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# Mapping Resistance: Spatial Narratives and Power Struggles in Los Angeles

Master's thesis in English  
Supervisor: Hanna Musiol  
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## Abstract

This project examines the use of space in two contemporary, postmodern novels, delving into the ways in which the urban landscape of Los Angeles in *Inherent Vice* and *Tropic of Orange* transforms into sites of control, repression, and resistance. It explores how the antagonists use space as a tool of oppression and how the marginalized population of L.A. resists this control using space and their bodies. The thesis is divided into two chapters, the first chapter focuses on Larry “Doc” Sportello and his fellow beach bums trying to resist the spatial control and destruction in 1970 Los Angeles. The second chapter examines how far manipulation and control have spread in the last 25 years and its effects on the marginalized population of L.A. Throughout the thesis the effects of oppression, globalization, and Los Angeles architecture are explored.

Keywords: Space, L.A., power, corruption, control & resistance.

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“Faustian economic restructuring, social prosperity, elite antisemitism, central place competition, internalization of class formation, extreme political fragmentation, and disfranchisement of the inner city – none brings it all together like Los Angeles.”

-Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*



## Introduction

Urban spaces are not just physical environments; they are dynamic entities shaped by complex interactions of social, economic, and political forces. In the sprawling, postmodern metropolis of Los Angeles, these forces converge to create a mosaic of spatial narratives that reflect and perpetuate societal inequalities, power dynamics, and cultural identities.

In *Inherent Vice*, we experience 1970 California through Doc, a ceaselessly stoned private investigator attempting to solve a seemingly unsolvable case involving a kidnapped real-estate developer. Amidst the backdrop of psychedelic counterculture and looming societal changes, Doc navigates a haze of conspiracy, corruption, and strange, dangerous characters in his search for the truth. 25 Years later, in *Tropic of Orange*, we get a look at 1990s California through seven different people from different cultural and economic backgrounds. After an explosion on the Harbor Freeway, the city is thrown into chaos, and it allows the marginalized characters to claim the freeway as a safe space of their own. Through these characters, we experience a militaristic and brutal Los Angeles in a zero-sum game between the classes where the aim is social control and commercial security.

This thesis examines the literary portrayal of Los Angeles in Thomas Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* (2009) and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997), aiming to study not only the spatial dimensions depicted by the authors but also the multifaceted aspects related to space. The focus will be on Pynchon and Yamashita's literary and spatial representation of the marginalized and the poor at the level of the person, street and society. I will examine the characters' available actions, the spaces and places they occupy; and how these spaces are under near-constant threat of destruction or transformation. This thesis examines the spatial organization within these novels, exploring how it reflects the control exerted by the affluent over the less privileged,

perpetuating cycles of poverty, manipulation, and marginalization experienced by the characters, while also investigating how those in positions of authority above street level exert their power. As space is both material and immaterial, the thesis will also discuss how the characters use their spaces to physically and symbolically resist the dominant power in the region as well as the spatial tactics they utilize. Space cannot be removed from its socio-historical context; therefore, the combination of these two novels and the secondary material allows an exploration of fringe and dangerous spaces and a centering of poor and marginalized voices. I have also chosen Karen Tei Yamashita and Thomas Pynchon so that I can get differing perspectives of class, ethnicity, gender, and time period, on the same space and place. How are the authors spatializing their plots and utilizing different aesthetic narratives? What do the novels reveal about Los Angeles space? Through the literature and the differing perspectives on the spatial dynamics of Los Angeles, one can uncover layers of meaning and complexity beneath its seemingly homogeneous façade.

My exploration of literary Los Angeles space and its power relations is informed by Mike Davis's work on L.A. architecture, culture, and city planning as well as Geographer Rebecca Solnit's works on traversing city space. I have also utilized theoretical frameworks such as Michel Foucault's "Heterotopology" (1984), Edward Soja's "Thirdspace" (1996), Martin Heidegger's "Dwelling" concept (1971), Mikhail Bakhtin's "Chronotope", Rob Nixon's "Slow Violence" and manmade "Atopias" (2017) to examine the social and structural aspects of the space in the literary works. Employing these methodologies allows me to examine the space as a discursive construct, highlighting small variations, mutations, and contradictions in the narrative. It also offers me ways of conceptualizing space and finding discontinuity and ruptures in the environment (Moradi 44). Furthermore, theories such as Thirdspace, include and combine the physical and perceived space, the mental as well as the conceived and lived spaces in the

analysis. This means that it can be used as a versatile tool to explore the literary, structural, and spatial aspects of the novels in combination with the political, cultural, economic, and social structure of the city space (Harris 265). These theoretical frameworks allow me to examine the novel's abstract and differential spaces as the ideas of lived, conceived, and embodied space have also been important for my reading of the works. With the chosen texts, I examine how literature can be used to explore and explain the complex and subjective experiences of postmodern Los Angeles's physical and mental space as well as the implications for those who inhabit it.

Chapter 1 will explore the spaces and places of *Inherent Vice*. Doc and his fellow beach bums use the fictionalized Gordita Beach as a physical and symbolic sanctuary where they can resist the changes coming to the rest of L.A. Their spaces are also being replaced by symbols of power and high and low-income real estate housing projects. This chapter examines how Gordita Beach is used as a heterotopia of deviation and a chronotopia of resistance against those who wish to alter and destroy their spaces. These spaces are a necessary safeguard as the antagonists use spatial destruction and reconstruction to manipulate history and the characters' memories.

Chapter 2 delves into the spaces of mid-1990s Los Angeles, mainly focusing on the impoverished neighborhoods and a newly established encampment of impoverished and homeless people situated on the Harbor Freeway. I argue that in *Tropic of Orange*, because of globalization and capitalism, the spatial control and exploitation have progressed to the point where many people are just part of the city infrastructure. In relation to this, I also examine the disconnect between the antagonist's conceived space and the actual lived reality of L.A. Chapter 2 will explore these matters mainly through two characters, Buzzworm and Manzanar. Via them, I can examine how some of the spaces of 90s California have deteriorated and others have

flourished over the last decades.

Throughout the thesis, I examine the author's literary representation of freeways, the importance of embodiment, movement, and stable dwelling in the formation of identity, and how the characters can use their bodies and their spaces in acts of resistance. Through a close analysis of Pynchon's and Yamashita's texts, I will unpack how urban space functions as a site of struggle, negotiation, and meaning-making. The dissertation delves into the influence of globalization and capitalism on intensifying homelessness and the exploitation of the poor, revealing the multifaceted ways in which space, power, social hierarchies, and economic inequality intersect in literary urban environments.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sidenote: I use very general terms to refer to both novels man-made structures and systems as antagonists as there is no clear face to the spatial control, oppression and violence.

Chapter 1: Lost in the Labyrinth - Spatial Power Struggles, Resistance, and Counterculture in  
Thomas Pynchon's *Inherent Vice*.

Thomas Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* is a 2009 postmodern noir-detective novel where the mystery barely matters, and nothing is ever really resolved. The story takes place in 1970 at the end of the "free love" and counterculture revolution of the 1960s. As mentioned, it follows a continually stoned and paranoid private detective named Larry "Doc" Sportello. The plot revolves around the kidnapping of rich real-estate developer Micky Wolfmann, who everyone wants to find. As Doc tries to figure out who has kidnapped whom and who knows what and where everyone keeps disappearing, and he becomes involved in a real-estate development conspiracy that aims to change the spaces and places of Los Angeles for a sinister purpose. While Doc is trying to unravel the mystery, it seems like someone is always trying to steer him in other directions. Either the LAPD, the government, the FBI, his fellow beach bum hippies, the Aryan brotherhood, black nationalists, or an international drug cartel named the Golden Fang. These various agencies of power and control are all trying to come out on top in the redevelopment of the city space. Even though they, somehow, all seem to be working together under the same leadership, toward the same goal. The plot, setting, and atmosphere of *Inherent Vice* align with the noir genre tropes, which frequently depict Los Angeles as a "deracinated urban hell" (Davis 37), emphasizing the characters' and antagonists' pursuit of economic self-interest. Pynchon highlights and accentuates this economic self-interest through literature by utilizing the city spaces. It is a novel that, despite both the sunny and smoggy California landscape, has a dark and eerie undertone and a constant atmosphere of paranoia. It operates, as literary scholar Hanjo Berressemn states, on a "rhetorical level that is mostly dark, angry and almost allegorical"

(Berressem 434), which stands in stark contrast to its setting.

At the same time, as noted by Lieven Ameel, the city space is crucial as it propels the narrative and guides the protagonist through it (Ameel 239). In this case, Los Angeles is changing and forming according to the will of the antagonists and the times. The literary space itself often conveys both meaning and feeling to its readers and the spaces can work as metaphors or highlight allusions that clarify the work. The spatial turn, according to Gerhard von Heever, suggests that we can conceive space as a social construction that can help us explain different histories and their cultural environment (Heever 74). Moreover, literature professor Russell West-Pavlov states that “the spatializing description of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power” (West-Pavlov 292). Space, as argued by Andrew Thacker, is both created by human endeavors and an active force in the development and formation of society (Thacker 30). There is an inherent power within the spaces, and they are never only a background for social activity. For example, by offering a glimpse “under the city”, the novels unveil its true intentions in how it treats its poorest and its essential workers. Pynchon paints a vivid picture of Los Angeles space in 1970 as unreal, dark, and alien, encompassing everything from treacherous back alleys to clandestine geopolitical forces lurking in the shadows. In the novels, the forward-thinking ideals of the Sunshine State leave a large part of its population in a dystopic struggle for survival, while living right next to affluent, gentrified neighborhoods and the downtown metropolis.

Consequently, Pynchon’s city influences both narrative and character and there is a symbiotic relationship between Los Angeles, Doc and the beach bums. Because of the antagonists and the age of change the characters are living through, they constantly have to adapt to new rules, contexts and settings. Rebecca Solnit states “We are ourselves ghosts of other

times, not fully present in our own; and we see what is no longer here and feel the future as a wind through the streets, a wind that is for us who look backwards always blowing away what we cherish, the storm of loss.” (*Infinite City* 23) Doc is very much connected to the city space as he is linked to a vast number of social connections throughout the city space and the bygone L.A. culture. He is an archetypical 1960s “California beach bum”, a man out of time who cannot keep up, and he is juxtaposed with the city’s rapid development. Throughout the plot, Pynchon shows how the city space and Doc can shape and reveal things about each other.

Additionally, there is an information overload to such a degree that it becomes more and more difficult to find context, and it is problematic to locate the texture of the place. Spatial scholar Yi-Fu Tuan defines the texture of space and place as the relationships that weave together social interactions and hierarchies as well as the symbiosis of words, images, effects and tactile experience (Manoulescu 243). The experience of reading the novel is like you are lost and confused along with Doc Sportello. The fog that is present throughout the novel is perhaps a physical manifestation of the confusion; we are stuck with Doc in the “desert of perception”, looking for clear and coherent meaning in Pynchon’s space. As if you are experiencing a contact high by holding the book, disoriented and trapped on the streets of L.A., where people seem to come out of nowhere and everywhere. The number of characters and entities contributes to the spatial confusion of the novel itself. There are one hundred and thirty characters, thirty-seven entities, six gangs, and four bands (Razzel 2019) in this relatively short novel. Many of these individuals meet, interact, fight, kill each other, or help each other in different ways but nothing seems to really change as a result. Just like the experience the novel’s psychedelic drug users seek, postmodernism offers a rejection of a single definite answer and instead embraces a multiplicity of meanings.

### Spatial Identity, Difference and Power

Pynchon uses a postmodern, scattered form and structure in tandem with a labyrinthine plot and content. He warps and rejects the idea of the traditional master narrative and turns it into something more modern and sinister. Instead of master narratives such as the enlightenment, religion, or the American dream, Pynchon's master narrative is one of paranoia, distrust, and the power of capitalistic and globalizing influences. Pynchon and Yamashita also make it difficult to ascertain who is really in power in either novel. Their control seems to be both fleeting and nebulous while at the same time being all-encompassing and totalitarian. Their influence infects every space and imposes their rules. They have used local industry and finance in combination with the overwhelming force of global investments to homogenize, shape, or destroy whichever space they need to shape the narrative.

What complicates the reading of the narrative further is that in both Pynchon's and Yamashita's novels, the characters find themselves entangled in an outcast spatial narrative that clashes with a dominant master narrative. This master narrative, a human construction, seeks absolute control not only over the physical spaces of Los Angeles but also over the bodies inhabiting them. Therefore, as cultural geographer Juha Ridanpää claims, the spatial narrative significantly influences and shapes the identities of the inhabitants as they are co-constitutive outcomes of interaction (Ridanpää 192). For example, the antagonists in the novels influence the city space and it is through the narrative they create that phrases such as "illegal alien", "the war on drugs" and the negative stigma around the poor and unemployable are created. These are phrases and language that categorize and dehumanize, further influencing the inhabitant's spatial identity. They propagate this sort of language and narrative while they continually remind the



people of their own merits and achievements. A relevant concept here is the “production of locality” (Huysen 24) which states that the city culture is interconnected with both space and action. This adds to the complexity of the spatial narrative as local space does not exist passively, it actively generates and influences various aspects of modern city life, such as cultural practices, social interactions, and economic activities. It informs the social use of space, how the characters interact and interpret the city and the distinction between the spaces. Therefore, the antagonists can employ tactics that can displace the anger that could be focused on the city’s unjust social structures, fostering division and turning the rest of the population against the outcasts. This manipulation of language and narrative not only perpetuates existing inequalities but also deteriorates social progress and obscures the cause and effect of the current social structures (Jaffe 4), which in turn makes them more difficult to change.

To further emphasize the connection between the disjointed narrative and the complex city space, Pynchon adeptly utilizes classic detective noir tropes but imbues them with a postmodern twist. Attempting to summarize the plot proves challenging due to the multifaceted and enigmatic nature of postmodern life and space portrayed within the narrative. Doc's frequent drug use adds to the narrative and spatial complexity, blurring the lines between reality and hallucination. Readers are prompted to question: Is everything a sinister global conspiracy or is he just a paranoid who imagines that it’s all connected? Moreover, Doc's lack of care concerning his past and uncertainty about his present reality creates a vulnerability that allows external forces to manipulate him and his perceptions of his physical surroundings. Hence, even the reliability of Doc's experiences and spatial understanding comes into question, challenging readers to assess the validity of his experiences and interpretations. Further obfuscating the power of the paranoid master narrative is Doc himself; as what perhaps is blocking the reader

from a proper spatial understanding is his drug-infused view of the city space. A complete interpretation of the space is resisted, and there is often some doubt that what we are reading is actually happening.

However, in *Inherent Vice* identity and space are closely linked, and they are dynamic and open to change. This relationship, in combination with the tendency that counter-narratives often emerge initially at the periphery of official culture (Jaffe 2), allows the beach bums and the homeless in *Tropic of Orange* to create their own spatial identity and counter-narrative through resistance—an aspect that will be explored later in this thesis. Through narratives and ideas such as ethnicity, social status, marginalization, and their social practices, rituals and discourses, one can create a sense of spatial belonging and reject the antagonist's "official" visions of wholeness.

On the other hand, because identity and space are co-constitutive it also gives the antagonists further power in regulating who is allowed to enter, leave, and live within these spaces as well as what kind of activity is occurring within them. Through this spatial control, they can create new social, moral, cultural, and even language confinements in their vision of the present and the future. This control is exercised through spatial dynamics that utilize and are empowered by social distances as well as social differences such as gender, class, race, etc. (Ameel 235). In this way the social elites can control the social mobility in Los Angeles, securing their place at the top. If you do not adhere to the rules, you are probably not going to succeed in their space. Being able to keep people, groups, or communities on the margins is a powerful tool. In the case of *Inherent Vice* and *Tropic of Orange*, the deviation from their controlled space is punished with lethal violence.

Another element that complicates the narrative is the fact that globalization and the ruthless and greedy capitalistic systems are a constant presence in the diegetic space of both novels'

literary representations of Los Angeles. The impact of globalizing technologies, such as electronic communications and new modes of transportation, has transformed the temporal and spatial dimensions of the city. Therefore, the spatial reading is further complicated by the fact that, as Amaryll Chanaday claims, globalization causes globalized facts to take local form (Chanaday 335). An example of this is the narrative of opposition between local and global is personified in Doc's struggle against the international drug cartel, the Golden Fang. Here, the local stand in opposition to the global, representing authentic cultural tradition, while the global is depicted as synonymous with "progress" that manifests as a force of alienation, domination, and dissolution. Moreover, as literature scholar Andreas Huyssen states, "This global/local binary, however, is as homogenizing as the alleged cultural homogenization of the global it opposes" (Huyssen 9). This means that the attempt to preserve local culture in the face of globalization can sometimes lead to the oversimplification or uniformity of diverse local traditions and identities.

