

“Relentless Geography”: Los Angeles’ Imagined Cartographies in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*

By *Cristina M. Rodriguez*

How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode its meanings and contents? It is doubtful whether a finite number can ever be given in answer to this sort of question.

---Henri Lefebvre (85)

Darling of Fredric Jameson, fetish object of postmodern philosophers, and bane of urban planners, Los Angeles as a city defies ordinary description and conventional narrative. Edward Soja, in his turn enchanted by the city, argues that LA confounds historicization, seeming to stretch laterally instead of unfolding sequentially, becoming a limitless, unstopping and unstoppable space (222). Indeed, Los Angeles’ confluence of global capital and inner city decay, of low density urban sprawl and extreme social, economic, racial, and ethnic segregations, is unique among contemporary cities, and perhaps for that reason looms large in both the philosophical and literary imagination. When analyzing a city so contradictory and multivalent, recourse to symbolic language might just be necessary, as even sociologists and theorists often wax poetic when attempting to depict the city’s character.¹

Author’s Note: I’ve taught Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* for several years now, with undergraduates at all levels. The novel’s intricate place detail necessitates giving students a fair amount of cultural context on 1990s Los Angeles (which I’ve attempted to provide here), but once grounded in that historical moment Yamashita’s narrative choices take on new significance. I’ve found that the novel’s narrative experimentation, coupled with its historical and geographical specificity, make it ideal for thinking through theories of space and place; by pairing Yamashita and Henri Lefebvre, I model for students how to incorporate theory into their own literary analyses, without losing sight of the specificities of the text. As an educator I am always looking for accessible literary criticism that demonstrates for students the successful application of theoretical lenses as well as performing compelling close reading; I hope this article comes at least marginally close to fulfilling these goals for other classrooms.

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What would a map of this unwieldy Los Angeles drawn from the ground up look like? How would its inner city be laid out if space were allocated based on use and need rather than investments and property value? In his groundbreaking work *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre argues that the conceived space of urban planners is fundamentally distinct from lived space, which cannot be mapped out. In her impressive city-wide narrative, Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997) demonstrates the effects of imposing conceived space upon the lived space of inner city Los Angeles residents, narrating what happens when the maps of urban planning no longer hold, and the counter-model of space being lived by a city's inhabitants rebels. Yamashita's text mirrors this disjuncture between represented and lived space through the use of narrative surrealism.² Space is fantastically reconfigured in the city, shrinking the uninhabited Downtown and expanding over-populated yet underrepresented neighborhoods, literally shifting geographically until its mapping matches the social space of those on the ground rather than those who map it from above. A new map emerges: "*There are maps and there are maps and there are maps,*" as the homeless conductor Manzanar Murakami claims. "The uncanny thing was that he could see all of them at once" (56).

Literary criticism on the novel to date has largely focused on the theme of globalization, interpreting *Tropic of Orange* as a commentary on the effects of NAFTA and the persistence of the local within global lines of power and commerce.³ Generally I concur with readings of *Tropic of Orange's* surreal depiction of the Tropic of Cancer, which see the imaginary hemispheric line's literal carrying of the south into the north as representative of globalization's effects on US immigration and labor. Yet not enough attention has been paid to the simultaneous, and equally

¹ Baudrillard's *Simulation and Simulacrum* comes to mind. See also Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* and Raúl Homero Villa's *Barrio-Logos*.

² Many critics and reviewers categorize the text as "Magical Realism," but I push back on that label, as Magical Realism denotes a particular historical tradition of Latin American writing; I also balk at the tendency to label as Magical Realist ethnic American writers, while other US authors who are not ethnically marked but deploy a similar style—such as George Saunders, Donald Barthelme, or Steven Milhauser—are called "surrealists" or "fabulists."

³ Kandice Chuh and Sheryl Vint argue that the novel reinforces the importance of the local in the context of the global; Molly Wallace, Mark Chiang, and David Palumbo-Liu, et al, argue for the "discourse on globalization it forwards" and Yamashita's US as "a landscape thoroughly mortgaged to global capital" (Wallace 153-155).

surreal, expansion of Los Angeles' inner city that takes place in the novel. Using Lefebvre's "science of space," anchored by Los Angeles' city planning schemas, I argue that Yamashita offers a different map, one perceived by the subsets of LA's population that fall through the cracks of the city's grid. *Tropic of Orange's* unorthodox formal structure, when combined with its narrative surrealism, creates a differential space in the text, transforming the novel into the Los Angeles imagined and lived by its anonymous users and inhabitants.

"Shrinkin' and expandin' jurisdictions": the science of social space

In the forty years since the publication of *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre's theory of space has undergone extensive criticism. Globalization studies critique Lefebvre's state-centric theory as insufficiently narrow and territorial; Environmentalists find the omission of nature from his theory of space glaring; Even Marxist geographers like David Harvey and Manuel Castells are wary of taking on Lefebvre's concepts wholesale, as evidenced in Harvey's own cautious re-tailoring of Lefebvre's spatial divisions in "Space as a keyword."⁴ Generally accused of being a "spatial fetishist," contemporary Marxist geographers qualify their praise of Lefebvre because of the dominance he concedes to spatial relations over social relations; while operating in a dialectic, Lefebvre's pronounced bias towards the spatial over the social comes close to denying the power of the superstructure as totalizing, an uncomfortable position for Marxists such as Harvey, Smith, and Castells to adopt. The chief critique, from multiple camps within human geography, is that Lefebvre "had elevated the urban spatial 'problematic' to an intolerably central and apparently autonomous position" (Soja 1989, 77). Yet despite these criticisms, even detractors often concede that Lefebvre's notion of space as actively produced and relational is "a necessary precondition for the construction of any general theory of uneven development" (Harvey 77), recognizing that, although his notion of the state is at times vague, his categorizations of urban space in particular continue to be useful.⁵

⁴ See also Neil Smith, "Antinomies of space and nature in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*," Michael R. Curry, *The Work in the World*, and Manuel Castells, *La Cuestion Urbaine*.

⁵ In *Social Justice and the City* Harvey even concedes that Lefebvre's hypothesis about urbanism in *La Révolution Urbaine* might possibly be correct, and that we must wait to see if history bears it out: "To say that the thesis is not true at this juncture of history is not to say that it is not in the process of becoming true or that it cannot become true in the future" (313).

Furthermore, Lefebvre's distinctive tripartite division of space is well suited to theorizations of contestations within space(s), and his conception of lived space as ruled by the imagination makes it particularly apt for reading the spatial implications of works of literature. Contemporary cultural geographers such as Douglas Pocock and David Ley, and postmodern geographers like Edward Soja, have used literary texts to bolster interpretations of places, to arrive at a more complete, even phenomenological, account of spaces through the depictions of individual agents.⁶ Yet these accounts to date lack a clear rubric for how to integrate literary interpretation into the findings of social geography; without a schema for applying the findings of literary exegesis to the geography of a place, the text in question often becomes either a mere example of data already gathered, or so subject to individual interpretation that it loses its power as a geographic tool. Lefebvre's *Production of Space* is unique in its combination of an emphasis on individual agency—the provenance of humanistic cultural geographers as well as postmodern geographers—and its insistence on rigorous structural divisions of space based on the particularities of urban development—the usual arena for Marxist geographers. Therefore, for my analysis of symbolic literary registers of *Tropic of Orange's* cast of characters, in what is arguably the world's most postmodern city, Lefebvre's brand of spatial fetishism is ideal.⁷

Lefebvre's initial proposition in *The Production of Space* is that "(social) space is a (social) product" (26). According to Lefebvre, we have succumbed to the illusion that mapped-out space actually corresponds to real space: "The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places. [...] Hence a rough coincidence is assumed to exist between social space on the one hand and mental space—the (topological) space of thought and utterances—on the other" (28). We assume a correspondence between social and mental space, encouraged by the "illusion," inculcated in us as parcel of cultural hegemony, that space is innocent. Lefebvre includes space in Gramsci's concept of hegemony as being exercised over "society as a whole": "is it

⁶ See for instance: Douglas Pocock, *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place*; David Ley and James Duncan, *Place/Culture/Representation*; Edward Soja, *Thirdspace*.

