heritage and genealogy—amid the political, social, and economic upheavals that the Pacific region experiences under globalization” (459). Joey’s musings over his ancestors (his mother, father, and Uncle) and how they represent the different fragments of his being (his “painful identification with heritage,” and the impact of “the political, social, and economic upheavals” on his life) are the realizations of the mixed Asian “ancestral” feeling (Santa Ana 459).

Frustrated with his limited capacity to accurately conceive of such a fragmented existence, he concludes his ruminations with an outburst directed to everyone; “*you can all go to hell,*” he tells us, making it apparent that his limited capacity to exist in such a multiplicative way is because of the world around him. Joey comes to realize, either consciously or subconsciously, that this is not a failure of his own, but rather a failure of the culture that has made it impossible to live with all of his many selves—such would only be possible in a dream landscape, one that doesn’t yet (and unbeknownst to him, doesn’t ever) exist for Joey. Like Lisa Countryman, Joey is susceptible to the narrative that America is the fantastical landscape where he truly belongs; America is the place where his problems won’t exist. To Joey, America is heaven, and “God [is] definitely a white man”—specifically “Charlton Heston in robes, with flowing white hair and matching beard” (190). The narrative of America is one that tricks those who have been eternally displaced (as a result of American neo-colonialism) to desire its liberatory realization. When Joey is with Rainer (another one of his white johns), Joey tries to indulge in the “paradise” that Rainer was able to purchase for them—a fancy hotel complete with room service, pharmaceutical cocaine, cognac from the in-room bar, and a shining, oasis of a pool. However, once Joey finds himself too comfortable, manifested through his flirtatious nicknaming of Rainer, Rainer reminds him that Joey should remember his place: “That’s the problem with these colonial situations of yours,” Rainer reprimands, worked up over the lower-class’s potential for a sneaky, “insidious power” over higher-class individuals (145). Reminded of his position, Joey futilely counters that “Servants can’t do shit” in this power structure, before reminding himself (and Rainer) that living in such a happy, care-free state simply isn’t possible due to the harsh reality that coincides with the fact of his existence:

“Sometimes I shit, Rainer. Sometimes I shit all day long. I wonder where all my shit is coming from, especially when I don’t eat. I don’t eat for days, sometimes. How come I shit? It’s scary at first. Then it feels good. Good shit cleans out my system. I get rid of everything” (145).

In Joey’s analogy, the act of defecation is something that is inextricable from Joey’s personhood. Even if Joey shouldn’t be shitting because he hasn’t eaten for multiple days, he still does; it is something that is inevitable, and inherent to who he is. This bodily act is not only natural to Joey’s physical being, but also—according to Joey—a means to an end. If Joey is able to rid himself of what is inherent to his personhood and “[clean] out [his] system,” then that’s when it will be worth it. Joey desires to rid himself of the “scary,” inherent aspects of himself—what I interpret as his Blasianness, due to its perpetual manifestation unto both his body and psyche—to finally attain the good life.

Further evidence points towards Joey’s necessitated deracialization at the end of Joey’s narrative, where we can see how—again, similarly to the end of Lisa’s journey, Joey is not able to successfully insert himself into mainstream society. *Dogeaters* ends with Joey—still worried for his life after witnessing the murder of Senator Avila, but no longer safe with Uncle—running away with a group of politically radical refugees that live on the outskirts of society. Joey is well aware of how dispensable his life is to the dominant culture of Philippine society, as it is without question that Joey will in fact be killed in order to prevent him from testifying that Senator Avila was murdered.¹¹ While this is reminiscent of the ways in which mixed race Bildungsroman characters resolutely find themselves “[abandoning] the social contract altogether” with no place

¹¹ In the novel, Senator Avila was a civil rights activist who was deemed dangerous by the government due what they interpreted as his extremely leftist political alignment.

in society available to them, I find that the end of Joey's journey suggests a "solution" to the mixed race, Blasian character's problematizing of the Bildungsroman narrative arc (Elam 127).