Oppositions like these inform the available behavior and possible acts within the space and the dialectic creates new cultural and social forms. These actions, in turn, create reality and inform speech acts, matter, form and image. Meaning that space is essentially modified by events, and it changes continuously. Spatial scholars Michel Lussault and Mathis Stock claim that after an action, it creates a new space, although it is not completely different until its re-activation and incorporation into a new activity. The pre-existing material form of space is a resource for practice, and it is incorporated into the new arrangement (Lussault and Stock 12). The manipulation of events is what provides the antagonists in both novels the power to alter the urban space to suit their narrative, demonstrating how space continually evolves through actions and remains susceptible to reinterpretation.

Consequently, in *Inherent Vice* the characters' spaces are being destroyed and changed to fit the antagonist's new vision of L.A. These new social and spatial structures are formed and stabilized by cultural and socially recognized situations, which again are formed by the actors through practice. In this regard, the importance of events, languages, discourse, and judgments as speech acts are crucial configurations. For example, Los Angeles is often mediated as a space made up of sunny beaches, huge, sprawling cities, and the glitz and glamour of Hollywood. It is considered one of the world's culture epicenters and it creates its spatial perception through mediation and literature. Culturally, Los Angeles is often depicted as the ideal, inspirational space for the "American Dream" and spiritual discovery, where one can come from nothing and be discovered or make it big in real estate, software, the fitness industry, or any other businesses. However, Los Angeles is unique among modern cities in that it combines global capital with inner-city deterioration, and low-density urban sprawl with great social, economic, racial, and ethnic segregation. Perhaps because of this, scholar Christina Rodriguez argues, L.A. looms large in both literary and cultural imaginations (Rodriguez 104).

Through practice and language, the issues of rampant homelessness, governmental and real-estate power abuses, discrimination, and the extreme living conditions of immigrants and the poor are often overlooked. Pynchon's and Yamashita's literary space, however, brings this to the forefront. The spaces are infested with violent crime, designer drug dealing, paranoia, and the seedier sides of the entertainment industry. Psychological and physical spatial tactics are both utilized as the antagonists use the police to limit freedom of speech and control and restrict spaces so that they can control crowds. This can, for example, act as an antidote to protests, and at the same time, seal off less useful or profitable neighborhoods and housing projects. Both the "American Dream" and Los Angeles seemly require large class differences to exist. In the

novels, the development of the city is focused on building a better future, but one could ask, for whom? The space enforces a system that tries to keep certain people assigned to certain spaces so that they can fulfill certain roles they have been directed into.

In relation to this, the novel depicts multiple examples of how the same space can even be construed in multiple ways by the same actor, depending on how they want to utilize it. We can also glean other, perhaps underlying, meanings and messages from space by examining the multiple ways the same place is portrayed through discourse. Speech acts are facilitated to express the significance of the place. In *Inherent Vice*, Gordita Beach is a prime example of how a space changes as a result of the discourse surrounding it. The beach space's purpose and value change throughout the novel at the whims of the antagonists and when it is no longer useful it starts receding into the background of both the plots and the city's consciousness, diminishing in value. This means that, as Lussault and Stock claim, the enemy has both the power and the linguistic competence to exploit and express social differences and the spatial complexity of the space (Lussault and Stock 13). This is tremendously powerful as they can present someone as one type of person through your space or the adjacent and linking spaces, which those individuals have no control over. Within this system characters such as the beach bums or the homeless are rarely the creators of space, they can often only narrate their spatial experience.

In this way, Pynchon uses the literary form and narrative to show the reader how the hierarchical social difference in *Inherent Vice* is socially produced and spatially expressed. This means that the social and spatial differences between Gordita Beach and the upper-class Hollywood Hills compounds or the LAPD headquarters underscore the social power differences and structures. This process involves a deliberate exertion of control and intrusion into both public and private spaces, resulting in their systematic degradation. Different people are assigned

to different spaces, and they take part in experiencing, producing, and reproducing the space and the social differences within it. It shows us how and to whom rules are enforced and it reflects what role the inhabitants of each space hold in the city's psyche. This is an effective way to keep them in the same space and hierarchical position. These spaces are subsequently replaced by symbols of power and markers of economic disparity, such as low-income housing, freeway expansions, and exclusive areas for the wealthy elite. This transformation holds critical importance as it deprives many characters of stable dwelling which is a foundation for their identity and security, leaving them disoriented and vulnerable.

To highlight and manifest the spatially produced power imbalance, Pynchon utilizes two important symbols of power: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Department of Justice. The first time Doc visits the Department of Justice, he is immediately "surrounded, by a couple of feds in cheap suits who could have spent a little more time in the sun" (Pynchon 72). The bodies of police and security guards, ever-present by these symbols of power, are a ubiquitous part of the scenery, an inherent spatial warning and blockade comprised of living agents. This type of security is, as West-Pavlov states, emblematic of human actors that are part of a "force field of power relationship materialized in the built environment and its production" (West-Pavlov 293).

In conjunction with this, the architecture of these buildings is described as big blocks of concrete and because of their scale and uninviting design, they noticeably stand in contrast to the surrounding buildings and landscape. The buildings have a psychological power called the "fortress effect", a socio-spatial strategy that makes sure that those who are not wanted, know that they are not wanted. The architecture is explicitly oppressive, anti-pedestrian, and influenced by the city's history of racial and class conflict (Davis 228). At the same time, large sections of

the public space in Pynchon's L.A. are transforming what Mike Davis terms "jail space". This means that homes and other key structures are being built with a fortress and prison-like exterior appearance, effectively normalizing prison architecture as aesthetic features (Davis 255). These are important spatial tactics as the structures and landscape inform and modify the characters' sense of boundaries and personal space. Such spaces epitomize an introverted approach to urban planning, removing access to public space and emphasizing defensive boundaries rather than inclusive public areas.

This sort of architecture, urban design, and segregation mirrors the values of the antagonists, illustrating their desire to withdraw from communal spaces and instead inhabit a world characterized by predetermined outcomes rather than chance. In doing so, they eliminate the expansive possibilities of the world and replace them with a sense of freedom that is exclusive to themselves and the marketplace (*Wanderlust* 255). Davis claims that the repelling of the Demonic Other, "reflects back on the surrounding streets, people and environment, spreading an arrogant paranoia, monopolizing landownership" (Davis 240). Consequently, in Pynchon's L.A. there is no real freedom in the city. The space is characterized by a type of architecture that is inherently repressive, paranoid, exclusionary, and divisive and it promotes high property value and personal space above public space or strong community ties. Overall, these buildings and symbols efficiently highlight the inherent power relations in L.A. space as well as in the city's material and immaterial space.

Moreover, Pynchon uses the entire cityscape and multiple symbols of power to showcase that when someone is in a position of authority and wields hegemonic power, they do not just take advantage of the natural differences that exist between people and social groups. This becomes apparent if one compares the spatial descriptions of the symbols of power with the spatial

descriptions of the rest of the city. They actively create and reproduce these differences as an essential tool to establish and preserve social and spatial divisions that support their continued authority and empowerment. These sorts of compounds and the people guarding them are always highly visible because, according to Davis, they represent a “type of repression of both space and movement, where there is a constant threat of armed response” (Davis 223). In this context, there is a clear difference between those on the periphery and those in the centers. The hegemonic power spreads and permeates all the real and imagined spaces of the city, ensuring that spatial variances are enacted everywhere.

He drove past the Gordita Beach station twice before he recognized it. The place had been radically transformed, courtesy of federal anti-drug money, from a pierside booking desk with a two-coil hot plate and a jar of instant coffee into a palatial cop’s paradise feature locomotive-size espresso machines, its own mini-jail, a motor pool full of rolling weaponry that would otherwise be in Vietnam, and a kitchen with a crew of pastry chefs working around the clock. (Pynchon 46)

This is the first time the reader gets a look at an LAPD station, and it is an impenetrable building that Doc is only able to gain access to because he can pose as a drug snitch. Even though it has been renovated with federal money, the detectives there think it’s a miserable place; they would rather be in West L.A. or Hollywood, in the “Center of the cop universe”. A space that is supposed to be there for the safety and security of Los Angeles citizens is both threatening and uninviting to its unwanted citizens. As the narrative delves deeper into the dynamics of power and control within Los Angeles, it becomes evident that the symbols of power and authority extend beyond the LAPD station. Those in power also re-create these differences in their private and personal spaces. We also get a glimpse of the intrusion of the rich and powerful into the



Californian landscape.

Throughout the novel, Pynchon's spaces convey the power asymmetry, oppression, and control over those without authority. They accomplish this through such concepts that Davis terms the neo-military architecture of "defensible spaces" and "pseudo-public" spaces, which are full of signifiers that stave off the undesired underclasses (Davis 226). At one point Doc, along with some other misfits, must escort a rich girl to a party at a Hollywood compound with her exploitative and corrupt dentist. These kinds of compounds allowed the upper and middle classes to respond to smaller and bigger threats by increasing their security in an attempt to increase spatial and social isolation. This type of security has been turned into a privatized industry through corporate development, creating even further division (Davis 227). Pynchon illustrates that the affluent not only possess stable dwellings but also maintain a secure network of spaces that guarantee their control and safety. To further emphasize this point, when Doc meets up with one of the antagonist's messengers, and he informs Doc that,

"It's about *being in place* ... We've been in place forever. Look around. Real estate, water rights, oil, cheap labor—all of that's ours, it's always been ours. And you, at the end of the day what are you? One more unit in this swarm of transients who come and go without pause in the sunny Southland, eager to be bought off with a car of a certain make, model, and year, a blonde in a bikini, thirty seconds on some excuse for a wave—a chili dog, for Christ' sake." He shrugged. "We will never run out of you people. The supply is inexhaustible." (Pynchon 347)

The spaces and places highlight the power imbalances between the haves and have-nots, as Michel Foucault states, "A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be a history of powers." (Foucault 149) Here Pynchon portrays Los Angeles as a

system where it is seemingly impossible to escape the system's grasp. The antagonist's ultimate aim appears to align with Davis's observations regarding the utility of these types of Los Angeles spaces, wherein “‘good’ citizens in their high security monitored private spaces, ‘bad’ citizens monitored and sequestered on the streets, controlled by the LAPD and the private security firms (Davis 253).

To further emphasize this power imbalance, Pynchon juxtaposes the Californian landscape, nature and desert with the compound in Bel-Air, which is unnaturally and at the same time seamlessly, inserted into the hillside, guarded by sentries at multiple gates and checkpoints, “Up hillsides and canyons, arriving at a mansion with another gate, low and nearly invisible inside its landscape gardening, seeming so much constructed out of night itself that at sunrise it might all disappear. Behind the gate glimmered a pale slash through the dark, which Doc finally figured out was a moat, with a drawbridge over it.” (Pynchon 179) We never get a look inside this party, but we know that it is attended by the rich and powerful of California, and the entire space and scene has a dark atmosphere to it. This upper-class space, meticulously constructed and featuring a drawbridge, is depicted as akin to a castle from a dark fairytale. This portrayal reinforces the idea that they have long-held power and will persist in their authority. Positioned high on the hillsides, they look down upon the sprawl, further emphasizing their elevated status compared to the Angelenos dwelling in the city below. Adding to the unreal impression and ambiance, it almost seems like “at sunrise it might all disappear”, which suggests that these spaces are disposable to California's rich and powerful. They live in another world compared to the rest of the city's inhabitants and that is conveyed through the spaces they dwell in. They utilize spatial tactics such as the drawbridge, the moat, and the sentries to ensure that they can control both who enters and who leaves. When Doc and the gang are at the compound, they can hear the

sounds of footfalls of coyotes and the slithers of snakes. At the same time, they still hear the ever-present sounds of the freeway traffic. Here there is a very Californian synthesis of sounds, adding to the fantasy and strange unreality of Los Angeles, with the natural sounds of the poisonous and vicious desert animals combined with the unnatural sounds of the cars boring down on the freeway at speeds that can easily kill both man and animal. This highlights the contrast between natural and unnatural, manmade landscapes that exist in California.

Access to dwelling or lack thereof is another spatial marker of status or power because we are formed and defined by our place of dwelling and environment, and we need them to define and strengthen our identity. We are, as Eric Prieto states, inherently rooted in our place, and we function within that system (Prieto 62) and there are consequences when our place is intruded upon, or we are denied access. Our own space allows us to highlight our autonomy, uniqueness, and the ways we conform to or differ from the rest of society. If the novel's characters do not have access to stable dwellings, the antagonists can destabilize entire groups of people rendering them more susceptible to control and manipulation. Because of this, the government's power permeates throughout the novel as paranoia runs rampant and the characters are unable to feel a sense of rootedness. They become disparate and unfixed and therefore easier to be displaced. This is further emphasized through Pynchon's and Yamashita's scattered and fragmented plot structure. As many of the characters in both novels have lost their space or become displaced, they need to find new ways to create space or inhabit place. Consequently, Gordita Beach and Tropic of Orange's freeway encampment provide freedom and a necessary haven of resistance against this imposed homogenization and *Inherent Vice's* symbols of power. These new spaces symbolize a semblance of freedom amidst the encroaching hegemony, and they allow the characters to be creators of their own space and the speakers of their own experiences.

Continuing the exploration of spatial dynamics, *Inherent Vice* contrasts the elite party's exclusivity with broader regional disparities. These differences underscore the novel's themes of greed, paranoia, and control by juxtaposing opulent spaces with economically constrained areas like Gordita Beach.

Resistance, memory, and culture

Throughout the novel, the government and real estate market in *Inherent Vice* is both destroying and restructuring certain spaces associated with Otherness while preserving others. This essentially results in the segregation of segments of Los Angeles' population. Pynchon conveys the novel's spatial geography of greed by highlighting the unlimited ecologies of the flatlands and downtown L.A. in relation to the limited economies of Gordita Beach, as noted by scholar Hanjo Berressem (Berressem 442). As earlier mentioned, it also allows the antagonists to control and create a social identity for themselves through difference-making. Public space is disappearing and being replaced with "megastructures that only serve to make capital" (Davis 226). They also deliberately and artificially construct neighborhoods and districts where the entire population falls into lower income brackets, limiting opportunities for upward social mobility.

In response to this reconstruction and relocation, Gordita Beach and *Tropic of Orange's* freeway encampment serve as chronotopes. As defined by James Kneale, a chronotope is a social space where cultures meet and clash with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power (Kneale 210). In the world of *Inherent Vice*, almost the entire 1970 Los Angeles space can be viewed as a chronotope because every part of the city is on the threshold for significant change and at a meaningful turning point with multiple different groups trying to resist this transformation. The city is entering a spatial and temporal metamorphosis, where the spaces of

cultural exchange are being eradicated and the interaction between cultures is being erased. As Solnit states “The city is a restless organism; individuals and communities are being moved in and out and processed. They arrive, arise, fluctuate, diminish. A constant shifting of the tide.” (*Infinite City* 105) Pynchon's depiction of Los Angeles vividly captures this cultural struggle, embodying the concept of a chronotope.

The spatial and cultural clash in *Inherent Vice* occurs because the antagonist's aim is not only to build new housing but also to remove buildings that have meaningful history or spaces that serve as points of cultural exchange and ideas, especially those with a link to earlier times in Los Angeles. The novel shows the reader how the government is working with Micky Wolfmann to manipulate the real estate market. One of the reasons they do this is because the elimination of these spaces strengthens class struggle. The antagonist's actions encourage dissociation and fragmentation instead of fostering association and continuity. Such actions, according to scholar Tim Woods, ultimately shape and reinforce the narrative and identity of the ruling class rather than addressing the needs of the marginalized communities within the city (Woods 135). In this manner, the antagonists of both novels act in a way that mirrors the scattered and disjointed postmodern literary form of the novels themselves. This form rejects grand narratives and promotes fragmentation of the plot and character's memories.

Additionally, this destruction is removing cultural meeting points in the city. According to Davis, public spaces are an important part of the meeting between classes and ethnicities; they are crucial meeting points as they are spaces where people can transform. Public space embodies the essence of the right to life, serving as a crucial ground for social, political, practical, and cultural activities. Solnit highlights this issue when she states that,

what was once public space is designed to accommodate the privacy of automobiles, malls replace main streets; streets have no sidewalks; buildings are entered through their garages; city halls have no plazas; and everything has walls, bars, gates. Fear has created a whole style of architecture and urban design, notably in southern California, where to be a pedestrian is to be under suspicion in many subdivisions and gated communities...In some places it is no longer possible to be out in public, a crisis for both the private epiphanies of the solitary stroller and for public space's democratic functions. It was this fragmentation of lives and landscapes that we were resisting long ago, in the expansive spaces of the desert that temporality became as public as a plaza. (*Wanderlust* 11)

This lack of public meeting spaces denies the people a chance to form new connections, and soon there will be few true democratic spaces left. This absence of public space further limits the characters' physical and mental autonomy. When public spaces disappear, so does the public itself; the individual loses their identity as a citizen capable of engaging and collaborating with other citizens. Citizenship relies on the feeling of having something in common with strangers, much like democracy relies on trust in unfamiliar faces. Public space therefore represents the shared realm where we interact with strangers, an inclusive zone free from segregation (*Wanderlust* 218). This is why the antagonists are altering and homogenizing these spaces and meeting points, allowing for less and less diversification and divergence from and within predetermined boundaries. They are essentially being despatialized and dehistoricized. They can gain further control by tearing down old buildings or building new structures in the old spaces that are accessible only to select individuals (Davis 229).

