



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies



span312.arts.ubc.ca



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

Hopscotch!

span312.arts.ubc.ca





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

Hopscotch!

Latin American Literature in Translation

span312.arts.ubc.ca





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

Hopscotch!

Latin American Literature in Translation

Papi: Rita Indiana on
Role-Playing, Excess, and Loss

span312.arts.ubc.ca





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

Hopscotch!

Latin American Literature in Translation

Papi: Rita Indiana on
Role-Playing, Excess, and Loss

with Jon Beasley-Murray

span312.arts.ubc.ca



Rita Indiana's *Papi* (2005) is a young girl's
homage to her father.

“Sometimes when I hear that scary music,
I get really happy cuz I know he might
be coming this way.” (1)

“My Papi has more of everything than your papi, he’s stronger than yours, he has more hair, more muscle, more money, and more girlfriends than yours.” (8)

The narrator spends hours and days simply waiting for Papi to arrive: the novel is a study in waiting and expectation. Until one day Papi does not turn up at all, not even late. So the narrator has to come to terms with the loss of someone who was never quite there (for her) in the first place.

“I don’t wanna be without my dad.” (13)

“My Papi has more of everything than your papi, he’s stronger than yours, he has more hair, more muscle, more money, and more girlfriends than yours.” (8)

Papi is both too much and too little.

Too much in that he is like a whirlwind,
propelled by and propelling the desire
and yearning all around him.

Too much in that he is like a whirlwind,
propelled by and propelling the desire
and yearning all around him.

Too little in that he is phantasmal and
incapable of compensating for the global
inequalities and frustrated aspirations that
underlie the frenetic yearning that
animates his hyped-up image.



CONSTRUCTING EXCESS

Papi is both agent and product of excess and hyperbole. He is defined by delirious accumulation and expenditure, a fantasy of consumerist abundance that is never exactly plenitude as there is always more to be bought, more to be used up.

“My Papi has so many clothes and so many closets to keep them in that sometimes, when he wants to wear a particular shirt, he has to buy it new cuz he forgets which closet he put it in.” (10)

“My Papi has so many cars, so many pianos, so many boats, submachine guns, boots, jackets, overcoats, heliports, my Papi has so many boots, and then more boots, my Papi has so many girlfriends, my Papi has so many boots, cowboy boots with eagles and snakes etched into the leather, leather boots, rubber boots, black boots, brown ones, red ones [. . .].” (10)

People line the streets, to bask in the glory of someone who has made it big in the USA, and to benefit from the ensuing abundance as Papi rewards their loyalty like an old-fashioned *caudillo*.

“They dream you fill your suitcase with gifts for them, that you work only for them, live only for them; in their dreams you owe them everything.” (3)

“Somebody kills a pig in Papi’s name so a woman can catch up to him and bring a fork to Papi’s mouth and he can blow on that roast pork and then, yum, eat it all up without missing a step. And so they slaughter chickens, goats, and guinea fowl all along the way, and running the whole time, Papi takes bites of everything.” (6)

Wherever Papi goes, the fever of
consumption goes with him.

Consumption depends upon and drives production, as everything that is bought has first to be manufactured.

“There are huts everywhere, trucks carrying construction materials, Titan Concrete logos on the side of those steel hulks. Cranes and more cranes turning their brontosaurus heads.” (85)

“When the projects are finished, the inaugurations are televised. [. . .] In front of each project there’s a sign that says Papi Did This.” (86)

For all their authoritarian tendencies, corruption, and political violence, both Trujillo and Balaguer left an ambivalent legacy among the Dominican people: of intimidation and fear, but also prosperity (at least for some) and the trappings of economic and social development.

“On the one hand, [Papi] expands the archetype of the dictator in Hispanoamerican literature and, on the other hand, he augurs, from the eye of the whirlwind that is Caribbean postmodernity, a sketch of the patriarch as product of the outlandish new itineraries of a culture that is hybrid, consumerist, and globalized.”

(Rosana Díaz Martínez)

Papi is a transnational cacique, always on the move, never confined, as were the sovereigns of old, to a fixed territory or people.

“Everywhere—on billboards, at intersections, on electric signs, on the murals on those salty walls along the Malecón—there’s Papi’s face and the colors of the flag, and below him a slogan like a prayer: *We’re All Family.*” (87)

