

DOKUZ EYLÜL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE
AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE PROGRAM
DOCTORAL THESIS
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

**CLAIMING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY:
REPRESENTATIONS OF LOS ANGELES IN THE
WORKS OF BOYLE, TOBAR,
AND YAMASHITA**

Esen KARA

Supervisor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Esra Çöker

İZMİR – 2018

APPROVAL PAGE



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this doctoral thesis titled as “Claiming the right to the City: Representations of Los Angeles in the Works of Boyle, Tobar, and Yamashita” has been written by myself in accordance with the academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that all materials benefited in this thesis consist of the mentioned resources in the reference list. I verify all these with my honour.

Date

Esen Kara

ABSTRACT

Doctoral Thesis

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

**Claiming the Right to the City: Representations of Los Angeles in the Works of
Boyle, Tobar, and Yamashita**

Esen KARA

Dokuz Eylül University

Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of American Culture and Literature

American Culture and Literature Program

The increasing role of the “city” in today’s neoliberal policies of global accumulation, capital and wealth has received considerable attention among many urban scholars. This is because the commodification, gentrification and privatization of urban spaces pose not only great challenges and difficulties but also opportunities for the urban dweller. At the right time and place urban consciousness can raise awareness and give rise to the creation of new types of spaces -- spaces that can function as sites of contestation and resistance. This dissertation offers an in-depth study of three Los Angeles novels, T. C. Boyle’s *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995), Hector Tobar’s *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998), and Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* (1997) in order to display the processes of capitalist production of space and urban everyday life that have given rise to various forms of spatial resistance, particularly, the subversive act of claiming *the right to the city*. First formulated by Henri Lefebvre, *the right to the city* is far more than the individual right to access urban resources regardless of one’s ethnicity, gender and class. It is the reimagining of the city as a powerful site of contestation that holds vast potential for revolutionary action and change. In this formulation, art and literature, cooperating with everyday resistance and

creative experimentation in the city, can interrupt the hegemonic spatial organization of late capitalism and open up possibilities for a revolutionary future.

The spatial framework of T.C. Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*, Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*, and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* is centered upon urban politics to deal with the compelling issues of immigration, homelessness, and social justice in the city of Los Angeles. The novels render Los Angeles as a strategic site of global capitalism as well as a contested space of resistance against power structures. By advancing the idea of *the right to the city* as a common ground for resistance against oppressive forces, all three writers imagine the city as having the redemptive power to change lives and bring social change. Tracing the urban tension that accumulates below the city as a reverberation of neoliberal urbanization processes, these texts coalesce around an urban consciousness that searches for a creative and revolutionary urban life against the segregating and alienating logics of capitalist city. Departing from Lefebvre's idea that art and literature bring new dimensions to urban studies in imagining alternative forms of urbanism and everyday life, the dissertation analyzes the spatiality of these three literary works in order to forge closer ties between urban studies and literary criticism and contribute to the ongoing scholarship of *the right to the city*.

Keywords: City, Space, The Right to the City, Production of Space, Los Angeles, Urban consciousness, Resistance, American Literature, Henri Lefebvre, T.C. Boyle, Hector Tobar, Karen Tei Yamashita

ÖZET

Doktora Tezi

Kent Hakkını Talep Etmek:

Boyle, Tobar, ve Yamashita'nın eserlerinde Los Angeles Temsilleri

Esen KARA

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Programı

Günümüzde kent, küresel sermayenin birikim süreçlerinde uygulanan neoliberal politikalar açısından giderek artan bir öneme sahiptir ve bu durum kent çalışmalarına yönelik disiplinler arası ilgiyi artırmaktadır. Kentsel alanların hızla metalaştırılması, soylulaştırılması ve özelleştirilmesinin yol açtığı sorunlar ve kentlilerin yaşadığı zorlukların yanı sıra, kentli olmanın getirdiği fırsatlar da kent çalışmalarının merkezinde olan tartışma konularıdır. Kentli olma bilinci, doğru yerde ve zamanda, çatışma ve direniş mekanları üretme yoluyla önemli bir politik araç olabilmektedir. Bu tez, çağdaş Amerikan edebiyatının üç örneğine; T. C. Boyle'nin *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995), Hector Tobar'ın *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998) ve Karen Tei Yamashita'nın *Tropic of Orange* (1997) romanlarına bu açıdan yaklaşır ve kapitalist mekan ve gündelik hayat üretim süreçleriyle, bu koşullardan doğan bir direniş biçimi olarak *kent hakkı* mücadelesini üç metin üzerinden izler. İlk kez Henri Lefebvre tarafından ortaya konulan *kent hakkı* fikri; etnik, cinsel ve sınıfsal kimliğin sınırlarının ardında ve kentin kaynaklarına bireysel erişimin ötesinde bir anlam taşır. *Kent hakkı*, devrimci eylem ve değişim potansiyeli taşıyan güçlü bir çatışma alanı olarak kentin yeniden üretilmesidir. Bu fikir çerçevesinde; sanat ve edebiyat, gündelik hayattaki direnişler ve yaratıcı deneysellikle işbirliği içine girdiğinde, modern kapitalizmin baskın mekansal düzenini sarsabilir ve devrimci bir gelecek için olanaklar tasarlayabilir.

T.C. Boyle'nin *The Tortilla Curtain*, Hector Tobar'ın *The Tattooed Soldier* ve Karen Tei Yamashita'nın *Tropic of Orange* romanlarının mekânsal çerçevesinin merkezinde yer alan kent politikası, özellikle; göç, evsizlik ve sosyal adalet konularına, Los Angeles kenti üzerinden odaklanır. Her üç roman da, bu kenti hem küresel kapitalizmin stratejik bir alanı olarak hem de iktidar mekanizmalarına karşı üretilen bir direniş mekanı olarak tasarlar ve toplumsal değişim getirebilecek ortak bir buluşma noktası olarak *kent hakkı* fikrine işaret eder. Neoliberal kentleşme politikalarının yansıması olarak kentin alt katmanlarında birikmekte olan gerilimin izini süren bu üç metin, kentlilik bilincinde birleşerek, kapitalist kentin yabancılaştırıcı ve ayrıştırıcı mekanizmalarına karşı yaratıcı ve devrimci bir alternatif kent yaşamını araştırır. Bu açıdan, söz konusu metinler kültür ve politika alanında geniş bir yelpazede süre gelmekte olan kent hakkı tartışmalarına önemli bir katkıda bulunmaktadır. Lefebvre'nin, alternatif kent ve gündelik hayat tasarılarında sanat ve edebiyatın oynadığı rolle ilgili fikirlerinden yola çıkan bu tez, her üç edebiyat metninin mekânsal düzlemini inceleyerek, kent çalışmaları ve edebi eleştiri alanları arasındaki bağları güçlendirmeyi ve kent hakkı tartışmalarına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kent, Mekan, Kent Hakkı, Mekan Üretimi, Los Angeles, Kent Bilinci, Direniş, Amerikan Edebiyatı, Henri Lefebvre, T.C. Boyle, Hector Tobar, Karen Tei Yamashita

**CLAIMING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY:
REPRESENTATIONS OF LOS ANGELES IN THE WORKS OF BOYLE,
TOBAR, AND YAMASHITA
CONTENTS**

APPROVAL PAGE	ii
DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET	vi
CONTENTS	viii

INTRODUCTION	1
--------------	---

**CHAPTER ONE
THEORIZING SPACE**

1.1. THE SPATIAL TURN AND THE WORK OF HENRI LEFEBVRE	16
1.2. THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE	22
1.3. THE SPATIAL TRIAD	25
1.4. CITY AS A SPACE OF CAPITAL	29
1.5. URBAN EVERYDAY LIFE	32
1.6. THE RIGHT TO DIFFERENCE AND <i>THE RIGHT TO THE CITY</i>	37
1.7. LEFEBVRE AND LITERATURE	43

**CHAPTER TWO
*THE TORTILLA CURTAIN BY T.C. BOYLE***

2.1. INTRODUCTION	58
2.2. REWRITING THE AMERICAN WEST: THE PANOPTIC CITY	61
2.3. THE COYOTE AND THE PILGRIM: “PRODUCTION OF NATURE” IN THE GARDEN	66
2.4. PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE RIGHT TO LIFE	83

2.5. UNDOCUMENTED LABOR AND <i>THE RIGHT TO THE CITY</i>	89
--	----

CHAPTER THREE

THE TATTOOED SOLDIER BY HECTOR TOBAR

3.1. INTRODUCTION	96
3.2. CENTRAL-AMERICAN REFUGEES AND THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NOVEL	101
3.3. L.A: “THE FIRST WORLD CAPITAL OF HOMELESSNESS”	106
3.4. THE HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT AS <i>REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE</i>	110
3.5. HYGIENIC BODIES / INFECTED BODIES	121
3.6. CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF THE CITY: THE LOS ANGELES UPRISING	126

CHAPTER FOUR

TROPIC OF ORANGE BY KAREN TEI YAMASHITA

4.1. INTRODUCTION	138
4.2. MAPPING LOS ANGELES IN A HYPER-CONTEXT	142
4.3. EXCAVATING THE CITY BELOW	148
4.4. A PROPOSAL FOR <i>THE RIGHT TO THE CITY</i>	153
4.5. ‘NEW AGE’ COSMOPOLITANISM VS. THE URBAN PROLETARIAT	156
4.6. REIMAGINING THE CITY AS AN <i>OEUVRE</i> : OCCUPY FREEWAY	163
CONCLUSION	181
REFERENCES	186

INTRODUCTION

According to United Nations' report of "World Urbanization Prospects" published in 2014, urban population of the world has exceeded rural population for the first time in history. The 2016 revision of the report indicates that while in 2014 the number of people inhabiting urban areas on a global scale consisted of 54 per cent of the world's population, this number is expected to reach 60 per cent by 2030.¹ In this context, North America is one of the most urbanized regions of the world today, with 82 per cent of its people residing in urban areas. However, while North American metropolitan cities, such as New York and Los Angeles, grow demographically and remain to be multicultural havens for newcomers from all around the world, they also currently become more and more subject to global corporate interests, large-scale land owning and re-development through state endorsements. The conditions of neoliberal economy have been territorialized in urban spaces worldwide, and American metropolis serves as the vanguard force for the relationship between global capital and neoliberal urbanization.

While global neoliberal economy rapidly widens the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged populations in the world, cities are increasingly becoming more fragmented across the ethnic and class lines. Typically, in a global city such as Los Angeles, while the number of vacant houses increases in city centers due to the lack of rent control, a considerable part of the urban population has to live in the peripheries in dire conditions or on the streets. Ghettoization, gentrification, and suburbanization processes, while providing for capitalist accumulation, also operate as modern segregational practices. Alongside the privatization and commercialization of urban common spaces, the global image of the city is also produced as a commodity. Interaction and exchange as the characteristics of the traditional city is redefined with the flexibility of global city discourse, and the notion of multicultural city is traded as an ethnic bazaar of consumerism.

The increasing role of the "city" in today's neoliberal/neocolonial policies of global accumulation and capital has received considerable attention from many urban

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2016).

scholars. This is because the commodification, gentrification and privatization of urban spaces pose not only great challenges and difficulties but also opportunities for the urban dweller. Urban consciousness at the right time and place can give rise to the creation of new types of spaces -- spaces that can function as sites of contestation and resistance. This dissertation offers an in-depth study of three Los Angeles novels, T. C. Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995), Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998), and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997) in order to display the processes of capitalist production of space and urban everyday life that have given rise to alternative forms of urban consciousness, particularly, the subversive act of claiming *the right to the city*. The idea of *the right to the city*, first formulated by Henri Lebevre is "far more than the demand for individual liberty to access urban resources" (Harvey, 2008: 23) regardless of one's ethnicity, gender and class. It is the reimagining of the city as a powerful site of contestation that holds vast potential for revolutionary action and change.

As a site of contestation, Los Angeles is a fitting stage for the selected literary texts and their claim for *the right to the city* because it is a classical example of neoliberal urbanization, post-Fordist wealth accumulation, and "a stand-in for capitalism in general" (Davis, 2006: 18). Increasing power of global capital and lessening state regulations in the workings of multinational corporations, transnationalization of labor as an outcome of supranational economic organizations, and inevitably widening economic disparities operate in Los Angeles to make it a global neoliberal city at its most extreme. The ideological manipulation of the fear of the other as well as the promise for the newcomer resonates with the gentrification projects that reshape the urban space and reproduce the social relations in the city while providing surplus profit for the economy. The commodification of urban spaces and the dense freeway networks that invade everyday life prevail to be the source of urban alienation, while urban sprawl and fragmented urban design deprive the city dwellers of a central public space. The priority of private property rights over housing rights, combined with the largest income inequality in the country, on top of all, grants the city the title of "the first-world capital of homelessness" (Davis, 2007b: 36). Los Angeles harbors these defining characteristics of neoliberalism, increasingly becoming a fragmented, segregated, and commodified city.

The three Los Angeles novels that I will analyze in this dissertation are set in the 1990s, a decade marked with economic, political and social changes: the enactment of North American Free Trade Agreement, immigrant flows from Central and Latin America to the US Southwest due to the civil wars and economic recessions, and the 1992 Los Angeles uprising as one of the most turbulent events in American urban history. The intertwining of this historical conjecture with the spatiality of the novels offers a dialogue between the past and present of the city, and sheds light on the urban upheavals that the US city faces today.

The spatial framework of *The Tortilla Curtain*, *The Tattooed Soldier*, and *Tropic of Orange* is centered upon urban politics to deal with the compelling issues of immigration, homelessness, and social justice in contemporary American literature. More specifically, the three novels pose a spatial critique of the issues of restructuring of urban spaces by global economy, rapid gentrification, marginalization of lower class ethnic communities, and the alienated right of the legal/illegal immigrants, refugees and the homeless to the public spaces of the city. The texts, when brought together, form a coalition that is based on the idea of *the right to the city* and create moments of rebellion that opens up cracks upon hermetic urban textures.

For the theoretical background of the dissertation, I draw upon Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, specifically his notion of *the right to the city*. Lefebvre's *right to the city* slogan inspired the 1968 student uprisings in Paris, and the notion has become popular again in the last decade alongside various urban uprisings, from "occupy" movements in the West to Gezi protests in Turkey. Lefebvre's formulation of *the right to the city* suggests a collective urban experience outside the fragmenting and alienating logic of capitalist production of space. *The right to the city*, for Lefebvre, is an ongoing struggle that is carried out through everyday resistance, appropriation, participation, and ultimately, transformation. Creative experimentation is a direct medium of rewriting the city against its ideological monumentality produced and enforced by the ruling class. For Lefebvre, collective spatial interventions and artistic experimentations have the potential to re-create the city as an *oeuvre*, a collective work of art, which is the ultimate aim for the realization of *the right to the city*. The city as an *oeuvre*, in this formulation, is

against the city as a product, a strategic site for capital accumulation where the exchange value rules over the use value of urban spaces. Art, literature, and philosophy, in this framework, have a significant part in Lefebvre's writings on *the right to the city*, as they inherently have the sense of the *oeuvre*, and they have the potential to restore the use value of the city, and therefore, open up possibilities for a liberated urban experience motivated by imagination, experimentation, and play.

Lefebvre's dialectic of the "work of art" and "the city as a work of art" brings new dimensions to critical geography and cultural studies, proposing collaboration between diverse forms of knowledge production. While art and literature constitute a significant part of *the right to the city* formulation, however, there is still a disciplinary gap between urban and literary studies. The aim of this dissertation is, therefore, to contribute to the interdisciplinary scholarship of *the right to the city* from the perspective of literary studies. During my writing process, Benjamin Fraser published a book in 2015, titled *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies: Henri Lefebvre and Humanities*, which urges for interdisciplinary exchanges between urban studies and humanities. Fraser criticizes the lack of interest of social scientists in aesthetics and humanities-centered critical perspectives, and he offers Lefebvre's work as a ground for the "burgeoning subfield of urban humanities research with a framework of understanding urban culture" (Fraser, 2015: 2). With a focus on Lefebvre's formulation of *the right to the city*, I aim to strengthen the ties between urban studies and literary criticism and thus contribute more to the field of urban humanities. In this sense, I read Boyle's, Tobar's, and Yamashita's novels as part of an *oeuvre*, in the sense that Lefebvre uses the word, as models of creative spatial experimentation. Through the imaginings of spatial and architectural interventions in the repressing and alienating urban texts of rising neoliberalism, these literary texts offer resistant mechanisms to "metamorphose the real," as Lefebvre puts it in his *right to the city* project (Lefebvre, 2000: 83). Overall, by rewriting the city as a contesting text, Boyle, Tobar, and Yamashita reimagine Los Angeles as an *oeuvre* that voices a cry and a demand for an alternative urban future, which echoes with an urban revolution in Lefebvre's own philosophical *oeuvre*.

In the first chapter of the dissertation I present a brief background on the "spatial turn" in the humanities and social sciences to trace the relationship between

geography and critical thought. This is followed by a summary of Henri Lefebvre's theory of production of space and *the right to the city*. With the "unprecedented institutional acceptance" of critical human geography towards the end of the twentieth century (Gibbons, 2001: 1), geographical thought has taken a pivotal role in knowledge production, which has led to a paradigm shift across disciplines. This shift, which is clearly reflected in Fredric Jameson's question, "why should landscape be any less dramatic than the event" (Jameson, 1991: 364), has rendered space as a hermeneutic tool, as significant as temporality, in understanding power/knowledge configurations and their shaping of social relations. The spatial turn is mainly linked to the debilitating effects of globalization and capitalist spatial organization in global cities that have intensified since the end of the twentieth century. Today, the developing trends of urbanization and its key role in capital accumulation on a global scale, as well as the new forms of resistance against these trends make critical human geography more relevant than ever in interdisciplinary oppositional politics and knowledge production.

The French philosopher and sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, is considered to be one of the primary influences on the spatial turn in the Anglophone intellectual world, specifically with the translation of his magisterial work, *The Production of Space* (1974) into English in 1991. As a Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre adds a spatial dimension to the theory of the capitalist mode of production, and in his theoretical framework -- which has later been expanded by Marxist geographers such as David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Neil Smith and many others -- he identifies the processes of worldwide urbanization in the post-industrial era as a new stage for capitalism. More specifically, according to Lefebvre and several other Marxist geographers, the production and realization of surplus value for accumulation and the disposal of surplus product increasingly operate in cities through urban development projects, real estate and land speculations, and the re-invention of consumption practices suitable for newly built urban spaces (Lefebvre, 1976; Harvey, 1993; Smith, 1996a). This process, according to Lefebvre, simply "shows that we have passed from the production of things in space to the production of space itself" (Lefebvre, 1976: 186). Moreover, globalization makes the reconstruction of space more flexible worldwide and therefore provides the impetus for the survival of capitalism (Harvey,

2001a). Urban everyday life also becomes a valuable source of analysis for Lefebvre as the social relations and everyday life practices of people in cities are also produced according to the needs of capital accumulation. Here, Lefebvre also incorporates the idea of alienation with his theory of capitalist production of space. The production and reproduction of urban spaces leads to the alienation of urban dwellers from the spaces they inhabit, and the bureaucratized everyday life subjects their lived experience to abstraction. All in all, capitalism in the modern world survives on the colonization of cities and urban everyday life.