⁷ There are other schemas for distinguishing between individual and social space, for instance Harvey's distinction between sociological imagination and spatial consciousness or geographical imagination (1973, 24), which echoes Lefebvre's split between conceived and lived space. But Lefebvre's tripartite rubric is much more clearly delineated, and accounts for perceived space.

conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched? [...] The answer must be no" (10-11). In reality, a given society's mode of production produces space, and imbues it with its ideology.

Working from his initial proposition, Lefebvre develops a "conceptual triad" to understand space, delineating three types of overlapping spaces: spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational spaces (lived space). Spatial practice "secretly that society's space" (38), *producing* spaces informed by the hidden ideological underpinnings of that society's mode of production. "Representations of space" refers to conceptualized space, "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, [...] all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (38). Here we have the map-makers. Lefebvre writes that the producers of this type of space operate under the assumption that their systems have correlates in "real" space.⁸ Representational space is that of inhabitants and users, "space as directly lived" (39). This space is often passively experienced and rarely verbalized. Conceived space at least presumes a logic, however inconsistent, but "representational spaces, on the other hand, need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history—in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual" (41). Thus, users' expressions of lived space are marked by imagination and symbolism, in direct contrast to the logic-driven language of representations of space.

Lefebvre quickly dismisses the use of literature as a starting point for a theoretical account of the division of space, claiming to lack suitable criteria for selecting appropriate texts (15). However, I would argue that *Tropic of Orange's* persistent interrogation of space renders it ideal for such a task. Employing Lefebvre's concept of overlapping spaces highlights the tension between contested spaces represented in the novel, and the consequences of a map that fails to represent all of the city's users. The

⁸ Likewise Harvey comments on the tendency of urban planners to focus too narrowly on certain aspects of spatial organization while ignoring others: "urban planning, dominated as it traditionally has been by a primary resort to drawing board design and, in particular, by the process of designing from the map (a notorious instrument for self-deception if ever there was one), was completely immersed in the details of human spatial organization as expressed in land use" (1973, 26).

characters of Yamashita's Los Angeles consistently experience the opposition between lived and conceived spaces. Buzzworm, an unemployed resident of South Central, lives through a generation of city planning and freeway construction that has willfully ignored his neighborhood. The homeless Manzanar Murakami hears in the sound of highway traffic all the city's maps working at once—each and every one excluding him and other homeless from its schemata. As the only characters without vehicles, living without a job or a home respectively, Buzzworm and Manzanar occupy spaces profoundly different from the representations of space they know from maps, master plans, and even non-natives of the city. They know intuitively, as Harvey eloquently puts it, “that social space is complex, non-homogeneous, perhaps discontinuous, and almost certainly different from the physical space in which the engineer and the planner typically work” (Harvey 1973, 35). As a result, they possess a vision of the inner city, shared by the distinct populations they represent, ultimately culminating in what Lefebvre calls a “differential space.”

Tropic of Orange's plot is dizzying. Told by seven narrators over the course of one week, the text's chief setting is Los Angeles, though the story skirts Mazatlán, Mexico City and Tijuana. The novel is set in the mid-1990s, the era of NAFTA's aftermath, Crips and Bloods battling in South Central, and the beginnings of the Internet. It follows a single Mexican orange that becomes magically attached to the line demarcating the Tropic of Cancer. As the orange moves north to Los Angeles, in the hands of Arcangel the street performer, all the “relentless geography” south of the tropic (197) moves with it. Meanwhile, a cargo of poisoned oranges causes several US deaths, one resulting in massive collisions on the Harbor freeway in downtown LA. Motorists abandon their cars, and subsequent fires drive out a nearby homeless encampment. The homeless occupy the stranded cars, coming to inhabit the freeway as its own city. In a nearby auditorium, Arcangel takes on SUPERNAFTA in a wrestling match that ends with their deaths, and the breaking of the orange's line.

The cast is equally imaginative and unwieldy, with the novel oscillating between seven narrative perspectives: the characters are Chicano, Mexican, African-American, Latin American, Chinese, and Japanese-American, and span classes and careers. To interpret the city

map Yamashita presents, however, we will focus on the two life-long inner city residents of the novel, Buzzworm and Manzanar.⁹

“It’s about how come the map’s wrong?”: conceived versus lived space

What map or maps is *Tropic of Orange* contesting? In order to discuss the alternate maps at work in the novel, we first need to establish the maps already in effect in the mid-nineties, when *Tropic of Orange* takes place. A brief history of Los Angeles’ economic growth in the twentieth century is therefore necessary, to foreground the intersections of politics, urban planning, racism and classism that result in LA’s contentious map, and provide the socio-historical context for city space as it is experienced by both Buzzworm and Manzanar.

For most of the twentieth century, Los Angeles has been a center for industrial growth in the world economy, and even during times of economic stagnation for the US overall, Los Angeles has continued to create jobs (Soja 191-195). Between 1970 and 1980, when the US as a whole added less than a million manufacturing jobs, the LA region added over 200,000 (195). There are two keys to the city’s durability: its constant influx of foreign investment capital, and its combination of both Fordist and post-Fordist industrial models.¹⁰ As Soja puts in in his deconstruction of Los Angeles, “Frostbelt and Sunbelt dynamics come together in Los Angeles, intermeshing to produce a complex mix of selective industrial decline and rapid industrial expansion” (200). LA’s simultaneous

⁹ I have paired these two because they are yoked by their invisibility on Los Angeles’ grid. Without vehicles, homes (in Manzanar’s case), or jobs (in both cases), Buzzworm and Manzanar are the only characters who live all of their lives on foot in the inner city. For a trenchant reading connecting the two *female* protagonists to the traumatic effects of globalization, see Julie Sze, “‘Not by Politics Alone’: Gender and Environmental Justice in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*.”

¹⁰ The Encyclopedia Britannica defines Fordism as “(1) the system of mass production that was pioneered in the early 20th century by the Ford Motor Company or (2) the typical postwar mode of economic growth and its associated political and social order in advanced capitalism.” Post-Fordism refers to the transition in Capitalist countries in the 1970s from the Fordist model to a post-industrial model of flexible accumulation and increased globalization: in cities such as Los Angeles, this results in the decline of large-scale, often assembly-line, mass production industries, the loss of jobs in the skilled labor sector, the rise of jobs in the unskilled labor or service sectors, the international outsourcing of labor, and increased geographically uneven development (Soja, 1996; 247).

development of both older Fordist and newer post-Fordist industrialization processes, “each closely tied to federal programs and expenditures” (196), results in a city boasting advances in technology and aerospace as well as the mass-manufacture of durables, produced at times in sweatshop-reminiscent conditions.