Furthermore, public and private spaces are receptacles for memories and as the antagonists remove the spaces, it erases the history of the previous, now unwanted occupants. This is partly

because, as Solnit posits, “Memory, like the mind and time, is unimaginable without physical dimensions; to imagine it as a physical place is to make it into a landscape in which its contents are located, and what has location can be approached.” (*Wanderlust* 77) Every space has some connection to history, but because of the extensive re-structuring and destruction in Pynchon’s Los Angeles, parts of the city space increasingly resemble the second stage of simulation and simulacrum—a mere copy of something real (Davis 50). Almost like a fabricated urban environment conjured up by the real-estate business and its speculation, the line between what is real and what is fake has blurred to such an extent that distinguishing between the two becomes impossible.

Moreover, the city has the power to eliminate space associated with societal shortcomings, such as impoverished slums or low-income neighborhoods, while choosing to maintain spaces of oppression, like privately operated prisons and the numerous police departments around Los Angeles. The deliberate preservation of certain spaces serves to establish symbols and landmarks that reinforce their authority and shape the collective identity of the city. In essence, the antagonists can manipulate the city’s history through spatial destruction. Memory is therefore vital because it can be likened to a tangible space. As sections of the city are demolished, the mental maps of pedestrians are disrupted, erasing their memories and associations.

In addition, the other reason they transform and destroy these spaces is because certain parts of the city, and the characters have their own memories which might not be in accordance with what the ruling power wants them to remember. This is important as West-Pavlov states “Space is not in time, it is time. Or, put the other way round, space is temporal. Space is happening all the time. Space is the dynamic of life spread out through all the networks of things.” (West-Pavlov 296) This occurs because references to memory frequently contribute to discussions

surrounding identity, and as Woods claims, “History is intimately tied up with reconstruction” (Woods 132/134). Meaning that collective spatial memories are crucial for reclaiming histories, power, and suppressed experiences and activities. They serve as a means to challenge the official narratives constructed by those in power and the commonly accepted understanding of space within society. Tuan posits that whenever a person feels that the world is changing too rapidly their characteristic response is to evoke an idealized time and place as well as a stable past (Tuan 188). Recalling or accessing a spatial memory can have the capacity to reshape or impact other memories or mental landscapes. By engaging with collective spatial memories, the beach bums can claim their own interpretations of history and challenge dominant perspectives.

Consequently, the available behavior is controlled by the place of action, which in turn is controlled by another network of spaces, their relationships, and their past. Our current environment exists not only in relation to other presently existing spaces and histories but also to our earlier developmental places which have shaped us and informed us of the role we play in our current space. Therefore, antagonists’ spatial manipulation needs to be absolute so they can control the spaces of action and the possible actions they can produce.

In the same vein, this sort of spatial control informs and restrains the insurrection and the counterculture. The recent history of 1960s L.A. was filled with free love, revolution, social movements, drug counterculture, and utopian dreams. But by the time *Inherent Vice*’s plot starts, all those dreams are already disappearing. It was a promising transitional time, both culturally and politically, that failed to change their social spaces. The culture devolved from an era of social change and opportunity to the conservative climate of Richard Nixon’s 1970s. Pynchon scholar Thomas Hill Schaub posits that “Pynchon also places responsibility for the conservative retrenchment upon the putative radicals of the sixties” (Schaub 35). Pynchon utilizes the novel’s



form as a means to reclaim some of that optimism in response to this. He is able to do so, because, as Maria Cichosz argues that postmodern literature permits “allegorical demystification” which she asserts “provides a renewed clarity of vision at the cost of a profound loss—the divine purpose, transcendental signification, and utopian unity” (Cichosz 521). Therefore, the postmodern form and the temporal layers of meaning have a major influence on this literary version of Los Angeles’s spatial dimensions (Ameel 237), as the 1960s became a utopian place many of the characters are trying to return to.

Thus, another reason why the antagonists are removing these spaces is that they are trying to sever their link to the counter-narrative and their anarchist past, stifling their will to protest and their ability to change. The oppression of and loss of this space and era seems to have demystified and sucked out all the potential and optimism from the characters and the world. Everyone just seems resigned to keep trying to survive. These are some of the reasons why the government is especially eager to tear down and replace Gordita Beach, a space of resistance that is closely tied to 1960s revolutionary culture and history. However, “the cult of the past calls for illusion rather than authenticity” (Tuan 195). This implies that the beach bums need to cultivate a genuine understanding of the place's history, rather than nostalgic melancholy, to fully grasp it and potentially initiate beneficial change in the future.

Consequently, the spaces of resistance play a crucial role in the characters' sense of reality and truth, as it allows them to act in ways that preserve their history and memories associated with specific places and locations. This destruction provides the antagonists with the ability to mythologize their own past construction and history, making it easier for them to claim they are designing a suitable future for the city (Davis 83). The beach bum’s memories can even be dismissed by the ruling force as subversive of “official history” and spatial being. Especially as

oral narratives are often regarded with suspicion by historians who claim they are unreliable (Woods 130). These modifications to the L.A. spaces are important to consider, as they underscore what Doc and the beach bums are fighting against as well as what they are fighting to get back.

Pynchon and Yamashita demonstrate that the lives and histories of ordinary people are intertwined with the space of Los Angeles, emphasizing human agency as the primary force shaping their spatial environment. This means that, as West-Pavlov posits, the beach bums can challenge the hegemony of linear, absolute time by constructing discontinuous, erratic temporalities (West-Pavlov 293) in response to the antagonists' eradication of history through spatial destruction and manipulation. As previously mentioned, Gordita Beach is closely tied to the countercultural revolution and the anti-establishment, and this imbues it with an inherent opposition to the establishment and governmental and capitalistic restructuring. Doc and the others want to transform the space into a place. A place where they can enact their cultural codes, values, and actions, to express their sense of self both through their environment and in opposition to the rest of society. Solnit claims that every space "exists in relation, symbiotic or in sanctuary from the larger world" (*Infinite City* VII). This means that at some point, the abstract city space of Pynchon's totalitarian Los Angeles will try to absorb and destroy the differences within it. Especially as the beach becomes a disrupting presence to the rest of the population, a salient juxtaposition to the suburban re-location and the downtown power center.

The beach bums' options for both private and public choices are shrinking as they have less and less space to freely maneuver through. Gordita Beach and the hippies living there are considered the enemy of the hillside and downtown rich and powerful, as they have created a heterotopia of resistance against the status quo. The Gordita Beach residents are literally and

figuratively outsiders to the system, labeled as a Demonic Other. The Gordita Beach heterotopia represents them spiritually and mentally. Gordita Beach also presents a space with an alternative mode of living that challenges the dominant capitalistic ideology. It counters the fragmentation of the population and space caused by the suburbs and its “monotonous” nine-to-five lifestyle. At first, the space provides a place of relief, safety, and a temporal, spatial, and cultural separation.

Instead of what Huyssen terms the inside/outside myth of hostile global powers (Huyssen 13), the bums and the homeless have been positioned as the Demonic Other within the city space. The Demonic Other in *Inherent Vice* and *Tropic of Orange* includes all the marginalized people, looking for an alternative space to exist. Rather than the dichotomy of East versus West or global versus local, the characters in the novels are caught in the struggle between center and periphery. Therefore, the beach bums utilize spatial differentiation and belonging to create “an-Other”-space and reality. According to spatial scholar Edward Soja, the purpose of these spaces is to provide “an-other” range of options, resulting in new meeting points, further political activity, and ideas. It is a transgressive space that can include new choices that challenge the center/hegemonic middle (Soja 5).

Consequently, Gordita Beach becomes the beach bum’s refuge and decompression heterotopia. Pynchon’s characters utilize heterotopias as sites of reversal and reflection on the transnational sociocultural codes that shape Los Angeles’s spatial politics (Moradi 43).

Heterotopias can be a useful tool to reclaim some of their space or create a new safe place.

Foucault states that “heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (Foucault 7).

As a safeguard, characters and other outside forces are supposed to follow certain rites to be allowed access to a heterotropic space. For example, many beach bums often use drugs to gain

access to another place or space, trying to find a utopia or a solution to their current spatial issues through unnatural means. Among the beach bums, a common rite seems to be psychoactive drugs, which distort both time and space. However, the novel might suggest that putting out faith in the supposedly utopian beach space is a mistake as it will never be able to properly counter the resources or power of the downtown capitalistic force. That is because, in *Inherent Vice*, the ability to deny access to both heterotopic and personal spaces is ripped away by authoritarian forces.

As a result, space and place become uncertain, unstable, and more difficult to separate and distinguish from other Los Angeles spaces. The novel's geographic space is planned to guarantee that certain locations correspond to specific archetypal and symbolic connections (Moradi 43). A notable example, as previously mentioned, is the hippies resisting and trying to get away from the encroaching globalization, gentrification, and re-formation which is radically changing large parts of California. Literature scholar Moein Moradi suggests that a "heterotopia is best understood as an approach to exposing and exploring different spaces" (Moradi 45), and the Gordita Beach heterotopia is used as a juxtaposition with the rest of L.A.

To further highlight this, Pynchon uses the beach, which is a fictional toponym, to "draw the reader's attention to the fictionality and the contractedness of the story world in question" (Ameel 235) through generic or universalist traits. The Gordita space self-reflexivity reinforces its Otherness and exposes the "normalcy" of the surrounding L.A. spaces while addressing the historical shift taking place in the city. The Gordita space becomes emblematic of many different struggles that are currently plaguing Los Angeles and the heterotopic spaces exert their effect on reality and all other spaces (Cichosz 531). The beach bums are required to resist the intrusion of the forces of globalization, the LAPDs, and the "War on Drugs" on one side. And simultaneously

they must endure the government's controlling hand, Micky Wolfmann's upper-class housing project restructuring as well as the Golden Fang drug cartel.

Furthermore, this alternative space is vital because, in combination with social freedom within a collective, it serves as a crucial place for the formation of identity for these characters. This is because the novels' bums and homeless seem to have few connections to other communities and seem to be deprived of their family ties. As Tuan suggests "In the absence of the right people, things and places are quickly drained of meaning so that their lastingness is an irritation rather than a comfort." (Tuan 140) Some places may lack significance for outsiders, particularly in terms of community and human connections, which underscores the importance of the beach bum's resistance spaces. Via Gordita Beach, Pynchon offers them a new space and reality which gives them alternative choices and lifestyles through resisting the conventional and conservative way of interpreting space and place (Soja 5).

Doc's personal space, his apartment, emerges as one of the novel's few examples of dwelling space and identity formation, evolving into what Foucault terms a heterotopia of deviation (Foucault p.5). Reminiscent of Gordita Beach, his home stands in contrast to the constantly changing outside world. His home barely ever changes, and other characters, such as his ex-old lady Shasta, use his home as an escape into a past she despises. Doc himself uses the space as an escape, as he lies on the couch looking at a picture in his living room that shows "a Southern California beach that never was—palms, bikini babes, surfboards, the works" (Pynchon 9). The painting becomes part of this escape fantasy, offering a space of temporal retreat (Cichosz 533). Here the Otherness is the idea of a Californian space that only existed in songs, books, and films that are juxtaposed with the reality of the novel's literary space. Pynchon uses Doc's home as a reminder that L.A. is a place with some stable locations that are being disrupted by the city's

many unstable and converging forces. He uses his space within the Gordita heterotopia to further break with the cultural norms of the city and resist the status quo, but the outside forces, friends, and foes continually intrude upon his personal space whenever they please. This indicates that Doc has lost yet another stable and secure dwelling place, necessitating the need to find an alternative means of resisting the control of the antagonists.

As mentioned, due to their lack of stable dwelling, the beach bums are instead often forced to situate their spatial identity in opposition to an outside force. By refusing to give up their space, the hippie beach bums and the homeless on the freeway encampment can exist in their personal space within a world that is tightly controlled by an oppressive and self-serving government and capitalistic system. The bums and the homeless have created a space of identity formation and social and cultural resistance that can challenge the grand narrative just by existing, though they are losing their space of action. Therefore, in the eyes of the antagonists, the beach bum's real transgression is their refusal to conform to the social hierarchies and the spatial narrative of Los Angeles. They accomplish this from a marginal position and their nonconformity becomes even more prominent because of their marginality in contrast to the greater, more affluent L.A.

Because of this newfound salience, Gordita Beach and the Freeway encampment became part of the cultural center despite being on the cultural and economic periphery. This means that their marginality gives them a certain amount of control they would otherwise not have. This marginality also ensures that Gordita Beach becomes the novel's spatial center of focus. It is a space that is liminal in both senses of the word ("Liminal") in that it is situated at the boundary of downtown L.A., and it is going through a transitional process. In spite of this, the beach somehow feels like a more anchored and secure place than many parts of L.A. Gordita separates itself from downtown L.A. because it is both natural and unnatural, a mixture of solitude by the

water contrary to the degradation of the city. The rest of the city is habitually covered in fog and smog. It has an ephemeral feeling because the urban space of L.A. lies between the desert and the sea, two massive spaces that are filled with symbolic associations with openness, freedom and ancient times.

In contrast to the wider city space, Gordita Beach is a “middle space”, not completely under anyone’s control. The beach bums and the antagonists are fighting over it, with one side being materially and easily outmatched. The beachfront properties are the spaces the government is most focused on rebuilding, and they are willing to go to great lengths to ensure that result. Neighborhoods are continuously bulldozed to make way for freeways or low-income projects, further subjugating residents to the power of capitalism. For many, as Davis claims, this spatial segregation leads to an “Isolation [which] becomes worse through the formation of exclusive, politically controlled groups, suspicious of their members, hostile towards those branded different...relations among outcasts are even more poisonous than among the residents” (Davis 47). The government even turns Gordita’s inhabitants into informants who must betray each other for their freedom or just in order to survive. Some hippies decided to give up their dream and integrate themselves into the greater L.A., selling out their own in the process. Others decided to continue the opposition; while the antagonists did whatever they could to gain control of the “middle space”. Thus, Doc, with good reason, even distrusts the hippies who live on the beach space with him. Doc is a discontinuity within a community of discontinuity, exposing differences and disruption in space.

Pynchon’s governmental and capitalistic antagonists do not only utilize the Californian real estate market to create more space they can control, but they also go to further extremes. For example, the government hires a hitman, Adrian Prussia, to kill people who do not conform, and

he disposes of the bodies inside freeway columns, making a symbolic sacrifice to capitalism, redevelopment and *Their* future. They also force real-estate mogul Micky Wolfmann to build their enormous, high-end housing projects in the desert, rather than giving away free living and dwelling space for the poor. According to the antagonist's view of capitalistic expansion; private property and the quest for wealth outweigh all, including public good and freedom. Thus, to sway even just one person against them might lead to issues for them further down the road, which they do not seem willing to allow. Therefore, spaces of resistance such as Gordita Beach, are essential in a world where the system uses human beings as tools and ends to achieve their economic goals and strengthen their hegemonic control. The bums and the homeless are disciplined so severely just to make sure others conform to the spatial and social lines they have drawn. However, an alternative method of resistance is available to Doc and the other marginalized characters. They can use their bodies in acts of resistance to spatial control.

The city, the body and movement

A city is like a language, a repository of possibilities, and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting those possibilities. Just as language limits what can be said, architecture limits where one can walk, but the walker invents other ways to go, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking, privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements (*Wanderlust* 213).

*Inherent Vice* is a city novel, and city novels can be understood by measuring movement and distances. Spatially, for example through the paths taken by protagonists or communities; or as Ameen claims, the emotional distances experienced by the protagonist (Ameen 233). In addition, according to spatial scholar Setha M Low, space can be mapped through "greeting, passage of time, the definition of events and identification of people with land and the landscape". Public



spaces can also be formed by individual movement, trips, and digressions of migrants crossing national boundaries, meaning that people create space as they move through it (Low 14/15). However, due to the shrinking effects of globalization and new efficient, time-saving technology, free time and movement are being eradicated. These advancements optimize production time while reducing unstructured downtime, resulting in increased productivity instead of promoting freedom (*Wanderlust* 10). This contributes to a world that seems to constantly accelerate, shirking the time-space of both workers and marginalized individuals. Hence, the beach bums' fight for a space of their own is intertwined with the struggle for the free time to traverse that place. Simultaneously, journeying through Pynchon's city space is both transformative and a dangerous endeavor for his characters.

The relationship between human bodies and spatial arrangements helps to imbue spaces with meaning and expose their cultural significance, making the study of the body and movement valuable components of spatial analysis. The everyday movements of the characters are a part of forming and creating the social space and place (Low 14). Phenomenologist Edmund Husserl described walking as the way we understand the relationship between our body and the world. He explained that our experience is rooted in the body's constant presence, and when the body is in motion, it perceives the interconnectedness of all its parts as a continuous sense of "here," moving through different locations (*Wanderlust* 27). In other words, when the body is in motion, it perceives the interconnectedness of all the world's parts. Each part of the body contributes to the experience of the whole, creating a sense of unity. The beach bums and the homeless' bodies become representational of the L.A. space. This reveals how the city spatially organizes the bodies of its marginalized citizens and shows the reader the underlying power dynamics within space.