Lefebvre offers a spatial triad in his *Production of Space* through which he identifies the dialectical tension between different forms of architectural space, in terms of their relation to human experience and knowledge production. In other words, Lefebvre provides a philosophical background to the perceived, conceived and lived space, with the terms *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *representational spaces*, three moments that are in a dialectic tension with each other. The triad mainly operates between the dynamics of absolute (concrete) space and abstract space, and their reflections in modern urbanization. In this theoretical model, *spatial practice* is the perceived space that refers to the physical space and the activities within it. Contrary to the old notion that space is an empty container that preexists people and their activities, *spatial practice* is the primary producer of space, and it involves human perception and behavior. The second level in Lefebvre's formulation, *representations of space*, is the conceived space, the domain of mental processes in spatial design and production. It is the space of knowledge that is conceived and conceptualized by architects, urban planners, technocrats and other professionals that theorize on space using signs, symbols and abstractions. *Representational spaces*, also translated as *spaces of representation*, is the most complex level of Lefebvre's spatial triad, referring to spaces that are directly "lived" by its users. This level contains all the intrinsic social characteristics of a particular group, as well as the unconscious materials, which change over time in different conditions. It also includes the level of imagination, dreams, fantasies, and memories; therefore, it is also the space of artists, writers and philosophers, who aspire to imagine alternatives to the conceived spaces of technocrats.

Representations of space is the instrumental space of capitalism and it aims for the homogenization of urban spaces through abstraction. This level conceptualizes urban space as geometric and fragmented and also dominates our experience of space. In this sense, it creates a division between our perception of space and our way of conceptualizing it. Through this medium, abstract space dominates the lived space and the lived experience of people. In the urban context, imposition of abstract space upon lived experience, first of all, causes alienation of the urban dwellers from their environment. Fragmentation of urban space through abstract codes in the level of *representations of space* is also reflected in the segregation practices in the modern city. Urban space of capitalism is ideally divided into various quarters disconnected from each other, which prevent people to come together and form political collectivities in the urban center. Also, spaces of marginalized people are set apart from the decision-making centers so that they will not have a say in the making of the city, and their lived experience is marginalized into the peripheries so that they will not have any chance to appropriate the center.

Lefebvre's notion of *the right to the city* is a counter-move against these hegemonic socio-spatial practices of late capitalism. It is formulated as an outlet for the lived experience, which has been subject to abstraction by the ideological instrumentality of *representations of space*. The appropriation of cities by capitalism entails new revolutionary practices, which is the appropriation of space by the very agency of urban dwellers themselves, beginning with the spontaneity of their bodily movement. In other words, because our perception of space derives from our bodily experience, this is the very source of resistance against abstract space and its hegemony over our lived experience. In that sense, physical act of occupation and appropriation provide the only opportunity to transform these abstract spaces of capitalism into liberated lived spaces of people.

Representational spaces, which is the space of bodily experience, of the unconscious, creativity and spontaneity take up an emancipatory role in imagining and recreating the city as a subversive text. Because *representational spaces* is also the space of artists and writers in Lefebvre's formulation, art and literature take a pivotal role in resisting the hegemonic architectural practices. If occupation and appropriation is the first step to claim *the right to the city*, art and literature as

representational spaces then stimulate the creativity of this claim and make the resistant practices unexpected for hegemony. More importantly, if the realization of *the right to the city* depends on the transformation of the city into an *oeuvre*, into a collective work of art, art and literature, cooperating with everyday resistance and creative experimentation in the city can interrupt the hegemonic spatial organization of late capitalism and open up possibilities for a revolutionary future.

Lefebvre's writings on centrality, periphery and urban colonization hold promise for contemporary radical politics, for the struggles of anti-colonial and feminist movements, as well as for the imaginings for alternative possibilities of the future (Kipfer et al. 2008). Taking Lefebvre and his philosophical legacy as a departure point, the chapter also interprets the transnational turn in American studies and its recent configurations of immigration, citizenship and the city in the context of neoliberal urbanization. With the emergence of globalization studies, transnationalism, also used as a substitute term for globalism, has been a common analytical framework for American studies (Fishkin, 2005; Jay, 2010). However, the call for transnational thinking in American studies in the early twenty-first century has provided controversial discussions of how to approach transnationalism in the American context. Discourses of hybridity, liminality and border crossings, which have dominated American minority studies since the early 1990s, have been subject to scrutiny in that they pose the risk of reproducing the celebratory discourse of globalization that universalizes differences and diverse experiences through abstract metaphors (Luis and Michael, 2017). In this argument, transnational thinking can only take an emancipatory role when it exposes and contests global capitalist processes, rather than contribute to the celebration of a shrinking world discourse. Transnational literature should therefore be analyzed within the context of US's neoliberal and neocolonial affairs worldwide.

As will be shown in the following chapters of the dissertation, the works that deal with the shaping of migration, citizenship and urbanization in the context of American neoliberal/neocolonial policies focuses on *the right to the city* against the increasing domination of neoliberal urbanization. The topographical imagination deployed in the novels that are discussed within the scope of this dissertation is framed upon a critique of geography and a rejection of abstract metaphors that

designate the US global metropolis as a commodity. These transnational texts place the materiality of the city in lieu of identity politics and bring new perspectives to the immigrant experience and urban subjectivity.

Thomas Coraghessan Boyle's modern classic, *The Tortilla Curtain*, is one of the literary works I read as part of the transnational literary *oeuvre* that places the urban question in an era of rising neoliberalism at its center. The novel uses a gated community setting as an allegory of socio-spatial injustice in Los Angeles. Representation of the gated community as a phenomenon of neoliberal urbanism and the consumerist everyday life as part of the gated community lifestyle is juxtaposed with the survival tactics of the homeless immigrants who use nature for shelter, as their most basic need of survival. The tension that inevitably arises between the real estate owners and the squatters in the Topanga Canyon area perfectly exemplifies the enduring spatial asymmetries as a source of urban conflicts in the US city.

In my close reading of the novel in chapter three, I focus on the spatial tension as an illustration of the conflict between private property and basic human rights. More specifically, liberal formulations of universal human rights embodied by the gated community residents in the novel become a synecdoche for private property rights and overrule the right to life. In this framework, I trace the process of production of space/nature in the case of the gated community and its surroundings, specifically the relationship between each social group and their diverse experiences of these spaces. The abstraction and commodification of nature by the capitalist process of production of space creates a center-periphery conflict and privileges the private property over the right to space, which, in the context of the novel, echoes with the right to life. The rule of private property applies to nature, which is represented by the canyon area outside the borders of the gated community, and the immigrants become subject to marginalization and criminalization. This is ideologically underpinned by the hegemony of abstract space as nature is produced as a homogeneous space external to humans and free from lived experience.

In the novel the neoliberal ethic that the gated community residents represent gradually transforms into rampant racism towards the immigrants as private property rights precede human rights. The immigrants, on the other hand, perform everyday resistance against the rule of abstract space by squatting in the canyon and

appropriating the private property when necessary. In moments of violation of their right to life, the immigrants also counter-attack the gated community area through non-violent tactics, by spray-painting the border walls of the community, which are built by the labor of the immigrants themselves but which ironically has been used for the purpose of excluding them. These acts of occupation and appropriation also specifically represent attempts of creating the city as a work of art, as an *oeuvre*. The shelters built in the canyon with the natural materials as well as with the basic equipment stolen from the real estates illustrate creative and spontaneous experience of space and, thus, offers tactical ways of claiming *the right to the city*.

The Tortilla Curtain, with the labor exchange market as one of its main settings, poses the question of undocumented immigrants' right to the city, which is still a controversial issue in *the right to the city* scholarship. In the novel, one of the central motifs is the invisibility of immigrant labor in the produced nature/space. In this sense, the labor market that is located on a parking lot on the road to Arroyo Blanco has a symbolic significance in the novel's excavation of spatial cleavages. The labor market provides the cheap labor for Arroyo Blanco, and no one complains as long as the laborers remain invisible in the area. However, the moment this labor market threatens the prestige of the estates, all immigrants/laborers in the area are stigmatized. The socio-economic dynamics of the place stand for the US's neoliberal relations with South America, working for the interests of the powerful only. The gated community dwellers as mainstream Americans are caught in a dilemma, whether or not to close the labor market and build a wall around the community, and in the end the rule of the private property overcome the liberal guilt. The immigrants provide the cheap labor for the building of the wall and the real estate company terminates the invisible contract with the laborers, depriving them of their right to exist even outside the borders of the community. Thus, the question of *the right to the city* in the novel is thematically interwoven with questions of undocumented immigration and the visibility of immigrant labor in public spaces.

In *The Tortilla Curtain*, the everyday resistance of the immigrants against spatial marginalization does not evolve into the realization of *the right to the city*. It is, on the other hand, a natural disaster that destroys Arroyo Blanco, a flood sweeping through the entire area. The natural disaster can be read as a subversion of

the popular Los Angeles disaster fiction that has an ideological tie with the inherent racial anxiety of the society, as one of the community members and a supporter of the wall is a producer of apocalyptic Hollywood movies. Also, while the ending of the novel does not offer a concrete solution, nature exploited by capital and brought to the service of the privileged urbanites brings the final catastrophe that hints at new possibilities for the future. In this sense, I argue that the novel voices “the cry” for *the right to the city*, the right to life, basic material necessities and the use-value of space. Although it does not stage a visible collective “demand,” *The Tortilla Curtain* fits well within the body of Los Angeles literature that take a critical stance towards the capitalist mode of urbanization and its effects upon transnational collectivities, and thus it contributes to *the right to the city* discourse in the present conjecture.

Chapter four deals with Hector Tobar’s *The Tattooed Soldier* and the representation of homelessness as a central urban crisis in Los Angeles. Similarly to the previous chapter, the priority of private property in the production and organization of the city will be discussed within the framework of *the right to the city*, specifically the right of the homeless to the city’s public spaces and urban services. *The Tattooed Soldier* situates the compelling question, “who has the right to the city,” in a transnational framework through the representation of a homeless encampment that is populated by people from diverse nationalities. In this sense, the word “homeless” becomes a metaphor for the disenfranchised urban population, refugees, immigrant laborers, and lower class Americans, who are deprived of their right to housing, and inevitably their right to the city.

In dealing with the issues of housing rights, *The Tattooed Soldier* portrays the homeless encampment as a space of collective resistance. In a city notorious for its urban sprawl and its lack of an urban center that brings people together for interaction, the encampment serves as an alternative public space residing at the city’s heart, yet standing in contradiction with the rest of it. The act of occupation and re-organization of the vacant land by the homeless defies the alienating design of the financial district that stretches ahead, and the everyday life activities of the homeless are performed as resistant tactics against the homogeneity of city life. The encampment also offers *the right to the city* as an alternative configuration of citizenship outside the boundaries of nation. Appropriation of the private property is

taken to an upper level through the participation of the homeless in the decision-making processes in the city. Two of the members of the encampment, one American citizen and one undocumented Mexican immigrant, keep showing up at state institutions to defend their rights, but due to their lack of economic independence neither the citizen nor the immigrant is welcome in these official public spaces.

While homelessness is the dominant trope in *The Tattooed Soldier*, the novel is also considered as one of the primary examples of Central American-US fiction. The Central American refugee experience in Los Angeles is staged upon the background of the US's political interventions in Central America, and Los Angeles is represented as a microcosm of US's neoliberal/neocolonial practices. While the Guatemalan government sponsored by the US subjects minority populations to discrimination and segregation, the refugees leaving their homeland and immigrating to the North experience a similar socio-spatial injustice in Los Angeles as well. The neoliberal/neocolonial role of the US in the continent is brought into scrutiny through a spatial analogy of Guatemalan geography and Los Angeles, and the 1992 LA uprising as the denouement of the novel restages the civil war memories of the Central American refugees, juxtaposing their past in Guatemala with their present condition in Los Angeles.

The urban consciousness of the novel reflects the social dynamics of the city from the below, leading us to the final catastrophe, the Los Angeles uprising. As one of the few novels in contemporary American literature representing the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, *The Tattooed Soldier* serves as a historical text providing insight into one of the most tumultuous moments in American history. More importantly, the novel focuses on the processes that lead to the uprising, the great burning and explosion that releases the tension accumulating deep down in the city from the very beginning of the novel. The narrative questions the acts of rioting and looting through the perspective of the protagonist, but in general, the uprising is represented as an expected explosion, a counter-action by those whose voices are unheard in the city. Los Angeles starts burning as Guatemalan cities and villages, and in this climactic moment, the unconscious of the urban dweller, represented by the two Central American refugees in particular, crosscuts the unconscious of the city. By emphasizing the multi-ethnic character of the event, the urban disenfranchised, such

as the homeless, refugees, illegal immigrants, ghettoized African Americans, all claiming the streets of Los Angeles, Tobar urges for a coalition that might, in the end, bring redemption, and an urban uprising, in a sense, is a rehearsal of such an action.

The last chapter of the dissertation deals with Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* as a subversive text, which, I argue, contributes greatly to the wide-ranging discussions concerning *the right to the city* movement in culture and politics. Yamashita's novel takes the political imaginings in *The Tortilla Curtain* and *The Tattooed Soldier* to a higher level and envisions an urban revolution based on appropriation and participation in the making of the city. *Tropic of Orange* similarly renders Los Angeles as a strategic site of global capitalist processes, and as in *The Tortilla Curtain*, the novel approaches the issue of *the right to the city* through diverse perspectives of urban dwellers from different economic classes. While the everyday life of the characters is organized according to their social status, their access to the urban quarters outside the spaces they are compelled to inhabit is limited. Against the spatial apartheid in the city, the narrative subversively builds a hyper-context at the beginning of the novel, where the stories of seven characters are interconnected with each other within the seven days of a particular week. This hyper-context table draws a timeline from Monday to Sunday, each of which is a crosscut chapter that focuses on one character and their lived experience in the city. In the bigger picture, the stories on the hyper-context are connected through an inter-web of relations, and the urban inhabitants transgress the confined spaces they are forced to inhabit. This narrative strategy symbolizes the main concern of the novel: the claim for lived space and to speak out against the dominance of abstract space in urban life.

Tropic of Orange offers a model of claiming *the right to the city* through the idea of "gente-fication," as an appropriation of gentrification. It is an anti-colonial/capitalist plan that prioritizes the will of people over that of power, as the word "gente," meaning "people" in Spanish, suggests. The idea is to participate in the decision-making process related to urban matters, a "DIY gentrification," that brings people's involvement into the shaping of the very spaces they inhabit. It is a proposal for the assertion of lived space against the hegemony of abstract space that

commodifies the streets. The urban inhabitants in this counter plan are urged to revitalize their lived spaces, first by claiming their right to these spaces, which is, in most cases, simultaneous with the right to exist, and then by making decisions collectively for the transformation of these spaces. This is a coalition that is to be formed by underprivileged minorities, by both Black and Latino communities, legal/illegal immigrants, by homeless, street peddlers and the rest of the disenfranchised.

From “gente-fication” as a model of claiming *the right to the city* through collective participation from below, the narration takes a further step towards the realization of *the right to the city* and imagines an urban revolution, a full-scale occupation of the heart of the city. As urban dwellers that are alienated from their right to the city’s public spaces, the homeless community in the novel appropriates the Harbor freeway and transforms it into an alternative public space. The occupation of the Freeway as the embodiment of neoliberal urban architecture soon develops into a reinterpretation of democratic public space. Private property, which are the vehicles left on the freeway in the wake of a chaotic moment, is transformed into public property, and used as homes for the homeless of the city. Once the basic survival needs are met, new possibilities for an alternative community life also arise. Cars are transformed into urban gardens for self-sufficiency, and public forums that function as a model of participatory democracy are organized to discuss and decide matters related to the fledgling communal life. Politicians and public figures are also invited to join the forums and mediate between the freeway community and the rest of the city. *The right to the city* is realized in the novel with an occupation movement and by way of sculpting the urban space with collective creativity, the city is rewritten as an *oeuvre*, with art, music, performance, and poetry.

The urban revolution Yamashita imagines grows into a continental uprising with a magic realist moment in the novel, when a mythic-heroic figure, Arcangel arrives with a massive group of followers from South America and join the grassroots movement growing at the very heart of the city. Interstate 110 in Los Angeles stages one large confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed, and Yamashita ends the novel right before military state forces arrive to break apart the occupation. With the occupy movement, the novel proposes a model for claiming *the right to the*

city by positioning the will of people in the making of the city. The continental grassroots movement that the occupation of the freeway evolves into, on the other hand, places US neoliberalism/neocolonialism at the center of the novel's critique of geography.

Lefebvre formulates *the right to the city* as a collective right to imagine and recreate the city specifically by those who are stripped of their right to experience the city fully. In every act of disrupting the linear flow of everyday life, alternative spaces are imagined, created and destroyed, and each time another crack appears. The whole pattern pushes the 'threshold of the city,' to borrow from Walter Benjamin, and opens up possibilities for alternative futures (Benjamin, 1999). By writing against the neoliberal/neocolonial world order, T. C. Boyle, Hector Tobar, and Karen Tei Yamashita emphasize the significance of continuously crossing the threshold of the city and envision *the right to the city* as an ongoing struggle for resistance and freedom.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORIZING SPACE

1.1. THE SPATIAL TURN AND THE WORK OF HENRI LEFEBVRE

“In Freud, Lefebvre found the unconscious; in Hegel, consciousness; in Marx, practical conscious activity; in Nietzsche, language and power; in Rabelais, festival, laughter and mockery. In the city, he made space for all five.” Andy Merrifield

In a 1967 lecture, Michel Foucault stated that, “the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed” (Foucault, 1986: 22). Foucault’s premonition attained greater prominence towards the end of the 20th century, and in today’s ever-globalizing world, space has a distinctive role in critical thought, and spatiality has become a hermeneutic tool as significant as temporality in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Warf and Arias, 2009; Gregory and Geddes, 2014; Meusbürger, Gregory, and Suarsana, 2015; Barrows, 2016). This dissertation has been inspired by the relationship between critical geography and literature, beginning specifically with the spatial turn as a paradigm shift in Humanities and Social Sciences. Within this framework, this chapter will first present a literary review of the spatial turn and Henri Lefebvre’s role on this paradigm shift, and continue with a summary of Lefebvre’s spatial theory and his notion of the *right to the city*. Next, the chapter will focus on Lefebvre’s idea of the *oeuvre* and discuss the applicability of Lefebvrian thinking in transnational literary studies.

