



Chapter One
Alternative Cartography:
Thirdspaces and Metamorphoses
in *Tropic of Orange*

Such a commotion was aroused that no one noticed, either on one side or the other of the Great Border--that Arcangel and a broken bus and a boy and an orange and, for that matter, everything else South were about to cross it: the very hemline of the Tropic of Cancer and the great skirts of its relentless geography.

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (197)

Someone put the city [Los Angeles] in the washer/dryer. Shrunk 50% in places. Then ironed it out 200% in others.

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (230)

The entire City of Angels seemed to have opened its singular voice to herald a naked old man and little boy with an orange followed by a motley parade approaching from the south. Once again, the grid is changing And the approaching parade was dragging in the entire midriff (and maybe even the swaying hips, burning thighs, and sultry genitals) of the hemisphere.

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (238-39)

I. Yamashita's Alternative Cartography of Los Angeles

In Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Cancer*, the landscape of Los Angeles is metamorphosing due to the northbound Tropic of Cancer. Concerned with the issue of

border-crossing, Yamashita depicts not only the migration of people, the motley parade led by the old man, Arcangel, but also the *mobile* Tropic of Cancer, which refers to a line of latitude about 23.5 degree north of the Equator. Cartographically speaking, the Tropic of Cancer, the Tropic of Capricorn, and the Equator are used to define three areas of the globe, based on climate--the Tropical, the Subtropical, and the Temperate Zone. With the northbound movement of the Tropic of Cancer from Mazatlán (Mexico) to Los Angeles (U.S.A.), the Tropical Zone is expanded and subsumes the City of Angels. In other words, in *Tropic of Orange*, through mobilizing the Tropic of Cancer, Yamashita achieves an alternative cartography which constitutes a re-mapping, and metamorphosis, as the thesis would argue, of the city of Los Angeles.

More than an example of metamorphosis, the mobile Tropic of Cancer is historically significant in the cross-border relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Hsiao-ching Li, in her reading of *Tropic of Orange*, pinpoints that the arrival of the Tropic in L.A. signifies the metaphorical return of Mexican reign (2004: 105). Once named Porciuncula, Los Angeles was the second largest city of Mexico before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848. Likewise, the northbound Tropic challenges the construction of the border and suggests the possibility of *mobilizing* the border. Yamashita's concept of alternative cartography is inscribed not only in the mobile Tropic, but in her metamorphosing of the city of Los Angeles. Rather than just another Hollywood simulation of L.A., Yamashita's L. A. focuses on the lives of blue-collars, laborers, the homeless, and, most of all, the natives of Mexico. Main characters in the novel are exclusively Chicanos, Asian Americans, and African Americans. With Yamashita's re-mapping, the fictional city of angels finally emerges from its long history of colonization.

II. Literary Review: Literature of Los Angeles

A brief review of literature and studies on Los Angeles is in order for my examination of *Tropic of Orange*, a fiction set around the U.S.-Mexican border and the city of L.A. David Fine, based on his research in L.A. fiction in *Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction*, asserts that “as a literary city Los Angeles did not really exist until the 1920s” (2000:14). L.A.’s literary identity is established by the four early novels: Harry Leon Wilson’s *Merton of the Movies* (1923), Mark Lee Luther’s *The Boosters* (1923), Ryan’s *Angel’s Flight* (1927), and Sinclair’s *Oil!* (1927). These novels laid the foundations for the later developments of L.A. fiction--the Hollywood romances, the hard-boiled crime fiction of the 1930s, and the tough guy detective stories. Generally speaking, Los Angeles fiction written between 1920s and the 1960s is considerably related to superstitions and folklore, such as a bizarre cult, spiritualists, prophets, or medical quacks. This literary construction of the city mirrors the persistently recurring themes of Los Angeles "fiction," that is, the fusion, or confusion, of reality and illusion, fact and fantasy (2000: 14-15).

According to Fine, virtually all writers of L.A. fiction, until the recent decades, were outsiders, newcomers, visitors--basically “strangers” to the place. Hence, a sense of temporal as well as spatial dislocation permeates in L.A. fiction. In terms of the presentation of place in L.A. fiction, Fine specifies what distinguishes L.A. fiction from other regional literature is its opposition, not that “between the present and past of *a* place but between a Southern California present and a past carried from some *other* place. History is not so much absent as displaced; it exists as a different geography” (2000: 16). This characteristic of colliding cultures is fully illustrated in the immigrant fiction--both the turn-of-the century fiction written by European immigrants and the more recent fiction of Asian and Latin American immigrants.