For example, freedom of movement is one way both novels signify the character's true social status and class position. Los Angeles's physical boundaries, in relation to spatial compositions, uncover the city's social structure. The characters' spatial schema is a fundamental part of their orientation and the position from which they view the world. They need this to orient the reader in the literary city space, which, as Low suggests, both transcends and attempts to suppress personal experience (Low 13). The beach bums are forced to follow certain cultural, moral, and social codes that are encoded within the city space. Consequently, the literary worlds of Pynchon and Yamashita are relevant in this analysis because their characters' structure and experience space in different ways, which gives us further insight into how the power dynamic has changed and worsened in the twenty-five years between their two plots. The intrinsic dangers present in Pynchon's Los Angeles result in limited freedom for the lower classes. Conversely, those at the top never have to worry about the dangers of the street in their day to day. They have safe passage between their insulated and protected spaces, such as the earlier mentioned Hollywood Hills compound. In contrast, Doc and the other beach bums have to risk their safety on the crime-ridden and ominous L.A. streets. The characters' spatial mobility is part of and signifies their social mobility.

Bodies are also controlled by space and L.A. is a city on the verge of profound transformation. Lussault and Stock claim that through movement and distance, we can understand the many ways space is constructed as a resource or as a condition to behavior (Lussault and Stock 10). As mentioned, the often unseen and omnipresent antagonist of *Inherent Vice* seeks to control and shape the urban space and movement using the drug trade, violence, and the real estate business. Pynchon's Los Angeles is made up of seemingly disjointed and unconnected spaces and Doc seems to struggle to find the continuity between the spaces and his

experiences which walking often provides. However, the antagonist has control over almost every space in the entire city and subsequently, Pynchon's urban space feels, at best, semi-private. All this effort to control and regulate walking and the city spaces suggests that the antagonists view walking as subversive. It is a fundamentally free act that clashes with their ideas of privatization and control. Subsequently, Doc resists control by wandering aimlessly through the streets, accessing the many restricted and heterogeneous spaces of the city. He creates a new spatial identity for himself by trespassing and challenging L.A. boundaries. He acts as an observer and a social chameleon; often getting access to many places he should not be able to.

Doc's divergent wandering embodies resistance to control, and "excluded spaces" become spatiotemporal formations produced out of the interaction of actors' moving spatial fields and the terrestrial spaces of body action (Low 14). This means that even the simple act of walking becomes a way to resist the status quo, control and modulate their alienation. Doc's traversal through the regulated spaces becomes an act of civil disobedience and a form of demonstration. As Solnit claims, it becomes a vital part of the resistance as it "maintains the publicness and viability of public space" and a "resistance to the postmodern loss of space, time and embodiment" (*Wanderlust* 176/267). Therefore, reclaiming and keeping the street walkable and accessible to everyone is important in the development of democratic spaces. Doc's exploration of Los Angeles on foot is crucial as it enables unfiltered, spontaneous encounters and allows him the freedom to "get lost", rather than simply as a way to travel from point A to B. This practice is almost spiritual and ingrained in the ethos of beach bums and hippies and inherently opposes the strict spatial control imposed by the antagonists. In essence, as noted by Solnit, the novels and the characters' bodily actions reveal "rich potential between thinking and the body; the way one

person's act can be an invitation to another's imagination; the way every gesture can be imagined as a brief and invisible sculpture; the way walking reshapes the world by mapping it, treading paths into it, encountering it; the way each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place" (*Wanderlust* 276).

Therefore, to combat particularly exploitative codes, the characters in *Inherent Vice* and *Tropic of Orange* use the body's movement and lived experience of their social space as another way to resist power and other dominant structures. Bodies are a part of space, and they are the most basic tool we have to shape and narrate our world. Through movement, the characters can travel through spaces and organize, select, and link them together creating "spatial stories" (Thacker 30). Additionally, Tuan claims that "when a person feels that he himself is directing the change and in control of affairs of importance to him, then nostalgia has no place in his life: action rather than mementos of the past will support his sense of identity" (Tuan 188). Doc, through his strange and eccentric spatial representation, resists and defies control and the cyclical and fabricated nature of Los Angeles's cultural trends.

Doc's constant mobility prevents him from establishing personal roots, leading to a superficial experience and appreciation of place, potentially causing him to miss out on the true essence of place. This results in a nomadic existence, his personal space being continually violated and his connection to space and the built environment is fleeting. At the same time, perhaps it is Doc's continuous movement and rootless existence, coupled with his drug-warped mind, that affords him a certain diplomatic immunity. This enables him to inadvertently infiltrate multiple groups and spaces on behalf of the antagonists.

Doc's embodiment provides readers with a seemingly objective perspective of the world, yet simultaneously reveals his subjective, hallucinatory viewpoint. And as Low states, embodied

space draws these two contrasting notions together and highlights the importance of the physical body in relation to space, experience and the world (Low 10). The drug use creates a distortion between the body and the physical space, which within the novel's postmodern form grants Doc a greater right and possibility for movement than almost any other character experiences. As Tuan states, "a brief but intense experience is capable of nullifying the past so that we are ready to abandon home for the promised land" (Tuan 184). This means that the perception of time influences one's sense of place, and due to Doc's drug-induced altered state of mind, his connection to place is further distorted. Therefore, Doc's sporadic detachment from space, place, time, and himself as well as his wandering through various spaces, allows him to be manipulated to serve the antagonist's agendas. Simultaneously, he unwittingly becomes a mediator of class conflict, acting as a messenger between the lower and the upper class.

What complicates the matter is the fact that Pynchon never lets the reader know if Doc has managed to gain spatial access or if he has been allowed into the supervised space as an observer and mediator. Doc is in the traditional role of the private investigator, but what he is following is too elusive and he becomes the one who is continuously followed. The Los Angeles space is the perfect setting for this labyrinthian postmodern noir story because of the intricate mapping of streets, the intersection paths, the intersecting lives, and the sheer size of the city. Doc's navigation of the city, along with this paranoid cat-and-mouse game enhances his spatial identity. Low defines embodied space as "the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form" (Low 10), a concept exemplified by the streets of Pynchon's Los Angeles. This aspect, in combination with the novel's postmodern form and spatial narrative, means that every space is constantly open to change and transformation. This literary depiction of L.A. is a controlled society and space, which often allows for a deceptive

freedom of movement between its many networks of spaces. Therefore, in Pynchon's paranoid master narrative, it might not matter how good Doc's knowledge of the city is or how much spatial intelligence he has. His experiences and social interactions are always mediated by his perception of Los Angeles's rigidly structured and supervised space. Nevertheless, in gaining access to controlled space, Doc becomes a vessel and observer that maps the city for the reader. Through walking and spatial access, Pynchon maps the lived space of L.A. and clearly defines who wields the power and who the outsiders are.

The Freeway, suburbs, cars and postmodernism

The antagonists and control structures are seeking societal spatial reconfiguration and movement is one way of rejecting that influence on both the individual and communal level. Therefore, to further limit the mobility of Doc and the Beach Bums and nullify their capacity to resist, the antagonists utilize urban architecture and infrastructure. Notably, they utilize the freeway system to remove pedestrian-friendly public spaces and further control people's movement. Instead of striving for a "classical urban space," the landscape and architecture of Los Angeles pursue a cohesive integration via its freeway system (Davis 73). Opening up the city to its driving citizens but limiting the walkability. Subsequently, both Pynchon and Yamashita make it clear that in their literary versions of Los Angeles, the potential for freedom of movement is shrinking significantly.

In *Inherent Vice* and especially, in *Tropic of Orange*, the slow death of walking has come about as innovations in transportation and communication only shrunk the city's walkable space and increased unequal development. Solnit states that "the disappearance of pedestrian space has transformed perception of the relationship between bodies and spaces" (*Wanderlust* 256). L.A. has become a city that is built around cars, and access to many spaces for those unable to afford

transportation is disappearing.

Consequently, the freeway spaces became another way for the antagonists to control the present time-space, movement and limit the available actions. David Harvey argues that the creation of the freeways induced a pressure of friction by the reduction of distance which leads to a sort of annihilation of space through time (Rodriguez 113). The freeways introduced new ways of experiencing space and time. This concept is tied to both novels characters and embodied space, where the space “occupied by the body and the perception and experience of that space, [which] contracts and expands in relationship to a person’s emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural predispositions” (Low 10). The novels’ embodied space is warped and changed as this sort of development leads to a lessening of options as many are unable to buy or rent transportation. Therefore, the links between places that freeways create are significant because they decide who gains access to where and what. This is an aspect emphasized in both novels, as most of the characters do not have enough capital to buy or rent anywhere else, and they have no way to stop or halt the freeway construction. Throughout their novels, Pynchon and Yamashita also challenge the idealized notion of Southern California’s suburban good life, which scholar Eric Avila claims “upheld the freeway as a symbol of such middle-class ideals as physical mobility, individual freedom, and civic progress” (Avila 185).

Furthermore, as many of the freeways have been built over old low-income neighborhoods, the physical construction itself has become a symbol and a physical manifestation of economic and spatial segregation in Los Angeles. Not only is the freeway there to remind people of their old place of dwelling, but it has separated people who used to live right next to each other and pushed others to the periphery. The construction of the freeways has led to the emergence of new low-income, minority ghettos across the city. Simultaneously, these same freeways have become

tools for the antagonists to target, dismantle, and displace "undesirable" communities and enclaves. The construction and destruction perpetrated by faceless bureaucrats in the name of progress have resulted in entire neighborhoods, in the middle of the city space, becoming isolated centers of poverty. Rather than providing alternative space for the displaced citizens, the land was typically cleared for other purposes, often privately owned and commercially utilized. Moreover, as noted by Avila, the construction of freeways has dramatically altered public space and fostered a dependency on cars, which in turn supports both the freeway system and substantial sectors of Los Angeles' economy (Avila 206).

The freeway, the suburbs, and the growing car culture fragmented the Los Angeles space as the infrastructure increasingly prioritized car owners, resulting in a decreased expectation for people to walk (*Wanderlust* 253). Which in turn further distorts the spatial relationship between the traveler and the traveled space. The car and freeway culture represents a move toward flux and rootlessness rather than rootedness and stability. Cars have also transformed the characters' bodies into something more mechanical and reflective of a postmodern era. Now many

identify with the speed of the machine and look with frustration or alienation at the speed and ability of the body. The world is no longer on the scale of our bodies, but on that of our machines, and many need the machines to navigate that space quickly enough. Of course, like most "time-saving" technologies, mechanized transit more often produces changed expectations than free time; and modern Americans have significantly less time than they did three decades ago (*Wanderlust* 258).

This modification changes the city's temporal landscape and now many are unwilling to revert to a slower pace. Meaning that the slow death of walking has also come about not just because of the lack of spaces, but also because of the lack of time. It also further enables segregation, as cars



provide a protected space for those who can afford them. They offer a sort of retreat from the world that makes the streets safer for car owners but more hazardous for others.

Because of these restrictions on walking and the fragmentation of the city space, the freeway in *Inherent Vice* then becomes a space of repression, segregation and emptiness. Postmodern novels are often concerned with location and with the character's subjective point of view of their space. Pynchon utilizes literary techniques that project the consciousness of the characters onto the physical world. Topophilia, which according to Robert Tally, is an engagement with the character's subjective sense of space and their subjective involvement with place.

Topophilic activities connect the interiority of the characters with the exterior geography and physical social space (Ameel 248). In other words, social space does not have to be external, but it can also be internal space, the space of the psyche or the body (Thacker 34). The postmodern "condition" is important to factor in the spatial analysis because "We are not only boundless subjects cruising among infinite interpretative options. We are also lost and spatially confused." This means that, according to Cichosz, postmodern literary analysis can be liberating and demystifying (Cichosz 528). The constant fog makes L.A. feel like an oppressive and dangerous place and through the postmodern lens, the fog can be read as the repressive governmental forces permeating and infiltrating every Californian space. Or it can be read as just a physical manifestation of Doc's distorted memory as it does not physically change the world, it only warps and obscures it.

Places are physical and spiritual sites that can anchor human identity. "Place" needs the subjective view of those who inhabit or claim it. Place is a space that is both personal and meaningful to the inhabitant (Ameel 242). There is a relationship between human beings and their physical environment, and Pynchon can use the environment to tell us about the characters.

Even the landscape has a connection with the characters; it is not just a static background. In comparison, Yamashita's characters re-claim the freeway space and make it into a place as we will see later. The freeway in *Tropic of Orange* will be used as a space of resistance and change, the *Inherent Vice* freeway, through the postmodern elements and Doc's eyes, is an "Atopia".

A manmade atopia is an environment that resists dwelling and any attaching of human identity, preventing the creation of meaning. They are generic spaces produced by globalization, such as freeways, airports, or chain stores. Atopias, according to Siobhan Carroll, interfere with the fundamental human relationship to place and with individual communities (Carroll 159). The freeway in *Inherent Vice* is a mixture of internal and external elements and an example of Doc's unreliable topophrenic spatial subjectivity while at the same time being atopic.

In Pynchon's Los Angeles, not only are the spaces saturated with fog but they are also filled with smog caused by atmospheric pollution. This is especially prevalent on the city's freeways and Pynchon's novel highlights this aspect early on as it describes a multitude of California's varied citizenry "all wheeling along together down into these great horizonless fields of housing, under power transmission lines, everybody lasing on the same couple of AM stations, under a sky like watered milk, and the white bombardment of a sun smogged into only a smear of probability" (Pynchon 19). Pynchon's portrayal of freeway space emphasizes its predominantly utilitarian and atopically-empty nature. To heighten the sense of distrust and paranoia, he uses the fog and the smog that intrudes into the space of L.A. These elements serve to highlight how the characters lack clarity and understanding, turning the freeway into a site of disorder and alienation. They navigate through a haze, unable to gain a clear sense of their surroundings or the forces at play, being manipulated by the unseen.

The continuous presence of the fog is noteworthy as there is a link between Doc's mental

state and navigating the Los Angeles streets and the freeway spaces. For example, Doc's head is just as empty of memories and meaningful associations as the atopic freeway itself. Furthermore, because fog and smog are such powerful distorting forces, they pretty much remove any potential to see things clearly, leaving one with visibility limited to just half a block and a hope for the best. This means that for Doc, it is not only difficult to navigate the smog-filled freeways but also his own mind. With "the fog's nightly roll inland", Los Angeles consistently obscures its inhabitants' collective mental state. They struggle not only to see their uncertain future but also their present. It gives the city a strange and unfamiliar feeling as the fog is so thick that the car's headlights seem like the eyestalks of an extraterrestrial and the "third dimension grew less and less reliable" (Pynchon 367). Moreover, driving on it always carries both an element of psychological and physical danger because of the low visibility and the speed at which the cars move. Driving and walking are both dangerous down on Pynchon's streets, where smog, fog, and smoke are a more common sight than the sun itself. When Doc is driving around, he experiences these dangers firsthand, as described when he is "trying not to flinch at what came popping out of the gloom in the way of city buses and pedestrians in altered states of consciousness" (Pynchon 50).

As previously mentioned, due to both the fog and the smog, Los Angeles is in a constant and changeable gray zone, which gives it an eerie sense of being simultaneously real and unreal. In the novel, L.A. is going into the fog and transforming into something new, something sunnier on the surface, but bleaker underneath. The antagonists in the story will gain more and more power, distancing themselves even further from the lower classes. As Doc drives into, or goes toward, the "hushed whiteness ahead" which might suggest the death of his hippie lifestyle, especially as the 1970s would be the death of mainstream hippie culture and the free love movement. Doc

sings along to the Beach Boy's "God Only Knows", indicating his thoughts about the unknowable future of Los Angeles and its disparate communities as their spaces are being erased by men such as Adrian Prussia and even worse, those he works for. The fog has completely covered the exit signs above the freeway ramps, forcing escapes to be a last-minute decision. It is like the fog is almost physically trying to keep its inhabitants from leaving. The characters can leave Los Angeles and its controlled space, but they will only be able to do so by an almost leap of faith, risking themselves and others.

The fog and the smog further isolate the characters from one another as they continually keep each other in the dark and use each other for their own gain. They betray each other to the government for minimal advances or just to survive. This is especially true for Doc, who feels like a lone wanderer throughout the story, being used and abused by both his enemies and even his fellow hippies. Doc, however, in the end only slouches down in his car and watches everything disappear, including the "trees and the shrubbery" and "the signs above the freeway that told you who you were". As the fog and smog exacerbate the characters' isolation, Doc watches as both the natural landscape and the unnatural capitalistic human intrusion into that space are swallowed up by the fog.