Earlier rounds of industrialization concentrated production in a broad zone running south from LA’s city center to the ports of San Pedro and Long Beach. By the 1970s, these Fordist industrial complexes for automobile and tire manufacturing have become Los Angeles’ rustbelt, “with numerous abandoned factories, high unemployment rates, economically devastated neighborhoods, extensive outmigration, and deskilling and wage-reducing occupational shifts from industry to service jobs” (Soja 201). In four short years, from 1978-82, at least 75,000 jobs were lost due to plant closings and lay-offs, and the labor market affected “were primarily highly unionized, well-paid minority and female blue-collar workers” (201). South Central Los Angeles, “the traditional industrial core of the city,” “bore the brunt of the decline in manufacturing employment, losing 70,000 high-wage, stable jobs between 1978 and 1982” (Oliver et al 121-122).

When unionized, high-skill blue collar employment largely disappeared, the twin pillars of low-wage non-unionized industries and highly-skilled aerospace/electronics industries grew exponentially in Los Angeles: “Viewed as a three-tiered structure, the industrial labor market has been significantly squeezed in the middle layers, expanded somewhat at the top, and massively broadened at the bottom” (Soja 208). Los Angeles was still producing jobs, and “new employment opportunities were emerging within or near the traditional industrial core in South Central Los Angeles” (Oliver et al 122). However, unlike the manufacturing jobs that disappeared from the area, “the new jobs [were] in the competitive sector industries, which rely primarily on undocumented labor and pay, at best, minimum wage” (122). This squeeze resulted in a more pronounced social and spatial segmentation of the labor market based on race, ethnicity, immigrant status, and gender. Illegal immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and Asia formed a vulnerable pool of labor for mass manufacturers such as the apparel industry in LA, while African-American and Mexican-American neighborhoods, created out of mass urban migration earlier in the century to secure high-skill blue collar employment, now suffered both high levels

of unemployment and even higher levels of segregation. What Soja calls LA's "double-barreled industrialization" resulted in the city's low density sprawl of residences and workplaces, linked by a labyrinth of freeways and marked by "an extraordinary fragmentation of political jurisdictions," into "literally hundreds of local governments" (Soja 196).

In response to the decline of the city in the face of sprawl and division, rather than revitalize afflicted neighborhoods, powerful corporate interests shifted public interest funds and public expenditures, intended for programs like public housing developments, towards major renewal programs aimed instead at the central city business district, and "selectively gentrifying the extensive areas of deteriorated housing surrounding it" (Soja 197). As massive foreign investments in Los Angeles internationalized its local economy, the restructuring of the city matched those interests:

Foreign capital has been migrating into Los Angeles at an ever-expanding rate, buying land, building office complexes, investing in industry, hotels, retail shops, restaurants, and entertainment facilities. More than half the prime properties in downtown Los Angeles is now owned by foreign corporations or by partnerships with foreign companies, led by Japan and Canada; and foreign capital is said to have financed as much as 90 per cent of recent multi-story building construction. (Soja 215)

Los Angeles emerges in the 1990s as a global financial center, a revitalized downtown surrounded by a gutted inner city.

By the mid-nineties, when *Tropic of Orange* takes place, the social, spatial, and political segregation of Los Angeles is among the worst in the country. In *City of Quartz* (1990), written on the eve of the Rodney King riots, Mike Davis explains that under Mayor Tom Bradley (1973-1993), Los Angeles' governance was marked by "an intricate citywide accommodation of elites" (128). While Bradley brokered a historic compromise between the Westside and Downtown, "the showpiece program of his administration" was promoting Downtown redevelopment rather than community development in Watts and East LA (128). This new political coalition allowed municipal infrastructure to expand precipitously, with profits consistently reinvested from utilities

and redeveloped ports back into the city, funding further development of Downtown:

These fiscal closed circuits sustained high levels of public investments in container docks, terminal buildings, and downtown bank skyscrapers that, in turn, kept happy a huge constituency of pro-globalization interests, including airlines, stevedoring companies, railroads, aerospace exporters, hotels, construction unions, downtown landowners, [...] and the politicians dependent upon the largess of all of the above. (vii)

LA's map, then, represented a "fiscal closed circuit," guided by Bradley's conservative principle of self-financing utilities, and driven by pro-globalization interests. Under this plan, transportation hubs and downtown's business infrastructure grew ambitiously. David Harvey's concept of the "annihilation of space through time" applies here, as the "intense pressure to reduce the frictions of distance by innovations in transportation and communications" resulted in the accelerated production of the region's uneven development: "A powerful centripetal force is felt as uneven geographical investments in transport systems feed further uneven geographical developments" (Harvey 2006, 100-101).

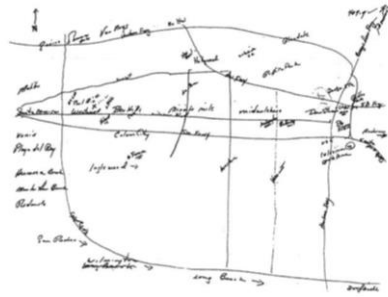
By following this design, "the city was subsidizing globalization without laying any claim on behalf of groups excluded from the direct benefits of international commerce" (Davis vii). Constituencies not tied to pro-globalization interests were literally not on the map: "There was no 'linkage,' in other words, between corporate-oriented public investment and the social needs that desperately fought for attention in the rest of the city budget" (vii). For instance, plant closures and redlining in South Central neighborhoods went overlooked; the disenfranchisement of the Eastside's Chicano population from city government went un-remedied; and the unchecked development of Downtown resulted in "irrational densities" which destabilized residential neighborhoods. Attempts by City Planning Director Calvin Hamilton (1968-85) to down-zone city neighborhoods to preserve single-family residential areas were impeded by the city council's pro-growth majority. As a result, "the city's zoning map remained wildly at odds with the community plans" (189).

This political neglect of inner city neighborhoods disproportionately affected minorities. When redevelopment of

Downtown began in earnest, “established Black and Chicano neighborhoods were losing several thousand [housing] units a year to freeway construction,” and “non-Anglos were able to purchase only 3.3 percent of the new housing stock constructed during the 1950s boom” (Davis 168). Deed restrictions, first legal and then de facto, ensured racial and social homogeneity in Los Angeles’ Westside and created a ‘white wall’ down Central Avenue, around the Black community at the edges of upwardly mobile neighborhoods. Unable to own or rent outside circumscribed neighborhoods, and redlined in their own, minorities in South Central and East LA were powerless to move, or prevent the encroachment of freeway construction.

There were also psychological effects, as “the city’s zoning map remained wildly at odds” not just with community plans, but eventually with the community itself. These political, social, and racial divisions “split the urban world into many enclaves experienced from many different perspectives.”¹¹ A 1971 study by the Los Angeles Department of City Planning exemplifies just how different these perspectives on the urban environment can be. The department used cognitive mapping—how an actual neighborhood citizen conceives and renders their environs—to glean fuller territorial information about contemporary populations. The study asked participants to map the space of the city. Their data shows the composite cognitive maps of “an affluent white suburb, an inner-city African American neighborhood, and a mixed neighborhood close to downtown that had long been home to new immigrants working in downtown factories and using a few downtown bus lines” (Hayden 27). The resulting images are staggering: Westwood’s white suburbanites draw an intricate, vivid map, complete with freeways radiating far beyond the city, though omitting lower income neighborhoods like South Central or East LA. The inner-city residents’ map is much smaller, centered in the city, and tellingly shows no freeways. The new Latino immigrants of Boyle Heights conceive of only five or six streets, their sense of the city limited to the bus depot, train depot, and city hall. The inner city’s inhabitants are so constrained within their neighborhoods that, even though they are urban space’s

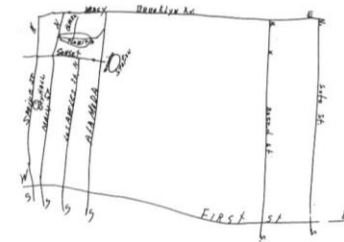
¹¹ From *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden’s compelling argument for the preservation of urban landmarks representing underserved city populations. She recounts the mapping study that follows.