III. Methodology

Recently, scholarly efforts make a contribution to the studies of Los Angeles, which is not confined to fiction or literary works, but matches the criteria of an interdisciplinary sub-field, including anthropology, architecture, cultural studies, geographies, Latin American studies, sociology, social history, urban studies, etc. Among the diverse approaches applied to L.A., I center on Edward W. Soja's notion of "Thirdspace" and his project of postmodern metropolis in Los Angeles as my theoretical framework. Besides, I want to connect the geographical mobility with the tradition of metamorphosis and see how the changing geography could be related to the tradition of "other worlds," as Marina Warner argues in *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self*.² Drawing on Soja's concept of Thirdspace and Warner's study in metamorphosis, I aim to examine the presentation of Los Angeles as alternative cartography in *Tropic of Orange* in relation to immigrants from Asia and Mexico.

a. Soja's Thirdspace

Edward W. Soja's groundbreaking trilogy of Los Angeles studies includes *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* in 1989, *Thirdspace: Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* in 1996, and *Postmetropolis* in 2000. Rather than being confined within the traditionally isolated discipline of geography, Soja's L.A. project has continued to provoke trenchant and inspirational debate on the issue of spatiality. His projects extends the disciplinary inquiry traditionally assumed by geography--the landscape, the region, location, and place--and draws attention to the power relations at work in the construction of individual and collective spatialities in L. A.

In *Thirdspace: Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Soja

² The discussion of metamorphosis and Warner's work will be concentrated in Chapter Three.

argues that spatial thinking, or what has been called the geographical or spatial imagination, has the tendency of reductionism, being confined to two approaches. Namely, spatialities are either seen as concrete material forms to be mapped, analyzed, and explained; or as mental constructs, ideas about and representations of space and its social significance. Soja critically re-evaluates this dualism to create an alternative approach. It is one that comprehends both the material and mental dimensions of spatiality, but also extends beyond them to new and different modes of spatial thinking, which he names as “thirthing-as-othering”--a significant theme that he claims embedded but never systematically explored in Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1996: 60).

By prompting “Thirdspace” as an alternative in spatial or geographical imagination, which is traditionally encased in its bicameral compartment, Soja recognizes the potentially equivalent powers of historicity, spatiality, and sociality. By doing so, Soja disrupts the privileged role of historicity in spatial imagination and comes up with a new perspective, which transforms the ways we think about historicity and sociality. He argues that a radical rethinking of the trialectics of space, time and social being in the idea of Thirdspace is in order:

Everything is seen as a *simultaneously historical-social-spatial palimpsest*,
Thirdspace sites in which inextricably intertwined temporal, social, and
spatial relations are being constantly reinscribed, erased, and reinscribed
again. (1996: 18; *emphasis mine*)

The simultaneous and endless reinscriptions of historicity, sociality, and spatiality constitute radical openness and inclusiveness, rather than confinement and boundary. Through this new approach to space and spatial thinking, Soja establishes dialogues with Lefebvre’s nonpolarized trialectics of spatiality and Foucault’s heterotopia. I argue that Yamashita’s alternative cartography of Los Angeles could be read as a textual illustration of Soja’s idea of

Thirdspace.

b. The Influences of Lefebvre and Foucault on Soja's Thirdspace

Soja's conceptualization of "Thirdspace" is inextricably bound up with Lefebvre's conceptual triad--Spatial practice, Representations of space, and Representational spaces (1991:33)--and Foucault's conception of "Heterotopia" (1986). In Lefebvre's trialetics of spatiality, a third, alternative mode of spatial imagination enters as "representational (or lived) space," which disrupts the dual mode of space as either materially formed or cognitively mapped, and proposes a Thirdspace that combines or mixes the "real" and "imagined" spatial imaginations (Soja, 1996: 10). Soja's notion of Thirdspace is in accord with Lefebvre's trialetics of spatiality in their refusal of polarization and proposes a combinational and radically open perspective.

Lefebvre clarifies his theoretical position in *The Production of Space*, "The project I am outlining . . . does not aim to produce a (or the) discourse on space, but rather to expose the actual *production of space* by bringing the various kinds of space and the modalities of their genesis together within a single theory" (1991: 16. *emphasis mine*). Hence, in probing how space is a socially produced creation Lefebvre prompts a "unitary theory":

The aim is to discover or construct a theoretical unity between 'fields' which are apprehended separately . . . The fields we are concerned with are first, the *physical* --nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and thirdly, the *social*. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias.
(1991: 11-2)

Spatiality in Lefebvre's unitary theory transcends traditionally polarized definition as merely physical materials or mental constructs. Rather, spatiality, as Lefebvre proposes, is a combination of physical, mental, and social space, and each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins, and presupposes the other. Lefebvre clarifies how this third-way thinking, instead of binarism, enacts a dialectical and dialogical relationship,

A triad: that is three elements and not two. Relations with two elements boil down to oppositions, contrasts or antagonism. They [three elements in the triad] are defined by significant effects: echoes, repercussions, mirror effects. (1991: 39)

It is Lefebvre's three-folded framework that contributes to the conception of Soja's spatiality-historicity-sociality trialetics and Thirdspace, a critical spatial imagination which is a recombination and extension of Firstspace perspective, focusing on the real material world, and Secondspace perspective, interpreting reality through imagined representation of spatiality.