But despite his desire for change, Doc remains tethered to the Los Angeles space, emblematic of a culture in flux yet unable to break free. At the end of the novel, Doc finds himself stuck in a convoy "in the desert of perception", caught out on the smog-ridden freeway, one of the only things he had seen people in that town "do for free" (Pynchon 368). Doc, however, drives around trying to lose the fog, to get back to the surface streets. He wishes it had not spread to the entire region as then he might have to spend days driving around. However, all hope is not lost as he sees that his gas gauge has more than half a tank, plus fumes, and he still has almost a full pack

of smokes. One of his wishes is “for the fog to burn away, and for something else this time, somehow, to be there instead” (Pynchon 369). For Doc to escape from the city, there must occur a shift in reality for him to get away from Los Angeles space. The space is now so tightly controlled and manipulated that it might be too late for him and all the other inhabitants. At this point, what they might need is a new start. Nevertheless, he is tied to it, as a symbolic representation of a part of its most mediated culture as well as his own inability to move on and change with the times. Being stuck in traffic on congested and smog-filled roads might offer Doc some small opportunity for communion with the other drivers and introspection—a space for contemplation.

Though it is arguable how valuable this “community” is as the solidarity the freeway drivers feel might be artificial, as atopias can offer a neat way for people to fit themselves into effectively ordered, predetermined social arrangements. Furthermore, as Carroll explains, the freeway atopia detaches people from their surroundings and real spaces and it removes most opportunities for meaningful interaction (Carroll 162/163). It does not contain any organic societies; everyone is much more physically separated from each other than they would be down on the street. It is a space that does not allow for unplanned encounters and happy chances. What the drivers enjoy is just the sense of ease, as they are assigned a role while interacting with the freeway space. This is a concern because so much of Los Angeles is covered in freeways that prioritize drivers over pedestrians, which makes it a less livable and walkable place for large parts of the population. Avila, in his study of the Los Angeles structures, claimed that the freeway's “insulated environment suited the growing mistrust of public life that permeated Southern California’s suburban communities, and its removal from the social landscape of the city furthered a diminishing awareness of the city’s social and economic diversity” (Avila 186).

Furthermore, Beci Carver states that “in L.A. traffic means untraffic”, by this she means anonymity, and distrust and that it is generally impractical (Carver 133). As individuals cannot anchor their identity or community to the freeway, this atopia and the freeways strengthen the system and car-focused structure, rather than the individual and their chosen communities (Carroll 162). The freeway is something the people of L.A. are forced to engage with, as the narrator states, “You can only cruise the boulevards of regret so far, and then you’ve got to get back onto the freeway again.” (Pynchon 40).

This isolation and spatial segregation are encouraged by the freeway and the design of *Inherent Vice’s* city spaces. The freeway is a structure and space that does not allow traversal by walking, and it is unavailable to those without access to motorized transportation. L.A., at the time, promoted the city’s “sense of self” as a work in progress (Carver 143). And since public transport and centrality facilitate use by the marginalized and poor, it has come to be seen as a negative. Therefore, in order to deny the marginalized access, rebuilding has encouraged inaccessibility and spatial segregation (Davis 230). This restriction has occurred through the destruction and reconstruction of low-income neighborhoods, the creation of new freeways, and the facilitation of “the white flight” to the suburbs. At one point, while driving on the freeway, Doc spots some black pedestrians looking down below the freeway, where the old community used to be, “maybe also looking for the old neighborhood, for rooms lived in day after day, solid as the axes of space, now taken away into commotion and ruin” (Pynchon 19). They have lost the physical connection to the spaces that once defined them, now only able to look down upon their old spaces of dwelling, which have been destroyed to make room for a generic, atopic freeway devoid of any sense of place. Simultaneously, “The white flight” to suburbia has only led to further traffic jams, smog, soil erosion, water shortage, and the erosion of the country

lifestyle (Davis 7). As Solnit states the “Suburbs are bereft of the natural glories and civic pleasures of those older spaces, and suburbanization has radically changed the scale and texture of everyday life, usually in ways inimical to getting about on foot. This transformation has happened in the mind as well as on the ground.” (*Wanderlust* 249) The freeway and suburban spaces serve as tools for the antagonists, stripping many residents of their freedom of movement and distorting and controlling their true, everyday reality, becoming another part of the simulation and simulacrum.

This means that the freeway becomes a safe space that offers drivers a sanitized and "friendlier" perspective of the city, presenting it as a collection of isolated sites devoid of their sociohistorical context. For those commuting between the suburbs and Downtown, the city space almost resembles a theme park instead of a real public space, as described by Avila: “the freeways thus heralded a new view of the city, one that translated the complexities of urban life into gentrified geography of play.” (Avila 210) The atopic freeway, along with strategic city architecture, such as removing pedestrian links to part of the city, makes it possible for the middle classes to go to work, and engage in recreational activities and consumption without having to engage with the lower classes (Davis 231). Additionally, because of these structures and the L.A. freeways, there are now “acceptable destinations” that have been pre-planned. As Carver indicates, this suggests movement in this space is no longer a fundamentally free act (Carver 136). In this way, identity has been altered on the spatial level of both the individual and neighborhood. The freeway is just inserted into the landscape, imposing its control of movement on the population. It has turned into a what Carroll terms a “space of flow” (Carroll 164), which is a space that only has one function, to get the driver from one place to another, where interaction is inorganic and limited. The freeway directs its drivers along a concrete pathway,

imposing a singular perception of the city and restricting the potential for diverse perspectives. Instead, the freeway mediated a view of the city space that “suited the very kind of suburban realizations that surfaced in places like Disneyland and Dodger Stadium” (Avila 186). Along freeway routes, dense foliage, or concrete barriers often blocked drivers' fleeting glimpses of the city. This deliberate visual filtering fostered unawareness or apathy towards the surrounding urban fabric, obscuring the experience of traversing the city's landscapes of labor and community. Therefore, the freeways offer a mediated view of the city space, similar to how Disneyland's structured space shapes and mediates a view of their ideal city space (Avila 213). The freeway provides a space that bypasses a significant portion of the inner city's racial tensions and poverty. Simultaneously, it eliminates the possibility of new meeting places that could bridge cultural and economic divides. It created barriers and offered the drivers a protected space of their own between their home, work and leisure.

*Inherent Vice* has a circular structure, which calls attention to itself through postmodern artifice. Furthermore, even though everything on the surface seems random and chaotic, the novel is tightly spaced and planned. Form and content are closely linked, and the novel's postmodern labyrinthian structure ends where it begins, with Doc driving through the smog-filled spaces of L.A. However, at the end of the labyrinth, Doc discovers nothing. Due to the tight spatial control the antagonists exercise, barely anything anyone does makes a substantial difference. At the novel's end, Doc has neither brought anyone to justice nor uncovered who was truly pulling the strings all along. Doc just stumbles aimlessly into plot after plot and he does not influence the city space or the story because he is too tied to his dissolving and evaporating 1960s space. He moves through the city like a ghost, and he has no real impact on the future space of Los Angeles. In essence, Pynchon only uses Doc as a tool to shed light on the spatial



manipulation in Los Angeles. By the end of the novel, the antagonists' grasp on Los Angeles space is stronger than ever and there seems to be no way out for Doc and the beach bums.

Therefore, In *Inherent Vice*, the way to progress is devolution of the system. The dismantling of the current control structures by removing or replacing them with new spaces created by and for the people. However, no one had the power to resist the dominant social and spatial order, and, in the end, the rest of the transgressors would be eliminated.

Chapter 2: Freeways and Fragmentation - Spatial Narratives, Dislocation, and Socio-Political  
Commentary in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*.

*Tropic of Orange*, released in 1997, is a postmodern-magical realist novel that explores the experiences of a cast of seven different people from seven different backgrounds through seven different narratives that all converge on the Los Angeles Harbor freeway. Yamashita paints a picture of a militarized L.A. where those lower on the economic totem pole, such as the homeless, immigrants, and wage earners struggle to survive.

The novel presents a California that prides itself on the American dream and the liberty of all its citizens. However, this dream is juxtaposed with the stark reality of the novel where there is a shocking number of people who are unable to live in any other way than day-to-day on the streets, unable to attain any semblance of stability and security. She examines what, if anything, can be done to remedy the extreme difference in the standard of living in Los Angeles. For many, owning a home now seems like a distant dream. The products of globalization and the new civilization being shipped into L.A. seem now to be worth more than most of the people in the city. In her vision of 90's Los Angeles, there is now a culture of "fake and commodified multiculturalism" that only services those in the higher economic brackets. Meanwhile, the city's leadership has either abandoned or doomed its essential, and often multicultural, workers. The people in power have at this point receded completely into the shadows, while the effects of their policies and manipulation are out in plain sight. One day, a collision on the freeway allows the marginalized population of L.A. to set up an encampment on the Harbor Freeway, creating a new egalitarian community.

Yamashita has divided the novel into forty-nine chapters, which means that it is structured in

such a way that each of the seven characters gets seven chapters where they are the focalizer of the plot. The characters are given an equal amount of time and space. She uses the form of the novel to foster equality between her characters and the narrative as well as a clever way to structure a very disjointed, chaotic and postmodern story. As the novel progresses, characters increasingly appear in each other's chapters, showcasing their interactions and the conflicts arising from race, class, and nationality barriers. Each character in the novel traces a distinct map of the socially and economically stratified cityscape of Los Angeles, thus structuring the narrative and informational exchange over the imagined space of L.A. (Kim 6). Due to the novel's magical realism elements, its characteristic form is disintegrated, and it allows the text to focus on poverty, race, and immigration as well as to explore and expose social injustices in Los Angeles. Yamashita and Pynchon depict Los Angeles as evolving through a combination of slow spatial changes and rapid capitalist exploitation, shaped by tactics of manipulation and redevelopment.

The lived and conceived spaces of Los Angeles

In both novels, there is a type of violence that is referred to as “Slow Violence” which is insidious, gradual, and not always noticeable rather than a show of explosive force. According to Rob Nixon, the goal of slow violence is “the erosion of rights, the seeds of change, and the unjust seizure of land” (Nixon 136). This is relevant to both *Tropic of Orange* and *Inherent Vice* as the systems that govern the space of Los Angeles exercise continual slow violence towards its poorer inhabitants. Violence is exercised onto their environment as well as the people who inhabit said environment. This type of violence is connected to Mike Davis's concept of militarized spatial control, wherein government entities, corporations, wealthy individuals, and businesses employ militaristic security ideologies to safeguard their assets and property from

perceived threats or undesirables, resulting in slow violence of spatial control.

Consequently, the antagonists use this protection as justification for excluding others from spaces and opportunities. According to Nixon, slow violence comes from an authoritarian regime's destruction of the environment (Nixon 132), a phenomenon exemplified in both novels through the destruction of low-income housing to build the freeway system—a process that began in the 1940s and persists into Yamashita's mid-1990s. In Yamashita's portrayal of Los Angeles, economic growth, a social good, now exacerbates social inequality and fosters unshared prosperity. This type of economic growth worsens social conflict and intensifies repression. The gradual and “invisible” destruction of the environment for a “greater purpose” is what allows the antagonist to control the poor and use them as a resource.

Therefore, the creation of spaces such as the encampment on the Harbor Freeway and Gordita Beach is crucial in highlighting and opposing the impact of slow violence, which creates a risk society where the burden of risk disproportionately affects the least privileged, particularly in the face of depleted resources. This newly created space on the freeway offers an egalitarian and participatory form of sustainable growth, “a selfless act of intergenerational optimism, both practical and utopian” (Nixon 134). The freeway constructions are so environmentally destructive that they significantly increase everyday anxiety and reduce the overall quality of life in Los Angeles. This impact is particularly relevant to a significant portion of the population, depicted through Yamashita's characters, living in poverty. This slow, environmental degradation not only lowers living standards but also threatens the long-term stability of L.A.'s spaces and their potential to turn into new and usable space.

The thematic relevance of slow violence is apparent in these paranoid postmodern worlds as the characters in *Tropic of Orange* and *Inherent Vice* do not know who to blame for the violence.

There is no face to the violence, only unseen nebulous globalized forces. Because this type of violence is so intangible, people might start blaming or fighting with each other rather than trying to change the system. This is exemplified in the novels by the gangs in the south-central hood and the beach bums who work as informants. Another example of slow spatial violence is how the government is restructuring the hood in 90s Los Angeles.

Just like Pynchon, Yamashita never shows us the ones who exercise this power, but the effect of their authority is always felt. It has saturated every space of L.A. Now their power is felt not only locally, but also globally through globalization and the subtle and obvious spatial manipulation of the rich and powerful. As a result of ongoing economic and architectural restructuring, along with the dynamics of slow violence and shifts in power centers, the symbols of power in *Tropic of Orange* recede into the background, becoming even more abstract and elusive. As David Rieff has observed about Los Angeles, “The Third World exists within the First, and two separate economies coexist that of the high-tech information technology and that of the street vendors and low-wage service works.” (Rieff 1992) This means that corporate globalization in Yamashita’s portrayal of L.A. has fostered human exploitation and socioeconomic injustice, resulting in the emergence of underdeveloped communities within the overdeveloped “first world” (Jansen 120).

In *Inherent Vice*, the effects of globalization were in a less advanced stage, but in *Tropic of Orange*, the globalization process has evolved further, and it has made control within spaces more nebulous. Through this system, people are viewed as expendable and only part of a larger arrangement that does not value individual autonomy or spatial agency. Woods claims that “Modernity has caused space and geography to become a plurality of intersections and borders rather than distinctly delimited nations, countries or a continent.” (Woods 130) In the modern

world, technology, globalization, migration, and cultural exchange have blurred traditional boundaries, resulting in globally interconnected and fluid spaces. Thus, it affects every character in both novels, whether they are in California or not. For example, one of the novel's main characters, Bobby, had a better life in Singapore before he had to emigrate to the United States. However, his family's business was adversely affected by the commercial-related consequences of globalization, which led to the bankruptcy of his father's enterprise. Consequently, Bobby had to relocate to the north to send money back home. Simultaneously, due to globalization's homogenizing effects, the real differences between cultures are being erased while the gap between the rich and the poor is expanding. Instead of "Mexican" or "Asian" spaces, there are now high-rises, cul-de-sacs, and suburbs on one side and ghettos, hoods, zones, and barrios on the other. Instead of a more clearly defined cultural identity, everyone is forced into what Yamashita calls a fake "multicultural mosaic" (Yamashita 110).

In combination with the effects of globalization, L.A. in *Inherent Vice* and *Tropic of Orange* are going through a radical transition process that leads to the *postmetropolis* ("Postmetropolis"). Which is when a city is going through simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes, representing a form of slow violence that disables the city's urban realities and replaces them with new ones. The first new urban space is marked by the erosion of the notion of place and the territorially defined social communities. The second is marked by the emergence of a new spatiality in which the urban and non-urban are interconnected, the boundaries between the interior and the exterior are blurred, and terms like "city," "suburb," "country," and "metropolitan area" are difficult to distinguish. According to Soja, because of the economic restructuring, the *postmetropolis* becomes a production space where capital, work, and culture penetrate through every facet of the city, converge, and create an exceptionally heterogeneous,

but cosmopolitan space (Soja 2000).

As a result of the focus on capital in combination with spatial and infrastructural manipulation, the spaces of transformation are becoming more and more limited. For example, the city neglects to support low-income hoods and does not provide incentives for residents to seek legal pathways out of these areas. Additionally, there is a lack of effort in facilitating the proper integration of immigrants into the broader Los Angeles community. Therefore, the people have to create a new and different type of resistance space.

A consequence of the *postmetropolis* restructuring is that many of the city's inhabitants are forced to live in oppressive ghettos and barrios that have been constructed around ethnic classifications. Places where beaches and parks are abandoned, youth gatherings are prohibited, and the streets are becoming hazardous and deserted (Davis 227). Davis states that "L.A. is ruined by an omnipotent Downtown establishment headed by the *Times* and some big banks, oil companies and department stores", however, "power in Southern California is fragmented and dispersed, without a hegemonic center". In recent times, old power structures have been destabilized by globalization with its new actors and power centers (Davis 101), though power remains in private capital which acts as a government in local affairs. As is often the case throughout history, new wealth only imposes its will on the community.

The novel uses the juxtaposition between the low-income neighborhoods and the epicenter of authority downtown to draw attention to the social hierarchies. Downtown is filled with cultural sites, skyscrapers, corporate buildings, and shopping centers which highlights its status and power. While the neighborhood spaces Yamashita shows the reader is filled with rented houses, liquor stores, crack houses, gangbanger houses, welfare houses, and low-income and big-family homes. This mirrors the erasure of history through spatial destruction depicted in *Inherent Vice*.

Through such juxtapositions and socio-spatial tactics, the antagonists fabricate an alternative history of downtown dominance, positioning themselves as perpetual victors. The view and conception of the South L.A. neighborhood spaces as “ghetto spaces” in comparison to the rest of the city, further influences the characters' representation and limits their available possible actions. Urban renewal efforts like this have resulted in the reduction and disappearance of public and democratic multicultural gathering spaces, contributing to increased division within and between racial, cultural, and socioeconomic groups.

Therefore, of particular relevance to Yamashita are the concepts of conceived space versus lived space (Rodriguez 105). In *Tropic of Orange*, the conceived space and the lived space hold almost no relation to each other. The antagonists impose their conceptualized idea of space onto the lived reality of the environment, regardless of its suitability or alignment with the actual lived experience. For example, how the antagonists intend to change the neighborhood space with the intention of “fixing” it, juxtaposed with the authentic lived experiences within Buzzworm's neighborhood space. As Solnit states, “Maps are a tool of those in power which reflects their priorities” (*Infinite City* 14) and they reflect the conceived space which shows facts, but not the reality of space. This is a powerful tactic as maps shape the spatial understanding and discourse of both space and place.