With the “unprecedented institutional acceptance” of critical human geography towards the end of the twentieth century (Gibbons, 2001: 1), geographical thought has taken a pivotal role in knowledge production, which has led to a paradigm shift across academic disciplines, termed as “the spatial turn” (Warf and Arias, 2009; Barry, 2015). As the renowned geographer, David Harvey suggests, “geographical imagination is far too pervasive and important a fact of intellectual life to be left alone to geographers” (Harvey, 1995: 161). Accordingly, the ‘spatial turn’

has become a catalyst to forge closer ties between diverse academic fields and social movements that have “a shared commitment to emancipatory politics within and beyond the discipline, to the promotion of progressive social change and to the development of a broad range of critical theories and their application in geographical research and political practice” (Johnston, Gregory, and Smith, 1994: 126). In this sense, cultural and literary studies have developed interdisciplinary connections with critical human geography, which “effected a shift within our modern sense of space, a shift more specifically from modernist notions of “text as space” to post-modernist conceptions of “space as text,” a shift in the process of which the term space itself has been problematized and repoliticized in novel ways” (Sielke, 2005: 108-9).

The interdisciplinary ties between literary studies and urban studies are becoming closer, and “the representation of cities in cultural texts or even the creation of the city itself as a cultural text” is increasingly becoming a subject of study in various disciplines (Fraser, 2015: 2). For the scholarly collaboration and conversation between urban studies and humanities that take cities as their target of criticism, Benjamin Fraser uses the term “urban cultural studies” and urges for its popularity. Drawing upon Lefebvre’s critique of disciplinary frictions that also lead to the alienation of academic labor, Fraser insists upon the necessity of “forcing literary and cultural studies to think the city geographically and forcing geography to think the city artistically,” so that a fruitful dialogue across disciplines about alternative ways of knowledge production can be formed (Fraser, 2015: 4). Literary and cultural texts prove to be an effective tool of analysis for critical geography, because literature is “more sensitive to those qualities of spatial and geographical formations that are most difficult to detect from within the established, formalized explanatory frameworks of the physical and social sciences” (Prieto, 2011: 14). While the study of space has always had a prominent place in literary studies, the study of literary works do not find much of a place in urban studies, except for the works of renowned geographers and urban philosophers, such as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey.

The spatial turn in critical theory is commonly traced back to the publication of Foucault's text "Of Other Spaces" in 1984, twenty years after it was first delivered. Before that, in *Social Justice and the City* (1973), a Marxist analysis of urban development in the capitalist age, David Harvey uses the phrase "spatial consciousness" as a precondition for new forms of critical thinking and alternative imaginations in the environment of global capitalism. In a 1994 interview, Edward Said, similarly, delineates the "paradigm shift" that ends the prioritization of time over space, describing it as "a new, invigorated sense of looking at the struggle over geography in interesting and imaginative ways" (qtd. in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2009: 92). Also, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said emphasizes the role of geography within imperialist ideology, and its cultural representations of space: "The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course, but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative" (Said, 1994: xiii). It is, on the other hand, Edward Soja, American geographer and critic, who first used the term, "spatial turn" to define a new cultural politics where space was employed as a common analytical tool (Soja, 2000). He urged for new strategies in critical thinking that aim "to spatialize the historical narrative, to attach to *durée* an enduring critical geography" (Soja, 1989: 1, emphasis in original).

Long before the term, "spatial turn" was coined, however, "space had actually been considered a shaping force" in the humanities and social sciences (Juvan, 2015: 82). Following back the threads through Western thought, it is Kant who enthroned geography, along with anthropology, as fundamental to knowledge production (Harvey, 2009). At the beginning of the 20th century, in his widely read essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," George Simmel also suggested that the study of space should be independent from the study of history (Simmel, 2010). It is a number of Marxist critics and geographers, on the other hand, that have widely renounced time as a ruling paradigm in Western thought, and formed closer ties across geography and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, from the end of the century onwards. The main idea within Marxist geographical thinking is:

a shared consciousness of the interrelations of space, knowledge, and power; and how the social production of human spatiality, from the global to the most local scales, is

an active part of the creation and maintenance of inequality and injustice, of economic exploitation, cultural domination, and individual oppression (Soja, 2000: 281).

The spatial turn as a paradigm shift in Western epistemology is mainly linked to the debilitating effects of capitalist spatial organization that have intensified since the end of the 20th century. Today, the developing trends of urbanization and its key role in capital accumulation on a global scale, as well as the new forms of resistance against these trends make critical human geography developed by Marxist thinkers more relevant than ever in interdisciplinary oppositional politics and knowledge production.

The French philosopher and sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, whose ideas on urban revolution and “the right to the city” underpinned the occupation of Paris by students in the spring of 1968, is considered to be one of the primary influences on the spatial turn in the Anglophone intellectual world, specifically with the translation of his magisterial work, *The Production of Space* (1974), into English in 1991. Edward Soja describes *The Production of Space* as “the most important book ever written about the social and historical significance of human spatiality and the particular powers of the spatial imagination” (Soja, 1996: 8). Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*, offers a socio-spatial dialectic that brings together a diverse range of topics from various disciplines. He adds the dimension of “capital” to Foucault’s text, and raises the question of how space and everyday life is produced according to the needs of capitalist accumulation, and also how both operate as an arena of resistance against hegemonic practices of the state and the bourgeoisie. Urbanism, architecture, language, art, and culture all fall within the realm of Lefebvre’s spatial hermeneutics, which is based on the idea that space is a social product, not a “form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it” (Lefebvre, 1991: 94).

The impact of Lefebvre’s socio-spatial dialectic has encapsulated not only studies regarding human geography, but also Western epistemology. Current methodologies, based on spatial thinking in the humanities and the social sciences, necessarily involve Lefebvre’s thoughts as well, because “his core insights endure in the twentieth century” and provide the ground for new critical trajectories in changing global conditions (Fraser; 2015: 1). Particularly, Lefebvre’s writings on

centrality, periphery and urban colonization hold promise for contemporary work, and for the struggles of anti-colonial and feminist movements, as well as the imaginings for alternative possibilities of the future (Kipfer et al., 2008: 286).

Among the pioneers of the spatial turn in the Anglophone intellectual world, interpreting the work of Henri Lefebvre, is Fredric Jameson, who offers the notion of “cognitive mapping”² in his critical work, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). In his description of postmodernism as the purest form of late capitalism, Jameson echoes Foucault’s envisioning of space as a fundamental aspect of the new forms of politics and culture that are emerging after the end of modernism: “it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism proper” (Jameson, 2005: 200). Within this framework, Jameson’s influential concept, “cognitive mapping,” serves as an aesthetic strategy in art and culture, and “seeks to endow the individual subject with a new heightened sense of its place in the global system” (Jameson, 2005: 54). In an era dominated by multinational corporations and changing forces of capitalism, Jameson, building upon Lefebvre, proposes a new form of politics that “will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern” (Jameson, 2005: 229). Cognitive mapping brings a spatial sensibility to the practices of representation, appropriates the various elements of postmodernism, such as simulacrum and pastiche, and aims to subvert the domination of capitalist exchange value in cultural production. “The new spatial logic,” created out of hegemonic practices of postmodernism, according to Jameson, is “to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time” (Jameson, 2005: 202).

Before the English translation of *The Production of Space* was published, Anglophone Marxist geographer, David Harvey, who has also made significant contributions to spatial justice and *the right to the city* scholarship in the present conjecture, discussed the interrelated history of space and the capitalist economy, in

² Jameson’s notion of “cognitive mapping” will also be discussed in the last chapter within the context of Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*.

his seminal work *The Condition of Postmodernity*. With a long and detailed exploration of the evolution of time and space in Western thought, *The Condition of Postmodernity* is grounded in the idea that space and time should be considered as a multilayered and complex process in close relation to human conceptions and perceptions. In Harvey's words, "neither time nor space can be assigned objective meanings independently of material processes, and it is only through investigation of the latter that we can properly ground our concepts of the former" (Harvey, 1991: 204). Drawing upon the ideas of early sociologists writing on the notion of "social space," such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Emile Durkheim, Harvey's materialist perspective specifically points out that "objective conceptions of time and space are necessarily created through material practices and processes which serve to reproduce social life" (Harvey, 1991: 204). In this sense, space and time in specific socio-economic contexts are accordingly organized, and changes in such organizations directly affect social relations and everyday life (Harvey, 1991: 204). More specifically, current power mechanisms shape the objectivity of space according to their own needs, and thus "any struggle to reconstitute power relations is a struggle to reorganize their spatial bases" (Harvey, 1991: 238). Within this framework, everyday life functions as a strategic domain for power to organize social relations on a spatial level.

In the current conjecture, David Harvey has expanded the theory of Lefebvre's production of space in relation to the conditions of the neoliberal market economy and an ever-globalizing capitalism. Harvey begins his dialogue with Lefebvre in his groundbreaking work, *Social Justice and the City*, even before the term spatial turn was coined, and in one of his more recent works, *Rebel Cities* (2012), he interprets worldwide uprisings through the lens of Lefebvre's visions of capitalist production of space, and *the right to the city* as a form of radical politics (Harvey, 2012a). "We owe the idea," as Harvey acknowledges, "that command over space is a fundamental and all-pervasive source of social power in and over everyday life to the persistent voice of Henri Lefebvre" (Harvey, 1991: 226).

1.2. THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

Lefebvre is considered to be the pioneer of “the Marxification of space” (Warf and Arias, 2009: 3), and his motto “space is a social product” has dominated the spatial epistemology in multiple disciplines. He brought the “understanding of space as a privileged medium of architecture” into question, and he emphasized “space’s instrumentalization as a medium, tool, and milieu of social practices” (Stanek, 2012: 50). The materiality of consciousness in Marxism underpins Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, but the Marxist spatial trajectory he formulated is more open and flexible, one that is “able to grow and adapt” (Soja, 1989: 48). Marxist critical geography began to gain influence in the 1970s, with its roots in the civil rights era of the 1960s (Soja, 1989: 45-48). In this context, Lefebvre’s formulation of the production of space as an essential factor in the capitalist economy and the urbanization process was a critical reaction to the socio-economic conditions of the 1960s and 1970s (Stanek, 2008). Lefebvre brought together philosophy, geography, and urban sociology in his large body of works, produced mostly during the politically turbulent decades in France. His notion of *the right to the city* mobilized the street demonstrations in 1968 in Paris, and with the publication of his *Production of Space*, the notion of space as an instrument of the capitalist mode of production, has increasingly become a paradigm to question “how relations of power and discipline are inscribed in the apparently innocent spatiality of social life,” and “how human geographies became filled with politics and ideology” (Soja, 2000: 6).

Lefebvre’s socio-spatial formulation, specifically his spatial triad, has been used as a quintessential tool in analyzing the power/knowledge/space axis in multidisciplinary fields. The spatial triad Lefebvre develops in *The Production of Space* elicits a dialectical tension between different forms of space in relation to human experience. This conceptual framework, first and foremost, stands against the understanding of space as a “form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it” (Lefebvre, 1991: 94). Unlike the concepts of ‘Euclidean,’ ‘isotropic,’ ‘infinite,’ or ‘mathematical’ space that evoke the idea that space is simply a geometrical and empty area, space is social construct filled with human experience (Lefebvre, 1991: 1-2). It is also simultaneously

produced both “as a social formation (mode of production) and as a mental construction (conception)” (Elden, 2004: 185). According to Lefebvre, between the philosophical formulations of space in Western Logos, and the mathematicians that endow space a scientific status, the theory of social life and human practice remains missing or ambiguous (Lefebvre, 1991: 3). Also, modern epistemology sets space as a ‘mental thing’ or ‘mental space’ that is always inserted with an appropriate logic. “We are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary space, ideological spaces, the space of the dream, psychoanalytical topologies, and so on and so forth,” Lefebvre states (Lefebvre, 1991: 3). “Conspicuous by its absence from supposedly fundamental epistemological studies,” however, “is not only the idea of ‘man’ but also that of space – the fact that ‘space’ is mentioned on every page notwithstanding” (Lefebvre, 1991: 3). Discussing the poststructuralist writings of modern Western philosophers, such as Foucault and Althusser, regarding universal spatial metaphors, Lefebvre again criticizes the lack of materiality in epistemological thought that designates space to an abstract model, conducive to ideological manipulations:

Most if not all of these authors ensconce themselves comfortably enough within the terms of mental (and therefore neo-Kantian or neo-Cartesian space), thereby demonstrating that ‘theoretical space’ is already nothing more than the egocentric thinking of specialized Western intellectuals – and indeed may soon be nothing more than an entirely separated, schizoid consciousness (Lefebvre, 1991: 24).

For Lefebvre, the concept of a general, abstract space in Western epistemology, or a specific scientific space designated by a specialist in a specific discipline, both lead to the fragmentation of space and thus its subordination “to a center or to a centralized power and advanced by a knowledge which works as power’s proxy” (Lefebvre, 1991: 9). Power thus dominates the abstract space, fills it and reshapes it according to its own needs, and furthermore alienates it from concrete human experience.

Locating human experience at the core of his formulation, Lefebvre emphasizes the difference between abstract and absolute space, in order to develop his ideas regarding the functioning of power and knowledge in the process of the production of space. Absolute space is the concrete space that is “made up of fragments of nature” and utilized by architecture for specific purposes (Lefebvre, 1991: 48). Simply, it is produced by humans for their concrete needs, but managed

by those who possess the means of production. While absolute space was originally the product of “soil and language,” it was appropriated into a historical and political space (Lefebvre, 1991: 48). Here, Lefebvre adds a spatial dimension to Marx’s theory of accumulation by tracing the moment when “the forces of history smashed naturalness forever and upon its ruins established the space of accumulation” (Lefebvre, 1991: 49). This is also the moment when absolute space is produced as abstract space, while the human experience and labor that occupies it is also reduced into abstraction, into “abstract social labor” (Lefebvre, 1991: 49). Absolute space as the “true space,” in which human experience takes place is conceptualized through the process of abstraction, through signs and symbols, and is imposed on social relations through the production of spatial knowledge. Abstract space thus becomes the dominant form of space, the realm of objectivity and formality, “of bureaucracy and power, rent and profit, and so on, so creating the illusion of a less chaotic reality” (Lefebvre, 1991: 300). Rendering concrete human experience and human labor invisible, abstract space “erases distinctions, as much as those which derive from nature and (historical) time as those which originate in the body (age, sex, ethnicity)” (Lefebvre, 1991: 49).

In the process of the production of space, the key idea is that “each mode of production has its own particular space, the shift from one mode to another must entail the production of a new space” (Lefebvre, 1991: 46). Abstract space thus serves as the domain where a spatial code for each mode of production and its social relations is created and applied. In the present context, abstract space covers up the functioning of late capitalism and the socio-spatial relations it organizes on the urban level. “This code thus has a history, a history determined, in the West, by the entire history of cities,” Lefebvre puts it: “Eventually it would allow the organization of the cities, which had been several times overturned, to become knowledge and power – to become, in other words, an *institution*” through which power exercises its cultural, ideological and political hegemony (Lefebvre, 1991: 47, emphasis in original). Lefebvre’s spatial triad operates on these dynamics between absolute and abstract space, and their reflections in the urbanization process.

1.3. THE SPATIAL TRIAD

The spatial triad consists of three interacting levels: *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *representational spaces*, three moments in a dialectic tension with each other. Lefebvre also names the phenomenological aspects of his conceptual triad as *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* space, referring to the ways space is produced: material, mental, and social.

Spatial Practice:

Spatial practice refers to the physical activities in space that produce the material spatiality that is specific of a social group. Contrary to the common notion that space is an empty container that preexists people and their activities, *spatial practice* is the primary producer of space that involves human perception, behavior, and experience. “The spatial practice of a society,” therefore, “secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction” (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). To understand the spatial practice of a society, one can decipher its space, as well as the everyday life performed in it. In the modern context, Lefebvre exemplifies the function of spatial practice under neo-capitalism via its connection to everyday life produced in urban spaces. It is possible to define the current spatial practice of people in capitalist societies, for instance, “by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project,” or simply through “the motorways or the politics of air transport” (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). Controlling the spatial practice and everyday life of a society thus means to have total domination over it.

Representations of Space:

The second level of Lefebvre’s formulation falls within the domain of mental processes that “have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991: 42). It is the space conceived and conceptualized by architects, urban planners, technocrats and other professionals theorizing on space using abstractions. *Representations of space* “is the dominant space in any society” and inevitably any “mode of production” (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). It establishes hegemonic power through the production of spatial knowledge via “an ensemble of

significations” that are “graphic and visual tending towards metalanguage” that is used for the “interpretation of inhabiting” (Lefebvre, 2000: 152). The discourse used in these conceived spaces helps to inscribe certain ideologies in spatial textures once the spatial practice of that society is deciphered. While spatial practice precedes *representations of space* as it “is lived directly before it is conceptualized,” the pervasive strategy of power to produce spatial knowledge via abstraction thus dominates spatial practice and “causes practice to disappear along with life, and so does very little justice to the ‘unconscious’ level of lived experience” (Lefebvre, 1991: 34). This dialectic, according to Lefebvre, generates complex social relations based on a centrality, operating on the fragmentation of center and periphery, public and private, official and underground.

Representational Spaces:

Also translated as *spaces of representation*, the most complex level of Lefebvre’s spatial triad refers to the spaces that are directly experienced, or in Lefebvre’s terms, “lived” by its users. *Representational spaces* thus contain all the intrinsic social characteristics of a particular group, as well as the unconscious materials embedded in the lived space. Though spatial practice is under the control of conceived modes of spatial production, “the clandestine or underground social life” within *representational spaces* bears the potential to produce tactics against domination (Lefebvre, 1991: 41). This is the level of imagination, dreams, fantasies, also “childhood memories, or uterine images and symbols, (holes, passages, labyrinths)” (Lefebvre, 1991: 41). Therefore, it is also the space for artists, writers, and philosophers who aspire to imagine alternatives to the conceived spaces of technocrats. The peripheral consciousness inherent in *representational spaces*, however, offers possibilities of resistance to hegemony only when it does not fall into a vicious circle of simulating the knowledge and practice produced and imposed by the level of *representations of space*. *Representational spaces* is also the space of the bodily lived experience, which is again interrupted and controlled by cultural codes that operate within *representations of space*, reducing the body and its spatial practice to “body without organs” (Lefebvre, 1991: 40). With its radical openness, uncertainty, and disorderliness, *representational spaces* have the potential to end the socio-spatial domination of the existing system, and make way for social struggles,

as “they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people” (Lefebvre, 1991: 41).

Lefebvre emphasizes the dialectic dimension of his triad, as it has “three elements, and not two:” the perceived, the conceived, and the lived (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). His treatment of space aims to go beyond the dualisms of Western philosophy, as he states, beyond the dualisms of “subject and object, Descartes’s *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and the Ego and non-ego of the Kantians, post-Kantians and neo-Kantians” (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). Unlike these abstractions, which bring along fragmentations, Lefebvre suggests a materialist spatial consciousness to unravel the tensions and contradictions that lie within the complex layers of spatial production. In modern capitalism, the process of spatial production ranges from the concrete relationship between human and nature, to its reflections in the social/symbolic level. The ruling class operates this process through the medium of a covert and segmented ideological structure, embodied in the *representations of space*. “This ideology,” Lefebvre states, “carries no flag, and for those who accept the practice of which it is a part it is indistinguishable from knowledge” (Lefebvre, 1991: 9).