Actual citizen's map: Westwood



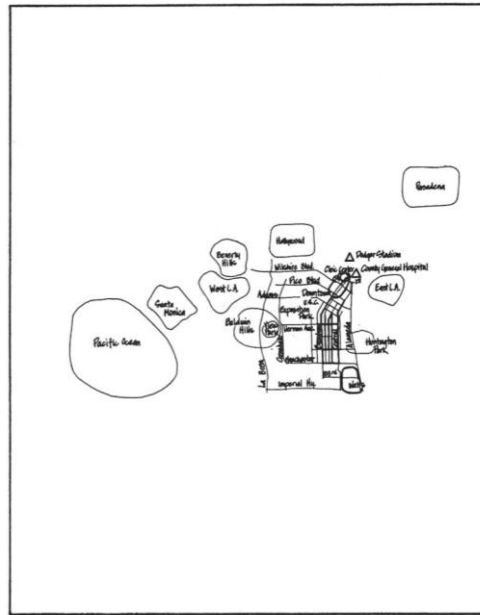
Actual citizen's map: Avalon



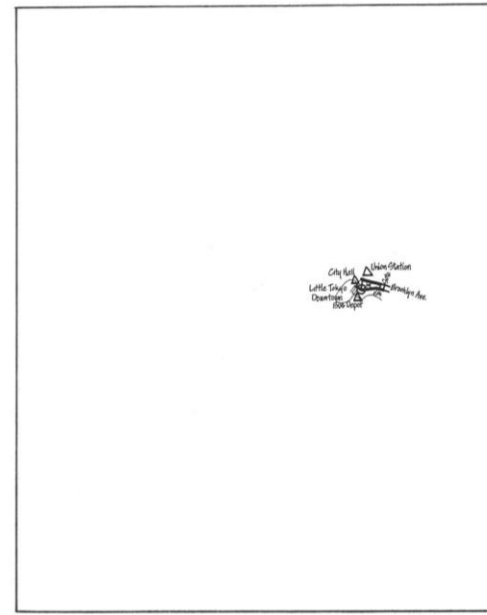
Actual citizen's map: Boyle Heights



Composite citizen image: Westwood



Composite citizen image: Avalon



Composite citizen image: Boyle Heights

Figure 1. Cognitive maps of an affluent predominantly white neighborhood, a working class, predominantly African

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American neighborhood, and a predominantly immigrant Latino neighborhood in L.A. Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place*. MIT Press, 1995: 28-29.

predominant users, they become unable to conceive what a map of LA drawn from above would look like [See Figure 1]

“Whose territory was it anyway?”

Yamashita attempts to recuperate these experiences of lived space, so at odds with the standard map, through characters who feel the disparity between their representations of space and the space presented to them by other social, racial, or political “enclaves.” Buzzworm, an African-American Vietnam veteran and native of South Central, lives through the local consequences of the city council’s pro-globalization agenda. South Central LA felt the crush of deindustrialization particularly keenly, and parts of South Central, including Watts, by 1990 are economically worse off than they were during the Watts riots in 1965 (Soja et al 218). During the 1970s, “the area experienced the greatest deterioration of any community in the city of Los Angeles. Population fell by 40,000; the labor force was reduced by 20,000; and by 1977 the unemployment rate hit 11.1%” (Soja et al 218). According to Oliver et al, in their analysis of the Rodney King riots, Buzzworm’s South Central in the mid-nineties is a crisis state brought on by forces “which have increasingly isolated the South Central Los Angeles community, geographically and economically, from the mainstream of the Los Angeles society,” including:

Recent structural changes in the local (and national) economy; wholesale disinvestment in the South Central Los Angeles community by banks and other institutions, including the local city government; and nearly two decades of conservative federal policies which have simultaneously affected adversely the quality of life of the residents of South Central Los Angeles and accelerated the decline and deterioration of their neighborhoods (120).

Buzzworm describes the land clearances in South Central incurred by the widening of the Century freeway in the early 1970s, which Davis calls “a traumatic removal of housing and restriction of neighborhood ties that was the equivalent of a natural disaster” (298):

He remembered years ago. Neighborhood meeting at the old recreation center. City bureaucrats come over to explain how they

were gonna widen the freeway. Move some houses over, appropriate streets, buy out the people in the way. Some woman just like grandma stood up and wanted to know what the master plan was. How'd she know it wasn't gonna be more than just widen the freeway? [...] Bureaucrats unveiled their poster boards and scale models. Everything in pastels, modern-like. Made the hood look cleaned up. Quaint. Make the palm trees look decorative. This was the plan. Just a little freeway widening. Wasn't gonna affect her house. (82)

Lived space goes up against conceived space: residents are faced with a visual rendering of their neighborhood that is almost unrecognizable from where they live, with its "pastels," quaint aspect, cleaned streets, and "decorative" palm trees. Yet the "master plan" is based on Downtown's growth and the freeways needed for movement in and out of the city, not on the maintenance of residential neighborhoods, and the highway's delayed completion inevitably affects Buzzworm's hood: "[Bureaucrats] make sure it took five years to clear the houses. Make sure the houses left to be broken into and tagged. [...] Use for illegal purposes. Pass drugs. House homeless. Make sure the ramp took another five years. Slow down the foot traffic and the flow. Break down the overpass crossing the freeway. Make it impossible for people to pass" (83). Delays in clearing and construction attract crime, eliminate foot traffic, and crush local businesses. The Crips, South Central's most notorious gang, is born out of this "social wasteland" (Davis 298).

Buzzworm has seen the contrast between bureaucrats' pastel depictions of benign highway widening and the concrete lived reality of abandoned homes and bulldozed streets. So when he looks at his copy of Mike Davis' *City of Quartz*, which has been given to him, and studies its map of South Central's gang territories [see Figure 2], he viscerally responds to the disconnect between lived and conceived space:

He followed the thick lines on the map showing the territorial standing of Crips versus Bloods. Old map. 1972. He shook his head. Even if it were true. Even if it were true, whose territory was it anyway? Might as well show which police departments covered which beats; which local, state and federal politicians claimed which constituents; which

kind of colored people (brown, black, yellow) lived where; [...] which schools got which kids; which taxpayers were registered to vote; which houses were owned or rented; which businesses were self-employed; [...] If someone could put down all the layers of the real map, maybe he could get the real picture. (Yamashita 81)

Buzzworm immediately questions the “reality” of the gang map, suspicious of its truthfulness, and aware that “even if it were true,” it would only represent one small aspect of the lived experience of his neighborhood. The gang map, as a model of conceived space, operates by isolating a single parameter. It also operates by isolating a space in time, freezing the ground at the peak of gang warfare and excluding the preceding years of massive Downtown redevelopment, failure to down-zone the inner city, and depletion of socio-economic resources that foment