At the same time, according to Solnit, every person possesses multiple maps of their lived space in their own head containing knowledge, relationships, history, facts, past, present and its relation to other spaces (*Infinite City* 3). One of the young adults living in the hood asks Buzzworm, “How come the map's wrong?” (Yamashita 161), reflecting the constant changes and rearrangements occurring in the hood. The characters in the novel reject the “totalizing impulse” of maps, which is the idea, that maps are predicated on the idea that knowledge is



mappable, knowable and visualizable (Cosgrove 16). The young adult's conception of the space is constantly in flux, making it difficult for anyone to properly anchor themselves to the neighborhood. This is especially clear in Yamashita's Los Angeles where downtown development is at an all-time high while unemployment and homelessness are concurrently and rapidly increasing. The city employed spatial tactics that targeted the poor, working together with the police to relocate homeless individuals to disadvantaged areas away from downtown. This strategy aimed to facilitate gentrification in the downtown area, safeguarding investments and property values. According to Davis (Rodriguez 124), these measures were anti-poor in nature. Thus, in *Tropic of Orange*, the hood is a space where people of lower socio-economic status are forced to reside, and the city's bureaucrats take advantage of their situation.

The way space is produced saturates it with its own ideology and the ideological underpinning of that society's mode of production. The novel's antagonists do not seem to care that their conception of the hood space does not correlate with the inhabitants' real, lived space. Instead, they produce space that is intended to regulate movement and actions (Rodriguez 108). They adhere to their conceived space's own logic, regardless of how inconsistent it is with the lived space as it does not need to be consistent or cohesive. These spaces are often filled with symbolic elements and images that either tell of the history of a people and individual or that space's ideology. Yamashita's antagonists use these spaces to underscore the inherent difference in their own strength and prosperity versus those on the outside of their circle while ensuring physical separation between the classes. This dynamic creates a psychological effect of dominance, which is reflected in the spatial layout and atmosphere of the hood space.

As a result, *Tropic of Orange* attempts to reconcile the disparity between the city's conceived and lived spaces by offering a subjective and personal perspective on poverty through the

characters Buzzworm and Manzanar, who have developed their own unique mental maps of their spaces. In Yamashina's literary vision of 1990s L.A., politics, urban planning, racism, and classism converge to create the controversial maps of Los Angeles. Scholars such as Ihab Hassan and J.B. Harley argue that "maps are our supreme fiction of the world... and cartography seek to define, construct, and represent particular visions of space". They also suggest that we "view maps as 'texts', as sign systems that are essentially, rhetorical structures" and the "rhetoric", they suggest, "permeate all layers of the map. As images of the world maps, are never neutral or value free or ever completely scientific. Each map argues its own particular cases" (Mermann-Jozwiak 6).

Consequently, the maps give the socio-historical background for Buzzworm and Manzanar's experiences with the city, highlighting the disparities, challenges they face, and the rules of Los Angeles's social order. The residents of the hood are largely overlooked and neglected by the city's authorities. The city also enables public servants to take actions such as appropriating streets, relocating houses, and displacing people to expand the freeway through the hood area. Yamashita draws inspiration from real-life architectural and spatial strategies, such as "the conscious hardening of the city surface against the poor, with the removal of comfortable places for pedestrians to sit. The city has spent millions on 'soft' environments in certain areas while at the same time, they are making other public spaces as unlivable as possible for the homeless and the poor" (Davis 232). In addition to living in abject poverty and danger from gang violence and the drug epidemic, the people in the hood space cannot be ensured that they will be able to keep their homes. Politicians may not feel obligated to fulfill their promises to the poor, as both the impoverished and the elected officials may be replaced in the next election cycle. As earlier mentioned, when the characters are continuously in danger of losing their place of dwelling, the

space can never feel truly safe. Just like in *Inherent Vice*, the real-estate business and the government are still wreaking havoc with the lower-income communities, creating new spatial containments and pushing people out to design their own spaces.

In *Tropic of Orange*, the antagonists use various spatial tactics, such as loitering homeless, drug addicts, dealers, and prostitutes, to force people to move or sell their property. For example, real-estate developers ensure that certain homes are “left to be broken into and tagged” and “Make it impossible for people to pass. Stop people from using the shops that used to be convenient. Stop people from coming to her dress shop...Now homeless, dope dealers, prostitutes only ones passing her shop. No master plan. No ma’am. Wasn’t gonna affect her no way.” (Yamashita 73-74) Here Yamashita highlights the emotional and psychological damage of the spatial destruction and restructuring in the low-income spaces. The novel shows how the antagonists regulate space and control space through its distribution of resources, and social services, and the enabling of the unofficial third-world economy within the city. This phenomenon also mirrors real-life dynamics, as Davis claims that the strengthening real estate industry in low-income neighborhoods exacerbates class divisions, leading to increased conflict and violence (Davis 40). In addition, the freeway construction and displacement serve a globalized “master plan” that further neglects the needs of the people in the low-income neighborhoods. The purpose of the freeway construction is to facilitate further growth in downtown L.A. and improve transportation and movement in and out of the city. Similarly, even building the freeway itself is a way to spatially control and segregate the people who live below and around it.

One of the psychological effects of this phenomenon is that the hood is becoming an increasingly isolated space within the city. Buzzworm notices that this type of construction not

only attracts crime but also diminishes foot traffic and devastates local businesses. This has long been an issue related to freeway construction as Avila states “Despite the thriving regional economy of urban Southern California in the age of the freeway, the peak of economic prosperity for inner-city communities such as Boyle Heights had already passed. The freeway not only ravaged the housing stock of the communities of East Los Angeles, it also impaired the economic health of those areas.” (Avila 212) Scholars such as Avila have therefore blamed the declining inner-city economy on the freeways. Due to the lower standard of living, authorities can now easily assert control over the inhabitants of the area, labeling it as gang territory, which exacerbates the situation. This classification drives property prices down, leading to gentrification in the surrounding areas, which become more popular and expensive. Yamashita suggests that the government is probably also able to force people out because those who live there are not aware of how much their property is worth. As mentioned earlier, the spatial tactics used in the hood serve as another example of slow violence. There the purpose was to devalue and appropriate the land and then to build luxury apartments and re-sell it. Through this constant and gradual spatial violence, few of the characters in either novel feel like they are secure in their space or their own time. It always feels transient, as if they are just the people who happened to be there at that particular time. Emi, Buzzworm, Manzanar, and Gabriel try to give a face to this destruction. Through these characters, the novel reveals the city’s social dynamics, and spatial injustices and uncovers layers of spatial memories, such as unequal access to resources and discriminatory urban planning policies. However, they are unable to reveal anything truly tangible that can incite change.

As a consequence of spatial manipulation and restructuring in *Tropic of Orange*, the neighborhoods have transformed into urban spaces characterized by a form of controlled

anarchy, where rules and boundaries are ambiguous and fluid. The spaces are fluid and constructed in tandem with the inherent power dynamics and social hierarchies within the hood. Buzzworm highlights this issue by noting how the official map prioritizes conflict zones and police stations over essential institutions like school districts and hospitals. Therefore, the gangbangers, peddlers, and thieves all try to divide themselves into unspoken territories. They are also in a position where the space around them only allows them to survive, not flourish. In the words of the characters living in the hood, “I’s survivin’. Everybody in the hood survivin’....Fuck that survivin’ shit” (Yamashita 25). It is a space that rewards criminal behavior because of the difficulty of achieving success through legal means. That is why they later let the spirit of capitalism and globalization influence and control their hood spaces. The gangs in the hood make a business-based truce, drawing up a binding legal contract and combining their forces. This is another example of a conceived space that does not adhere to the actual lived space because it is constrained to only one aspect of the hood. However, by establishing this truce, they manage to carve out a space that aligns with the map of their neighborhood, allowing them to assert ownership and autonomy over their lived space. It becomes a space where they are not as disposable. Ironically this makes it even simpler for the antagonists to manipulate them as they know who officially has “control” over which space. Hence, they can allow the warfare to continue to drive down the prices of the properties in the neighborhood.

In these novels, space both represents and defies individuality; the antagonists wield power by shaping and controlling space to portray individuals in a certain light. Through Buzzworm, a Vietnam veteran who has grown up in the hood, Yamashita shows us how the people in hood space must either cope with the everyday space or overcome the deterministic exterior structures and embodied norms (Lussault and Stock 12). Those who have grown up in the hood or poverty

are almost “programmed” by their space to engage in certain actions. The inhabitants have been conditioned to behave in certain ways, either through explicit instruction or by being misled into believing that certain actions will lead to rewards or opportunities within their space. Especially in a space that has lost many of its public and social services.

Despite this conditioning, some individuals are still able to resist societal norms and act in ways that challenge the dominant power structures. For example, as Rodriguez points out, Buzzworm challenges the belief that representation equals lived experience (Rodriguez 122). He is a character that is closely tied to his space while at the same time defying the ruling power's conception of him as a “hood resident”. He is “the street” and it is a crucial part of his identity, and he is the novel's “angel of mercy” (Yamashita 26). He tries to make the hood a better place through reform, rehab, free clinics, legal services, and support for shelters and soup kitchens. He has an idea of “self-gentrification” (Yamashita p.74), by self-made standards and respectability. But the question becomes is that possible in the Los Angeles hood-space's current structure? At one point, he wonders to himself, “Somebody else must have the big map. Or maybe just the next map. The one with the new layers you can't even imagine. Where was his house on this map? Somebody's parking lot? Somebody's tennis court? Or just the driveway to some gated community?” (Yamashita 73)

Buzzworm is able to help because of his connection to the space. He is one of the lucky few who owns his own house, but only because he and his grandmother spent thirty years paying the downpayment. “Could go without food or clothing, but not her house” (Yamashita 72). For him, the house is filled with old memories, ghosts, and a profound sense of significance because it was inherited, imbuing it with inherent meaning. Place is also a crucial part of the character's identity, particularly in a space where homes can easily be taken away. Tuan claims that “as a

result of use the space itself acquires a density of meaning and a stability that are characteristic traits of place” (Tuan 182). Buzzworm is connected to both his home space and the broader neighborhood where his house is located. The home space represents both work and life made visible. It even grants him a degree of influence, as various entities—homeowners, gangs, police, real estate developers, and even street vendors—vying to control as much of the hood's space as possible.

He is also connected to the “natural” physical element of the hood space and talks about the city’s palms as if he is their personal gardener. He states that if “you understand the species of trees in the neighborhood, you understand the nature of my work” (Yamashita 29). The palm trees are the landmarks of the neighborhoods, a symbol of the landscape, tall enough that they can be seen across the freeway. The palm trees both look out of the hood over downtown while they force outsiders and freeway motorists to acknowledge the hood from the outside, they are “a beauty that could only be appreciated from afar” (Yamashita 31). California is often associated with a relaxed sun-filled day on the beach underneath the palm trees; however, in Yamashita’s Los Angeles, it barely rains, the sun is a constant and oppressive, relentless force that brings all the ugliness of the city’s ghettos into light. “El A is A-pocalypse... It just natural phenomena: earth, wind, fire, water” (Yamashita 140). Instead of rainy seasons, they have apocalyptic seasons, containing fires, floods, earthquakes, and riots. The sun is so bright and strong that the days are getting longer and even in the middle of L.A. there are no shadows. This is another reason for the palm trees’ significance as they provide free shade for those who cannot afford porches. The palm trees are some of the few natural protections the city offers its poorer inhabitants. However, by the end of the novel, Buzzworm finds himself unable to fix his sights on the palms anymore; things have shifted too much, becoming unrecognizable. The

"camouflage of smog" (Yamashita 214) prevents him from even seeing the palm trees anymore, yet he still chooses to continue watering them. Yamashita's portrayal of the hood space communicates the brutality imposed by man-made divisions and borders, both as militaristic entities with disastrous consequences and as fabricated constructions unable to contain or illustrate the real world (Kim 17). The spatial manipulation in Yamashita's portrayal of Los Angeles now permeates every corner of the city, rendering it impossible for the novel's characters to exist beyond the confines of the man-made infrastructural grid.

People as infrastructure and the city grid

Yamashita uses the literary form to draw attention to Los Angeles's infrastructural grid and the hidden layers that the city system both utilizes and depends on. She familiarizes this abstract and unfamiliar grid by conceptualizing and spatializing it. The grid in L.A. orders, controls, and connects its spaces and all aspects of life within the city, including its connecting roads, freeways, and neighborhoods. This system and grid dictate the allocation of power, resources, and assistance in Los Angeles, yet none of it reaches the spaces inhabited by the novel's main characters. In *Tropic of Orange*, the human bodies within the narrative are often marginalized, exploited, and underestimated within the overarching grid of societal structures, even though they are fundamentally relied upon. The system even decides which people are visible and eligible for support and who will be erased and/or ignored.

The infrastructure is part of the narrative architecture, and the pages are the space where the multiethnic subjectivity of Los Angeles plays out. The novel, according to Jina Kim, highlights the interconnection, the grid, and the mutual dependence of its characters and the network "that tie individual to community, community to city, and city to globe" (Kim 7). A further consequence of the earlier mentioned *postmetropolis* and globalization's focus on economic



growth and urban restructuring is that those inside the infrastructure are manipulated and those outside of this heterogeneous order are the ones who will suffer. According to Yamashita, the wealth and work that globalization was supposed to bring to the city space has instead been outsourced and the characters most attuned to Los Angeles's infrastructure are those who experience its power asymmetries daily.

As the focus is almost exclusively on the accumulation of capital and labor, Yamashita's homeless and unemployed are treated like lower beings, while others use, consume, and rely on products made in spaces on the other side of the world. The convergence of technological advancement and the evolution of capitalism has marginalized a significant portion of the working class, rendering their labor and valuable skills obsolete. This phenomenon has resulted in widespread unemployment, poverty, and limited access to educational opportunities. The marginalized are expected to be living like scavengers on the rest of the city's remains, not even fit to live in their abandoned and rejected spaces. Saskia Sassen states "Although these types of workers and jobs are never represented as part of the global economy, they are in fact part of the infrastructure of jobs involved in running and implementing the global economic system." (Sassen 81) Even though they are essential to the L.A. economy, Yamashita's poor, immigrated, and homeless are a section of the population that has been labeled as a Demonic Other, devalued and ignored so much that they essentially blend in with the rest of the inanimate objects of Los Angeles, becoming part of the city's space.

In addition, there is an interdependence between the characters, Los Angeles, and the grid that Yamashita can highlight in unique ways through literature. This interplay showcases the subjectivity and interdependence of her characters. Yamashita's depiction of L.A. also functions as what literary scholar Elizabeth Mermann-Jozwiak calls "a symbol of the post-national space:

it is not a clearly demarcated or homogeneous structure made up of assimilated or assimilating immigrants” (Mermann-Jozwiak 2). As mentioned earlier, the novel attempts to bring attention to various infrastructural issues, historical contexts, and social networks, challenging the labeling of migrants and homeless. In both books, those on the top have exploited this interdependence and framed those working on the bottom as lazy and dependent. Here again, spatial tactics and the linguistic power of the enemy are crucial, as terms like “illegal immigrant” can immediately conjure images of unfair dependency. However, Yamashita's perspective suggests the opposite is true, depicting the impoverished denizens of the city and the systemic structures as symbiotic, with a suggestion that those in positions of privilege may be the ones who are parasitic in nature. To challenge these views, Yamashita, in line with Kim’s ideas, uses the narrative to acknowledge the characters’ “shared dependency on social and prosthetic networks of support” (Kim 2), and the infrastructure becomes a living, breathing part of the plot and space. She challenges these labels through the undocumented migrants Rafaela and Bobby, as well as their son, Sol, who embodies the multicultural identity. Together, their narrative arcs, which bookend the novel, offer a counterpoint to the parasitic and dependent view, foregrounding the novel's exploration of ideas such as equality, labor, and space.

Drawing from AbdouMaliq Simone's concept of "people as infrastructure" (Simone 2004, p.407), it can be argued that Yamashita uses literature to highlight how the city space and the system are creating tools out of its citizens' bodies rather than supporting them. An infrastructural grid, according to Caroline Levine, “link separable nodes, including bodies, spaces, machines, and objects”, as well as providing “channels for the movement of bodies, energy, information, and waste” (Levine 597). The grid deprioritizes the individual and individual actions as the city space itself is of foremost importance. The impoverished are

viewed primarily as useful resources, for example, during election season and as a part of the larger infrastructure, like cogs in the machine with little room to carve out a life or identity for themselves. One would think such a vast system of interdependence would guarantee proper integration with the literary city space; however, that is not the case. This stands in contrast to the claim Mermann-Jozwiak makes which is that “These populations have significantly reshaped the landscape of the city, through, for instance, the availability of products, services, and identities.” (Mermann-Jozwiak 2) Conversely, as earlier mentioned, the system hides, produces, and reproduces socially unequal structures and narratives, and, as a result, individuals do not have access to the same resources or opportunities. Their identity becomes entwined with an essential yet scarcely visible and constraining infrastructure amidst their struggle for necessities and a space of their own.