Lefebvre defines abstract space as “the tool of domination,” a lethal weapon that “asphyxiates whatever is conceived within it and then strives to emerge” (Lefebvre, 1991: 370). The historical conditions that give rise to internal differences in societies are subject to homogenization or total elimination within the functioning of the capitalist production of space. Specifically, urban architecture in late capitalism is formed upon abstraction, fragmentation and division, and therefore, it has a strategic role in the reduction of social differences. Fragmented spaces in the cities of capitalism render social differences at a minimum level and under constant control, through “minimal difference,” as Lefebvre names it. The production of space in late capitalism

undermines city centers by scattering urban life into isolated parcels: bungalows (*pavillons*), districts of high-rise towers (*grands ensembles*), factory and university compounds, and resort towns on the beach. Demarcated by property divisions, transportation routes, and lines of functional and social segregation, these parcelized social spaces (planned in vulgar modernist fashion) represent forms of *minimal difference* (Kipfer, 2008: 201, emphases in original).

Spontaneous movements within spatial practice give rise to differences that pose a challenge to abstract space conceived by “specialists who effectively translate

the social order into territorial reality with or without direct orders from economic and political authorities” (Lefebvre, 1991: 374). These differences create a “spatial duality,” which looks like a conflict on the surface and creates the impression that “an explosion is inevitable” between ostensibly dual power structures (Lefebvre, 1991: 374). What generally happens in the end is the absorption of unexpected differences within the homogeneous abstract space, “in which case, only *induced differences* arise” (Lefebvre, 1991: 374, emphasis in original). The spatial conflict that creates induced differences under the control of power functions as “a measure precisely, of the repressive and assimilative capacity of the dominant space” (Lefebvre, 1991: 374).

An induced, or “minimal” difference is in the form of a recurrence of certain different elements “within a set or system generated according to a particular law” (Lefebvre, 1991: 372). A certain rule of mathematics and exact sciences is employed in the production of space through repetition: the qualitative is subordinated to the quantitative (Lefebvre, 1991: 372). In this way, minimal differences continue to exist in the margins of space, because “the potentially hegemonic character of abstract space rests on a successful production and incorporation of (minimal) difference in all its dimensions” (Kipfer, 2008: 203). To challenge such duality that is perfectly optimal for ideology entails the production of maximal difference, which happens when “a given set gives rise, beyond its own boundaries, to another, completely different set” (Lefebvre, 1991: 372). Maximal difference is also termed as “produced difference,” and it is the ultimate way to subvert the codes of abstract space. As opposed to induced difference, “a *produced* difference presupposes the shattering of a system; it is born of an explosion; it emerges from the chasm opened up when a closed universe ruptures” (Lefebvre, 1991: 372, emphasis in original). Lefebvre’s maximal/minimal difference dialectic translates into his formulation of the right to difference and *the right to the city*, which, he insists, can be claimed “through practical action, through effective struggle” (Lefebvre, 1991: 396).

1.4. CITY AS A SPACE OF CAPITAL

The foundation of Lefebvre's theoretical framework concerning the production of space rests on his inquiries into the urban setting of the late capitalist world, specifically his observations of Paris during its modernization in the 1960s. Lefebvre dialectically intertwines the Hegelian/Marxist concept of concrete abstraction with the urban space (Stanek, 2008). He reformulates the abstraction of concrete labor, and the alienation of the laborer from his own labor as it appears in Marxist theory, by transforming the idea of space into concrete abstraction, and the alienation of the inhabitants from their lived space in the modern city (Lefebvre, 1991: 15). He describes the process as a transition "from the production of things in space to the production of space itself" (Lefebvre, 2009: 186).

The spatial organization of modern capitalism is based on Cartesian logic that geometrically cuts, parcels, sectionalizes and distributes regions in order to rationalize and legalize discrimination: "What is being covered up here is a moral and political order," says Lefebvre, "the specific power that organizes these conditions, with its specific socio-economic allegiance, seems to flow directly from the Logos – that is, from a 'consensual' embrace of the rational" (Lefebvre, 1991: 317). The abstraction of concrete space by the capitalist mode of production is realized by a system of representation, "which proceeded from measuring space with parts of the body to universal, quantitative, and homogeneous systems" (Lefebvre, 1991: 110-11), in the same way that time is designated as an abstraction, with terms or ideas such as "schedules, runs, crossings, loads" (Lefebvre, 2009: 187). The whole process underlies the history of capitalist urbanization:

Not only has capitalism laid hold of pre-existing space, of the Earth, but it also tends to produce a space of its own ... through and by means of urbanization, under the pressure of world market; and, in accordance with the law of the reproducible and the repetitive, by abolishing spatial and temporal differences, by destroying nature and nature's time" (Lefebvre, 1991: 326)

Lefebvre explains the significant role of urbanization in the survival of capitalism through Marx's theory of value, specifically the distinction between use value and exchange value of commodities. "Although space is not analyzed in *Capital*," he says, "certain concepts, such as exchange value and use value, today apply to space" (Lefebvre, 1991: 192). Marx's theory of value dates back to Adam

Smith and David Ricardo and their idea that the value of a thing is measured by the labor that is necessary to produce it. The exploitation of labor by the capital owner produces a surplus value, and the product is put on a market for exchange so that the surplus value will bring profit. As Marx describes it in the *Capital*:

A commodity is a use value or object of utility, and a value. It manifests itself as this twofold thing; that it is, as soon as its value assumes an independent form – viz., the form of exchange value. It never assumes this form when isolated, but only when placed in a value or exchange relation with another commodity of a different kind. (Marx, 2015: 41).

For capitalist accumulation, the exchange value of goods or products should exceed their use-value, though it is the use value that determines whether the product satisfies the need it is basically produced for. “The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange;” Adam Smith puts it, while “those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use” (qtd. in Harvey, 1993: 153). This distinction also shapes the social structures of societies ruled by the capitalist economy.

Lefebvre considers the relationship between use-value and exchange value, and its role on the reproduction of social relations, within the context of capitalist urbanization. “Space as a whole enters into the modernized mode of capitalist production,” he states, for a simple reason: “it is utilized to produce surplus value” (Lefebvre, 2009: 187). This goes back to the production of nature, the concrete absolute space where spatial practice takes place (Lefebvre, 2009: 192). As the “source of all use value,” however, nature is subject to capitalist mode of production, and inevitably abstraction at all times (Lefebvre, 2009: 192). The relationship between human and nature and its exploitation by capital is the precursor to social-spatial relations in modern urban spaces. The city, as well as nature, is produced as concrete abstraction where labor, spatial practice, and the lived experience of people are dominated on behalf of capitalist accumulation.

David Harvey, similarly to Lefebvre, emphasizes the role of urbanization for the survival of capitalism, where “urbanism relies upon the concentration of a significant quantity of the social surplus product at one point in space” (Harvey, 1993: 226). For Harvey, the city also “functions as a locus for disposing of surplus product” through its absorption within the designed practices of everyday life (Harvey, 1993: 228). “Monumental architecture, lavish and conspicuous

consumption, and need-creation in contemporary urban society,” for example, “are all different manifestations of this same phenomenon” (Harvey, 1993: 228). Urban space in the post-industrial era is the ground and means for the capitalist mode of production, a sphere of concrete abstraction, in Lefebvre’s terms, where the material everyday life of people is codified through the *representations of space*, as outlined in Lefebvre’s triad, through a symbolic order regulated by power and capital. It is capital itself, basically, that functions as “the principal architect of spatial structures” on the urban scale (Badcock, 1984: 53).

From the suburbanization movement in the second half of the twentieth century to present gentrification practices in world cities, new modes of urbanization in the post-industrial capitalist world provide a spatial fix for the over-accumulation crises of capitalism (Harvey, 2012a). In this sense, urban planning and architecture serve as tools for the ruling class, as they organize and reorganize the urban space for the benefit of capital accumulation and crisis management. Harvey exemplifies this process through his analysis of the urban regeneration of the Second Empire Paris. In 1848, during “one of the first clear crises of unemployed surplus capital and surplus labor side-by-side,” the working class claimed the streets of Paris (Harvey, 2012a: 7). The movement was violently suppressed by the forces of the bourgeoisie. Then Louis Bonaparte, who became the emperor in 1852 after a coup d’état, hired Haussmann, a German urban planner “to help solve the surplus capital and unemployment problem by way of urbanization” (Harvey, 2012a: 7). Haussman’s projects solved the crisis of over-accumulation through investments in the urban space and brought modernity to the built environment. One of the goals was to reduce the possibility of new working-class uprisings in the city. Medieval neighborhoods populated by the working class and the urban disenfranchised were destroyed, and while new parks and squares were built, access to public spaces by various groups of people became difficult, and the alienation of the working class from urban life became more intense. Paris was redesigned as “the city of light” and became the European center of tourism and consumption: “the cafes, the department stores, the fashion industry, the grand expositions, all changed the urban way of life in ways that could absorb vast surpluses” (Harvey, 2012a: 8). The mounting tension between the bourgeoisie and the working class in the city then resulted in the

eruption of the Paris Commune in 1871, during which the working class claimed and occupied the streets of Paris for two months, with “the desire to take back their city on the part of those dispossessed by Haussmann’s works” (Harvey, 2012a: 8). Lefebvre also used the Paris Commune as an example for urban revolutionary practice, and developed it into his idea of *the right to the city* during the 1968 student uprising in Paris, which followed a similar trajectory to the Second Empire Paris events (Lefebvre, 2000).

In the US, Robert Moses employed a similar solution to Haussmann’s, in order to absorb the surplus problem through urban development projects in the New York Metropolitan area. The strategy of re-engineering the city to solve the crisis of capital found a place in other major metropolitan centers of the US, and ensured “the stabilization of global capitalism after the World War II,” under the leading role of the US (Harvey, 2012a: 9). The suburbanization of the US also aimed at recreating the city, and a whole new urban everyday life along with it, that would absorb the surplus products, “from suburban tract housing to refrigerators and air conditioners, as well as two cars in the driveway and an enormous increase in the consumption of oil, all played their part in the absorption of the surplus” (Harvey, 2012a: 9). The transformation of urban space and the suburbanization movement, on the other hand, led to the urban crises of the 1960s, in a similar manner and for the same reasons as France’s, Second Empire Paris. History repeated itself in the 2008 crisis, when the property market, which had played a significant role in absorbing surplus capital, crashed in the United States.

1.5. URBAN EVERYDAY LIFE

Henri Lefebvre’s theoretical analysis of space and urbanization go hand in hand with everyday life as a valuable source of critical inquiry. In his prolific writing career, Lefebvre wrote five full-length books on the sociology and philosophy of everyday life: three volumes of *Critique of Everyday Life*, and two interrelated works, *Rhythmanalysis* and *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. He brings art, philosophy, literature, architecture, urban planning, and political economy together in his dealing with modern everyday life as a strategic arena for accumulation, power

and resistance. “Power occupies the space which it generates,” and therefore, “the everyday is the very soil on which the great architectures of politics and society rise up” (Lefebvre, 1976: 89). The city serves as a fully operational capitalist space, where surplus value is produced within the urban fabric, “with its multiple networks of communication and exchange” and “its various installations,” but most importantly, its everyday life is based on homogeneity, repetition, alienation and consumption (Lefebvre, 2009: 187). Lefebvre’s point of departure is “Marxism as critical knowledge of everyday life,” which he applies to the urban conditions of the neo-capitalist world (Lefebvre, 2008: 138). The relationship between the reproduction of social relations and the reproduction of means of production bring to the fore everyday life as a stage, where those social relations are performed and repeated.

In the urbanization process, the production of space works in coordination with the everyday life to be performed in these produced spaces (Lefebvre, 1976: 9). The everyday life of the proletariat, the commodification of labor, and the alienation of the laborer in Marxist thinking follow a similar pattern in the changing conditions of the postindustrial city, where the ruling class dominates the spatial practice of city dwellers, enforces an alienating urban environment, and organizes their everyday life as a strategic site for power. Thanks to the production of the urban environment and the designation of everyday life, the presence of power, however, is not always obvious. It is inscribed in monuments, as well as in the tiniest details:

the power to maintain relations of dependence and exploitation, does not keep to a defined “front” at the strategic level, like a frontier on the map or a line of trenches on the ground. Power is everywhere; it is omnipresent, assigned to Being. It is everywhere in space. It is in everyday discourse and commonplace notions, as well as in police batons and armored cars. It is in objects d’art as well as in missiles. It is in the diffuse preponderance of the “visual,” as well as in institutions such as school or parliament. It is in things as well as in signs. Everywhere, and therefore nowhere (Lefebvre, 1976: 86, emphasis in original).

On the other hand, everyday life with its possibility of simultaneity and creativity is the very realm from which an unexpected revolt might arise. The urban landscape thus provides the setting for the dialectic between the *representations of space* and *representational spaces*, both of which are acted out in the level of everyday life.

In Lefebvre's interpretation, the bourgeoisie divide the everyday life of the individual as both public and private, which puts individuality in a one-dimensional relationship to the universal. In modern everyday life, "single beings" have to face reason, society, culture, and the world in a universal intellectual context. As a result, "there can be no question here of real individuality," "but merely of an abstract, empty, negative *form* of individualism" (Lefebvre, 2008: 149). Everyday life is inscribed with a universal consciousness that has minimum interaction with material practices, and individuals are alienated from their own lived experience. "Separated from the conditions in which it could flourish or even exist," the individual consciousness is restrained in a "life split into contradictory or separate poles: work and rest, public life and personal life, public occasions and intimate situations, chance and inner secrets, luck and fate, ideal and reality, the marvelous and the everyday" (Lefebvre, 2008: 149). The ideology of the bourgeoisie as the superstructure of capitalist spatial production designs the everyday urban life in a way where no spontaneity or creativity emerges outside the control of power. Instead, "this consciousness shrinks in upon itself," and the "colonization of everyday life" becomes possible (Lefebvre, 2008: 149).

Along with the production of individual consciousness, the organization of metropolitan architecture also plays a key role in such colonization. "There are no longer colonies in the old sense of the word," but the underprivileged urban populations are continuously subject "to a concentrated exploitation through the methods and maintaining the elements of a state of spatial segregation" (Lefebvre, 2009: 181). Urban space is designed and produced in reductive and hierarchical ways, which leads to fragmented neo-colonial spaces that are "nothing but subjected, exploited spaces" (Lefebvre, 1976: 84-85). The everyday life designated for these spaces serves as a monitor for the ruling class, which will maintain its power as long as it "envelops and incorporates the daily aspirations, desires and dreams of [the] subaltern population" inhabiting these lived spaces (Kipfer, 2008: 200).

Lefebvre also draws attention to the function of modern everyday life in maintaining an increasingly consumerist society. The logics of urbanization work in tandem with consumerism in modern cities, in order to dispose the surplus product. This is a global strategy, as Lefebvre defines it, which mainly operates on the

urban/local level. The everyday life of urban dwellers, all around the capitalist world, become replicas of each other, thus serving both the economic and political interests of the ruling class. In these societies of consumption, “you are being looked after, cared for, told how to live better, how to dress fashionably, how to decorate your house, in short how to exist; you are totally programmed, except that you still have to choose between so many good things, since the act of consuming remains a permanent structure” (Lefebvre, 1971: 107-108). Simultaneously, modern urban architecture that already works as “an unitary system and total planning” focuses on the production of urban space as a locus of consumption, which extends to hyper-consumption in an ever-globalizing world. (Lefebvre, 2000: 85). Through the built structures that impose certain patterns of movement and action upon its inhabitants, an everyday life organized on “a programmed and computerized consumption” becomes “the rule and norm for the whole society” (Lefebvre, 2000: 85). The production of space renders the hegemony of abstract space over lived space. Homogeneity rules over fragmented spaces that have minimum interaction with each other, and all stay under the control of a central power. According to Lefebvre, the whole process operates on a spatial level, making architecture and urban planning an ideological instrument for the domination of the everyday:

They will build not only commercial centres, but also centres of privileged consumption: the renewed city. They will be making ‘legible’ an ideology of happiness through consumption, joy by planning adapted to its new mission ... Others will erect *decision-making* centres, concentrating the means of power: information, training, organization, operation. And still: repression (constraints, including violence) and persuasion (ideology and advertising). Around these centres will be apportioned on the ground, in a dispersed order, according to the norms of foreseen constraints, the peripheries, de-urbanized urbanization. All the conditions come together thus for a perfect domination, for a redefined exploitation of people as producers, consumers of products, consumers of space (Lefebvre, 2000: 85).

The city is planned and built in a way that any potential of appropriation or assertion of differences by inhabitants is reduced to a minimum. The arrangement of urban daily life is constrained within “a geometric isotopy, full of instructions and signals, where qualitative differences of places and moments no longer matter” (Lefebvre, 2000: 128). This prevents inhabitants from participating in the unique and creative experience of *representational spaces*, outside the control of the decision-making centers (Lefebvre, 2000: 128). Even the architect “creating” these spaces

cannot free himself from ideological impositions, both because the means are also produced by power and because the architect himself/herself lives within the produced social relations, and so his/her imagination is also entrapped. But the architect should be looking for ways to release his/her imagination from social and ideological constraints because “his job should be *to produce a space by protecting it against power*” (Lefebvre, 1976: 88, emphasis original). The architect, in other words, should assign more freedom to *representational spaces*.

For resistance in the realm of everyday life, Lefebvre insists on the contradictions between space and the everyday. These contradictions are continuously and spontaneously generated within the movements of the body. The reproduction of social relations begins within the borders of the closest geography to the subject, that is, the body, through the domination of universal consciousness produced by power: “power has extended its domain right into the interior of each individual, to the roots of consciousness, to the ‘topias’ hidden in the folds of subjectivity” (Lefebvre, 1976: 87). Beginning with the id/ego/super-ego and private/public dichotomies, the individual is subjected to fragmentation, even in the most basic of social relations, and the reproduction of these relations takes place in the everyday. What Lefebvre dwells on is the potential of bodily movement to “supersede the private consciousness” by escaping from “the asphyxiating straitjacket of fragmented activities” (Lefebvre, 2008: 150). The body is both the most vulnerable geography and the most resistant, Lefebvre insists, as there is no way to fully know what the body is capable of, and no way to destroy it without damaging the social body first. “The body, at the very heart of space and of discourse of Power,” for Lefebvre, “is reducible and subversive,” and so is the everyday, because it serves as the initial stage for bodily movement, the realm where it is disciplined and programmed through geometrics, and also where it is the most resistant owing to the unconscious, daily aspirations and dreams, and most importantly, its concrete reality (Lefebvre, 1976: 89). In this sense, experience might take a poetic form in the realm of the everyday (Certeau, 2010: 112), when the limits of the lived space are pushed by means of unexpected steps and movements. For this very reason, the body and the everyday have “the privilege of being not only the

witness for the prosecution but also the terrain of defense and attack” (Lefebvre, 1976: 89).