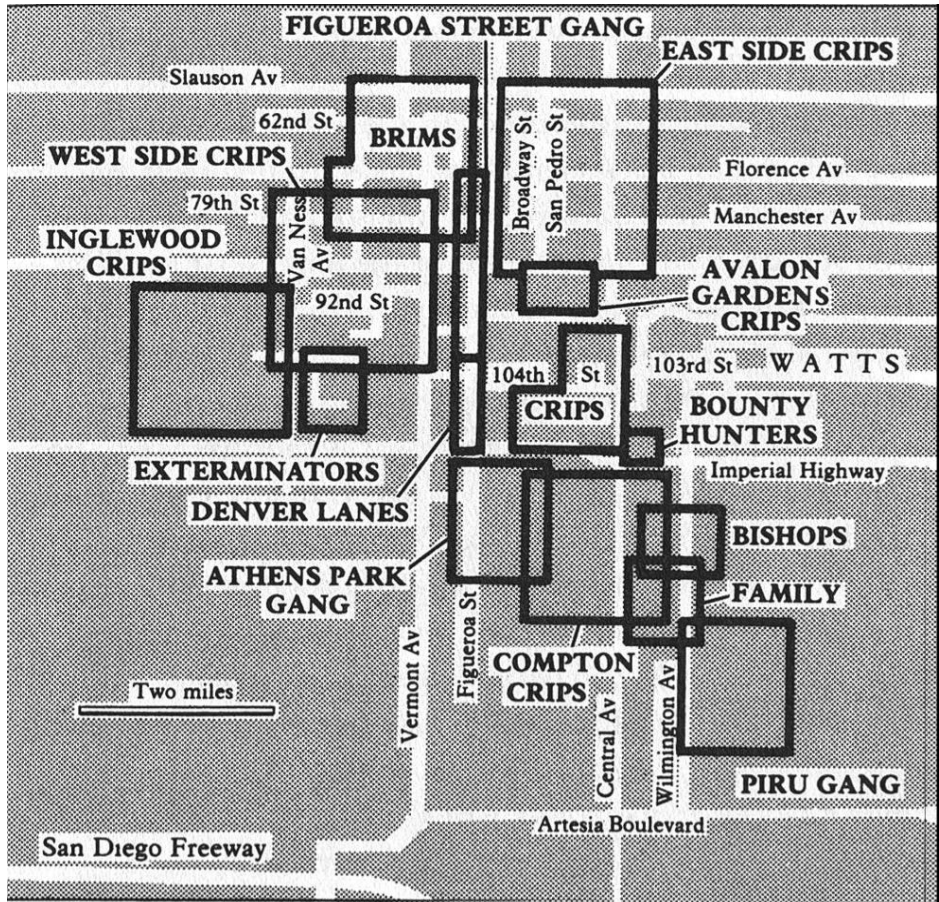


Figure 2. Map of gang territories by 1972, from Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz*. Verso, 1990; 301.

the rise of gangs in the first place. Buzzworm’s litany of other possible maps critiques the first, as the gang map appears to deliberately erase the factors—the police districts, school districts, and the institutional discrimination of businesses and housing covenants, among others—that have helped build the territories of Crips and Bloods being depicted. Buzzworm knows there is a bigger map, but cannot see it: “Was this his territory? According to the map, it was in Crips or Bloods territory” (81).

Buzzworm counters the representation of his hood demarcated by the city’s freeway grid or gang maps by building his own mental map based on lived, local experience of his neighborhood streets. South Central

has long been neglected by local government and community-based organizations, as the Reagan Administration dismantled the social safety net, and community-based organizations were forced to reduce or cease programs for the disadvantaged in the neighborhood (Oliver et al 126). Aware that state resources have abandoned South Central, Buzzworm takes on the role of “walking social services,” checking up on his neighbors and helping drug addicts, gang-bangers, and single parents improve their lives. As he walks, Buzzworm admires the area’s tall palm trees. Growing up in the inner city, Buzzworm says he “never noticed trees,” as there were “no trees to mention” (31):

Bushes, dried-up lawns, weeds, asphalt, and concrete. Consequently, no shade this side of town. What’s trees? He always wondered. Never sure about trees, even though he learned to spell it, learned to copy the pictures other kids painted in tempura, two brown strokes for a trunk and that green amorphous *do* on top, sometimes with red dots they called apples. Never saw one of those in the neighborhood. (32)

The absence of shade and the preponderance of concrete illustrates the spatial inequalities at work in Los Angeles’ urban planning (“Poor people don’t get to have no shade,” Buzzworm’s childhood classmates assert (32)). The hidden ideology of late capitalism extends here to the conception of something as simple as a tree. Children are taught that an “ideal” tree is from an orchard or temperate US suburb, fruit-bearing, green, providing shade, and indicative of good soil and enough water. Yet trees are geographically and economically out of reach for this South Central neighborhood. An apple tree is so beyond Buzzworm’s experience and hence his imagination that he must learn the concept in school. The presumed knowledge of what a tree *should* be puzzles Buzzworm. His lived experience has no counterpart for this tree.

However, once Buzzworm experiences a tree on his own block, he questions the concept of tree as such: “suddenly [...] his eyes followed the gray-brown poles up to the sky, and for the first time, he recognized what he believed to be a tree. They don’t draw it certain, he thought. Not at all. Brown trunks should be much longer, top *do* a bush, and absolutely no apples” (32). He imagines instantly how *his* real tree, a palm, might be rendered. Then he begins countering the received notion of a tree: “After

that, he started to draw these trees all the time [...] He was sure he had the tallest trees of anyone in the class” (31-32). Buzzworm counters the learned concept of a tree and even asserts the superiority of his own homegrown variety, taller and more real than the apple trees he must imagine.

In microcosm, Buzzworm’s changing conception of a tree offers an instance of lived space pushing up against both ideological *perceived* space, which unconsciously presents a certain kind of tree and hence a certain landscape as representative, and the *conceived* space of urban planners and architects, who have developed the spaces around South Central with an eye to maximizing the flow of some citizens—those driving on the highway, who could “speed over the hood like the freeway was a giant bridge” (33)—while minimizing the flow of others—impoverished African Americans with no access to a car and no purchasing power. Buzzworm thus resists the assumption that representations might equal lived experience: “Buzzworm figured that some representations of reality were presented for your visual and aural gratification so as to tap what you *thought* you understood. It was a starting place but not an ending” (25).

Despite protestations from his neighbors and classmates (“What you drawin’ them ugly palm trees for?” (32)), Buzzworm insists on the unique value of the trees in his neighborhood, admiring their adaptation to urban surroundings, their suitability for the desert climate, and their great height, rather than lamenting the absence of orchard trees:

One day, Buzzworm got taken for a ride on the freeway. [...] He realized you could just skip out over his house, his streets, his part of town. You never had to see it ever. Only thing you could see that anybody might take notice of were the palm trees. That’s what the palm trees were for. To make out the place where he lived. To make sure that people noticed. [...] This was probably why the palm trees didn’t need any water to speak of. They were fed by something else, something only the streets of his hood could offer. (33)

The palms, planted as a “mistake,” expected to stay short but turning out “as giants” (32), mark the space as set apart by their very spontaneous height, giving his neighborhood a unique characteristic, putting it “on the map” despite its status as unseen or neglected by urban planners. The

palms also force commuters and other users of L.A. space to conceive of the neighborhoods and foot traffic that is otherwise invisible from the freeway. Buzzworm's insistence that his version of a tree, or a neighborhood, is as valid as the "ideal" conception proffered by school or city planners, comes from his recognition that the representations of reality he's being presented with have little to no correlates to his own lived reality.

The value Buzzworm places upon his local environs, whether by admiring the unique attributes of the palms lining his streets, or by providing "walking social services" in the absence of government aid, suggests the possibility of a counter-map, one created from the ground up. Yet this ground-up map, in turn, can only be expressed symbolically, through narrative language. To plot out Buzzworm's daily walking routes or the locations of his palm trees would mean isolating aspects of the neighborhood and building models that substitute them for the whole, recreating the loss of knowledge endemic to converting lived space into conceived space. By representing this alternate mapping via narrative Yamashita conveys the sense of lived experience which is lost when transformed into a representation of space. The surreal traffic symphony Manzanar Murakami hears operates in this same imaginative register of lived space.