Consequently, the notion of the body and its actions is critical because the marginalized have become an unnoticed and integral part of the city’s underlying infrastructure that the rest of the city relies on. Just like in *Inherent Vice*, where Adrian Prussia hides his victims inside freeway columns, Yamashita illustrates how the homeless, immigrated and impoverished individuals become intertwined with the city’s infrastructure. They are part of an invisible historical grid that governs land use, human behavior, labor and property (Yamashita 52). Yamashita draws attention to this in two of the novel’s many poems:

all the people who do the work of machines:

human washing machines,

human vacuums,

human garbage disposals (Yamashita 172).

and

It means that you are no longer human beings

but only labor.

It means that the land you live on is not earth

but only property (Yamashita 222).

The characters are unable to live up to Buzzworm's ideas of self-gentrification because they inhabit a space that prioritizes international interests over its impoverished citizens. Their rights, autonomy, and agency are being eliminated, and their bodies are controlled in favor of globalizing interests. This situation reflects the antagonist's refusal to acknowledge the subject that is engaged in self-determination. In *Tropic of Orange*, individuals who fail to achieve self-sufficiency are relegated to impoverished hood spaces where they are exploited for cheap labor and often stigmatized as burdens on the state and taxpayers. Now, due to globalization, entire communities that were once self-reliant, with their own local economies such as food markets, are increasingly reliant on larger economic centers that generate income through the global market. As a result, it has become increasingly challenging for individuals, particularly the homeless and impoverished, to maintain self-sufficiency. And as mentioned, rather than helping the current inhabitants of L.A. the government has elected to utilize work from other nations.

Yamashita explores the impact of trade agreements like NAFTA, which facilitated the importation of a cheaper workforce from developing countries to sustain Los Angeles' infrastructure. This influx of foreign labor contributed to a rise in anti-immigration opinion among certain segments of the population. Transnational corporations were able to access cross-border labor and consumer markets thanks to NAFTA, which severely damaged local enterprises and exacerbated poverty (Thoma 7). Here another grid and structure have formed which, as

Grace Kyungwon Hong has pointed out, created a flow of work and goods that has led “people to blame the economic recessions not on capital re-organization and transnational corporate policies, but on Mexican immigrants, who were ostensibly taking American jobs while draining the United States of its scarce social service and welfare resources” (Hong 135). This means that the spaces of L.A. have undergone significant transformation due to free trade and global infrastructural networks, which have facilitated the movement of goods, people, labor, and money (Kim 8). However, despite these developments, many of Los Angeles's poorest residents are unfairly blamed for depleting resources, even though they often work in the city's lowest-paid jobs. As a result, the issue of poverty is often redirected away from downtown to other areas of Los Angeles, such as ghettos, barrios, and immigration enclaves within the city space. This blame also disregards the socio-economic conditions in the countries from which immigrants originate, which are affected by the symbiotic relationship with L.A. through trade agreements.

Furthermore, after the destruction of the freeway encampment, Buzzworm observes a group of homeless men roasting and consuming the hearts of Mexican infants, symbolizing the desperate measures taken by the impoverished in Los Angeles to sustain themselves at the expense of Mexico's future. This grotesque act mirrors the importation of goods and exploitation of labor enabled by the NAFTA agreement, underscoring the ongoing exploitation of both countries' poor people through capitalist globalization. This, according to Anne Mai Yee Jansen, underscores the perceived division between the "developed" nations of the north and the "developing" nations of the south (Jansen 104), revealing that outdated perceptions of place persist in the contemporary globalized landscape.

By highlighting this infrastructure, the novel challenges the idea, as Kim suggests, that global capitalism's beneficiaries are self-governing, and that self-ownership leads to liberation by

highlighting the interdependent nature of multi-ethnic city life and the various social, economic, and prosthetic systems supporting individuals (Kim 19). Yamashita uses literature to properly acknowledge these subjects, aiming to shift the stigma and discourse surrounding their perceived one-sided dependency. She seeks to illuminate the exploitation perpetrated by the upper classes, along with the disappearance of spaces and opportunities for these marginalized individuals.

To create further division amongst the immigrated and marginalized, *Tropic of Orange*'s governmental and corporate diversity rhetoric has led to a fake and dishonest culture of celebration around multiculturalism. While it fosters diversity and attracts new labor, it also perpetuates another social hierarchy and overlooks the pre-existing issues within the city (Davis 80). The immigrant and multicultural population, which has played a significant role in constructing the city's spaces, now finds itself relegated to or compelled to undertake menial jobs for the affluent and influential. Yamashita underscores this situation through characters like Gabriel and Emi, who mock and reject the contrived corporate and commodified multiculturalism forced upon them. For instance, unlike Gabriel, who seeks a connection to his heritage, Emi rejects her cultural identity and often makes light of it. As illustrated by the quote, "She liked trying to be anti-multicultural around him" (Yamashita 21) and especially when they discuss L.A.'s "multicultural mosaic":

"There's you and me and the gays at the end of the bar and the guy with the turban. And how about those Caucasian Japanophiles who talk real Japanese with the sushi man? Can we count them too?" (Yamashita 110).

She continues on: "Do you know what cultural diversity really is? . . . It's a white guy wearing a Nirvana T-shirt and dreads. That's cultural diversity. . . Don't you hate being

multicultural? ...I hate being multicultural . . . You're invisible. I'm invisible. We're all invisible. It's just tea, ginger, raw fish, and a credit card" (Yamashita 111).

Yamashita's political function is to highlight and give form to societal dynamics. Emi bluntly reveals the shallowness of multiculturalism's official discourse, highlighting its tendency to reduce ethnicity to superficial elements like cultural festivities and cuisine, while privileging European Americans over ethnic minorities. Multiculturalism has been commodified and co-opted by corporate interests, serving as a mere marketing tool. In contrast, Yamashita illustrates how the daily lives of the city's residents defy these simplistic narratives (Mermann-Jozwiak 2). At the same time, both Gabriel and Emi are the novel's two most privileged characters, and they are the least aware of the infrastructure and grid. Through her characters, she questions whom the city deems worthy of elevation through corporate multiculturalism, while also shedding light on the evident disparities in spatial and material distribution.

Due to the ongoing manipulation and re-labeling, the characters may appear disconnected from their situation because they find it challenging to establish a stable identity, often relying on spatial and temporal factors as the basis of their identity. The city offers, as Solnit states, "a liberatory state for those who come to emancipate themselves from family and community expectation, to experiment with subculture and identity" (Solnit 186). Gabriel and Emi compare their current lives to the pre-globalization, pre-interconnected, pre-internet age which does not exist for them anymore. This is especially true for Gabriel who wants his reporting to have the same flair and style as a 1940s noir detective. Similar to the Chandlerian antiheroes of an earlier age of L.A., which is very much rooted in Los Angeles "mythology". The reality of the detective archetype is now probably someone more like Doc Sportello. He aspires to be a detective and professes to adhere strictly to the noir style. However, in reality, he embodies more of a soft-

boiled detective persona, longing to be associated with a time and place that no longer exists.

Moreover, Gabriel's further detachment from the culture might stem from his lack of genuine attachment to his personal space or the city's urban environment. Unlike Buzzworm and Manzanar, these spaces merely represent the life he desires, rather than being integral parts of his identity or existence. Gabriel opposes the traditional Mexican diaspora in America, feeling a stronger attachment to L.A. spaces than to his tenuous connection to his Mexican heritage. He stands out as the only character whose personal space we explore in the story. Gabriel is looking for something in another culture and space he is "biologically" tied to but in reality, has barely anything in common with. This makes sense as Gabriel's "obsession" with the property "had begun one summer when Gabriel felt a spontaneous, sudden passion of the acquisition for land, the sensation of a timeless vacation...and there had been one additional attraction: the location" (Yamashita 8). Gabriel wants to turn his vacation space into a heterotopic place of deviation and resistance. He's unable to do so because he doesn't genuinely care about the place; he simply wants it completed as a means of self-actualization, to validate his self-image, and as a symbolic gesture rather than a literal place he can consider home. Similar to his connection to "Old L.A." through his obsession with old noir detectives. Because of his intentions, the house never properly transforms from space to place. Gabriel's misplaced intentions are highlighted in his actions as he chooses style over comfort, and he insists on growing fruit that cannot grow in that climate. Emphasizing that he is not connected to the culture, the land, or the space in the way he thinks he is. This mirrors his self-image as a hardboiled detective, which he is not. Further highlighting the dissonance between his self-image and reality. Later, when Gabriel returns to the border space, he almost fails to notice his own place.



Manzanar's symphony and the changing Los Angeles space

In contrast, Manzanar Murakami, like Buzzworm, is deeply intertwined with the city space and its marginalized inhabitants, particularly the homeless. He embodies a sense of belonging in L.A. unmatched by anyone else. Both he and Buzzworm position themselves in the local community, striving to reconcile the relationships among fellow citizens. Manzanar embraces homelessness, residing beneath the L.A. freeway, and "to say that Manzanar Murakami was homeless was as absurd as the work he chose to do" (Yamashita 34). The work he has chosen to do is to compose a symphony out of the city's traffic. He is a figure of the freeway, intimately tied to the city, so much so that he can sense the time of day through his feet by feeling the vibrations and intervals of the cars on the freeway. He has "a blackened appearance...like the underbelly of the overpass itself" (Yamashita 96). And as earlier mentioned, terms like "homeless" and "unemployed" are ways of linguistically denying people their right to a secure living space and emphasizing what they lack. But through Manzanar, Yamashita implies that material possessions and a physical dwelling may not inherently make you more connected to a city or a space. And she shows how one can connect to space in other meaningful ways. Especially as characters like Manzanar, have a unique conception of the city space as they have no access to a home to "retreat" to, thus they are always in the public sphere.

Furthermore, Yamashita utilizes Manzanar as a means to illustrate the intricate grid of the city. Manzanar's lack of resources and deep connection to his surroundings enables him to perceive the entirety of Los Angeles simultaneously, each map as a layer of music. This conceptual approach enhances understanding of the city's abstract elements. This also underscores the extent to which the characters are intertwined with the infrastructural grid that structures and regulates L.A., and consequently, the global economy, due to their interconnection. He can see

connections throughout the city that are practically invisible to large parts of the population. As the narrator states, “Standing there, he bore and raised each note, joined them, united families, created a community, a great society, an entire civilization of sound. The great flow of humanity ran below and beyond his feet in every direction, pumping and pulsating, that blood connection, the great heartbeat of the city.” (Yamashita 33) Via the novel’s magical realist elements, his symphony spatializes the city into a complex grid and map of patterns and bodies.

His symphony, in connection with globalization, transforms L.A., as he uses music to display how the city forms and reforms itself. To him, the only musical instrument worthy of his compositions are the spaces of L.A. and the lives lived within them. He views the space as a map of labor, industries, shopping districts, services, work and machines. He can visualize and conceptualize the grid of land, actions, and property which is made up of both stagnant and dynamic relationships and connections. The narrator states, “In those days, there were railroads and the harbors and the aqueduct. These were the infrastructures built by migrant and immigrant labor that created the initial grid on which everything else began to fill in.... and a new grid spread itself with particular domination” (Yamashita 203). This means that there are multiple, paralleling, and overlapping layers to the city, some go unnoticed while others are more prominent. People might not notice that it is all connected but these patterns help control the distribution of wealth and the city’s population. The layers of networks Manzanar is referring to in the previous quote were built by forced migrant labor which was essential for the city’s current spaces and economies.

Furthermore, these various layers are competing for survival and the awareness of the city. And as Manzanar states, “*There are maps and there are maps and there are maps*” (Yamashita 52). This points to the idea that the city space, the network of adjacent spaces the grid and the

characters are deeply intertwined and interdependent as it has molded, supported, and influenced them internally and externally. As people are becoming extensions of the Los Angeles infrastructure, they are also part of these layers. Yamashita is trying to draw attention to the invisible grid, the systems of support, the marginalized people's struggle, and merging the city space into a cohesive whole that combines all the layers of experience and emphasizes everyone's labor. She shows us how this grid limits and controls the characters' assumed agency. And that to those situated "above street level", those below them on the grid serve as a support network. Meaning that the reverse of the parasitic dependent view is also true. At the same time, the poor and homeless' capability for action is severely limited as it hinges on various external entities (Kim 16). Yamashita utilizes literature and Manzanar's symphony to elevate the infrastructural system and the freeways beyond their ordinary significance, portraying them as both sinister and transcendent. These aspects and spaces emerge as central focal points, demanding attention.

Moreover, Rodriguez states that "Literary language, able to operate in imaginative or symbolic registers, can capture the 'layers of the map' that urban planners exclude." (Rodriguez 132) Buzzworm, Manzanar, and the narrative of the novel offer the reader a counter-map of the conceived hood and freeway space. Through this alternative narrative, Yamashita uses the literary mode to express the lived experience that is lost when lived space is transformed or primarily viewed as conceived space. In the end, the character's experience cannot be conveyed through standard maps, because the conceived experience might have little to do with their actual reality. However, literature and literary tropes are valuable because they can subjectively and emotionally represent their experiences offering readers a fresh perspective and valuable insights into societal structures that can easily be overlooked. The novel's form allows us to move beyond

conventional maps and instead focus more clearly on the human experience of spatial control and destruction, as well as the concept of place. This argument appeals to emotion, or pathos, and can drive change and lead to greater spatial equality. The novel seems to suggest that we must recognize the grid or structure in order to establish a proper support system. Currently, only the poor and the super-rich truly understand the grid. That is because the wealthy control it, while the poor are entangled and manipulated within it. Literature gives us tools to highlight less visible power relations and to analyze spaces that are beyond our understanding in our current world.

Thus, Yamashita employs literary language and postmodern-magical realist elements to illustrate how globalization and spatial manipulation transform the spaces and topography of Los Angeles. She achieves this by utilizing Manzanar's symphony not only to map interdependence but also to conceptualize the changes in these spaces. Scholars such as Wendy B. Faris and Shannin Schroeder argue that magical realism has often "been a genre that questions hegemonic belief systems by destabilizing the boundary distinguishing 'reality' from magic'" (Jansen 104). This draws attention to the artifice of the novel and allows Yamashita to demonstrate how the spatial control exerted by the antagonists, coupled with the forces of globalization and the postmodern-magical realist elements of the novel, physically transform the spaces of L.A. Thus, Yamashita uses magical realist literary tropes to critique the ruling power and Los Angeles's labor and immigration politics. These tropes also allow her to shift the reader's conception of lived space while simultaneously showing where the spatial focus of the novel lies. The two spaces that physically expand are the hood and the freeway, both spaces of the marginalized and "expendable" population. Perhaps she is suggesting that expansion and spatial transformation are necessary to accommodate the growing homeless and immigrant population.

The characters observe changes to the landscape, particularly when the freeway overpass begins to shift and stretch. This marks a significant moment in the story where the space is no longer entirely controlled by any single entity. As Buzzworm points out, “Can’t you see it? Where we are. Harbor Freeway. It’s growing. Stretched this way and that” (Yamashita 163), and a character comments, “Streets stretched and shrunk this way and that. Someone put this city in the washer/dryer. Shrunk 50 percent in places. Then ironed it out 200 percent in others” (Yamashita 197). This is because the narrative of globalization focuses on the hypermobility of money, the emergence of a new global class, and the phenomenon of time-space compression brought about by improved transit and telecommunications. Sassen reasons that the globalized economy cannot be separated from local spaces and the bodies of the workers who helped create it (Sassen 103). *Tropic of Orange* stresses how globalization has condensed the world's spaces, granting us access to everything within arm's reach, anytime, anywhere. This is especially true for a city like L.A. You do not have to go anywhere; everything eventually comes to the city. As a result, time and space stretch and expand within these areas, influencing both the physical environment and the abstract concept of space throughout the rest of the city.

After the creation of the freeway encampment, the valley also expands and stretches, and the Hollywood sign edges nearer to the encampment. The cognizance of the characters' poverty and marginalization extends beyond their spaces and into the broader city, especially downtown and the Hollywood hills, as the presence of the freeway encampment becomes more widely recognized in the public consciousness. As the space of marginalized people expands, the space available to the rest of the citizens shrinks. The freeway space is creating harmony within the city space, giving a more equal share of land to the marginalized. And just like the beach bums in *Inherent Vice*, the homeless are using their space to provide a clear contradiction to the

conceived and conceptual space of gentrification, capitalization, and globalization in downtown Los Angeles. It is in opposition to these abstract spaces that new conceptions of lived space are formed.

New space can be created as a result of practice and action, through the process of qualification, arrangement, building, conception and bodily gestures. This act is described by Lussault and Stock as the creation of space and place through mere practice (Lussault and Stock 8). Manzanar's symphony and the new space on the freeway represent an attempt to establish a fresh spatial paradigm and alter the existing maps and grids. He uses his symphony as a way to "counter-map" (*Infinite City* 17) the antagonist's grand narrative of spatial control, drawing on his indigenous knowledge of the city to create a new map for Los Angeles's marginalized people. This serves as a response to the creation of freeways and radical housing redevelopment, which the novel portrays as symbols of spatial apartheid and slow violence. He is creating a new and modified grid made up of people rather than structures and inanimate things.