1.6. THE RIGHT TO DIFFERENCE AND *THE RIGHT TO THE CITY*

The relationship between capital, urban space and everyday life makes the city historically, a class phenomenon, as both Lefebvre and Harvey strictly emphasize. While urban space and everyday life is regulated according to the needs of capitalist accumulation, a socio-spatial inequality between diverse groups populating the city inevitably occurs. The polarization in the distribution of wealth alongside the territorial organization of capitalism results in a wide disparity between people regarding their access to, and control over, space as well as the services provided by urban centers. Then there arises, in Harvey’s words, “a pecking order” among various groups in the population of the various resources which the city has to offer,” and the ones “at the bottom of this pecking order are the losers” (Harvey, 1993: 78-79). Considered through the lens of space-power dynamics, those who have the power and skills to produce *representations of space* have control over those who have no such authority or competence (Harvey, 1993: 82). In every case, there remains “the fundamental conclusion that the rich can command space whereas the poor are trapped in it” (Harvey, 1993: 171).

Urban space, in Marxist geographical thinking, is mainly interpreted as an economic instrument, because it is interchangeable and it has exchange value. Urban space is also a political instrument to exert absolute control over people through homogenization. “Economic space and political space” of the cities “converge toward the elimination of all differences,” and while postindustrial urban space operates as a “space of quantification and growing homogeneity, a commodified space where all the elements are exchangeable and thus interchangeable,” it is also designed and produced as “a police space in which the state tolerates no resistance and no obstacles” (Lefebvre, 2009: 192).

Domination of social space in the cities of late capitalism is based on a strategic formulation that aims for homogeneity, fragmentation, and hierarchy in three main steps: “break up oppositions by redistributing groups of people, including

opposing groups into ghettos; hierarchize places on the basis of power relations; and control the entire system” (Lefebvre, 2009: 243). Consequently, segregational practices play an eminent role in dominating the cities and avoid any coalitions between urban inhabitants. “Segregation” as Lefebvre emphasizes, “is inclined to prohibit protest, contest, action, by dispersing those who protest, contest, and act” (Lefebvre, 2000: 163). In the same way, modern gentrification projects operate for the purpose of not only capitalist investment in the production of urban space but also separation of diverse groups from each other through spatial displacement (Harvey, 2015). Segregational practices keep the potential of maximal differences at the level of minimal difference, and while differences arise on the ghettoized margins, they are “challenged by the forces of repression, which demand silence and forgetfulness” (Lefebvre, 2003: 21). This center-periphery conflict extends to a fragmentation that takes shape in “the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games, of guerilla war, of war” (Lefebvre, 1991: 373). Any contradictory movement that claims the right to difference that is already inherent in *representational spaces* faces the threat to be absorbed and assimilated within a “conflictual duality” that is “deemed optimal by a particular ideology” (Lefebvre, 1991: 374).

The political, economic, and social history of the city has always witnessed tension and conflict between opposite forces and dynamics. While the city has “variously functioned as a pivot around which a given mode of production is organized,” it has also been “a center of revolution against the established order, and as a center of power and privilege to be revolted against” (Harvey, 1993: 203). The spatial planning process by specialists, in other words, the realm of *representations of space* is used to establish a barrier against differences. However, “this barrier is always relative and, in the case of membranes, always permeable” (Lefebvre, 1991: 176). If homogenization of differences is the preliminary step in colonizing the urban space and everyday life, then these very sites are the places to be politicized and organized collectively by the inhabitants, in order to develop a claim for maximal difference. Through the disavowal of the prescribed quotidian, and through creativity and spontaneity, the city can function as a “place where people walk around, find themselves standing before and inside piles of objects, experience the intertwining of

the threads of their activities until they become unrecognizable, entangle situations in such a way that they engender unexpected situations” (Lefebvre, 2003: 39). The revolutionary potential of *representational spaces* thus finds an outlet, through creating spontaneous movements against the abstraction of control mechanisms. On the other hand, by fragmenting the lived experience of people and alienating them from their lived spaces, the ruling power regularly breaks up the revolutionary potential within everyday life. If the bodily movements in *representational spaces* “retain a defensive posture and no counterattack is mounted from their side,” any attempt to assert maximal difference will ultimately be absorbed by the center, and in the end “centrality and normality will be tested as to limits of their power to integrate, to recuperate, or to destroy whatever has transgressed” (Lefebvre, 1991: 373).

Before the publication of *Production of Space*, Lefebvre formulates the notion of the *right to the city* as a liberating vision against the dominant power structures that mainly operate on the urban space. This formulation was an intellectual reaction to the social and urban crisis in 1960s Paris, and it came out as “a cry and a demand” against the increasing socio-spatial injustice in the cities (Lefebvre, 2000). In his writings on Paris’s socio-spatial transformation in the post-war era, Lefebvre criticizes the shift from the architecture of necessity to the modernist functionalist urbanism that ghettoized –mostly Algerian- immigrants (Harvey, 2012a: x). Drawing parallels between the 1848 Paris Uprisings, the Paris Commune of 1871, and the civil rights movements of the 1960s, Lefebvre emphasizes that class relations are strongly etched into the urban fabric, and therefore revolutionary should be urbanized as well (Lefebvre, 2000).

In the industrial city “the working class is rejected from the centers towards the peripheries, dispossessed of the city, expropriated thus from the best outcomes of its activity” (Lefebvre, 2000: 179). In late capitalism, the displaced and disenfranchised urban population involves diverse groups of minorities alongside the proletariat, and the reproduction of cities creates new class lines that divide urban spaces. While the fragmentation of the city restricts the movements of urban populations and keeps interaction and exchange at the minimum, urban spaces that are parceled out are easily commodified and the city itself becomes a space of

exchange value. Therefore, it gets more difficult for the less privileged urban populations to reach the certain areas of the city, and in many cases, to have access to urban services. The city becomes a product with an exchange value and its inherent use-value diminishes, which makes it harder for everyone to have spatial experience in equal conditions (Lefebvre, 2000: 66-68).

Lefebvre's thinking of cities is shaped by the dialectics of geography as both a limiting force and a bearer of alternative imagination. This is, more specifically, a "dialectic between imaginative free play and authority" (Harvey, 2000: 164). For Lefebvre, the city is inherently an *oeuvre*, a collective work rather than a product. The city's potential as an *oeuvre* "contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange and *products*" (Lefebvre, 2000: 66 emphasis in original). More precisely, "the *oeuvre* is the use value and the product is exchange value" (Lefebvre, 2000: 66, emphasis in original). What Lefebvre suggests is to reclaim the use-value of the urban space, which is basically a claim for *the right to the city* by those who are deprived of their right to have access to the use-value of the city. Due to the segregational practices in the cities of late capitalism, however, the urban disenfranchised lose the sense of the *oeuvre*. "Urban consciousness will vanish" in this process, and the commodification of the city will prevail (Lefebvre, 2000: 77). Here, Lefebvre urges for an emergence of a collective urban consciousness, an assertion of maximal difference through restoring the use-value of the city. "The right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and *appropriation* (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city" (Lefebvre, 2000: 173, emphases in original), and it is a claim by the "*urban man* for whom and by whom the city, and his own daily life in it, become the *oeuvre*, *appropriation*, use value (and not exchange value), by using all the means of science, art, technology" (Lefebvre, 2000: 180, emphases in original). In this sense, Lefebvre's formulation of *the right to the city* takes the form of a common denominator for those who are subject to spatial injustice in the city and also to the bureaucratized control of everyday life. The revival of an urban consciousness bears the capacity to destroy the ideology of consumption as well as to break the spatial barriers.

Lefebvre places the idea of *the right to the city* outside classical humanism. The historic city that was once established upon encounter and exchange cannot have

a part in imagining a new urban future, because that nostalgia is now used as an “object of cultural consumption for tourists, for estheticism, avid for spectacles and the picturesque” (Lefebvre, 2000: 148). The notion of the city in classical humanism is now a text in fragments, in “the form of a document, or an exhibition, or a museum” (Lefebvre, 2000: 148). The city has been subject to abstraction throughout its history, and it “is no longer lived and is no longer understood practically” (Lefebvre, 2000: 148). The *urban*, on the other hand, remains to be the kernel for future possibilities, though the urban itself is also “in a state of dispersed, alienated actuality” (Lefebvre, 2000: 148). The fragmented segments that constitute the historic city, for Lefebvre, cannot be put back again. Therefore, the urban “calls for new approaches” that will envision the construction of a new city “on new foundations, in other conditions, in another society” (Lefebvre, 2000: 148).

The right to the city is “a superior form of rights: the right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit” (Lefebvre, 2000: 173). Harvey also defines *the right to the city* as a collective right and prioritizes it over the enlightenment ideals of human rights, which are “individualistic and property-based and, as such, do nothing to challenge hegemonic liberal and neoliberal market-logics” (Harvey, 2012a: 4). *The right to the city* as opposed to the market logic of neoliberal urbanism and everyday life, serves as “one of the most precious yet most neglected human rights,” and as an exercise for “[t]he freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities (Harvey, 2012a: 4). In transforming the city into an *oeuvre*, participation in the decision-making process and appropriation of urban space become subversive acts against the rule of private property and exchange value (Lefebvre, 2000: 174). The starting point of *the right to the city* is, therefore, to reimagine the city as a place where encounter and simultaneity are not manipulated under the domination of exchange value only. “Use value, subordinated for centuries to exchange value” should attain a priority again through the agency of an urban society, by the intervention of people in the process of production of space under capitalism (Lefebvre, 2000: 167). The city, first of all, should be reimaged as an *oeuvre*, a collective work of art, rather than a product. And it is not the architect or the urban planner that can solely produce the urban space with new social relations, outside of the old historical formulas. People dwelling in the city should also take

revolutionary steps towards changing urban space, and thus creating a new urban life (Lefebvre, 2000: 154). The *oeuvre* can be created through a full access “to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete *usage* of these moments and places” (Lefebvre, 2012: 179).

In order to imagine a different society and a space of differences, new ways of spatial production should be imagined first, but what is initially required for such a change is “the explosion – of all imposed space” (Lefebvre, 2009: 193). This is a “space as a whole that would be redefined, that would bring about a conversion and subversion” (Lefebvre, 2009: 194). It requires the outlet for the revolutionary potential of *representational spaces* so that collectively produced tactics will first develop resistant mechanisms beyond the surveillance of power, and against the homogenizing effect of abstract space, and then to transform what is at hand, to imagine a new socio-spatial production. An urban consciousness, first of all, will develop “against the increasing forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchically organized power – that defined the specific geography of capitalism” (Soja, 1996: 34). Lefebvre thus underlines a model of urbanized oppositional politics that serves as an “alternative pathway,” one that is “not located ‘in-between’ his bi-polar worlds of centers and peripheries, or in some additive combination of them” (Soja, 1996: 34). Rather, it offers “an Otherness, a strategic and heretical space ‘beyond’ what is presently known and taken for granted” (Soja, 1996: 34).

For the revival of an urban consciousness, the act of dwelling gains significance. Dwelling in the modern city is “reduced to a designated function” of the habitat, which begins with the design process that fabricates “the fragmentation of space for sale and purchase (exchange)” (Lefebvre, 2000: 188). In other words, capitalist relations of production and reproduction manipulate architectural practices and urban planning through the ideological deployment of *representations of space*. From the pre-capitalist era, when architectural practice was also under the control of religious, political, or ideological hegemony, dwelling has been of lesser significance, because the architect’s practice is fixed and limited by ideology, and his/her role in the social division of labor remains ambivalent (Lefebvre, 2000: 190). In other words, architectural practice operates through the decoding and the recoding

of real spaces, of the tangible world, upon a specific flat surface, a drawing board. The 'plan' of the work on a blank paper however, does not remain innocent because it filters reality. "On the ground," back in the real world, however, "the bulldozer realizes 'the plans'" (Lefebvre, 2000: 191). The design process in architecture and urban planning "entails a risk, that of substitution to objects, especially people, bodies, their gestures and acts" (Lefebvre, 2000: 192). So even if the architect or the planner initially acts upon the matter of dwelling, "what he has done" in the end is "the reduction of 'to inhabit' to *habitat* (Lefebvre, 2000: 79, emphasis original). What Lefebvre suggests in terms of architectural practice is to imagine and create spaces for appropriation. In other words, architectural practice should invest in the potential of cities as an *oeuvre*, a place of use-value. This is a struggle for those who are deleted out of blank papers, texts, or master plans, a struggle for those who are deprived of their right to the city. The idea of recreating the city as an *oeuvre* is at the center of Lefebvre's formulation of *the right to the city*, and in this utopian project, diverse forms of knowledge production are put in collaboration with each other. Lefebvre insists upon the unanimity of thought and action and considers science, art, and philosophy as inseparable realms in imagining and creating an alternative urban life. His ideas on fragmented spatial production echoes with his critique of fragmented knowledge, which, he believes, is a source of alienation (Lefebvre, 2000: 86-87). Therefore, Lefebvre continually criticizes "the separations between *praxis* (action on human groups) and *poiesis* (creation of '*oeuvres*')") (Lefebvre, 2000: 87). In his preface to *The Right to the City*, he attacks systemized separations of theory and practice and makes it clear from the very beginning that the [right to the city] work "wants to break up systems, not to substitute another systems, but to *open up* through thought and action towards *possibilities* by showing the horizon and the road" (Lefebvre, 2000: 63, emphases in original). Creating the city as an *oeuvre*, in this sense, requires both meditations on the city as well as applications of alternative practices.

1.7. LEFEBVRE AND LITERATURE

The right to the city is not an issue of “urbanized rights” only, but an open pathway to imagine and experiment with the city; in Harvey’s words, it is “the alienated right to make a city more after their own desire” (Harvey, 2012a: xvi). In Lefebvre’s notion, the urban proletariat and the urban disenfranchised is “a social force” to mobilize a collective action for an alternative urban life, but under the conditions of segregated city organization and the alienated everyday life, the sense of *oeuvre* disappears (Lefebvre, 2000: 173). In other words, in the urban everyday life of late capitalism, there is not any room left for spontaneous action towards the creation of the city as an *oeuvre*. In this sense, philosophy and the work of art come to the fore in opening up possibilities for the creation of the *oeuvre*, because the sense of the *oeuvre* is already inherent in them. Here, Lefebvre makes “the whole philosophy,” not merely “the philosophy of the city,” as a background to his *right to the city* notion and places it against “the ways fragmented sciences have highlighted or partitioned urban reality” (Lefebvre, 2000: 86). Although the city as an *oeuvre* has been replaced by commodification of cities, the sense of the *oeuvre* still prevails in the work of philosophers as well as those who meditate on the city (Lefebvre, 2000: 89).

Works of art also play a key role in *the right to the city* project because creating the city as an *oeuvre* simply means creating and experiencing the city as a work of art. Here, Lefebvre uses the phrase ‘works of art’ as “poetry, music, theater, novels” (qtd. in Fraser, 2015: 76). Architecture as a form of art, on the other hand, “needs an orientation” because architecture alone cannot “create possibilities” as it is most of the time practiced within the systemized realm of *representations of space* (Lefebvre, 2000: 173). Nevertheless, the work of art, with its inherent sense of the *oeuvre*, inspires architecture and contributes to its potential to conceive space outside hegemonic codes. “Philosophy,” in the same way, “cannot realize itself without art (as model of appropriation of time and space)” (Lefebvre, 2000: 176). The work of art, on the other hand, can bring back the spontaneity and play that is deleted out of the everyday life by capitalist production of space.

While fragmented urbanization disperses differences and silences the rhythms that make the city an *oeuvre*, the work of art has the contradictory potential to recreate the urban rhythms that the cities of late capitalism are increasingly lacking. “To put art at the service of the urban” is what Lefebvre suggests in his philosophical approach to the cities, and this “does not mean to prettify urban space with works of art,” but rather, the city life itself becomes a work of art (Lefebvre, 2000: 173). While graffiti and other forms of art that intervene in the urban space as a subversive tactic is also a form of creating the city as an *oeuvre*, Lefebvre regards the work of art “itself as source and model of *appropriation* of space and time” (Lefebvre, 2000: 173). In other words, it is “the theoretical elements brought by art,” that he considers “as a capacity to transform reality, to *appropriate* at the highest level the facts of the ‘lived,’ of time, space, the body and desire” (Lefebvre, 2000: 164). Therefore, the central question Lefebvre asks in discussing art, literature, and philosophy as part of an urban revolutionary project is: “Why should the imaginary enter only outside the real instead of nurturing reality?” (Lefebvre, 2000: 167).

The work of art in *the right to the city* formulation is subversive in the sense that it is in dialectic with play and imagination. Later, in the spatial triad that Lefebvre proposes in *The Production of Space*, *representational spaces* becomes the realm of art and literature, as it is the realm of bodily movement, spontaneity and play. The tendency of ‘play,’ a word that Lefebvre puts great emphasis on, is subordinated by the discourses and practices of consumerism and advertising and thus stripped of its meaning. In this sense, claiming *the right to the city* entails an attack, first of all, on the center that regulates urban space and urban life as a “place of consumption and consumption of place,” whereby spontaneity and play are restricted within “leisure centers, leisure societies, cities of luxury and pleasures, holiday places” that are dominated by an “industrial and commercial production of culture” (Lefebvre, 2000: 170-1). Against commodification of urban space and everyday life, Lefebvre proposes “the centrality of play” in creating the city as an *oeuvre* “by subordinating to play rather than to subordinate play” (Lefebvre, 2000: 171). Within this framework, appropriating public spaces through imagination and play, and making *representational spaces* more visible and free from bureaucratized consumption are acts of claiming *the right to the city*. The city as an *oeuvre* is the

city of “movement, the unpredictable, the possible and [of] encounters,” and when movement and mobilization move beyond the control of power structures, the *oeuvre* becomes perpetual, and thus stands firmly against the hegemony of the capitalist city (Lefebvre, 2000: 172-3).

The idea of the city as an *oeuvre*, as a collective work of art, is against the city as a commodity, in the sense “that the *oeuvre* restores use-value” (Lefebvre, 2000: 21). Beginning with industrialization, urban spaces as “refuges of use-value” are subordinated to exchange-value, which also limits spontaneity and creativity. Here, the distinction between work and product in Lefebvrian thought gains significance, in relation to both the city as a work and the aesthetic work itself. While replication and interchangeability are the basic features of a product, difference and uniqueness characterize a work. Also, while the work, or work of art in this context, restores the use value, the product is associated with its exchange value (Lefebvre, 2000). Imagining the city as a form of “industrialized cultural production” serves for the exchange value of cities, so does the playfulness designed as part of the ‘leisure’ in commodified daily life (Lefebvre, 2000: 168). Moreover, the urban life under the domination of capitalist production of space is alienating for people who dwell in the city, which is also identified with the alienating effect of the work of art that serves for a “social imaginary furnished by ideology and advertising” (Lefebvre, 2000: 168). Both the city and the work of art can be a work or a product, a space of commodification or resistance. What Lefebvre urges for in his *right to the city* formulation is, on the other hand, “aesthetic and/or political activity that is uninflected by the universalizing or homogenizing logic of the capitalist production of space” (Janzen, 2002: 106). Literature, in that sense, with its inherent sense of the *oeuvre*, and as a mode of *representational spaces* has a great potential to restore the city’s use value, to invest in an urban consciousness, to reclaim the urban space as an alternative site of counter-hegemonic practices. By rejecting to contribute to the commodification of the city as an attraction center, and by providing creative sources for alternative ways of urban living against prescribed consumption, the work of art, in harmony with the creative experimentation in the city, can thus “become *praxis* and *poesis* on a social scale: the art of living in the city as a work of art” (Lefebvre, 2000: 173).