Foucault is frequently referred to in Soja's L.A. project. Soja acknowledges that "his [Foucault's] treatment in relation to space and time, between the spatial and the historical imaginations has a great influence on his conceptualization of Thirdspace (1996: 15). Foucault emphasizes the centrality of space in our time:

In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space. (1986, 23)

With this claim Foucault explicitly endows space with equal attention that time has been privileged in human science. Commenting on Foucault's breaking down the domination of historicism, Soja asserts that it is a fundamental act in opening up the spatial imagination and

in rebalancing the trialetics of historicity-sociality-spatiality (1996: 15-6).

In agreement with Foucault's concern for the central role of spatiality in social theory, Soja further identifies the connection between Thirdspace and Foucault's conception of heterotopia. With the focus on spatiality of social life, Foucault proposes the idea of heterotopia as a comparison to that of real space and utopia. Utopia, as opposed to the real space, is space in which history is presented in either 'a perfected form' or else 'turned upside down.' Foucault argues that neither of these two spaces exhaustively illustrates the actually lived space since:

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in it self, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (1986, 23)

Thus the concept of heterotopia emerges as the most intensive depiction of lived space.

Foucault defines it as follows:

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible . . . they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory. . . . Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. The latter type

would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation. . . .

(1986, 25, 27)

Soja's Thirdspace is similar to Foucault's heterotopia in many ways. First, both concepts possess the radical openness and all-encompassingness that mark them as heterogeneous and alternative spaces. Second, both spaces are sites of contestation for their simultaneity and juxtaposition of many incompatible, real-and-imagined spaces. Finally, both notions are obliged to the balance of the trialectics of spatiality-historicity-sociality, highlighting the central role of space in human experiences.

c. Dialogue between Soja and Yamashita: Vision of Aleph as Microcosm of Thirdspace

Soja's employment of the Aleph in his investigation of L.A. establishes a dialogue with Yamashita's multi-layered re-mapping of the city. In *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja uses Borges' brilliant evocation of the Aleph as the place "where all places" are to provoke new ways of looking at and understanding Los Angeles. Again, in *Thirdspace* Soja uses the Aleph as the point of departure to recompose its imbricated conceptualizations of Thirdspace.

The short story, "The Aleph," is narrated by a fictional Borges and begins with the death of Beatriz Viterbo, a lady that the fictional Borges wooed. The first narrative theme, thus, is the hapless and foolish love. The fictional Borges contrives to develop a friendship with Beatriz's cousin, Carlos Argentino Daneri, to have the opportunity to visit her old house (where Carlos lives) and to see her portraits.

Carlos turns out to be a dreadful versifier and has written lots of poems. The story then moves on to its second theme, the poetic vision of the deluded Carlos Argentino Daneri and his efforts to get his work published. The fictional Borges, who is also a writer, gives an excoriating and passionate description of bad writing. However, the fictional Borges does nothing to discourage Carlos, because it is only through him that Borges would have access

to the memory of Beatriz, who has now been dead for eleven years.

The existence of the Aleph is not mentioned until the story is halfway through. One day Carlos calls Borges to announce agitatedly that his landlords Zunino and Zungri, "under the pretext of enlarging their already oversized café, were going to demolish his house." His only hope is that his lawyer, Zunni, would sue them for damages. It is in this call that Daneri first mentions the Aleph, which he discovered as a child in the basement of the dining room. The Aleph, he explains, inspired his poetry. Borges immediately assumes that Carlos is crazy and takes some malicious pleasure in this insight. Borges goes to the basement and is encountered with the Aleph, which he goes on to describe:

What eternity is to time, the Aleph is to space. In eternity, all time-past, present, and future-coexists simultaneously. In the Aleph, the sum total of the spatial universe is to be found in a tiny shining sphere barely over an inch across. (Borges, 1971: 189)

After seeing the Aleph, the fictional Borges leaves the house. On his way home, Borges is afraid that not a single thing on the earth would ever surprise him. Feeling happy and fortunate, Borges finds himself forget what he sees from the Aleph after several sleepless nights. The story then ends in a postscript. In the epilogue dated March 1, 1943, Carlos, has just won the second prize for National Literature, while Borges does not get even a single vote for his *Cards of the Tajúr*. "Once again," he says, "ignorance and envy have triumphed!" Finally, there is a farcically overwrought debate (including a library, mysterious manuscripts, mirrors, and references to the *Arabian Nights* and *The Fairie Queene*) over whether Borges's Aleph is the true Aleph--which undermines and obscures the brilliance of his vision of it. Borges ends the story by acknowledging that the argument is moot because he has, "with the tragic erosion of the years," begun to falsify and forget both his experience of the Aleph and the features of Beatriz.