"All the layers of the real map"

As a homeless freeway conductor (complete with baton), Manzanar straddles two of Los Angeles' most defining facets: its rampant poverty and its crushing traffic problems. As of 2006, Los Angeles maintained the distinction of having the largest number of poor of any metropolitan area in the nation; its number of people living in extreme poverty doubled in the 1990s (Davis xv). In the shadow of Los Angeles' emergence as the "capital of capital" for the Pacific Rim (Soja 193), extreme poverty and unemployment reached a crisis point: "A particularly acute housing crisis has been boiling for many years, reversing the long trend toward increasing homeownership and inducing an extraordinary array or disparate housing strategies. [...] Those even less fortunate live on the streets and under the freeways, in cardboard boxes and makeshift tents, pooling together to form the largest homeless population in the United States – another 'first' for Los Angeles" (Soja 193). Circa 1983, the number

of homeless in LA County was estimated at 30,000, 40% of whom were considered mentally ill (Soja et al 195).

As Downtown development skyrocketed without remedying unemployment levels and dilapidated neighboring areas, Los Angeles' urban planners employed a number of strategies for containing the growing number of homeless. Davis writes that in the city of Los Angeles "one observes an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort" (224). To protect Downtown investments, the built environment itself combated the homeless;¹² the city combined these tactics with a police-enforced criminalization of any form of protective shelter, pushing the homeless to the edges of the now gentrified Downtown. As of 1990, the LAPD itself sat on the design board of at least one major Downtown redevelopment project (233).

As for traffic, Los Angeles' 'congestion tax' – the time lost in traffic delays – is the highest in the US, and mass transit accounts for only one in fifty trips within the region.¹³ Freeway building, such as the Century freeway widening that decimated South Central or the massive freeway constructions that by the 1980s consumed 12 percent of the land in East LA, displacing almost 10 percent of its largely Chicano population (Villa 82), has become an irrefutable symbol of the city council's plan to globalize the city at the expense of its inner-city denizens: "Redevelopment massively reproduced spatial apartheid. The moat of the Harbor Freeway and the regraded palisades of Bunker Hill cut off the new financial core from the poor immigrant neighborhoods that surround it on every side" (Davis 230).¹⁴

Stationed at various overpasses throughout Los Angeles, Manzanar feels the flows of traffic created by the city's massive freeway system, and unifies it into a symphony. Lefebvre doubts that "a small number of maps or even a single (and singular) map might be sufficient" to "deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode its meanings" (86); Manzanar, however, can see what Buzzworm calls "all the layers of the

¹² Including inaccessible building designs, arming with security cameras and guards, "bum-proof" benches, and sprinklers in public parks set to go off randomly overnight to prevent sleeping. See *City of Quartz*, Chapter Four.

¹³ As of 2006. From *City of Quartz*' preface, written on the fifteen-year anniversary of its publication.

¹⁴ For the socio-cultural effects of these freeway projects, especially on the Chicano/Latino population of Los Angeles, see Raúl Homero Villa, *Barrio-Logos*.

real map." Manzanar *hears* the different maps of city space as an ongoing symphony, and conducts the sound of trucks, cars, and persons: "As far as Manzanar was concerned, it was all there. A great theory of maps, musical maps, spread in visible and audible layers" (57). Fascinated by "the complexity of human adventure over lines of transit" (56), he sees the ebb and flow of traffic as musical movements, and conducts "sound into symphony" (35), connecting his city with an aural map.

Yamashita develops two metaphors to describe Manzanar's connection to the city: first, he bears and raises the sounds of the city, parenting a melody that connects its citizens, that "joined them, united families, created a community, a great society, an entire civilization of sound" (35); second, he sees the city united as a "blood connection," a network of veins and arteries, the literal lifeblood of the city, sustaining its heartbeat through "pumping and pulsating" (53). The insistence of these metaphors on the bodily and the familiar speak to a different way of conceiving the human network of Los Angeles. His conducting explicitly links up a city that is already intricately connected, but wholly unaware of its "blood connection." The language is dramatically at odds with discourse on grids, maps, and commuter routes, even though Manzanar's focus is freeway transportation. Yamashita, through the character of Manzanar, has humanized and incorporated (meaning, given a body to) an element of urban activity normally perceived in non-human, mechanical terms. As he conceives it, "the freeway was a great root system, an organic living entity" (37).

Manzanar's unique conception of the city cannot be unbraided from his status as homeless and carless. The resolute physicality of both the way he understands the city and the manner in which he conducts within it, "his very heart tilted forward, his arms offering" (35), reflects a relationship to his surrounding space marked by constant inhabitation, distinct from those tied to the city by work or leisure. Ironically, his lack of material or monetary ties is exactly what makes Manzanar's lived experience of the city more profound: "To say that Manzanar Murakami was homeless was as absurd as the work he chose to do. No one was more at home in LA than this man" (36). The underlying assumption of conceived space, corroborated by Los Angeles' various structural designs, that the homeless do not belong in the city, is revealed to be "absurd." Lefebvre remarks that even at the level of language we marginalize inhabitants of space, lacking well-defined terms to refer to them, and

resting on “clumsy and pejorative labels” (362). Indeed, the term “homeless” linguistically tries to erase the very persistent and we could say at-home homeless population of the city. Like other homeless, Manzanar is “feeding on leftovers” of society, collecting its refuse and reusing its discards: “In the same manner, who would use the residue of sounds in the city if Manzanar did not?” (56). His position as a “recycler,” and as a permanent inhabitant in social space, persisting in the public sphere as a man with no private home to return to or car to escape with, augments his perception of urban space, making visible a series of urban interconnections those ‘on the map’ can’t see, since “ordinary persons never bother to notice” (57).

Manzanar sees the “prehistoric grid of plant and fauna and human behavior,” and “the historic grid of land usage and property, the great overlays of transport, [...] a thousand natural and man-made divisions” (57), and conceives of these complexities as “mapping layers” (57). He perceives the elements of a city either meant to be rendered invisible, “the very geology of the land,” its underground rivers and fault lines, or to be ignored as quotidian, the “man-made grid of civil utilities,” natural gas, “unnatural waterways,” sewage, electricity (57), recognizing that, even before the introduction of streets, homes, and transport, there are already multiple, competing lenses for viewing city space. These are the layers that he conducts: “*There are maps and there are maps and there are maps.* The uncanny thing was that he could see all of them at once, filter some, pick them out like transparent windows and place them even delicately and consecutively in a complex grid of pattern” (57). Essentially, Manzanar is conducting maps, different rubrics for compassing the space of the city.

However, his product is of a wholly different order than the grids and networks he uses as raw material, as he combines these elements but does not appear to hierarchize them. Using an orchestra where “each of the maps was a layer of music,” Manzanar unites the sections into a unified sound. This musical map incorporates all the grids at work, thus presenting a model of unity without exclusion. Yet as with Buzzworm’s experience of his neighborhood, Manzanar’s experience of space cannot be expressed by a normal map. The imaginative realm of lived space can only be represented through literary tropes, either the metaphorical tie of Manzanar to the city that houses him, or by the surrealist depiction of a symphony of traffic sounds. The very fullness of Buzzworm and Manzanar’s understanding of the environs around them make the

exclusions necessary to standard map-making not possible. Only literature, *Tropic of Orange* argues, can create *this* kind of map.