The work of art, specifically literature, serves as a medium to excavate the hidden moments of everyday life that are rendered monotonous and meaningless in modern capitalism. In the opening of *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, Lefebvre emphasizes “[t]he momentous eruption of everyday life into literature” with James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and places the novel alongside Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola (Lefebvre, 1971: 2). Representations of everyday life in certain literary works subvert the alienating forces of modernity by bringing to the very center the details of everyday life, bodily movements and spontaneous acts. Looking critically into the details of everyday life through the medium of literature creates a “consciousness of alienation – that strange awareness of the strange,” and “liberates us, or begins to liberate us, from alienation” (Lefebvre, 2008: 20). Literary works, in other words, “disalienate their readers from existing alienations” (Fraser, 2015: 114). In *The Critique of Everyday life*, Lefebvre proposes closer readings of everyday life moments found in modernist literary works such as Joyce’s *Ulysses*:

Thus the simplest event – a woman buying a pound of sugar, for example – must be analysed. Knowledge will grasp whatever is hidden within it. To understand this simple event, it is not enough merely to describe it; research will disclose a tangle of reasons and causes, of essences and ‘spheres’: the woman’s life, her biography, her job, her family, her class, her budget, her eating habits, how she uses money, her opinions and her ideas, the state of the market, etc. Finally I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history ... So now I see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event – and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many ‘essences’ it contains within itself. The social phenomenon may be defined as the unity of these two sides. It remains for us to explain why the infinite complexity of these events is hidden, and to discover why – and this too part of their reality – they appear to be so humble (Lefebvre, 2008: 57).

In this sense, Joyce shows in the *Ulysses* that “the report of a day in the life of an ordinary man had to be predominantly in the epic mode” (Lefebvre: 2008: 27). In his canonical work, *Paris, The Capital of Modernity* David Harvey also builds a bridge between representations and materializations of the city to understand the urban phenomena in the history of Paris. Harvey explores literary and cinematic representations of Paris in its turbulent moments and traces the hidden urban tension in these texts. Representations of urban everyday life in Balzac’s novels shed light on Paris’s transformation during Hausmann’s period, which Harvey considers as the harbinger of the revolutionary movement of 1871 Paris Commune. Again, Harvey makes similar connections between representations of Paris and its everyday life in

the early 1960s, specifically in the French New Wave cinema. The quotidian images of Paris in Godard's movie, *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, in Harvey's reading, reflects the growing tension in city life right before the 1968 uprisings (Harvey, 2005). Building upon the philosophy of Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre, Harvey adopts the view "that we do not merely live in a material world but that our imaginations, our dreams, our conceptions, and our representations mediate the materiality in powerful ways" (Harvey, 2005: 18).

In emphasizing the importance of art, philosophy, and literature for claiming the city as an *oeuvre*, Lefebvre criticizes classical Marxism for ignoring the revolutionary role of art and literature. "For many Marxists," he says, "it seems that art is only a distraction, a form of entertainment, at best a superstructural form or a simple means of political efficacy" (Lefebvre, 1988: 82-83). On the contrary, he argues "that great works of art deeply touch, even disturb, the roots of human existence," and in the highest level, works of art "*metamorphose* the real (Lefebvre, 1988: 82-83). Creating the *oeuvre* in an aesthetic, as well as a practical sense, here, does not refer to "the imaginary of escape and evasion which conveys ideologies, but the imaginary which invests itself in *appropriation*" (Lefebvre, 2000: 155). Still, as a Marxist geographer, Lefebvre, in his own *oeuvre*, also questions art and literature as part of the superstructure forming socio-spatial hegemony:

But what criteria would make certain texts more relevant than others? Céline uses every-day language to great effect to evoke the space of Paris, of the Parisian *banlieue*, or of Africa. Plato, in the *Critias* and elsewhere, offers marvellous descriptions of cosmic space, and of the space of the city as a reflection of the Cosmos. The inspired De Quincey, pursuing the shadow of the woman of his dreams through the streets of London, or Baudelaire in his *Tableaux Parisiens*, offer us accounts of urban space rivaling those of Victor Hugo and Lautréamont. The problem is that any search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about. What texts can be considered special enough to provide the basis for a "textual" analysis?" (Lefebvre 1991: 14-15)

In capitalist cities, urban spaces take on the form of fragmentation, segregation and commodification, and while the fragmentation of the cityscape on behalf of capital urbanization constrains imagination and leads to stereotypical representations of the city, such spatial dividedness also limits the possibilities of cities as places of collective coalitions and resistance, as potentially revolutionary

sites. On the other hand, art and literature cooperating with everyday resistance and creative experimentation in the city can interrupt the hegemonic spatial organization of late capitalism and open up possibilities for a revolutionary future. These are the texts that open cracks upon dominant spaces, by creating the very “spaces for transformational politics,” which “are there because capital can never afford to close them down” (Harvey, 2001b: 410). In *the right to the city* context, art and literature have a compelling place in creating the city as an *oeuvre* and restore the city’s use value. In other words, “the arts in general will always continue to have a use value to the degree that that help us to think more carefully through how capital operates” (Fraser, 2014: xviii).

The tension growing out of reconstruction of the cities, and the reorganization of daily life by the brutal forces of global capitalism is an impetus for urban insurgent movements today, and a new political vocabulary inspired by Lefebvre is being formed upon such resistance. While Lefebvre’s notion of *the right to the city* has been a political banner for many contemporary urban movements all around the world, and has been subject to much scholarly as well as political interest in recent years, its exploration in literary studies is still insufficient. Lefebvre’s idea that works of art have a compelling role in creating the city as a work of art offers new dimensions to urban studies and literary studies in imagining alternative forms of urbanism. As Westphal states, sometimes “the fictional text returns to the world and settles in comfortably,” but sometimes, as it is also argued in this work, “even it may create the world” (Westphal, 2011: 6). The insistence upon the demand for a just city will continue to resonate in the works of art in their creative representations of urban everyday life. In that sense, the works of art, as discussed within the scope of this dissertation, first voice ‘a cry’ against capitalist production of space and then ‘a demand’ for better alternative futures.

Lefebvre’s work prevails to be a source of inspiration today for ever-expanding studies on transnational literature. His writings on centrality, periphery and urban colonization, and the production of minimal and maximal difference in capitalist metropolitan areas provide an effective analytical lens for the study of anti-colonial, feminist, and transnational movements worldwide (Kipfer et al., 2008: 286). Within this framework, the work at hand approaches transnational American

literature and its configurations of the city from a Lefebvrian perspective, departing from the idea that “Lefebvre always maintained a deeply peripheral consciousness, existentially heretical and contracentric, a spatial consciousness and geographical imagination shaped in the regions of resistance beyond the established centers of power” (Soja 1996: 30). As the spatial turn, which is discussed at the beginning of this chapter, coincides with the transnational turn in American studies, Lefebvre’s urban theory presents a rich vocabulary to engage with the complimentary questions of immigration, diversity, and transnational solidarities in American metropolis.

Lefebvre’s right to the city notion and his theory of production of space center upon a periphery-center conflict in the urban space, and he recurrently interrelates the capitalist relations in the city with the processes of urban colonization. In other words, colonization, in Lefebvre’s thinking, is not restricted to empire and nation formulations; rather, it is continually produced in the cities within the conditions of capitalist production of space: “wherever a dominant space is generated and mastered by a dominant space,” Lefebvre puts it, “where there is periphery and centre –there is colonization” (qtd. in Kipfer et al., 2008: 294). By the same logic, Lefebvre also points to the “colonization of everyday life” in metropolitan areas where power penetrates into the threads of daily life, and every step of urban inhabitants is subject to a hierarchical organization by the state and capital (Lefebvre, 2008). In his discussion of mega cities in the global South, Mike Davis also names the process of neo-colonial relations operating in the urban level as “the urbanization of empire” (Davis, 2007a: 122). The spatial organizations in the third world cities are reproduced within the first world cities as well, through ghettoization and gentrification, which gives rise to new forms of colonialism, center-periphery relations and marginalizations (Kipfer et al., 2008).

In the last two decades, critical geographers have offered new forms of radical politics that transcends the nation paradigms in challenging power structures. Since the imperial role of the states is changing according to the contemporary spatial organizations of global capital, cities are brought to scrutiny in cultural studies and postcolonial studies as well. More specifically, after the spatial turn as a paradigm shift, class, race and gender politics have merged with a new spatial imagination that focuses on the power-subject dynamics operating in the urban level.

Identity politics that gained significance in the struggles of minority populations during the 1960s has been re-articulated within the changing paradigms that are centered around urban spaces and globally structuring of culture and politics. In Edward Soja's words,

If traditional equality politics mobilizes its radical subjectivity most expansively around taking collective control over the "making of history," then the new cultural politics of difference, identity, and representation, without lessening the power of its historically inspired strategies, adds a new source of mobilized consciousness rooted in the more immediate collective struggle to *take greater control over the "making of geography" - the social production of human spatiality* (Soja, 2000: 281).

The growing spatial consciousness in critical thinking and political struggles at the turn of the century has, therefore, found voice in cultural studies, bringing new dimensions to the ways of claiming difference. Bell Hooks, for instance, puts emphasis on the practice of appropriating space as a revolutionary politics that should encompass all segments of identity politics (Hooks, 1990). Similarly, Iris Marion Young takes contested urban spaces as potential sites for imagining a revolutionary future because "[t]he city, as a vastly populated area with large-scale industry and places of mass assembly, is for us a historical given, and radical politics must begin from the existence of modern urban life" (Young, 2010: 233). Large scale migration flows and ethnic diversification of global cities have also influenced the interest in spatial organization of urban areas as well as the spatial practice of people, and shifted a critical focus towards the notion of urban citizenship.³

Globalization, both as an economic and a cultural phenomenon, has played a key role in the shaping of a spatial consciousness in cultural studies and concurrently of a form of radical politics emerging outside the framework of nation. What David Harvey names as the "spatial fix," which is the geographical expansion and restructuring of places as a solution to crises of modern capitalism, manifests itself within the concept of globalization (Harvey, 2001a). The departing point of critical geography is mainly the ideological motivations of global capital on a spatial level, and similarly, the transnationalism in cultural studies has a strand of thinking that

³ For a detailed discussion of the notion of urban citizenship, see Appadurai and Holston (1996), Purcell (2003), Baubock (2003), Smith and McQuarrie (2012), Bridges and Fortner (2017).

builds upon critical perspectives towards the spatial orientations of global capital. Cultural imagination has also been particularly under the influence of globalization, as discussed by Arjun Appadurai in his often-cited work, *Modernity at Large*, and thus the form and content of cultural texts have been increasingly shaped by transnationalism since the end of the last century (Appadurai, 2003). There is no concise definition for the term “transnationalism,” as it “has been a diverse, contested, cross-disciplinary intellectual movement.” However, as Briggs et al. suggest,

some of its manifestation has been bound together by a particular insight: in place of a long and deeply embedded modernist tradition of taking the nation as the framework within which one can study things (literatures, histories, and so forth), the nation itself has to be a question – not untrue and therefore trivial, but an ideology that changes over time, and whose precise elaboration at any point has profound effects on wars, economies, cultures, the movements of people, and relations of domination. (Briggs, McCormick, and Way, 2008: 628).

The term transnationalism, or transnationality in various contexts, is used as a substitute word for globalization, when considering the economic, political, and cultural impact of the latter on the paradigm of nation (Ong, 1999: 4). The emergence of supra-national political and economic organizations, the flow of global capital across continents without strict national regulations, mass migrations on a global scale, and digital networking platforms have rendered transnationalism as “a useful concept that represents phenomena, which, although not entirely new, have reached particular intensity at a global scale at the end of the 20th century” (Luis and Michael, 2017: 3).

In the context of American studies, the transnational turn is historically marked with the period, “when the study of minority, multicultural, and postcolonial literatures began to intersect with work done under the auspices of the emerging study of globalization” (Jay, 2010: 1). Although the geography of the “United States is and has always been a transnational crossroads of cultures” (Fishkin, 2005: 44), transnationalism has respectively been a common analytical framework since the turn of the century, mainly in dealing with immigration and minority populations. As a central theme in post-colonial writing, transnationalism gains a different dimension in the American context, where post-colonialism is in close association with American neocolonialism and neoliberalism both inside and outside. The US’s

relevance to post-colonialism is rather ambivalent in critical thought, though there is the term, “internal colonization,” used during the 1960s civil rights movements in the United States (Schueller, 2004: 162). “Rejecting the preexisting national paradigm of immigration and assimilation,” activist students of the era from various university campuses “articulated the disenfranchisement of racial minorities as a form of colonization,” and “declared the ghettos, barrios, internment camps, and reservations to be the ‘internal colonies’ of the United States” (Fishkin, 2005: 183). While this formulation fits well in the context of the post-war era, it is not adequate for the neocolonial present of the country, as Sharpe suggests (Sharpe, 1995: 184). In that sense, the “postcolonial” status of the US is increasingly considered in relation to the leading role of the United States in globalized capitalism.

The political and economic role of the United States in the global arena has been a dominant concern, when theorizing multiple meanings of transnationality in American studies. In other words, the call for a transnational American Studies in the 21st century has often centered on a “larger understanding of the United States in the comparative context of Western Hemispheric and finally global study” (Rowe, 1998: 31). In her analysis of changing form and content of postmodern American literature in the era of globalization, Rachel Adams also points to the central image of “a planet that is tied together through the increasing interpenetration of economies, cultures and kinship” as well as “a shared perception of community whereby for better or worse, population in one part of the world are inevitably affected by events in another” (Adams, 2007: 268). In this sense, the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the US and its influence upon the rest of the world in the globalization process adds multiple meanings to the studies of transnationalism. Transnational movement in American studies has encouraged critical perspectives on the US neoliberalism and neocolonialism in shaping geographies outside its own borders as well and the reflections of these political and economic interventions in its own global nodal points.

Neoliberalism is the political extension of economic globalization and it is defined as “the latest stage of capitalist global structural and hegemonic domination” (Ong, 2006: 11). American neoliberalism, in this context, operates as “a radicalized capitalist imperialism” (Ong, 2006: 1). More specifically, it is “a capitalist-class

social movement that has had great success claiming and codifying property rights and the right to profit” (Purcell, 2008: 88). Today, neoliberalism stages “a new geopolitics of war,” in urban spaces and border zones, intensified by “[d]eindustrialization and regional decline, gentrification and extrametropolitan growth, the industrialization of the Third world ... a much deeper transformation in the geography of capitalism” (Smith, 2008: 1). One of the prevailing questions in transnational thinking is how a global neoliberalism is “producing sovereignty, citizenship, public cultures, and forms of labor that are striated across multiple ‘zones’ that are not nations, but which articulate with nations and with other, transnational forces?” (Briggs, McCormick, and Way, 2008: 635). In the context of continental America, for example, how “the transnational flow of goods, labor, and culture among Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, and Mexico” shape the issues of immigration, civil rights, social and spatial justice, center-periphery and colonizer/colonized dialectics is a crucial question (Sandoval-Strausz, 2014: 807). These ‘zones,’ which are mostly produced in global cities where transnational economic, political, and social processes take place, are, therefore, becoming more significant in thinking American studies from a transnational perspective.

Major global cities in the US and other global geographical sites that dovetail with the global US cities in the workings of neoliberalism set the stage for a transnational imagination that is stimulated by a spatial consciousness. Transnational epistemologies provide “an anthropology of the present,” that “should analyze people’s everyday actions as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts (Ong, 1999: 5). Here the relationship between the everyday life and the economic processes in the global city comes to the fore, because “the local sites of global processes do matter” (Luis and Michael, 2017: 12). Representations of the global city, as both “spaces of control” and “spaces of possibilities” (Ostendorf, 2002: 3) offer reflections of such sites, and help us “to consider the reciprocal construction of practice, gender, ethnicity, race, class, and nation in processes of capital accumulation” (Ong, 1999: 5).

As the leading role of the US as a neoliberal power is shaping cities across the world, as well as creating third world cities within its own metropolitan areas, urban space is increasingly setting the thematic background of American transnational

literature in its dealing with social relations, identity, and power. From the first colonial settlements to the organizations of its global cities, “place has always been a strategic construct, a narrative creation as well as a physical reality” in American history (Lipsitz, 2001; 25). In this sense, the global city has served as an arena of unequal geographical development, of socio-spatial relations produced by capitalism, and also, in the American context, the “modality through which racial relations of domination and subordination are naturalized” (Kennedy, 1999: 227). The global city as the vanguard force of global capitalism today sets the framework of analysis for transnational American studies, as well as literary and cultural works that intend to defy the traditional notion of nation and citizenship. The growing inequality in global cities and its colonized spaces as a result of neoliberal urbanization opens up spaces for an urbanized mode of transnational resistance. As a space of representation, the global city is imagined as a tactical site, where alternative identities, rights, and ways of visibility can be claimed, and therefore it becomes a place where new forms of struggle and coalitions might emerge.

The overriding aim for both esthetic and scholarly work, produced in a transnational perspective, is “to narrate an account of globalization that speaks not just of an abstract market with buyers and sellers ... but of actors: transnational corporations, social movements of students, market women, tenants, radicalized and ethnicized migrants, labor unions, and so on (Denning, 2004: 28-29). On the other end of the spectrum, however, the transnational urban space as the subject matter in postcolonial and transnational thinking is also appropriated as a spatial metaphor that reproduce the celebratory discourse of globalization. Common terms in transnational lexicon, such as ‘postcolonial hybridity,’ ‘cultural diversity,’ ‘porous borders’ have been used in American minority studies, specifically since the 1990. These notions of liminality, thirdspace, or the cosmopolitan post-border city, function as a “formulation of metaphors of transnationalism as a “boundless” and therefore liberatory process” (Luis and Michael, 2017: 11). The idea of the tolerant and diverse city, or the porous border space as a multicultural contact zone and site of empowerment for minority populations, serves as an abstract notion of flexibility, which can also ideologically serves for a more flexible “capitalist accumulation quite as effectively as for the purpose of contesting hegemonic narratives of race,

ethnicity, class, and nation” (Luis and Michael, 2017: 6). For the global city is not only a zone for diverse identities and populations, it is also a strategic place for the global market that needs the existence of differences for consumption practices, while at the same time keeping these differences at a minimal level, so that they do not pose any threat to spatial hegemony (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1992; Dirlik, 1994; Ong, 1999).

The appropriation of spatial metaphors in the form of “free-floating abstractions” dates back to Descartes, and continues to contribute to the designation of space as an ideological instrument of power (Smith and Katz, 2005: 78). Beginning with Lefebvre, Marxist critical geographers criticize the universalization of spatiality through uncritical use of absolute space, which “is quite literally the space of capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism” (Smith and Katz, 2005: 78). This argument rests on the necessity of acknowledging the source domain for spatial metaphors and bringing them to close scrutiny in relation with socio-political conditions that in the first sense produce human spatiality. “The point here,” Smith and Katz suggest, “is to enable an explicit consideration of the meaning and politics of metaphor by investigating the connectedness, the imbrication of material and metaphorical space” (Smith and Katz, 2005: 79). In this framework, representation of space as an abstract notion bereft of its social materiality normalizes inequalities that derive from capitalist production of space.