Like Gordita Beach, the freeway encampment space is co-constructed through action. The action constructs spatial arrangement and the qualities of the place. This is why the freeway encampment has spatial elements such as broad accessibility, no monetary restrictions, and an egalitarian influence (Lussault and Stock 12). Moreover, the differential freeway space has also been utilized to restore unity to the functions and elements of regular social practice that the abstract city space of Los Angeles has taken away from the homeless population (Rodriguez 127). Allowing them to form a new community, such as those in the city's conceived maps while at the same time transgressing the spatial practices of the city. Through their actions, the marginalized can not only establish a new community but also express their discontent towards the ruling system.

The Freeway Encampment and resistance

In *Tropic of Orange*, Yamashita constructs a mythical space of resistance on the freeway, designed by and for Los Angeles's most marginalized people. Before the takeover, the freeway was another man-made border and a symbol of movement, everyday minutia and traffic, part of a system that steered the people of L.A. from one predestined destination to another. Genevive Giuliano explains how the network of freeways facilitated a remarkable expansion by affording residents and businessmen supreme mobility. The freeway system, emblematic of accessibility and transit, symbolizes the uninterrupted flow of goods and individuals within civilization (Giuliano 231). Just like in *Inherent Vice*, the freeway is home to a great mass of seemingly heterogeneous travelers, used for mostly practical purposes. And despite technological and structural advancement as well as increased spatial mobility, the divide between the affluent and the marginalized has only increased. This increased mobility has also come at the cost of the destruction of the neighborhoods of the people who now lack mobility and the ability to access the freeway.

Yamashita also uses the freeway to highlight how the demands of global consumers are more important than the needs of certain segments of its citizens. Before the encampment was established, the freeway space in *Tropic of Orange* was associated with pollution and frustration. For example, there was the frustration of the ordinary motorist stuck in traffic on the freeway amid diesel exhaust and transportation of “the great products of civilization” (Yamashita 104). She shows us the connection between the freeway and the spatial displacement within the city as it is clogged with the machines and machinations of globalization. Trucks are constantly moving back and forth above the ruins of lower-income citizens' homes. At one point Yamashita states that “citizens wondered how they were supposed to get through the day without breathing”

(Yamashita 147) because of the extremely poor air quality.

And now, in Yamashita's Los Angeles, even inanimate and intangible items are better protected and sheltered than most individuals. Buzzworm tells Gabriel, "It's a wake-up call, Balboa. All these people living in their cars. The cars living in garages. The garages living inside guarded walls. You dump the people outta the cars, and you left with things living inside things. Meantime people going through the garbage at McDonalds' looking for crusts of bread and leftover fries." (Yamashita 40) Yamashita's marginalized are often either ignored, manipulated, looked upon with disgust, or viewed as disposable by large portions of the city's population. People have been reduced to mere bodies, marginalized, and deprived of stable dwelling places. This dynamic gives rise to new spatial narratives, and it is the reason why the creation of the freeway encampment is necessary. In this world, these sorts of salient spaces become vital as a small safeguard from human trafficking, gang violence, and the city's police. They create a counter ideology through the differential space that resists the abstract space and confronts the dangers of Yamashita's current lived map of L.A. The people on the freeway encampment utilize dwelling as a practice, as resistance, a transgression, and a way of coping with space. Using the freeway, they remind the rest of L.A. that they too are a part of the city space. They accomplish this by rearranging the regular daily order, an action that influences the quality and features of the freeway space.

Similar to the portrayal in *Inherent Vice*, Yamashita's Los Angeles seeks to absorb and destroy opposing and divergent spaces. However, destabilizing elements have the ability to agitate in a way that commands the place to be recognized and possibly transformed. These spaces continue to develop as a resistance and a countermeasure to the wealth and power-centers spaces in L.A. That is because, as Rodriguez states, a truly new space cannot be produced



without it emphasizing differences and its own original abstract spatial practices (Rodriguez 127). The majority of the novel's characters lack agency and the opportunity to convey their stories; they are enslaved in a grand narrative that suppresses their voices.

Consequently, the marginalized population uses their symbolic and differential space on the freeway to show the rest of the city that they exist and that they are a part of the city space. Yamashita wants to highlight the dignity in spite of the indignity that is present in their current circumstances. The novel illustrates how various small movements and actions culminate in an explosion, leading to the creation of the encampment, which serves as a rejection of the grid and infrastructure by the marginalized people. Two separate collisions on the freeway resulted in a massive traffic jam, slowing everything down and providing an opportunity for people to reshape the space. Reminiscent of Pynchon's outcasts, Yamashita's characters are taken from the periphery and thrust into the center as they reclaim their space. The accident on the freeway brings people together regardless of cultural difference, race or class. The local context becomes symbolic of the global situation and through literature, this narrative aims to rewrite history and imagines a possible future beyond the constraints of the grid and capitalism. It is the gathering of homeless individuals that ultimately captures the attention of the rest of the city.

The Harbor Freeway cuts through the heart of Los Angeles and during "the Hour of the Trucks," citizens reclaim their lost and destroyed territory, establishing the "utopian" freeway encampment. One of the homeless comments: "There's already names to the lands, like streets! South Fast Lane and North Fast Lane. Limousine way... There's a truck could be a Seven Eleven. Got everything..." (Yamashita 134). This quickly becomes an important aspect of the freeway spaces, as Solnit claims "In dreary times joy itself is insurrectionary, as community is in times of isolation" (*Wanderlust* 215), and consequently, the freeway encampment rapidly

transforms into an open, egalitarian community. This is apt because, as Ramón Saldívar states, magical realism as a literary form explores “the nature of nation- and community-formation, the ethos of justice, and the crossing of symbolic borders and inhabiting the transnational imaginary” (Saldívar 578), while it draws attention to real-life issues. Abandoned cars on the freeway are divided up and repurposed as homes for the homeless, in stark contrast to the abundance of empty houses around the country. Everyone shares the available resources and Buzzworm comments that it is like “a trailer park akin only to a giant Arizona swap meet” (Yamashita 145). In this new space and system, practicality and functionality take precedence over aesthetics. The homeless prioritize making sustainable improvements to the cars they occupy, including growing fruits and vegetables. Notably, Yamashita points out how the homeless community comprises not only shady characters but also former television executives, artists, tradespeople, and other professionals who are currently out of work. No one is in charge; instead, everyone collaborates on tasks. From the chaos of traffic jams, communities, shops, TV shows, and news outlets emerge, catering to the needs of the poor and homeless. They even have trash pickers and social workers. Buzzworm takes over the TV operation to make sure that the homeless are correctly represented. They have now introduced homeless cooking shows and sitcoms, featuring homeless anchors, and broadcasting programs like "Lifestyles of the Poor and Forgotten," all of which gained instant success. This is the type of "self-gentrification" Buzzworm mentioned earlier in the novel—gentrification according to the standards set by the residents rather than by city developers. The freeway encampment stands in stark contrast to Gordita Beach, serving as a space where people rely on each other and their shared purpose, driven by a necessity for survival. However, this shift separates them from their previous support system, exacerbating the contrast between them and the rest of the city, and ultimately leading to their downfall.

As earlier mentioned, bodies and their movement can be used in acts of resistance. Despite the world becoming more accessible and distances shrinking due to modern communication and transportation, local spatial authorities still heavily control mobility (Mermann-Jozwiak 19). However now, thanks to the freeway encampment, everyone is compelled to walk; “amazing thing was everybody in L.A. was walking. People were finally getting out, seeing the city” (Yamashita 187). In *Tropic of Orange*, because of the freeway encampment, people are no longer able to drive. The cars are instead used as shelter for the homeless as the “Streets become unrecognizable from an automotive standpoint. The only way to navigate was to feel the streets with your own two feet” (Yamashita 219). The presence of the freeway encampment compels other citizens to adopt similar modes of movement and paths as the marginalized, traversing shared spaces using comparable methods, thereby establishing physical and mental spatial relationships among them. The marginalized no longer blend with the space and infrastructure. Now that everyone is forced to walk, creating a new social space, leveling the playing field and changing the dynamics of mobility within the city. At one point the narrator states “Perhaps it should have been a comforting idea to Manzanar. A kind of solidarity: All seven million residents of greater L.A. out on the town, away from their homes, just like him, outside. In the next moment, they would all cram their bodies through exists.... all jam their bodies into vehicles of every size” (Yamashita 177). This is similar to the characters in *Inherent Vice*, as they also employ their bodies as a form of resistance, collectively moving in ways that offer the homeless a new spatial representation, rendering them as visible as other citizens. Now, those who lack mobility are among the most mobile residents in Los Angeles as they have claimed the city’s symbol of movement and transportation for themselves. As Rebecca Solnit states, “Bodily causes had bodily effects; it was to be a revolution of not merely ideas but of bodies liberated,

starving, marching, rioting.” (*Wanderlust* 220) And now, the homeless and marginalized of L.A. use their bodies and their actions as a form of speech, and walking is a straightforward and simple method of resistance. They resist the idea that walking can be a sign of powerlessness or low status. It becomes a physical manifestation of their political beliefs and the marginalized all collectively use their bodies in a highly mediated act of civil disobedience and a demonstration of community solidarity.

The marginalized utilize walking as a response to modern alienation, control, and manipulation, providing them with a physical and mental connection to others. It embodies a way of existence that merges consciousness with the surrounding space and its inhabitants, granting the freedom to engage with others during walks while expressing their independence. Moreover, shared walks offer an opportunity to explore common ground through a self-sufficient activity that has remained unchanged since ancient times. This is significant because, as Solnit claims, “Walking returns the body to its original limits again, to something supple, sensitive, and vulnerable, but walking itself extends into the world as do those tools that augment the body.” (*Wanderlust* 29) The homeless people’s dependence on cars illustrates a deepening fusion of the mechanical and humanity, as Los Angeles citizens seek refuge in the only perceived safe spaces available: the cars on the freeway. This underscores the impossibility of getting away from the pervasive postmodern modern civilization and globalization within the city space.

The marginalized are able to create effective and salient demonstrations because they are such an integral and unnoticed part of the infrastructure and city space. Thanks to their knowledge of and connection to the city, as well as their physical ability and willingness to move around the space, they can create an unavoidable spectacle. This spectacle can potentially grab the attention of both the media and the remaining citizens. Simultaneously, the psychography of

insurrection and urban space in *Tropic of Orange* are conducive to rebellion (*Wanderlust* 230). This suggests that the harsh economic and emotional conditions of the city space encourage acts of insurrection and foster solidarity among marginalized communities. Therefore, the utilization of the public and freeway space becomes physically and mentally central to their collective action. They are reclaiming the public space for the public in the face of globalization and privatization, which are separating the classes from each other and even within their respective groups.

The freeway space then becomes the battleground for democracy and freedom, a “place where ordinary people can speak, unsegregated by walls, unmediated by those with power”, and the space is ideal because “direct political action in real public space may be the only way to engage in unmediated communication with strangers, as well as a way to reach media audiences by literally making the news...Demonstrations, protests, uprisings, and urban revolutions are all about members of the public moving through public space for expressive and political rather than merely practical reasons” (*Wanderlust* 216). As public space has significantly diminished in the years between the two novels, the marginalized have to create a democratic public space where they can gather and be seen and heard. In Yamashita's literary city, most spaces are privatized and tightly controlled, leaving little room for walking or public demonstrations. The only way the characters in her story were able to attract attention from the rest of the city was through a massive gathering of the poor and a literal explosion in the heart of Los Angeles. By stopping traffic, they are able to express their grievances on foot and through their bodies and reclaiming public space. This allows them to take part in determining its potential present and future use. Shutting down the freeway is possibly the most effective method that Yamashita's marginalized characters could have utilized, given the city's heavy reliance on cars and its large sprawling

space.

In essence, Pynchon and Yamashita have used their marginalized characters and their bodies' actions to explore the "relationship between ideas, acts and the material world" (*Wanderlust* 268). Both authors portray the characters' actions as justifiably resistant and a moral necessity, as it is vital for survival in their respective versions of L.A. However, in the end they also underscore the futility of resistance in the postmodern urban landscape. For example, the actions of the people on the freeway are constricted as they have little to no opportunity to move the cars forward or backward, the homeless on the freeway are "stuck", and they are unable to evolve beyond their current predicament. They have to use the fuel of the cars to keep them warm and "rev" to keep the battery alive, which means that from the start their new "utopia" is still dependent on the outside world, "but for the moment, a strange peace settled over the city" (Yamashita 147).

Nonetheless, this peace is not meant to last as "the average citizen viewed these events and felt overwhelmed with the problems, felt sympathy, or anger and impotence" (Yamashita 106). Some reacted to this annexation of freeway space with compassion. Others contend that the homeless are expendable and they have a right to protect their property with firearms. The violent reaction to the encampment is swift and intense due to its proximity to their regular, everyday working spaces, which the homeless often rely on for shelter. What finally sparks the sympathy of the people watching the siege of the freeway encampment is that Emi is shot on live TV "Her death would be unforgivable. Emi's enraged media would see to that. A thousand homeless could die, but no one would forget her ultimate sacrifice" (Yamashita 216). But it does not matter, their time on the freeway is limited no matter what. While the encampment is being created, there is a fire at both ends of the freeway and a pocket of gas below it. Just like in the

hood, they are surrounded by the police, who are not there to protect and serve their people. The mediation and mediatization of the protest on the freeway are not enough to garner proper public support from the government or the wider public. The ending of the novel echoes the massacre at Tiananmen Square which happened only some years before the novel's publication and it "serves as a reminder that marches, protest and seizures of public space don't always produce desired results" (*Wanderlust* 225).

Yamashita highlights how the built environment is animated by dynamic circuits of social meaning (Kim 7) and not just as a background for the plot. The freeway was a symbol of spatial and economic division and through the encampment, it became a transitory haven of democracy, social safety and support. The freeway encampment could not remain independent from the rest of L.A., which is why it eventually became a target. It's attacked, turned into a violent warzone, and forcefully reintegrated into the abstract city space by the military.

In the latter part of the novel, Yamashita hints at change as new homeless conductors emerge across the city, seamlessly harmonizing with their surroundings. They have the potential to carry on Manzanar's symphony, ushering in fresh perspectives on mapping and perhaps shedding light on overlooked aspects of urban life. In doing so, they are forging yet another subjective space, forming connections and altering the existing grid. However, the novel ends in seven different vague and uncertain endings. And just like Pynchon, Yamashita refrains from unveiling the true identity of the antagonist, and no one faces accountability or is brought to justice. This absence of clarity adds another layer of complexity to the exploration of power dynamics and justice within the author's city space. Neither author tells us what to do, they only use their literary form to elucidate specific dynamics of space and control. The conclusion resonates with the fragmented nature of postmodern urban space, echoing the themes of dislocation and

displacement. It underscores how the history of oppression and spatial violence becomes intertwined with the city's spatial dynamics, serving as a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by marginalized communities navigating these environments.



## CONCLUSION

In Thomas Pynchon and Karen Tei Yamashita's literary representations of Los Angeles, the city becomes more than a backdrop, it emerges as a dynamic character and serves as a battleground between the marginalized and the powerful. Throughout the novels, the reader experiences the labyrinthine streets of a city in flux, where the collision of globalization, capitalism, and technological advancement shapes not only physical spaces but also the lives of its inhabitants. Everything and everyone inside the city are living as resources on a cycle of reinvention, regeneration, erasure, and replacement, while the city and its elite remain. Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* and Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* offer divergent yet complementary perspectives on the urban experience, revealing the interplay between power, identity, and spatial politics. The authors use the space to show how hierarchical and social differences are expressed as well as shedding light on how urban environments shape and are shaped by cultural and socio-economic factors. Consequently, through these postmodern narratives, I have examined how the city serves as both a site of resistance and a tool of oppression, where the struggle for agency unfolds amidst the shifting contours of time, space, identity and memory. One of the central themes that emerge from these novels is the transformative impact of infrastructure on urban landscapes and communities. The construction of freeways, a ubiquitous feature of Los Angeles, serves as a metaphorical and literal pathway through which characters navigate the city and its socio-political terrain. The cityscape becomes a battleground where competing forces vie for control, where the marginalized assert their agency in the face of systemic oppression, and where the boundaries between reality and illusion blur. Characters in both novels embody the tensions between belonging and alienation, mobility and confinement, as they navigate the complex urban landscape. Moreover, the notion of control and resistance through space and movement emerges

as a recurring motif in both novels, as characters challenge dominant narratives and reclaim agency over their spatial realities and experiences. Whether it's Doc's subversive investigations or Buzzworm's and Manzanar's grassroots activism, these acts of resistance disrupt the status quo and offer glimpses of alternative modes of living. The authors give their characters a chance to fight against the system. However, in the end, both novels highlight the futility of trying to break out of a system that has been there since long before any of the characters have been alive.

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