In one section named “Envisioning Thirdspace through ‘The Aleph’” (1996: 54-60), Soja makes an explicit connection between his proposition of Thirdspace and the Aleph by re-reading Borges’ short story. Soja takes “The Aleph” as “an allegory on the infinite complexities of space and time” (1996: 56), and argues that the idea of Thirdspace and the Aleph are identical in their scope of spatial perceptions. He asserts that the radical openness, “all-inclusive simultaneity” of Thirdspace is implied and reinforced through an “unimaginable universe” (Borges, 1971: 14) in the Aleph. Soja’s definition of Thirdspace presents “the multifaceted inclusiveness and simultaneities of lived social space” (1996: 58), resonating with the dizzy array of a multiplicity of spaces in the Aleph:

Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconsciousness, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (1996: 56)

That is to say, the juxtaposition of infinite space, “the sum total of the spatial universe” (Borges, 1971: 189) in the Aleph corresponds to Soja’s Thirdspace, one place “where all places are” (1996: 56), characterized by openness and simultaneity of places.

In Yamashita’s novel, with the northward Tropic of Cancer and its concomitant Mexican history and geographical expansion, the urban spaces of L.A. gradually expand since they now contain more than one place and time, but comprising many “words,” or “other worlds” in Warner’s terms. Los Angeles after 1848 coexists with that before 1848 in the same space. I argue that the city of L.A., in Yamashita’s alternative cartography, becomes the Aleph, which is an exemplary of “the infinite complexities of space and time” (Soja, 1996: 56), where everything comes together.

The following scene would convey the simultaneity enclosed in the Aleph through

Arcangel's Aleph vision, in which the intertwined ethnic history of Los Angeles takes place. As a performing artist, Arcangel once enacts the cosmos motion in the marketplace.

[Archangel] juggled balls representing the planets of the solar system while spinning a replica of the sun on his nose. He, like E.T., was very good at this, keeping Pluto on the outer ring, juggling everything--Saturn, Uranus, Venus, Jupiter, etc., even the moon around the Earth--in great ellipses . . . He had had a dream. And when he awoke he could still see the dream like a miniature *Aleph* reflected from his mind to an indefinable point on his visual horizon. (Yamashita, 1997: 51)

The circuit of celestial spheres is a miniature of the solar system's movement. In other words, the universe is contained in these little globes. To quote from Borges's depiction of the Aleph, "The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished. Each thing (a mirror's face, let's say) was infinite things" (1971: 12). Like the Aleph, these enclosed spaces encompass possibilities of openness and radical simultaneity of multiple spaces.

IV. Ethnic Immigrants in Los Angeles: Mexican Americans, African Americans and Asian Americans

The political message embedded in *Tropic of Orange* can never be overemphasized with its non-white setting, which centers on exclusively ethnic immigrants from Mexico, Asia, and Africa. A review of the history of immigrant communities in Los Angeles is in order to deepen the historical content in which my reading of *Tropic of Orange* is situated.

In their book, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations, and Migration* (2003), Gonzalez and Fernandez argue that Mexico's socioeconomic ties with the United States have always been a crucial role in Los Angeles's Chicano history since Mexico is situated in the

neighborhood of the United States and in the threshold of Latin America (2003: 35). The history of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles began early in 1848 with the signing of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which the United States paid \$15million for all Mexican territories west of the Rio Grande and north of Arizona's Gila River, including Alta California, and the city of L.A. The conquest of 1848, pointed out by Gonzalez and Fernandez, appears to be the key event that subordinated Mexicans, which signifies the beginning of Chicanos as a minority population in the United State (2003: 11).

According to Gonzalez and Fernandez, the economic policies carried out by the Mexican government during 1880 to 1910 caused tremendous social unrest that propelled internal migration and later emigration flows to the U.S. (2003: 34). In the late nineteenth century, the United States gradually intervened and controlled the economics of Mexico through building Mexican railroads by U.S. companies; the investment of U.S. capitals in mining and smelting, the effects of the Mexican modernization projects; and the displacement of large segments of Mexico's peasant population as a consequence of the foreign-inspired modernization. Based on the available statistics, Gonzalez and Fernandez point out that Mexican labor began to enter the United States in sizable groups after 1905, partly as a result of the south-to-north internal migrations in Mexico. In 1911 the Immigration Bureau noted that at least 50,000 Mexicans crossed the border annually without documentation. The cyclic pattern of migration of superfluous labor from Mexico began to take root. Later, migration resurged in response to the 1930s economic depression in the United States, which caused a slowdown of the mining industry and motivated a northward migration (Gonzalez and Fernandez, 2003: 43).

The analysis of migration by Gonzalez and Fernandez shows that migration from Mexico declined after the 1930 economic depression. The slowdown in migration last until the early 1950s with a renewed vigor. During 1950-1970, further ties developed between

the two countries. The subordinated status of Mexico and specifically the changes in its political activities of U.S. corporations and the U.S. government provided the opportunity to construct a giant agribusiness economy on both sides of the border that relies on the constant supply of cheap labor from Mexico (Gonzalez and Fernandez, 2003: 49).