From a materialist geographical perspective, the “contemporary form of globalization is nothing more than yet another round in the capitalist production and reconstruction of space” (Harvey, 2001a: 24). Therefore, the idea of a shrinking world, and the discourse of cultural diversity, is often regarded as a strategic aim for the reorganization of space by global forces. Globalization, in that sense, repeats “the old story of modernity ... it convenes spatial difference into temporal sequence, and thereby denies the possibility of multiple trajectories; the future is not held open” (Massey, 2005: 87). The celebratory discourse of globalization promotes a spatial flexibility on a transnational level, “which, just like the space of places of modernity, is deployed (when needed) as a legitimation for its own production and which pretends to a universality which anyway in practice it systematically denies” (Massey, 2005: 87). Rather than opening up new spaces and rendering borders

useless, globalization operates for the needs of late capitalism. Globalized capital is always in need of a “spatial fix” to solve its accumulation problem, and therefore, in the context of, and as a part of this ‘globalization,’ new enclosures are right being erected (Massey, 2005: 85-89). In this framework, global neoliberal economy is shaping the cities in the way that “the rights of private property and the profit rate trump all other notions of rights one can think of” (Harvey, 2012a: 4). Using the globalization discourse that celebrates mobility, diversity and difference, global neoliberalism utilizes spatial fixes for its own needs and limits access to spaces for certain groups of people, while making it easier for the capital owner. Nostalgic metaphors of the traditional city as a place of encounter and exchange serve for the designation of consumption sites for the privileged classes in neoliberal cities today. “Claims to oppositional centrality (street life, central-city living, festivity) and difference (multiculturalism, ethnic and sexual diversity, avant-garde cultural practice,” as part of the globalization discourse that unfolds in contemporary urban life “can be traced to various urban movements since the 1960s,” and “superficial versions of these claims” remain to be the “components of bourgeois urbanism and gentrification” (Kipfer et al., 293).

Transnational thinking can take an emancipatory role when it exposes and contests global capitalist processes, rather than contribute to the celebration of a shrinking world discourse. As will be shown in the following chapters of the dissertation, the transnational writing that deals with the shaping of migration, citizenship and urbanization in the context of American neoliberal/neocolonial policies propose *the right to the city* against the increasing domination of neoliberal urbanization. The topographical imagination deployed in the novels that are discussed within the scope of this dissertation is framed upon a critique of geography and a rejection of abstract metaphors that designate the US global metropolis as a commodity. These transnational texts place the materiality of the city in lieu of identity politics and bring new perspectives to the immigrant experience and urban subjectivity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TORTILLA CURTAIN BY T.C. BOYLE

“It's the sense of touch. In any real city, you walk, you know? You brush past people, people bump into you. In Los Angeles, nobody touches you. We're always behind this metal and glass. I think we miss that touch so much, that we crash into each other, just so we can feel something.”
Crash Movie (2004)

“The exploitation of the worker is simultaneously the exploitation of the soil.” Karl Marx

2.1. INTRODUCTION

T. C. Boyle's modern classic *The Tortilla Curtain* opens with a crash on a Los Angeles freeway, “an accident in a world of accidents, the collision of opposing forces” (Boyle, 2003: 3). The crash serves as an extended metaphor in the novel that exposes spatially reinforced antinomies in the everyday life of suburban Los Angeles. The representation of the two “sharply-delineated asymmetrical worlds” (Schafer-Wünsche, 2005: 405) carves the narrative into two halves, which materializes the socio-spatial divide between two different urban populations of the American Southwest: Mexican day laborers and the suburban bourgeoisie. Set in the 90s, in the aftermath of the 1992 LA uprising, the novel stages an urban crisis that has deepened through the vast disparities of wealth and poverty on a global level, large-scale illegal immigration and a related social/racial anxiety. The spatial conflict that frames the narrative occurs at the edge of the city but within the city limits, the Topanga Canyon of the Santa Monica area of West Los Angeles, and the gated community of the Arroyo Blanco Estates, which represents an architectural phenomenon that gained popularity in world cities during the rise of neoliberal urbanization in the 1980s. The tension between nature and an urban development at the heart of it stands for larger dichotomies in the novel, between human and animal, abstract space and lived space, universal human rights and private property rights. The architectural tensegrity that the narrative is formed upon presents a criticism

towards the neoliberalism of the 1990s, which has been increasingly exclusionary on the urban level, with the constant flow of immigration to the US. The novel poses the question of *the right to the city* within the context of “production of nature,” and the right of the (undocumented) immigrants to urban public spaces, which is basically the “produced” nature in the spatial framework of the novel.

I read the spatiality of *The Tortilla Curtain* through Henri Lefebvre’s formulation of the production of space, and Neil Smith’s production of nature in the context of neoliberal urbanism. The novel, first of all, contextualizes the American pastoral ideal in a neoliberal environment, where nature is designed as an abstract and artificial notion, and produced as a fetishized commodity. The pastoral ideal in the context of 90s urbanism, in other words, provides ideological support within the workings of capitalism, which inevitably produces a socio-spatial inequality. In a Lefebvrian context, nature as absolute space is subjected to abstraction through the alienation of human experience and labor and produced as a source of surplus value. This homogeneous abstract space forms the backyard of the gated community, but it is also the space occupied by Mexican day laborers. While the pastoral ideal is traded in the real estate market of neoliberalism, the universal idea of nature, bereft of the human dimension, cultivates forms of race and class hatred, which is reflected in the novel through the relationship between homeless immigrants and community residents.

In *The Tortilla Curtain*, the right to space on the basis of use-value contradicts with the right to private property in the setting of the Topanga Canyon. The US liberal formulation of self-preservation embedded in the founding political texts of the country is recoded in the context of neoliberalism to further impose the rule of private property. The security architecture of Arroyo Blanco Estates and the increasing antagonism towards the immigrants dwelling in the canyon underlie the contradiction within the idea of right to life and self-preservation in the American context, and from a broader perspective, the contradiction within the idea of universal human rights, which are preceded by private property rights in the process of the capital production of space (Harvey, 2012a: 4). This is ideologically backboneed by human/animal hierarchy in the formulation of universal human rights, reducing immigrants to the level of animals, and thus “human rights” being granted

to certain human beings only. Also, through the setting of the labor exchange market, which is built on a 7-11 parking lot, located along the way to the canyon area, the novel illustrates the alienation of human labor from commodified nature/public space. While cheap immigrant labor serves the economic interests of the gated community, when the number of day laborer increases and their visibility comes to influence the exchange value of the estates negatively, the contract between the immigrants and the residents is terminated. Here, again, I read the socio-spatiality of the labor exchange as a contradiction between abstract and lived space, as the element of contract within the abstract space allows only for “minimal difference” and that does not pose any threat to the established homogeneity (Lefebvre, 1991).

Against these forms of hegemonic spatial production, however, the novel stages moments of resistance through the coyote allegory, not only as a metaphor representing the immigrant experience, but also as an animal in its literal sense. Both the animal and the human carry out resistance tactics by appropriating nature and trespassing private property in moments of sheer needs for survival. The everyday resistance of the immigrants against spatial marginalization does not evolve into a collective realization of *the right to the city*, and instead, it is a natural disaster that destroys the Arroyo Blanco estates, a flood sweeping through whole place. While the ending of the novel does not offer a solution for the future of the city, nature exploited by capital and brought to the service of the privileged urbanites brings the final catastrophe. This, in a sense, reinforces the liberal environmental formulation of the idea of an external/universal nature that punishes the wrong doings of humanity. Nevertheless, the moments of contestation voice the cry of the disenfranchised urban population, specifically the undocumented immigrants in this context, and the ending catastrophe hints at an outlet for alternative futures. *The Tortilla Curtain*, mainly with its critical stance towards neoliberal urbanization, contributes to the *oeuvre* of Los Angeles novels that make a path toward the new possibilities that will arise once the current order is destroyed.

2.2. REWRITING THE AMERICAN WEST: THE PANOPTIC CITY

Considered as “Boyle’s most controversial novel” (Gleason, 2009: 93), *The Tortilla Curtain* is set in an urban space that is increasingly militarized as a consequence of the growing number of immigrants in Los Angeles. The novel is set in the decade of rising social/racial anxiety, as the non-white population reached a majority in California (Gendzel, 2013: 177). The early 90s were marked by the controversial “Proposition 187,” also known as the “SOS, Save Our State, Initiative,” which aimed to bring severe legal restrictions to immigrants, and prohibit people without legal status from reaching public services in California. The proposition asked for various citizenship-screening processes on a local level, while the regulation of immigration was assigned to federal law (Martin, 1955). In November 1994, the proposition was approved by Californian voters with a percentage of 59 to 41, which was “a largely symbolic expression of frustration with illegal immigration, much as Proposition 63, which made English the state’s official language in 1996 proved to be” (Martin, 1995: 255). The proposition also led to fierce public debates, and eventually to mass street protests, with approximately 70,000 people marching from East Los Angeles to Downtown (McDonnell and Lopez, 1994). Days later, a federal district court issued a temporary injunction against the implementation of the law, but it was only five years later that the law was declared unconstitutional and effectively terminated (McDonnell, 1999). In 2014, unenforceable sections of the proposition were also symbolically repealed, however the resonances of the proposition still continue today.

In the *Tortilla Curtain*, the debates surrounding Proposition 187 are reflected in the property owners’ association meetings of Arroyo Blanco Estates and the polarity of the residents in terms of whether to build a security wall around the community (Gendzel, 2013). The campaign for 187 “featured grainy surveillance camera footage of shadowy figures jumping over fences” (Gendzel, 2013: 177), which is also the dominant trope of the novel, the coyote/immigrant jumping over fences and trespassing on to the private properties located in the canyon. Arroyo Blanco residents first build a security gate, then a fence, and in the end, a wall. When Delaney Mossbacher, a self-proclaimed “liberal humanist with an unblemished

driving record and a freshly waxed Japanese car with personalized plates” (3) hits Candido Rincón, the undocumented Mexican immigrant, on the freeway in the opening scene of the novel, the liberal beliefs of the community, which are specifically represented by Delaney, begin to transform into increasing fear and hatred towards the immigrants. Delaney’s sense of security within the borders of his affluent community is gradually diminished after he crashes the “dark little man with a wild look in his eye,” and he begins to see through “a window on another reality” (3). Through the conflict between Delaney and Candido, as well as through the emerging one between the inhabitants of the gated community and the squatters in the canyon, the novel renders a mounting tension between liberal notions of welcoming/excluding on a spatial level. Both the immigrant in the canyon and the wild coyote as an embodiment of illegal border crossing become the arch-enemy of the privileged residents of Arroyo Blanco, whose initially liberal position devolves into rampant racism. In this sense, the novel repudiates the enduring myth of the multicultural and tolerant US city, within the microcosm of the gated community.

Since massive immigration flows and the related security-oriented urbanism are still compelling issues for the US, almost two decades after the publication of *The Tortilla Curtain*, Matthew Sangler, American playwright and director, adapted the novel for the stage in California and has received much praise by critics.⁴ Actually, Boyle himself was also inspired by an earlier classical text that deals with migration, and socio-economic hardship and injustice, in California. *The Tortilla Curtain* is a rewriting of Steinbeck’s classic, the *Grapes of Wrath*, opening with an epigram from its predecessor: “They ain’t human. A human being wouldn’t live like they do. A human being wouldn’t live like they do. A human being couldn’t stand it to be so dirty and miserable.” Reimagining the *Grapes of Wrath* in the environment of the 1990s, “Boyle’s *The Tortilla Curtain* revisits Steinbeck’s concern regarding social protest and the treatment of migrants, linking the two as politically aligned novels” (Wright, 2016: 152). Steinbeck’s depression era and the Okies suffering in California, is re-illustrated in the context of the early 1990s economic recession, which deeply affected employment and the housing market, as well as the socio-

⁴ For a comparative analysis of both texts, see Gendzel (2013).

economic status of immigrants in California (Baumol et al. 2003). In this context, while “Steinbeck emphasized the dynamics of capital accumulation, Boyle deepens this analysis by bringing out the racializing character of this process” (Meyerson, 2004: 87). In writing the story of Mexican immigrants following the Steinbeck’s literary legacy, Boyle also creates “a different kind of directionality for the national imaginary, no longer from East, but from North to South.” (Campbell, 2000: 1).

The novel’s stage adaptation in 2012 similarly contributes to the changing meaning of the American West in the 21st century. From diverse perspectives and contexts, the American West has different connotations, as Neil Campbell suggests: Frederick Turner’s American frontier, for instance, is markedly different from the South to North one viewed by Mexicans. For Chinese immigrants, on the other hand, the American West is actually the East. Beginning from “Native American emergence stories, European myths of new Eden, settlers’ and immigrants’ belief in the dream of the new start in the golden land,” many myths, beliefs and stories have formed the concept of the West in different social, political and economic conditions (Campbell, 2000: 2). The multidimensional production of the American West in the collective consciousness renders it “a complex, unstable signifier that has been given meaning by those who have lived within it, passed through it, conquered it, settled, farmed, militarized, urbanized, and dreamed it” (Campbell, 2000: 2).

In the era of globalized capitalism and neoliberal urbanization as its imperative, the American West, and specifically Los Angeles as its cultural icon, takes the shape of an open prison made of interdictions, walls, and borders in the cultural imagination. This popular Western metropolis is increasingly becoming a “citadel-panopticon” that is designed “to command, protect, socialize and dominate the surrounding urban population” (Soja, 2000: 237). *The Tortilla Curtain* as a Los Angeles novel contributes to an ever-changing cultural production that still brings new dimensions to the understanding of Los Angeles today. Specifically, Boyle’s novel plays a significant role in presenting critical alliances that express alternatives to the mainstream cultural discourse on Los Angeles.

The intricate relationship between class and urbanism manifests itself in the spatiality of the city and its architecture, which is always “symbolic of our culture, symbolic of the existing social order, symbolic of our aspirations, our needs, and our

fears” (Harvey, 1993: 31). The built environment as the spatial reflections of economic inequality will inevitably project the fear of the other, and thus “increasingly become cities of fortified fragments, of gated communities and privatized public spaces kept under constant surveillance” (Harvey, 2012a: 15). Having gained popularity in the 1990s, gated community lifestyle sets an example for the “new class war” that started “at the level of built environment,” in that very decade (Davis, 2006: 228). Residential areas with luxury lifestyles safeguarded by fences or walls, and strictly controlled by private security forces in Los Angeles, has been “translated into a proliferation of the new repressions in space and movement” by means of the “architectural policing of social boundaries” (Davis, 2006: 224). Standing for “the ideal community that Americans have sought since the landing of pilgrims” (Blakely and Syndner, 1999: 2), the gated community concept symbolizes the US city as an “increasingly unequal place,” with “broader social forces unleashed in an unstable metropolitan system” (Blakely and Syndner, 1999: 28).

The literary rendition of Los Angeles in *The Tortilla Curtain* is framed by the city’s segregating architecture of walls and borders, as well as the immigrant experience of crossing those borders. However, the novel does not simply reproduce the “border writing” metaphors of hybridity and border crossing that are recurrent in postcolonial, thirdspace, or more specifically, the Chicano/a literature of the 90s. In other words, the coyote as a trickster figure jumping over the fence is a cultural metaphor in the novel that connotes the idea of border crossing as an empowering act for the immigrant, and it is transferred into a spatial materiality that exposes the present-day conditions of neoliberal urbanization. Candido Rincón is a persistent border crosser, and he is allegorically aligned with the coyote figure. However, the coyote itself is literally an animal whose territory is destroyed by urban sprawl, and its survival is put at risk. Both the coyote and the immigrant are stripped of their basic rights to exist, even in the wilderness. They simply cannot survive in a geography that is parceled out and sold as a commodity through the capitalist production of space/nature. Just like the animal that has to jump over the fence and hunt the pets inside the gated community, the immigrant also has to cross the various borders produced in every quarter of the city.

One of these borders that the immigrant has to cross on a daily basis is the freeway where Delaney crashes into Candido at the beginning of the novel. The freeway is a giant concrete barrier that cuts into a piece of nature and makes its way to Arroyo Blanco Estates. On one side of the freeway is “the canyon” that “fell off to the rust sandstone bed of Topanga Creek, hundreds of feet below” (6). Candido and his wife América are camping down by the creek, while the estates are situated high upon the cliffs of the canyon. The freeway functions as an invisible border between the canyon area and the labor exchange taking place in a 7-11 parking lot for the immigrants, and while crossing the freeway to their camping place after he comes back from the labor exchange, Candido experiences his fatal accident. In this way, for the urban trickster in Los Angeles, the freeway represents the threshold of death. Crossing the freeway as an act of survival is later repeated in the novel, in one of Candido’s flashbacks to the time when he first finds out about the Topanga Canyon. Candido and a group of Mexicans in the Canoga Park neighborhood are captured by immigration officers, and standing altogether in a line, he then defies “that fatalism, that acquiescence, the inability of his people to act in the face of authority, right or wrong, good or bad,” with a voice in his head shouting “run!” (172). Two other immigrants follow him when he takes the lead and crosses the freeway fence. Ahead of him, stretch out eight lanes and a stream of cars, and “something uncoiled inside of him and he sprang out into the traffic like a cornered rabbit leaping from a cliff to avoid the dogs” (173). The two boys are hit by the cars and die on the freeway, and “while the apocalypse of twisted metal and skating cars blasted the world,” Candido crossed all the lanes, “vaulted the fence and became one with the shadows” (173).

These scenes depicting the extreme struggle for survival along the borders and fences dividing the urban landscapes offer a more nuanced reading of border discourse in transnational American literature. The notion of border is illustrated both as a metaphor and a materiality in the novel, and it resonates with death and the basic needs of survival. Urban borders are drawn as architectural extensions of socio-economic conditions, and while the everyday life of urbanites are confined within these boundaries they become fatal membranes for the immigrants. In this framework, the immigrants’ experience of urban landscape and its borders is not totalized into a post-national free-floating topography in *The Tortilla Curtain*.

Rather, the act of resistance within these concrete borders is most of the time a matter of survival. While liberal humanist Delaney, when he hits Candido on the freeway, wants “to reduce it into abstract terms” (3) the accident on the freeway is as real as when the coyote crosses the six-foot chain fence and wall to hunt Delaney’s domestic dog. Moreover, blended with the border crossing scenes set in Tijuana, Mexico, the inside and outside of the gated community and the urban grids surrounded by invisible walls direct a harsh criticism towards the policies of the US-Mexico border, where economic ties between the two countries are regulated by neoliberal politics determining the fate of individual border crossers.