Much of the past scholarship on Joey Sands' positionality in *Dogeaters* focuses on his queerness. As Stephen Hong Sohn states in his article "From Discos to Jungles: Circuitous Queer Patronage and Sex Tourism in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*," "Hagedorn's novel unmasks the complicated queer sexual interactions in the postcolonial cityscape where we see an unstable power dynamic between prostitute and john" (318).¹² Sohn explains that scholars often contend over "the contradictory emergence and subsequent disappearance of queer sexuality with respect to Joey Sands," as many critics claim that by the end of the novel Joey's identity as a queer individual has been subsumed by his participation in revolutionary politics (Sohn 318). However, as evidenced by Joey's inextricable tie between his race and his sexuality (as expressed through the imposition of¹³—and embrace of¹⁴—his "Joey Taboo"), the marked disappearance of his sexuality is also suggestive of his deracialization. Joey's storyline is one that is reminiscent of the idealized "future of racelessness" that framed the act of assimilating into the assimilation into the American mainstream as the solution to life's racial issues; it lets racelessness be the answer—his Blasianness is most innately tied to his sexuality throughout the novel, and when he is sexuality-less in the end, he is in effect raceless (Sexton 266). Then (and only then) is Joey able to live in a society—*after* he is pushed out of the mainstream society that will eternally racialize him, and after he is extinguished of the individualization characteristics of his Blasianness.

¹² In Sohn's article, john (lowercase) refers to clients of sex workers, rather than the name of any particular individual.

¹³ By his onlookers

¹⁴ By Joey himself

This cleansing of identity that Joey experiences in the final chapter is explicitly foreshadowed by the woman who welcomes him into this community of refugees. Despite introducing herself to Joey as Lydia, the woman is soon revealed to actually be Daisy Avila¹⁵—the daughter of Senator Avila (the leftist civil rights activist whose assassination Joey had witnessed). Although Lydia momentarily exposes her past identity to Joey by asking him about her father, she has evidently given up this identity otherwise. The narration reveals that Lydia had been a leftist activist similar to her father, and was only “granted a pardon by the President on condition she remain in permanent exile” (Hagedorn 232). Since then, Lydia had long taken refuge “under an assumed identity” with her leftist comrades—the people who “are her only family, now” (233). In order to continue embodying her revolutionary politics, Lydia was forced to neuter herself of her identity and her familial ties whilst starting her community of leftist refugees. In essence, escaping the dominant hegemony into this radical, nonconformist society spelled the end to her individuation. Although Joey did not have the same experience to its fullest extent, he is alluded to being on the same path with the same inevitable ending. Like Lydia, Joey is forced out of mainstream society against his will, and as he finds a home in this new group of refugees, he starts to lose sight of his identity before his escape. Hagedorn writes: “[Joey’s] life in Manila is only a memory now, the faces of Andres and Uncle blurred and distant” (232). Joey has not yet fully lost his past identity (his experiences, his sexuality, his race) as he enters this revolutionary community, but he is certainly on the path to do so. As a result, Joey’s journey suggests that deindividuation for the Blasian results in emancipation from the oppressive characteristics of race, and that in its purest form, revolutionary politics must embody (and subsequently strive for) racelessness.

¹⁵ Daisy is a featured character throughout *Dogeaters*, but her path does not cross with Joey’s until this moment near the end of the novel.

Although Joey and Lisa are seeking out the savior-esque, multicultural America of their dreams, they are already living in the wake of America's true impact onto their respective landscapes—both through the society's manifestation of America in their countries' oppressive impositions on their Blasian psyches, as well as through their bodily manifestation (deemed fetishizable and disposable) of America through their phenotypic expressions of Blasianness.