Gonzalez and Fernandez indicate that since the seventies, the U.S. has shifted investment in Mexico away from mining and railroads to industrial manufacturing, the most dynamic sector of industry (2003: 52). The 1990s witnessed the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the most devastating example of U.S. domination over Mexico, which continues to tear apart the socioeconomic integrity of the South. Rather than a free trade agreement, the NAFTA could be better described as a “free investment” agreement since it guarantees a free hand to U.S. enterprises to invest in and take advantage of Mexico’s cheap labor (2003: 55). Besides, the treaty would simultaneously deny in various forms other economic powers the advantages of operations in Mexico. To put in brief terms, Gonzalez and Fernandez assume that the United States seeks to create with Mexico an economic bloc to compete against Europe and Japan (2003: 65).

As for the residential region of Chicanos in Los Angeles, the second largest Mexican city outside of Mexico, Gonzales and Fernandez indicate that Chicanos have settled in Boyle Heights and the massive barrio of East Los Angeles since the twenties (2003: 32). According to their research, generations of Chicanos have lived in these ethnically partitioned spaces. As the Chicano identity was being fashioned across the Southwestern states from the mid-1960s onwards, one of its principal sites of articulation has been East Los Angeles (Gonzales and Fernandez, 2003: 29).

Raphael Sonenshein’s *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (1993) provides a clear contour of the intersection of politics and race, particularly that of black and white, in the city of Los Angeles. According to Sonenshein, African-Americans

arrived in 1850, the time after Americans gained control of California by the 1848 treaty. Most blacks were probably indentured servants to white families. The black population grew slowly, from twelve in 1850 to sixty-six in 1860 and ninety-three in 1870, while black measured only 1.6 percent of the city's population in 1870 (1993: 21). Sonenshein observes that the economic participation of black in Los Angeles emerged early: the ability of blacks to acquire property and to convert it into wealth. Despite state limits on African-American political equality, there were no barriers to the acquisition of property. In 1856, Bidy Mason, a black slave from the South was freed by the local courts. She acquired land in the center of the city that eventually made the Masons wealthy (1993: 21). When investigating the relation of the emerging of L.A. black community and land boom, Sonenshein notes that the modern black community traces its roots to the land boom of the late 1800s. These significant economic opportunities favor small black community. In the early decades of the 20th century, the black population increased from 102 to 7,599. In a growing entrepreneurial city, blacks were participating in the system in which wealth was being accumulated at a remarkable rate, through real state (1993: 22-6). However, Sonenshein points out that the civic culture and the local economy became increasingly hostile to blacks and other minorities. In 1942, the iron grip of racial discrimination was finally broken. Under great pressure from black labor leader A. Philip Randolph, President Roosevelt issued an executive order forbidding racial discrimination. The southern Pacific Railroad began to import southern blacks at a rate of three hundred to four hundred a day. In June 1943 nearly twelve thousand blacks entered the city and many of them resided in Watts and the central city (1993: 26-9). After World War II, blacks continued to migrate to Los Angeles. Sonenshein reveals that in this post-war period more blacks moved westward, out of the central city. Between 1960 and 1963, the African American percentage of the Tenth District increased from 38 percent to nearly 47 percent. (1993:22).

As far as Asian Americans are concerned, *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*, edited by Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng, gives a succinct recollection of Asian American history in America and in Los Angeles in particular. The preface identifies that the history of Asian American is generally divided by World War II to two periods. In the pre-WWII period, Asian immigrants were primarily laborers, subject to exclusion; denial of citizenship and racial oppression in the context of a developing global capitalism were common (1994: VII). Ong and Azore assert that the first wave of Asian immigrants began with the arrival of Chinese coolies in 1848 and the Chinese community developed both in Los Angeles and in northern California. As opportunities in the gold mines waned and racial hostilities grew in northern California, an increasing number of Chinese settled in Los Angeles. However, according to the statistics, Ong and Azore discover that the population fell by nearly half, to 2,602 in 1910 and remained stagnant for the next decades due to the adverse impact of 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (1994: 101). The Japanese filled the vacuum left by the exclusion of the Chinese. However, like the Chinese, Ong and Azores observe that many whites saw the Japanese as a threat to the city and throughout the state. The anti-Asian movement led to the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907-1908 and Japanese immigration was severely restricted by the 1917 Immigration Act. By 1930, the Japanese immigrant population stood at 35,390 (1994: 101).³

Ong and Azores note that global capitalism, which has undergone considerable growth and change since World War II, is a decisive factor in the post-war Asian Immigration (1994: 102). Not only has the world economy become much more integrated, but also the role of