Soon, Manzanar will not be the only one to hear his mapping symphony.

“Anybody on the ground’d know”

According to Lefebvre, the lived space of inhabitants, while largely left unexpressed, possesses the latent power to push back against both perceived and conceived space: “the violence of power is answered by the violence of subversion. [...] State-imposed normalcy makes permanent transgression inevitable” (23). Though abstract spatial practice a given society seeks to “reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there,” subversive elements can still “rattle the lid of the cauldron,” forcing at least recognition and at best transformation of the space. These new spaces continue to emerge by resisting or subverting the spaces molded by “the centres of wealth and power”:

[A]bstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space ‘differential space,’ because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. It will also restore unity to what abstract space breaks up—to the functions, elements and moments of social practice. (52)

This concept of differential space, as a subversive force that accentuates differences and transgresses against a given spatial practice,¹⁵ is directly applicable to *Tropic of Orange*. At a metanarrative level, the term describes the imaginative geography Yamashita creates in the novel itself, as her non-linear, non-hierarchical, polyvocal storylines produce a literary differential space. At the narrative level, which I shall address first, several of the central events of *Tropic of Orange*, including the homeless takeover

¹⁵ There are several other similar theories of resistant space, such as Michel Foucault’s “heterotopia,” Edward Soja’s “thirdspace,” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s “borderlands.” I prefer Lefebvre’s conception because of his tripartite division of space, which is also specifically tied to a late capital urban landscape, as his examples from Latin American shanty towns demonstrates.

of the Harbor freeway and the citywide traffic symphony, are best understood as expressions of differential space.

After two massive collisions, a large nearby homeless encampment, driven out by the fire of a crashed propane semi truck, moves onto the highway and into the cars abandoned by their owners: "In a matter of minutes, life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways. Occasional disputes over claims to territory arose, but for the moment, there were more than sufficient vehicles to accommodate this game of musical chairs" (121). For almost a week the Harbor freeway is reappropriated in these "predictable and unpredictable ways," as the homeless make a neighborhood out of their new car homes. Soft shoulders and trunks become gardens, streets are named, food services operating out of abandoned trucks meet the needs of the car city. The until recently carless experience and use their vehicles in ways unimaginable by those accustomed to riding LA's freeways.

The homeless city functions as a differential space, producing a counter-ideology that Lefebvre claims can challenge homogenizing abstract space. Lefebvre uses the example of Latin American shanty towns, which despite poverty "sometimes so effectively order their space—houses, walls, public spaces—as to elicit a nervous admiration. [...] The spontaneous architecture and planning ('wild' forms, according to a would-be elegant terminology) prove greatly superior to the organization of space by specialists" (374). The characterization is apt for Yamashita's car city. Eventually "politicos" tour the space and discover it to be self-sustaining and well organized. The mayor remarks that he's surprised to see how clean it is; he's told they've established "regular trash pickup," as well as recycling, an outhouse system, and a makeshift water works system based on the traffic median's sprinkler schedule (218). The over-taking of the Harbor freeway spontaneously applies "wild forms" of architecture and planning, and reorganizes space in ways so effective and user-friendly that even the mayor and city politicians must, with "nervous admiration," admit the efficiency.

As an effect of this differential space, time stops, in a surrealist turn, and the area around the freeway expands. Manzanar senses that "the entire event was being moved, stretched" (123), but continues to conduct, "pressing on through the spectacle that the present circumstances would soon become, [...] and the utterly violent assumption underlying everything: that the homeless were expendable" (123). The Harbor

freeway runs through the center of Los Angeles, bifurcating the inner city beneath it. When the city itself expands to actually accommodate the homeless population that has until now been deemed “expendable,” it also expands inner city neighborhoods such as Buzzworm’s South Central, and even neighborhoods outside the city center that are viewed as equally “expendable,” such as East LA and Koreatown.

A gangbanger calls Buzzworm asking for advice, as negotiations between the Crips, Bloods, and lawyers have stalled now that the territory seems to have shifted. The lawyer has a Thomas Guide “all marked up, annotated in writing” (187), but the gangbangers can tell that the official map they’re looking at no longer applies: “It’s about how come the map’s wrong? It’s about shrinkin’ and expandin’ jurisdictions” (188). Buzzworm jokes that the lawyer might be teasing them, but the “homey” insists: “the hood’s what we know, like the tattoos on our arms. You don’t understand the graphics, you don’t understand nothing. And someone’s movin’ it around” (188). When Buzzworm returns to South Central, he sees what the gangbanger saw, repeating the homey’s words to himself: “Anybody on the ground’d know what I’m talkin’ about” (188). The streets themselves are shifting based on the new logic of need and use. Maps like the Thomas Guide are incapable of capturing this new layout, which is now organized according to the type of knowledge the gangbanger insists his crew possesses: with the hood familiar to them as tattoos, literally drawn on their skin, they experience viscerally the difference between the official map and the actual distances felt on foot, such as the width of Adams street or how long it takes to span MLK Boulevard (188).

If we consider the surreal geographic shifts in *Tropic of Orange*, including the traveling Tropic of Cancer, but especially the stretching of time and space around the Harbor freeway, as representations of emergent differential space, we illuminate the rupture between space as produced and space as experienced or lived. The abandoned, poverty-stricken, and homeless-occupied neighborhoods of Los Angeles that have remained financially outside Downtown’s gentrification while residing in the heart of the city provide a constant counter to the abstract space produced by late capitalism, and envisioned by developers and urban planners driven by pro-globalization growth. These local areas foment discontinuities between conceptions of space radical enough to produce a new space. Furthermore, the way this space shifts—underserved but over populated sectors gain land, while underused parts of the city diminish

physically—“restores unity” to actual social practice (Lefebvre 52), as conceived space finally matches up to the *lived* space of the majority of Los Angeles’ inner city inhabitants.

Differential spaces, which “endure or arise on the margins of the homogenized realm,” are eventually overtaken by abstract space: “Sooner or later, [...] the existing centre and the forces of homogenization must seek to absorb such differences” (Lefebvre 373). The freeway takeover is “absorbed” by a military assault that attacks the makeshift neighborhood as if it were a national threat (which ideologically, according to Lefebvre, it is). The spontaneous car city and its differential space is destroyed. However, *representations* of this differential space remain. In another second surrealist turn, Manzanar’s symphony is taken up by the homeless encampment, and ultimately the entire population of Los Angeles. Manzanar’s symphony, now carried on by “grassroots conductors of every sort” (254), continues to produce a map of those elements rendered invisible by perceived and conceived spatial production. Yamashita’s surrealistic depiction of the symphony and the shifting geography of the city also point to another, metaphorical representation of differential space: that of the novel itself.

A “choral babel” and “the next map”

The homeless of the Harbor freeway takeover and LA’s inner-city denizens first hear Manzanar’s musical map, which has now incorporated the differential space of the freeway into its symphony. Buzzworm catches a young street tagger listening to classical music on his walkman; he tells Buzz he’s “trying to listen for this thing” (106) he hears in his head, that “sounds like this stuff here” (106). Later, as Buzzworm is searching the radio channels for soul music, another Los Angelino is trying to discern the song in her head: “Could anyone identify it? It was driving her crazy. [...] Only thing she knew was it sounded classical” (107). The homeless on the freeway hear Manzanar’s music instantly and clearly, and begin to sing and harmonize to the symphony, leading Buzzworm to exclaim, “there’s a goddamn choir down here!” (156).