Conclusion: Make it Real

In “Race, Sex, and Nerds: From Black Geeks to Asian American Hipsters,” Ron Eglash reports how African and Asian racialization are rooted in two diverging forms of degeneration departing from the “original ‘Caucasian’”. Africanness has historically been defined in relation to primitivist racism, which “operates by making a group of people... beings of uncontrolled emotion and direct bodily sensation” rooted in sensuality. Asianness, on the other hand, is subjected to orientalist racism, which “operates by making a group of people too abstract and thus ‘arabesque’—not really a natural human but one who is devoid of emotion” (Eglash 52). As a result of these opposing racializations, Eglash posits, we have now been given examples of postmodern racism through the binary stereotypes of the Asian nerd and the African American “anti-nerd hipster.” At the middle of these stereotypes is whiteness—“the perfect balance between these two extremes” (52). Eglash uses this logic to explain the difficulty that the media has had in representing Black nerds and Asian American hipsters, as both groups require the encompassing of two opposite, contradictory¹⁶ identities. I find that this same difficulty is present when Blackness and Asianness (as opposed to Blackness and nerd-dom, or Asianness and hipster-dom) are attempted to (and failed to) be represented in one, liveable Blasian body.

As we have seen through both Lisa and Joey’s bodies, representations of Blasians require us to *expand* the ways in which we interpret intersectional identity—more specifically, how mixed race identity can be encompassed through narrative. These two individuals, though fictitious, exemplified characteristics that force us to recognize the ways in which a singular body can simultaneously exhibit conceptualizations of the African American experience (such as Patterson’s Social Death) and conceptualizations of the mixed Asian American experience (such as Santa Ana’s Feeling Ancestral). And although both exhibit qualities that mark them as typical,

¹⁶ According to the dominant forms of racialization.

anti-Bildungsroman protagonists (mixed race individuals who do not require social education and are cognizant of their peripheral placement outside of society), they still refuse to abandon the “social contract” that most other mixed race, anti-Bildungsroman narratives would emphasize (Elam 127). This consistency amongst these two Blasian narratives exemplifies what is at stake in regards to how mixed race individuals in general inhabit society’s popular imagination. As I had brought up in the introduction to this paper, the history of mixed race individuals has persisted on a narrative that frames mixed people as indicative of an idealized “future of racelessness”: one that—using the logic of mainstream American multiculturalism—will result in a society that is so racially mixed that it is rendered harmonious through its racelessness (Sexton 266).

Given Lisa and Joey’s striking similarities to one another, the stark difference in their narratives’ ends calls for investigation. Why is it that Joey—who, similarly to Lisa, was enticed by fantasies of American modernity and multiculturalism so much so that it served as his main motivation throughout the novel—is the one who survived at the end of his journey, while Lisa was not offered this privilege to continue living? I argue that this is because Joey, *unlike* Lisa, is able to find himself eschewed into a society that does not need to reckon with his racialization/Blasianness. Joey is only able to “survive” because he is rendered raceless in his ending, and therefore—because he is no longer mixed-race—conceivable in this alternate, “revolutionary” society of people. The group Joey finds himself with at first seems to be a community on the edge of progressive, liberatory ideas. However, Joey’s inability to inhabit this space with his racelessness unscathed indicates how many progressive movements are inherently liberal—resoundingly faithful to, and uncritical of, the oppressive hegemony.

It may seem contradictory that Lisa—who is the ambiguous, white passing Blasian¹⁷—is the one who is not “benefited” the deracialization that Joey—who is evidently Blasian, and is more explicitly perceived as being racially mixed with Black—experiences at the end of his narrative. However, this points us towards another necessary consideration: although Lisa is able to pass as white or escape racialization due to her ambiguous appearance, her journey to Japan is largely incentivized by her hope of finding out who her biological parents were—their ethnicity and racialization included. Even though Lisa has displayed envy for the “ease” of her adopted sister’s monoraciality, this desire for a more stable, unquestioned belonging does not invalidate the fact that she is attempting to find her own version of this belonging via her Japanese mother and Black father’s origin stories. In essence, Lisa is on a constant march towards her *re*-racialization; no matter how often she is imagined as something other than Blasian, Lisa’s persistence in her own racial self-identification (and the subsequent search for the validation of said identity via her familial investigation) refutes any temporary escape she may have from the impacts of her racialization: her inevitable peripheralization. As Don Lee writes, “[Lisa] wanted to recognize where she came from... She wanted to belong somewhere, to someone. She wanted, for once in her life, constancy” (256). This “constancy” that Lisa dreams of, I argue, is a location within a racial identity that is conceivable in the imagination of mainstream society; but Lisa is Blasian, a racial identity that has yet to have conceivably entered said imagination.