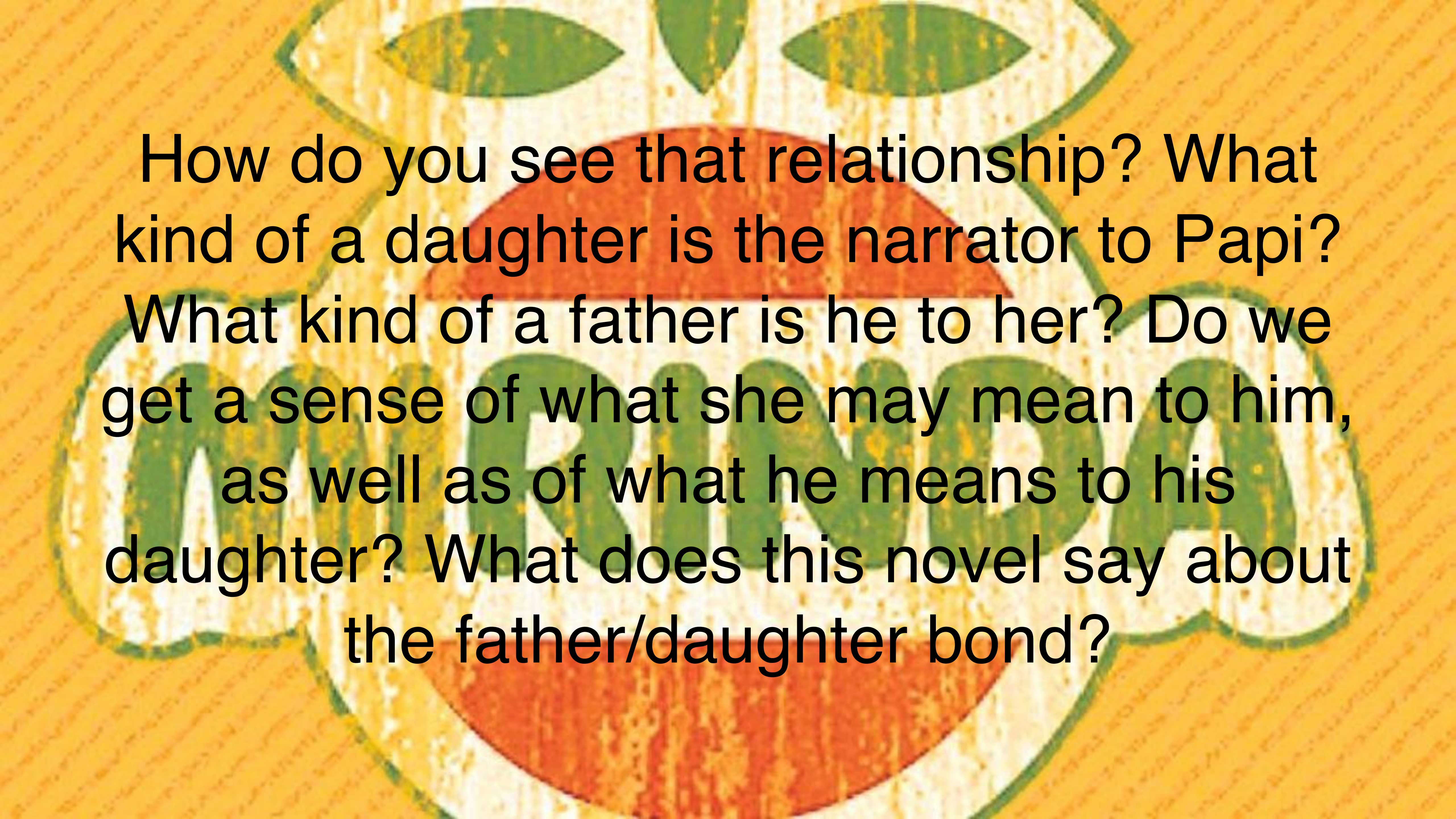
“Papi’s children all look the same, albinos with ash-colored hair and blue eyes, and they all wear little sailor outfits. [. . .] They crawl in a single file and go door to door looking for Papi, asking for a helping hand.” (79)

“Then there’s the royal family, which is me, my abuela, my aunts, and the twins [. . .]. There’s also my mother, recognized by Papi’s royal family as Papi’s only wife cuz she was the first and they married the way God intended, in the church.” (80)

“I stick an arm out and fire and fire and fire, and you can hear Papi’s girlfriends screaming as they fall from the parade floats, fatally wounded, grabbing their chests.” (16)

The narrator fantasizes complicity with her father, that the only relationship that counts, for him as well as for her, is the one that the two of them share.

How do you see that relationship? What kind of a daughter is the narrator to Papi? What kind of a father is he to her? Do we get a sense of what she may mean to him, as well as of what he means to his daughter? What does this novel say about the father/daughter bond?



How do you see that relationship? What kind of a daughter is the narrator to Papi? What kind of a father is he to her? Do we get a sense of what she may mean to him, as well as of what he means to his daughter? What does this novel say about the father/daughter bond?

It is hard to distinguish projection from reality in the narrator's description of her father.

It is hard to distinguish projection from reality in the narrator's description of her father.

As much for her as for everyone else around, Papi is a blank screen on which she can trace her wildest imaginations as to what a father could be.