³ According to Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng (1994: 101), with the door closed on China and Japan, the Philippines became the source of cheap agricultural labor for California. As the colony of the United States, the Philippines were not included in the prohibitions of the Immigrant Act. In 1940, there were 4,498 in the city of Los Angeles. *The New Asian immigration in Los Angeles and global restructuring*. Ed. Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Asian immigrants has shifted dramatically as well. The relaxation of racial restriction after World War II, according to Ong and Azores's analysis, enabled new Asian immigrants to settle in Los Angeles. It is not until the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 that the number of immigrant resumed on a large scale. The resulting influx from Asia and the Pacific amplifies Los Angeles's Asian population from some 120,000 in 1960 to more than a million today. As Ong and Azores indicate, in the 1990 census, approximately 403,000 Asians immigrated were settled in Los Angeles in the 1980s. Asian immigrants of this period are of middle-class origin, including professionals and entrepreneurs and arriving in large numbers (1994: 102).

Ong and Azores point out that with the resurgence of the Asian American population, the Latino population grew from 15 percent to 36 percent of the total population between 1970 and 1990 (1994: 103). As for other ethnic groups in Los Angeles, Ong and Azores specify that the African American population has remained stable, at about tenth of the total population, and the Anglo population has declined in absolute and relative terms. In 1970, Anglo comprised 71 percent of the population, but two decades later, they constituted only 41 percent (1994:103).

Designated as the Model City of multiculturalism, however, Los Angeles has a long history of racism against Asians, Africans, and other people from the South, and the persistently underlying turmoil among ethnic groups remains. Murphet in his book, *Literature and Race in Los Angeles* (2001) records the crux of unstable interethnic relations in the city of Los Angeles. Murphet depicts the Riot of 1992 as follows:

On April 29, 1992, thousands of Latino, black, Korean and white citizens participated in the Riot. The movement not only questioned but demythologized the myth of multiculturalism. 'Over 16,291 people were arrested during the riot. The Fire Department received

5,537 fire calls and responded to an estimated 500 fires. An estimated 4,000 businesses were destroyed. Fifty-two people died and 2,383 people were injured. Property damage and loss have been estimated at between 785 million and 1 billion. (2001:142)

Murphet concludes that the myths of multiculturalism in the so-called Rainbow State is held hostage in the Riot. This dramatic reawakening of ethnic others in Los Angeles brought home the possibility of a “new geography” of the metropolis. This "return of totality" to the street of Los Angeles calls for the advent of a renewed representation of the multiethnic metropolis (2001: 143).

V. Yamashita’s Connections with Multiethnic Americas in Los Angeles

Yamashita’s re-mapping of Los Angeles, particularly with her concern of the changing landscapes of ethnic minorities, as presented in *Tropic of Orange*, is strongly connected with and influenced by her identity as a Japanese American, who grew up in the hub of the city and spent nine years doing research in Brazil.

The child of an earlier generation of Japanese immigrants, Yamashita grew up in a Japanese American community located in Central L.A., which had been a center of black housing complex. The period of her childhood was a transitional moment for Japanese Americans. At that time, Japanese Americans had just come back after World War II from the interment camp, and they were essentially regrouped in small ghettos to rebuild their communities, which were mixed within African Americans. Therefore, much of her early experience was a mixture of Japanese and African Americans.

Yamashita’s link with Latin American is built through her 9-year-studies of the history of Japanese immigrant community in Brazil, and her marriage to a Brazilian architect. Between 1975 to 1984, Yamashita conducted a research on history and anthropology of

Japanese immigration to Brazil. After interviewing and collecting information from Japanese commune members, Yamashita realized that fiction would be a more suitable genre for exploring the Japanese diasporic experience. The result of these years in Brazil is three novels: *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (1990), which imagines the contact between technology and rural culture through the lens of magical realism., and [is] also the winner of the Before Columbus Fiction American Books Award and the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize. *Brazil-Marú*, Yamashita's second novel, traces the rise of a Japanese experimental community in the Brazilian interior. Her third novel, *Tropic of Orange*, with a vein of magic realism, maps the multi-layered grids in Los Angeles and the border between America and Mexico.

Yamashita's absence in Los Angeles between 1975 and 1984 motivates her re-positioning and re-mapping of Los Angeles. Yamashita's experiences as Japanese American growing up in L.A., the Pacific Rim city, and her contacts with African and Latin American communities in the City of Angeles stimulate her contemplation on L.A.'s myth of being the model city of multiculturalism. The Riot of 1992, for Yamashita, is a contradiction to the feeling of positivism propagated by the government and a manifestation of the long history of racism against Asians, Africans, and Mexicans from the South. Being aware of the lack of literary representation of the ethnic communities in Los Angeles, Yamashita published *Tropic of Orange*, a demonstration of her alternative cartography of Los Angeles in 1991.