Manzanar’s symphony spreads throughout LA, ironically, through the very impossibility of movement. The expansion of underserved areas and the surreal shifts in time constricts the highly developed but largely uninhabited Downtown, creating an epic traffic jam. Every cultural event

in the city ends simultaneously, and every commuter merges into traffic so immovable it renders LA's thoroughfares useless. Drivers abandon cars throughout the city: "Streets'd become unrecognizable from an automotive standpoint. Only way to navigate was to feel the streets with your own two feet" (219). The entire city becomes carless and homeless; "Perhaps it should have been a comforting idea to Manzanar. A kind of solidarity: all seven million residents of Greater LA out on the town, away from their homes, just like him, outside" (206). Their new status on foot allows them to perceive the city as users and inhabitants, and as such they are able finally to hear Manzanar's symphony.

Manzanar sees his musical map emerging throughout Los Angeles, and with it a different way to perceive the city. Looking back to Los Angeles' beginning, he sees that until now the infrastructures and grids of the city were driven by a "map of labor": "It was those delicate vulnerable creatures within those machines that made this happen: a thing called work" (237). The new grid he sees, however, is not driven by labor, but rather by inhabitants. City-dwellers like Manzanar, Buzzworm, and the homeless in encampments throughout the city are excluded from the grids of labor and transport that historically defined Los Angeles. This exclusion made them invisible to representations of space, and their lived experience continuously contradicted maps they were not listed upon. The symphony city-dwellers begin to hear, however, expresses the "inhabitant's" experience of city space:

Little by little, Manzanar began to sense a new kind of grid, this one defined not by inanimate structures or other living things but by himself and others like him. He found himself at the heart of an expanding symphony of which he was not the only conductor. [...] On a distant overpass, he could make out the odd mirror of his figure, waving a baton. And beyond that, another homeless person had also taken up the baton. (238)

Manzanar and "others like him" are defined by urban planners and even by linguistics by what they are *not*: unemployed, homeless, carless. The "expanding symphony" represents the differential space of these unseen inhabitants, marks the presence of a largely unperceived group, and connects them to one another and to their location—like a grid. *Unlike* a grid, Manzanar's symphony avoids the supposed objectivity of conceived

space, through the freedom of each conductor to interpret: “Strange and wonderful elements had been added,” Manzanar remarks, creating “at times a choral babel” (238). As users of all the city’s maps, but perceived or conceived in none, the homeless grid outlined in song maintains Manzanar’s ability to see all the maps at once, and to incorporate them.

Yamashita builds a differential space of her own through her use of an unorthodox non-hierarchical narrative layout, conceptualizing for her readers the literally inconceivable: a map of lived space, by and for users and inhabitants. Yamashita spatializes the form of *Tropic of Orange*, indexing the text with a “HyperContexts” two-page chart [see Figure 3], which lays out in columns and rows the different characters and their sections of narration.

The HyperContexts page is plotted according to character and day of the week, but their order is random, their allotment upon the page is equal, and each chapter is labeled by the character’s unique way of reckoning the passing of a day (“Dawn”; “To Eat”; “Coffee Break”), and by their specific location in space, usually literal but sometimes metaphorical (“Koreatown”; “Marketplace”; “Final Destination”; “Aztlán”). Yamashita weaves these chapters seamlessly throughout *Tropic of Orange*, choosing not to hierarchize them chronologically or cyclically but operating under a thematic principle all her own. The characters, from disparate cultural, ethnic, and national environments, all migrate eventually to Los Angeles, finding themselves by the end to be intimately connected. Formally, then, the novel constructs a kind of lived space, based in individual experience, marked by the imagination, and representative of the differential spaces that already exist within our cities.

The traveling tropic, the utopian freeway takeover, the expanding city, and Manzanar’s music all use surrealism to attempt to capture the pre-verbal experience of representational space. Literary language, able to operate in imaginative or symbolic registers, can capture the “layers of the map” that urban planners exclude. Speaking of contested urban spaces, Hayden warns that “as the productive landscape is more densely inhabited, the economic and social forces are more complex, change is rapid, layers proliferate, and often abrupt spatial discontinuities result that cultural landscape studies seem unable to address adequately” (17). These “spatial discontinuities,” akin to Lefebvre’s differential space, cannot be resolved with quantitative analysis, “because there the human experience of place is often lost” (17). Where the tools of map-making fall

short, other cognitive strategies can be employed, to remedy the gap between lived space and conceived or perceived space. Hayden suggests the power of place memory to mend this disparity; Yamashita has a different strategy. Her work demonstrates the power of imaginative city-building, to provide a place, if only in fiction, for a map conceived from the ground up to be drawn. *Her* map points towards the possibilities of spaces as yet incomprehensible in reality. As Buzzworm puts it: "Somebody else must have the big map. Or maybe just the next map. The one with the new layers you can't even imagine" (82).

HyperContexts

	Monday Summer Solstice	Tuesday Diamond Lane	Wednesday Cultural Diversity	Thursday The Eternal Buzz	Friday Artificial Intelligence	Saturday Queen of Angels	Sunday Pacific Rim
Rafaela Cortes	Midday -Not Too Far from Mazatlán chapter 1	Morning -En México chapter 10	Daylight -The Cornfield chapter 18	Dusk -To the Border chapter 24	Dawn -The Other Side chapter 30	Nightfall -Aztlán chapter 38	Midnight -The Line chapter 45
Bobby Ngu	Benefits -Koreatown chapter 2	Car Payment Due -Tijuana via Singapore chapter 12	Second Mortgage -Chinatown chapter 15	Life Insurance -L.A./T.J. chapter 26	Visa Card -Final Destination chapter 34	Social Security -I-5 chapter 40	American Express -Mi Casa/Su Casa chapter 49
Emi	Weather Report -Westside chapter 3	NewsNow -Hollywood South chapter 9	Disaster Movie Week -Hiro's Sushi chapter 20	Live on Air -El A chapter 27	Promos -World Wide Web chapter 29	Prime Time -Last Stop chapter 41	Commercial Break -The Big Sleep chapter 44
Buzzworm	Station 10 -Jefferson & Normandie chapter 4	Oldies -This Old Hood chapter 13	LA X -Margarita's Corner chapter 16	You Give Us 22 Minutes -The World chapter 22	AM/FM -FreeZone chapter 31	The Car Show -Front Line chapter 37	Hour 25 -Into the Boxes chapter 48
Manzanar Murakami	Traffic Window -Harbor Freeway chapter 5	Rideshare -Downtown Interchange chapter 8	The Hour of the Trucks -The Freeway Canyon chapter 19	Lane Change -Avoiding the Harbor chapter 28	Jam -Greater L.A. chapter 35	Drive-By -Virtually Everywhere chapter 42	SigAlert -The Rim chapter 46
Gabriel Balboa	Coffee Break -Downtown chapter 6	Budgets -Skirting Downtown chapter 14	The Interview -Manzanar chapter 17	Time & a Half -Limousine Way chapter 25	Overtime -El Zócalo chapter 32	Working Weekend -Dirt Shoulder chapter 39	Deadline -Over the Net chapter 43
Arcangel	To Wake -Marketplace chapter 7	To Wash -On the Tropic chapter 11	To Eat -La Cantina de Misericordia y Hambre chapter 21	To Labor -East & West Forever chapter 23	To Dream -America chapter 33	To Perform -Angel's Flight chapter 36	To Die -Pacific Rim Auditorium chapter 47

Figure 3. Grid of character's whereabouts, with his or her style of referencing time and place. Yamashita, Karen Tei. *Tropic of Orange*. Coffee House Press, 1997; front matter

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