“My Papi has more cars than yours, more cars than the devil.” (8)

“My Papi has more cars than yours, more cars than the devil.” (8)

“I imagine giving the yo-yos away during the recess at my school as the teacher says, Get in line. Everyone wants to be my friend, even Julio César and Raúl wanna be my friends.” (32)

The narrator wants to *be* Papi, and
to love as he does.



LOVING THE GAME

Indiana's novel subverts or queers
gender roles and desires.

“I continue staring at María Cristina as I come closer, slowly, and as I get so I could almost touch her nose with mine. . . / *And I’m here, here to love you. / And I’m here, here to adore you. / And I’m here, here to ask you for. . .* / Then I grab her hand and put my arm around her waist [. . .] and I quickly lift off the ground, away from Papi, while we kiss with our eyes closed.” (52)

“That’s why they buzzed my hair off, like a boy’s. [. . .] And that’s why I climbed on top of Natasha under her bed.” (44)

“Papi has so much money, he has to carry a woman’s purse; a man’s bag is just not big enough.” (20)

“Papi was in me, and I was in Papi. I even licked the salsa picante from Papi’s impeccable cuticles. I was exactly the same as Papi. I was Papi. I am Papi.” (129)

“The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it.” (Sigmund Freud)

“Introducing all or part of a love object or a thing into one’s own body, possessing, expelling or alternatively acquiring, keeping, losing it [. . .]. The fantasy of incorporation merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic [. . .]. In order not to have to ‘swallow’ a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost.” (Abraham and Took)

“I swallow it, I jump, I fall into a river, I swim,
I splash about, I get out, I run, run,
run, run, run.” (127)

Papi becomes immortal as his daughter becomes Papi, as she takes on his role.

“Your adventure awaits but first you have to understand the backstory. Solid knowledge of the backstory before starting the game will make the adventure much richer.” (78)

It is as though the vision latent in a novel such as Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* could now be realized in new ways.

“The principal objectives [. . .] to intercept and interrupt the business associates’ evil industry and to find Papi, which would restore order and peace in the world.” (80)

“To reach these objectives we must first overcome numerous obstacles. The lots at the mall, elevators, roofs, beauty salons, town squares, the caves, the resorts, and everywhere else, all booby-trapped, all crawling with monsters. We must conquer them step by step, word by word.” (80)

“Papi increases in power thanks to the energy given off by everyone in the world who wants a new car. Papi’s power blooms when the spirit of those who yearn vibrates at its highest.” (78)

“They let their women go with the watchmen and sell their kids one by one just so they can buy a car at Papi’s dealership, where they’re given the magic key so they can fly, get women, and eventually more keys.” (78)

Papi, or the idea of Papi, holds out the promise that we, too, can become “players”: playing the field, taking on a role, bending reality to our advantage.

“We can see a ludic aesthetic based on multiple disarticulation. Discourses of identity, national and media referents, as well as the different forms of written creation, are freed from every regulating grammar and come to be inscribed in the field of the experimental and the transitory.”
(Fernanda Bustamante Escalona)

“The recreational exercise of playing not only allows us to define the characters or to assume the role of the ‘player,’ but it also manages to juxtapose different universes— in which narrative reality, audiovisual reality, and dream reality become one and the same.” (Fernanda Bustamante Escalona)

In a world in which movies, adverts, music videos, video games, and television all blend and cross-contaminate, new intercultural and transnational jargons and slang arise, and new roles to play emerge, to compensate for the increasing inequalities and unbridled violence that are also associated with unregulated markets, be they legal or illegal.

“People cried and jiggled their raised key chains. Then more people came, grown-ups and kids and pets, with camping equipment and gifts for me: peanut butter, guava juice, German porn on VHS tapes, all so that when Papi returned, he’d do something for them, cure their toothaches and such.” (132)


We shift at last from Papi to Mami.

“I imagined a ball with stitches, a dirty white ball inside my mother, and also how, once it was taken out, we’d play with it and I would hit it out of the park with a bat like Sammy Sosa.” (143)

“I can stand up now and even walk a little
but I’m still gonna need your help
to go to the bathroom.” (145)

“Mami and I would entertain ourselves by playing memory games. For example, we’d try to remember somebody’s name.” (144)

There may still be monsters around the corner, but they no longer overshadow the here and now.



MUSIC

Fósforo,
“Cochabamba”



CATERING

Bindy Kang-Dhillon



PRODUCTION

jon.beasley-murray@ubc.ca

CC-BY-NC, 2023



This video is licensed under
Creative Commons.

You are free to **share** (re-use,
copy, redistribute) and/or **adapt**
(re-mix, transform, build on) it.

But you must **attribute** (give
appropriate credit), and you may
only use it for **non-commercial**
purposes.

CC-BY-NC, 2023



Made in Vancouver, BC

CC-BY-NC, 2023





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

HISPANIC STUDIES





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

HISPANIC STUDIES

¡Don't leave it to mañana!