VI. Plot Summary of *Tropic of Orange*

In *Tropic of Orange*, Yamashita presents a L.A. noir that takes over seven days and focuses on seven different characters, driven to unlikely encounters with one another by the apocalyptic plot. The novel is like a collage in which distinctive and disjointed voices

converge--including Bobby, a Korea town workaholic; Emi, a media-savvy TV reporter; Rafaela, a Mexican woman and palm reader; and Mazanar, a homeless sansei surgeon conducting symphonies from a freeway overpass. In addition, Gabriel Balboa, a Chicano reporter extraordinaire, is a hero, a detective, and a truth-seeker.

Buzzworm is an African American who wanders on the streets of Los Angeles. Always accompanied by his radio, Buzzworm is a valuable and reliable informant to Gabriel, and the latter always jokes of sharing the Pulitzer award with Buzzworm. Buzzworm likes to wander on the streets and introduce himself as *Angel of Mercy*, 24-hours at service.

Gabriel Balboa is a Chicano newspaper reporter who tries to fight social injustice. He owns a piece of land down in Mexico that straddles the Tropic of Cancer. He spends lots of efforts and money trying to build a vacation house, which is actually a hacienda, or a rancho. He brings down one fruit sapling at each visit. However, only one tree, planted right on the Tropic, produces the only fruit--a ripening orange whose burnished skin reveals "a line--finer than the thread of a spider web--pulled with delicate tautness" (Yamashita, 1997: 12). On the summer solstice, with the sun shining directly overhead, that orange falls, and the Tropic of Cancer itself comes tumbling down.

The orange is carried north, bringing it "the very hemline of the Tropic of Cancer and the great skirts of its relentless geography." Meanwhile, there's a whole shipment of oranges, from Brazil via Mexico, with liquid narcotics. When these toxic oranges get mixed with Valencias and are sold on the streets of L.A., people die once they taste them. Authorities confiscate and destroy these oranges, while "housewives and yuppies, environmentalists and meat-eaters, hapkido masters and white guys in dreds with Nirvana T-shirts--all going for the spiked oranges" (Yamashita, 1997: 140). A cataclysmic freeway conflagration leaves a mile of traffic and walls of flame. The rich abandon their luxurious cars, while the homeless, who promptly take up residence in the abandoned cars, and later

form an organized homeless community along the highway.

Rafaela, the housekeeper, and the incarnation of the Chicano homeland of Aztlán, calmly sweeps crabs from the floors of Gabriel's landlocked house in Mazatlán. Together with her son Sol, they discover a mystical orange that has a connection with the Tropic of Cancer. Such an opening scene, the flood, the stench of rotting crabs, reminds us of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings." Arcangel is similar to the old man who speaks gibberish in his cage. He is a prophet, miracle-worker, and performance artist. Gabriel's mystical orange nestled in his suitcase, and Arcangel is coming north to meet SUPERNAFTA in "the Greatest [Wrestle] Fight of the Century: El Contrato Con America." To meet her husband Bobby, Rafaela and Sol join Arcangel's journey to Los Angeles

The other lead woman character is Emi Murakami. A sankai of Japanese descent, Emi is a fast-pace television reporter who likes to shock people with her un-politically correct comments. She and Gabriel are lovers and she is constantly leaving work to come to Gabriel's rescue. Emi is suspicious of the Rainbow States' rhetoric of multiculturalism and always makes fun of Gabriel's nostalgia for origin by asking, "Returning to your roots? Pilgrimage to the source" (Yamashita, 1997: 164). She is shot to death in an outdoor news interview while Gabriel stays in Mexico, visiting his rancho and collecting materials for his masterpiece.

Manzanar Murakami, a first-generation Japanese American, is a homeless who conducts an imaginary orchestra from on overpass. L.A.'s traffic serves as an important component to his symphony. In one internet meeting with Gabriel, discussing his recent interviews, Emi recognizes that Manzanar is her grandfather, who was once a surgery doctor, but disappeared for unknown reasons.

Bobby is an Asian workaholic who is in search of Rafaela and Sol. He constantly

mentions his hard efforts at putting his baby brother through college, sending money to his father, and providing for his family. The family finally gets a reunion at the auditorium where Arcangel wrestles with SUPERNAFTA.

The novel ends in the wrestling scene. With the orange's northward movement to L.A., the city is changing figuratively. Like reflections of some funhouse mirror, "streets stretched and shrank this way and that. Someone put this city in the washer/dryer" (Yamashita, 1997: 230). Before the fight starts, Arcangel brings Sol and the orange safely to the auditorium, passing them to Bobby, who comes there to meet Rafaela and Arcangel in the wrestling race. Bobby cuts the orange, and sees the thin line embedded, and then grabs the two ends of the line. Helplessly, Bobby keeps hanging on to the stretching line until it is about to tear him apart. At last, Bobby lets go:"Lets the lines slither around his wrists, past his palms, through his fingers. Let's go" (Yamashita, 1997: 268).