Lisa’s simultaneous need to respect the racial identity that she has been given biologically *as well as* respect society’s limited rules of race perpetually placed her in the crossfire of an infinitely warring terrain; she was always at odds with what she felt was true, and what the hegemony has validated. What had led her astray from herself was America’s promise of a

¹⁷ Lisa is racialized in different ways throughout *Country of Origin*, depending on the context of the situation, who is perceiving her, and what they notice about her phenotypic features. She is perceived as Black, Asian, white, and unidentifiable during different points in her life.

harmoniously multicultural society—one that puts forward a liberal utopia of racelessness, inhabited only by individuals whose ancestors “cross-fucked for a better world” enough so that they each could be born with the raceless “New Face of America”. Lisa believed she could find this dreamy safe haven, and with all of her multitudes—her biological father and mother, now named to mark their entirety—locate herself within it. Her attachment to this social contract humanizes mixed race individuals in acknowledging the persistent desire to find a place to belong, but also spells her death due to that place not existing. Neither Joey nor Lisa find their ideal ending; although Joey survives at the end of his narrative, this came at the cost of his Blasianness, in essence neutering him of the qualities that made up his identity and self.

Moving Forward

As a woman of African American and Filipino American descent, Janet C. Mendoza Stickmon had regularly found herself either misread or misunderstood by those who perceived her. Even when she made others aware that she was both a Filipina and an African American, she was interpreted as a “diluted version” of both of her races (43). After taking inspiration from other scholars who researched multiracial identity before her, she embraced their tradition of blending terms in order to establish herself, even in spite of others questioning whether it was “a real, lived experience” (43). This led her to create a new label for herself—one that she envisions as comfortably fitting into Blasian identity, yet disregards the binary thinking of those around her: Blackapina.¹⁸

Lisa and Joey’s stories are representative of the tragic fate in which Blasians may find themselves in, if a similar re-envisioning of the social contract is not created for the self. In

¹⁸ This is an account from Janet Stickmon’s essay “Blackapina”. It should be noted that throughout her essay, Stickmon uses the term “Afro-Asian” instead of Blasian, though these two terms can be thought of as synonyms.

hopes of inspiring semblances of hope for a genuine Blasian existence that does not end in death (or in the death of one's Blasianness), I point us towards the traditions of current Blasian writers. In her essay "Rising Sun, Rising Soul: On Mixed Race Asian Identity That Includes Blackness," Velina Hasu Houston reckons with the fact that mixed race people constantly live in racial misrecognition—not typically from themselves, but from others. As she concludes her essay, she encourages mixed race individuals to use their incomprehensibility to their advantage, refuting the epistemologies that precede them to "name their difference" and "articulate their progressive mixed race identity in and on their own terms" (30). That new point of articulation—that self-articulation—is where we¹⁹ can belong and be made real. To exist as a Blasian individual with all of their multitudes, one must embark on an eternal trek towards *oneself*, on their own terms. Then, and only then, can the rest follow.