VII. Organization of the thesis

In this thesis, I propose to look at the alternative cartography of Los Angeles by way of Soja's L.A. project of the Thirdspace and Warner's study of the tradition of metamorphosis in Yamashita's novel, *Tropic of Orange*. With the mobile, northbound Tropic of Cancer, I argue that Yamashita's fiction of alternative cartography serves as not only a recounting of the history of border controversies between the U.S. and Mexico, but a strategy that transacts the emerging of Thirdspace in her representation of Los Angeles, which was once the second largest city of Mexico. Accompanying the northbound Tropic of Cancer are the changing landscapes and the imminent spaces constituted by the multiethnic immigrants in L.A. Thus, Los Angeles contains not just one space, but becomes a space where all spaces converge; a space where heterogeneous spaces coexist. In other words, it's a vision of the Aleph in both Borges' and Soja's imaginations. While Los Angeles is grounded on the openness and

simultaneity of a variety of urbanity, I propose that the City of Angels in Yamashita's novel could be read as a manifestation of Soja's concept of Thirdspace and an illustration of geographical metamorphosis through especially Arcangel's and Rafaela's transformations in the novel. Moreover, by drawing on the South American literary tradition of magical realism, I highlight the influence of Yamashita's experiences in Brazil and her integration of magical realism and Sojan Thirdspace in the context of metamorphosis. While focusing on the two lead figures in relation to Mexican nativism, namely Arcangel and Rafaela, I aim to explore the *geographical* and *bodily* metamorphoses in the magical/real evocations of Thirdspaces in *Tropic of Orange*. That is to say, the thesis is theoretically based in the tradition of metamorphosis while the reading of Archangel centers on his relations with Thirdspace and that of Rafaela on her implications with the motif of metamorphosis.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter presents the history of Los Angeles literature and studies, featuring the ethnic representations concerning immigrant issues and U.S.-Mexican border controversies. The history of Los Angeles will assist the further exploration of the city in Yamashita's novel: what characterizes her Los Angeles in comparison with other fictions? In what aspect does Yamashita's mapping of L.A. deviate from the traditional portrait of L.A.? In what way does her depiction of L.A. distinguish itself from others? What does the changing landscape that of the Thirdspace, tell us about the tradition of metamorphoses? In sum, this examination of socioeconomic relations in L.A.'s multiethnic context aims to explore an alternative cartography in *Tropic of Orange*.

Chapter Two centers on the Mexican American character, Arcangel. The discussion dwells on the intersection of Arcangel and Soja's concept of Thirdspace through the lens of magical realism. With the examination of the practice of magical realism as inscribed in Arcangel's Aleph vision and magical realistic identity, I argue that a form of Thirdspace, a

space of justice and multiplicity, is achieved. In other words, the representation of place/space in Arcangel's Aleph vision and the space enclosed in his transformative migration is a space of magical realism that manifests the spatial fantasy of Thirdspace.

Chapter Three focuses on Rafaela's metamorphosis to the serpent and explores the spatial dimension in the tradition of metamorphosis. Though receiving little attention in current criticisms, Rafaela's metamorphosis is of significance in many ways. I argue that an alternative mother figure is embedded in Rafaela's intimate relation with the Tropic of Orange. The characteristic of mutability which dominates the process of metamorphosis and the Thirdspace enables Rafaela to transcend a maternal role tied to the Aztec nativism through the imagery of the snake. In other words, Rafaela embodies the Aztec spirit through her metamorphosis into the snake, which is a representation of one Aztec deity. Moreover, I argue that through the metamorphosis, Rafaela is transformed to be the figurative mother of the Tropic of Orange, which results in the geographical metamorphosis of the Americas. Rafaela's metamorphosis and her maternal relations to the Tropic of Orange testify to a reinvention of the archaic Aztec myth that challenges present controversy in relation to the U.S.-Mexican border.

The conclusion argues that Rafaela's husband, Bobby, is a Pan-Asian character. It is important to note that Bobby is a Chinese, who speaks Chicano Spanish, living in the Korean town in Los Angeles. My attempt here is to investigate the significance of his presence, particularly at the end of the novel. Yamashita's trickster act of a mobile Tropic of Cancer would be considered within the context of Bobby's Asian American background and his immigration to the city of Angeles.

To sum up, the thesis is an exploration of Yamashita's perception of alternative cartography concerning the urban spaces of Los Angeles in terms of Thirdspace and metamorphosis. My contribution is threefold. First, I emphasize a historicized study of

the urban spaces in Los Angeles, excavating its Latino and Asian dimensions in terms of Soja's trilectics of historicity-sociality-spatiality. Second, I relate Borges' vision of the Aleph to Yamashita's alternative cartography in the context of South American magical realism. By doing so, I aim to highlight her personal and literary investments in South America, Brazil to be specific. Third, drawing upon Soja's notion of Thirdspace, I extend the application of metamorphosis, which originally concentrates on bodily transformations, to geographical ones. It is my argument that Yamashita's alternative cartography makes a great contribution to the city of Los Angeles and the multiethnic immigrants of the great metropolis.