¹⁹ Lisa, Joey; Mixed race people, more generally; Blasian individuals, more specifically.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso books, 2006.
- Beebe, Maurice. "Introduction: What Modernism Was." *Journal of Modern Literature* (1974): 1065-1084.
- Berlant, Lauren. "Cruel Optimism." *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010): 93-117.
- Chang, Jeff. *Who We Be: The Colorization of America*. St. Martin's Press, 2014.
- Chang, Tina. *Hybrida: Poems*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.
- Chin, Frank, et al. *Aiiieeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers*. University of Washington Press, 2019.
- Eglash, Ron. "Race, Sex, and Nerds: From Black Geeks to Asian American Hipsters." *Social Text* 20.2 (2002): 49-64.
- Elam, Michele. *The Souls of Mixed Folk: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millenium*. Stanford University Press, 2020.
- Hagedorn, Jessica. *Dog eaters*. Open Road Media, 2013.
- Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1997.
- Herman, David, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Routledge, 2010.

Houston, Velina Hasu. "Rising Sun, Rising Soul: On Mixed Race Asian Identity That Includes Blackness." *Red and Yellow, Black and Brown*. Rutgers University Press, 2017. 21-32.

Lee, Christopher. *The Semblance of Identity: Aesthetic Mediation in Asian American Literature*. 1st ed., Stanford University Press, 2012. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvqsdvg4. Accessed 22 May 2021.

Lee, Don. *Country of Origin*. Norton, 2005.

Lima, Enrique. "The Uneven Development of the Bildungsroman: D'Arcy McNickle and Native American Modernity." *Comparative Literature* 63.3 (2011): 291-306.

Lowe, Lisa. "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences." *Contemporary Asian America*. New York University Press, 2016. 531-553.

Matusitz, Jonathan, and Ann Davidson. "Race of the Future: Mixing of Colors in the United States Leading to One Race?." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 25.8 (2015): 857-870.

Melinda L. de Jesús. "Liminality and Mestiza Consciousness in Lynda Barry's 'One Hundred Demons.'" *MELUS*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2004, pp. 219-52. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4141803>. Accessed 25 May 2022.

Palumbo-Liu, David. "The Minority Self as Other: Problematics of Representation in Asian-American Literature." *Cultural Critique*, no. 28, 1994, pp. 75-102. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1354511. Accessed 22 May 2021.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, with a New Preface*.
Harvard University Press, 2018.

Peckham, Rachael. "Identity Anxiety and the Power and Problem of Naming in African
American and Jewish American Literature." (2009).

Ponce, Martin Joseph. "Toward a Queer Afro-Asian Anti-Imperialism: *Black Amerasians and
U.S. Empire in Asian American Literature*." *Journal of Asian American Studies*, vol. 20
no. 2, 2017, p. 283-287. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/jaas.2017.0022.

Raboteau, Emily. *The Professor's Daughter: A Novel*. Macmillan, 2005.

Rondilla, Joanne L., Rudy P. Guevarra, and Paul Spickard, eds. *Red and Yellow, Black and
Brown: Decentering Whiteness in Mixed Race Studies*. Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Santa Ana, Jeffrey. "Feeling Ancestral: The Emotions of Mixed Race and Memory in Asian
American Cultural Productions." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 16.2 (2008):
457-482.

Sexton, Jared C. *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism*.
Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Sohn, Stephen Hong. "From Discos to Jungles: Circuitous Queer Patronage and Sex Tourism in
Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 56.2 (2010): 317-348.

Song, Min Hyung. *The Children of 1965: On Writing, and Not Writing, as an Asian American*.
Duke University Press, 2013. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11sn000. Accessed 22
May 2021.

Stickmon, Janet C. Mendoza. "Blackapina." *Red and Yellow, Black and Brown*. Rutgers University Press, 2017. 33-46.

"The New Face of America: How Immigrants Are Shaping the World's First Multicultural Society." *TIME Magazine*, 18 Nov. 1993.

Wang, Xuan Juliana. "Days of Being Mild." *Home Remedies: Stories*, Atlantic Books, London, 2020.

Washington, Myra S. *Blasian invasion: Racial Mixing in the Celebrity Industrial Complex*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2017.

Wilderson III, Frank B. *Afropessimism*. Liveright Publishing, 2020.