2.3. THE COYOTE AND THE PILGRIM: “PRODUCTION OF NATURE” IN THE GARDEN

The urban question in *The Tortilla Curtain* is intertwined with the idea of production of nature by capitalist urbanism. The relationship between rural and urban that is defined by “a new consumerist approach to the relation to nature” (Harvey, 2012a: xv) in contemporary urbanization is illustrated with the Arroyo Blanco Estates that are “placed in the wilderness of a Californian semi-desert encroached upon by urban sprawl” (Sesnic, 2011: 3). The estates are located high up in the Topanga Canyon and are surrounded by a wide geography of wilderness, yet they are still desirably located within the city limits. The residents of the estates are cosmopolitan urbanites living their suburban ideal within the protective borders of a homogeneous community. “The suburbs are urban,” as Lefebvre puts it, “within a dissociated morphology” (Lefebvre, 2000: 78). The socio-spatiality of the gated community life on the edge of the city, therefore, represents the fragmentation of the urban space and concomitantly the alienation of the urban dweller from the center. While urban sprawl blurs the boundaries between city and countryside, nature becomes a source of profit source and plays a thematic setting in the novel in its representation of uneven spatiality.

Arroyo Blanco, with both its architecture and everyday life, embodies a suburban ideal that has been revised in an era of neoliberalism. The gated community has its connections with the rest of the city through a network of freeways, but its

architectural concept is defined by the idea of living in the heart of nature, away from the big bad city. It is a homogeneous environment, with the majority of the community being white, upper-middle class Angelenos, as the name Arroyo Blanco suggests, as it translates from Spanish to mean, “white stream.” Moreover, the houses are also replicas of one another, signifying the homogeneity of the population:

The houses were all of the Spanish Mission style, painted in one of three prescribed shades of white, with orange tile roofs. If you wanted to paint your house sky-blue or Provençal-pink with lime-green shutters, you were perfectly welcome to move into San Fernando Valley or to Santa Monica or anywhere else you chose, but if you bought into Arroyo Blanco Estates, your house would be white and your roof orange (30).

The uniformity of the architecture is also embodied in Arroyo Blanco’s everyday life. Consumerism is deeply integrated with the daily life of the residents, which is continuously juxtaposed with the life of the immigrants squatting in the canyon and struggling to meet their basic necessities. Delaney performs his “morning ritual with customary speed and efficiency” everyday, within a strictly scheduled time and “regular as clockwork” (31). In their typical morning routine, while Kyra Mossbacher takes “her twelve separate vitamin and mineral supplements with a half glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice” (31), Delaney prepares “the full nutritional slate for his son every morning – fresh fruit, granola with skim milk and brewer’s yeast, hi-fiber bar,” following Kyra’s rules, which, he thinks, have “a touch of the autocratic and perhaps even fanatic in the regimen” (34). Kyra works as a real estate agent in the Santa Monica Valley area, as “the undisputed volume leader at Mike Bender Realty, Inc.” (31), and Delaney writes columns for a nature magazine based on his individual observations in the canyon. Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher represent the typical Californian upper-middle class lifestyle: “They were joggers, nonsmokers, social drinkers, and if not full-blown vegetarians, people who were conscious of their intake of animal fats” (34). They define themselves as liberal humanists, with their memberships of “Sierra Club, Save the Children, the National Wildlife Federation and the Democratic Party” (34). For the interiors of their suburban house, “[t]hey preferred the contemporary look to Early American or kitsch,” and “[i]n religious matters, they were agnostic” (34). The chapters illustrating the everyday life of the Mossbachers are given from the perspective of

Delaney and paired with those of Candido. The Rincón couple, camping down by the ravine, serve as a foil to the Mossbacher couple living high up in the canyon in their gated community, and their sharing the canyon geography is reflected in consecutive chapters filled with the movement of their everyday lives. After the car accident, the Rincón couple run out of food, because Candido is now “in no shape to climb up out of the canyon and throw himself back into *la lucha*, the struggle to find a job, to be the one man picked out of a crowd, and then to work like ten men to show the *patrón* you wanted to come back tomorrow and the next day and the day after that” (81). On the other side, while buying a new car, Delaney thinks, “when he did make a major purchase he felt good about it, good about himself, the future of the country and the state of the world. That was the American way. Buy something, feel good” (149). Hyper-consumption as part of everyday life in the estates is contradicted with the basic survival needs of immigrants camping in the canyon, and this juxtaposition in the narrative map out the extreme fragmentations found in urban spaces.

The Mossbacher and the Rincón couple both dwell in the Topanga canyon, and the novel portrays the process of the capitalist production of nature through their diverse experiences with nature. The process of the production of space is basically defined as the prerequisite of “uneven development of the capitalist space economy” (Janzen, 2002: 99). Nature, in its commodification process, is produced as an abstract space “from which previous histories have been erased” (Gregory, 1994: 336). The unevenness of the spatial experience and everyday life is mainly given in the novel through the representation of the Topanga canyon area where nature is produced as an abstraction by the real-estate market. In this context, the abstract nature continually contradicts with the concrete nature filled with the lived experience of the immigrants. In other words, the experience of nature as the “source of all use value” (Lefebvre, 2009: 192) counteracts with its exchange value. Abstract space as the ideological space “of bureaucracy and power, rent and profit” generates “the illusion of a less chaotic reality” (Lefebvre, 1991: 300), and in the case of the real estate owners, the existence of the immigrant squatters in the canyon is the disruption of the perfect order for which they move into the canyon in the first place. Their idea of the nature as part of their gated community lifestyle is a homogeneous space alienated from lived experience, and this is initially where the conflict between

community residents and immigrants, as well as the conflict between human and animal arises from.

Neil Smith, who expands Lefebvre's idea of the production of nature, explicates the ideological backbone of the process with his critique of the universal notions of nature in Western philosophical thought (Smith, 2008). From the Hegelian division of the concept of nature as 'first nature,' which is entirely abstract and outside of both itself and the self, and 'second nature,' which is formed by society and its institutions, to Kantian dualism of internal/external nature as contradiction between human passions and the physical environment, there always remains a conceptual dichotomy between nature and society, nature all alone being stripped from history (Descola and Palson, 1996). Nature is confined to binaries, universal or material, but in each case it is positioned as external to the human experience. While development of technology subjects nature to human domination, for example, nature maintains its divine power to cast disasters upon humans. When nature is damaged or destroyed by human factors, it is again the human potential that can save or "fix" nature (Smith, 2008). Placing human at the center by externalizing nature is the basic and foremost tenet of nature/society dichotomy, which enables the production of nature as abstraction in the capitalist economy. It is through the ideology of universal nature that "[t]he imperatives of capitalism bring all manner of natural environments and concrete labor processes upon them together in an abstract framework of market exchange" (Castree, 1995: 20).

In a more specific context, the American pastoral ideal reproduced in the 1990s as part of the urban sprawl sets an example of the notion of universal nature in Western philosophy. The idea of human domination over external nature provides the ideological support for the dynamics of capitalist spatial production and brings out "the transformation of rural America into a playground for the cities (Smith, 2008: 21). In modern urban everyday life, human relationship with nature is produced with "a similar journey to the universality of nature in which we endeavor to immerse ourselves," through the "experience of national parks, mountain retreats and weekend vacations in the country" (Smith, 2008: 69). In this process, nature as abstract space is stripped of spontaneous human activity, so that it can be reproduced on the basis of the requirements of the capitalist economy. "The domination of nature

argument” in philosophy, as Smith suggests, “implies a dismal, one-dimensional, contradiction-free future,” bereft of any materiality. Focusing on “the much more complex process of *production of nature*,” on the other hand, unravels “a historical future that is still to be determined by political events and forces, not technical necessity” (Smith, 2008: 48). The process of production of nature creates enclosures, borders and fortified spaces, because while “capital extends its sway, the entire globe is partitioned into legally distinct parcels, divided by great white fences, real or imaginary” (Smith, 2008: 116, emphasis in original). Gated community urbanization blended with the age-old pastoral ideal is a neoliberal phenomenon that maintains a “spatial apartheid,” in contemporary urban America, which more and more looks “like Victorian England than Walt Whitman’s or La Guardia’s New York” (Davis, 2016: 215). *The Tortilla Curtain* maps out this historical conjecture in the case of Los Angeles, a city that is famous for its urban sprawl and lack of a city center, as well as one that “cradles and embodies the most potent version of the great bourgeois vision of good life in a tamed countryside” (Banham, 2009: 220).

“The master image of the garden” (Smith, H., 1978: 123) in American cultural history, as described in *The Virgin Land*, is perfectly illustrated with the Arroyo Blanco environment, where the concept of a tamed nature keeps the estates in demand for the urban bourgeoisie. While the increasingly militarized architecture of the settlement provides the residents with security, the whole area should maintain an agrarian feel. There are no streetlights within the borders of the community, which is “one of the attractions, “the rural feel, the sense that you were somehow separated from the city and wedded to the mountains” (62). Delaney and Kyra’s house is the most attractive one of all the estates in the community, as theirs is located “in a cul-de-sac that marked the last frontier of urban development, and the chirring of the crickets seemed louder here, the darkness more complete” (64). The canyon area is Delaney’s private Eden, a space for fresh new beginnings, discoveries, and opportunities. As a columnist at a nature magazine, *Wide Open Spaces*, Delaney writes his “observations on nature blooming around him day by day, season by season” (32). The name of the new-age nature magazine hints at the frontier ideology, which is deeply entrenched within the traditional cultural imaginings of the American West. Delaney’s pseudonym, “Pilgrim at Topanga Creek,” also connotes

the puritan's battle with nature, the pilgrim on a colonial expedition into the wilderness: "*Who am I, Manzanita stick in hand and nylon pack clinging to my shoulders like a furled set of wings, out abroad in the wide world?*" (76, emphasis in original). Delaney's writings promote the universal dichotomy of nature and society: nature is devoid of any social-historical background; it is rather an open and empty space, a transcendental realm that offers happiness and spirituality for the urbanite. He writes his columns in an Emersonian style, asserting himself as "a recent transplant, seeing the flora and fauna of the Pacific Coast with the eye of a neophyte" (109). Nature provides him with "*a primeval sense of liberation, of release*" (76, emphasis in original) and his spiritual connection with nature sets him "apart from his fellow men and women, that he saw more deeply and felt more passionately – particularly about nature" (32).

As a liberal environmentalist, Delaney is worried about the extinction of certain species, and "overpopulation, desertification, the depletion of the seas and the forests, global warming and loss of habitat" (32). He blames human beings for "chewing up the resources of the planet like locusts" (32), but not the corporations or real estate companies cutting deep into nature by building high-price estates for the privileged and several lanes of highways for their mobility. Delaney's concerns about nature fit well with the liberal environmentalism promoted by neoliberal ideology, as it is much easier for him to criticize every single human being on the planet for consuming resources, rather than the capitalism that subdues the whole earth for the sake of profit. To put it in Smith's words, this is rather an ideological commitment "to the conventional assumption of an external nature, albeit a damaged but fixable nature," which actually equals "to reproducing the very social conditions of production, consumption and 'development' that have given rise to environmental concerns in the first place" (Smith, 1996b: 40).

On the other hand, the Rincón couple, Candido and América, appropriate the canyon area on the basis of its use-value, and in moments of survival they trespass the private estates located high up in the canyon. In that sense, their struggle to survive sharply contradicts with Delaney's transcendental experience with nature. Candido and America claim the spaces in the canyon and transform them into lived spaces, while Delaney perceives nature as a spiritual self-help resource. When the

teenagers from Arroyo Blanco estates destroy the immigrant couple's camp, leaving "a message emblazoned on the rocks in paint that dripped like blood ... BEANERS DIE" (61), Candido has to search and find a new place to build a new shelter. From Delaney's perspective, anybody out there in the canyon disturbing his solitary adventures are "transients, bums, criminals" (113). From Candido's standpoint, however, teenagers attacking their camp are also "dangerous and crazy and the parents who'd raised them must have been even worse" (84). Delaney's sense of protection against the unknown dwelling in nature derives from a self-absorbed mentality and evolves into racism towards the end of the novel. Candido, on the other hand, melts away, fading even more into the heart of nature for both shelter and safety, whenever it is necessary.

Because Candido cannot work after the accident for some time, he searches the ravine for a new temporary home, while América is at the labor exchange. He goes into the current of the water, carrying their belongings above his head: "if he could make it to the far side and set up camp there, then no one could get to them, unless they were part fish" (85). He moves farther upstream, "where the canyon walls steepened till they were like the walls of a room" (85). At a dead end, he finds a good spot where he can build a new home away from danger:

He found what he was looking for at the rear of the pool, just behind the wreckage of the car. There was the spit of sand there, a private beach just wide enough for a blanket and some sort of shelter ... and then the canyon closed up like a fist ... what Candido saw wasn't stone and leaf and grain of sand, but a sitting room with a big shaded lamp dangling from the ceiling, with sofas and chairs and a polished wooden floor that gleamed beneath a burden of wax. It was a revelation. A vision. The sort of thing that might have inspired a pilgrim to build a shrine (86).

Candido appropriates this spot into a real home using his imagination and materials from nature, as well as the endless waste coming from Arroyo Blanco's everyday life, which he manages to recycle in creative ways. For the roof of this new shelter, he uses "some twine – or was it fishing line? – and two black plastic bags that he was able to work into the thatch of the roof" (87). Nature, in this sense, forms "the material stratum of daily life" (Smith, 2008: 49) as a physical landscape fused with human labor. In those moments, Candido's experience with nature is set, side by side, with Delaney's as two antipodes: For Candido, nature provides shelter, one of the basic necessities of human life, which he fills with lived experience, with

spontaneity and creativity. For Delaney, however, nature is a private space of personal improvement, a product of modern urbanism with an exchange value.

In one of his pieces in *Wide Open Spaces*, Delaney writes about one of his adventures into the deeper parts of the mountains, describing himself as a pilgrim at the shrine, in a way, ironically, similar to what Candido imagines to be in his own spot: *I'm a pilgrim, that's all, a seer, a worshiper at the shrine. No different from you, really*" (76, emphasis in original). He does not actually belong to nature, as he lives his daily life in the same manner as other urbanites, *"housebound half the day, a slave to the computer, a man who needs his daily fix of electricity as badly as any junkie needs his numinous drug"* (76, emphasis in original). On the other hand, he is *"different, too"* as he has the privilege to live around nature and enjoy it in the midst of his highly scheduled everyday life: *"I have these mountains to roam and these legs to carry me ... I am climbing into the fastness of the Santa Monica Mountains, within sight and sound of the second-biggest city in the country (within the city limits, for that matter), to spend a solitary night"* (76, emphasis in original). The hills in the broad daylight all belong to him, because he has tasted them *"as you might taste an exotic fruit"* (77). An experience out there at night, *"[his] first sojourn here under the stars,"* nevertheless, it is something new that he is excited to possess (76-77, emphasis in original). What makes his experience different from other naturalists or hikers is that he will not stay at a *"prescribed campground"* at night, but choose his own *"solitary place"* (77). In his columns, Delaney presents his experience as a tour package that advertises *"not only the fixed joys and certitudes of Nature but the contingencies too"* (78, emphasis in original). Nature, in this sense, is a designated site for the privileged Californians, a commodity that comes as part of the Arroyo Blanco Estates and its everyday life.

Candido's interaction with nature, however, is more unique as he appropriates the place on the basis of its use-value and transforms it into *"a work he could be proud of"* (87). Unlike the prescribed campgrounds, as Delaney would prefer it, this is *"a real camp"* that would surprise América and provide them with safety: *"Something solid and substantial, a place they would call home – at least till he got back on his feet and found work"* (87). The juxtapositions between Delaney's and Candido's spatial experiences present nature as appropriated/dominated space, as

‘work’ or as ‘product,’ in the way that *representational spaces* are practiced within them. *Representational spaces* is “the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). Delaney applies a ‘conceived’ formula for his experience in nature, one that is under the domination of exchange value. Each Arroyo Blanco estate is produced as a replica of one another, as well as the everyday life routine of the residents, and nature serves as a one-dimensional background image. The ideology of universal nature trades the Topanga Canyon environment at the real estate market, and Delaney reproduces this ideology by locating nature as an external space to be discovered and enjoyed, within the slots of a prescribed everyday life. Human labor, on the other hand, reclaims the use value of nature when necessary and appropriates *representational spaces* outside the hegemony of abstract space.

“Nature,” Lefebvre states, “creates and does not produce; it provides resources for a creative and productive activity on the part of social humanity (Lefebvre, 1991: 71). From this perspective, Candido’s spatial experience that is based on the use-value of nature creates “a work,” which “has something irreplaceable and unique about it,” in contrast to a “product” which “can be reproduced exactly, and is in fact the result of repetitive acts and gestures” (Lefebvre, 1991: 70). Delaney’s nature is subject to a contract of homogeneity that erases distinctions. “Camping. Dwelling. Living” (11), as he imagines Candido in the canyon, are therefore acts of defiance against this homogeneity. The meaning of dwelling is “prescribed” by the *representations of space*, which is the conceptualization of space by the dominant mode of production, and Delaney cannot come to terms with any other ways of experiencing nature. Candido’s, on the other hand, actively creates his lived space. This is an appropriation of *representational spaces*, a subversive act that unravels unconscious materials, memory and desire that are inherent in *representational spaces*:

He knelt in the sand, feeding sticks into the grasping greedy fingers of the flame, the smell of woodsmoke pricking his memory through the nostalgia of a thousand mornings at home, and he saw his mother burning a handful of twigs to get the stove going, corn gruel and toast and hot coffee smothered in sugar, and then he turned his head from the fire and watched his wife’s limbs and hips and breasts fill with light” (126).

On the other hand, he gated community lifestyle envisions an abstract notion of nature that is free from any particularity, adversity or peril, fitting well with the American myth of nature that offers individual fulfillment and progress. The American “back to nature” movement, which dates back to nineteenth century, was a “response not of frontier pioneers but of urbanites,” catalyzed by nature writings that “brought nature into suburban drawing rooms” (Smith, 2008: 21). For these urban pioneers, however, a tamed version of nature was preferable. “Domesticized, sanitized, and sprawled out on coffee tables” in the nineteenth century imagination, “nature belonged just like the family cat” (Smith, 2008: 21). The promise of a better life at the edge of the city in *The Tortilla Curtain* is a re-illustration of the American pastoral dream as it requires the taming of the wild. The back to nature movement of the 1990s derives, first of all, from the desire to flee a city that draws massive floods of immigration, although job opportunities and housing conditions are not sufficient. To settle in nature, however, means that nature has to be brought under total control, a recurring “attempt to smooth the corners of nature into a more harmonious unity” (Smith, 2008: 24).

The existence of both a trespasser coyote and a squatter immigrant, in that sense, ruins Delaney’s “back to nature” lifestyle. His liberal humanism and environmentalism is shaken, first by the immigrant figure as a metaphorical coyote, and then by the animal itself. Both of them are harmless from the perspective of Delaney, so long as they are invisible and they surrender to the rules of homogeneous abstract space, the gated community environment in this case. The coyote jumps over the six-foot chain link fence and seizes one of their domestic dogs, which suddenly makes Delaney feel helpless in the face of nature: “there it was, wild nature, up and over the fence as if this were some sort of circus act” (37). The coyote incident disrupts Delaney’s self-help relationship with nature and becomes a catalyst for his growing intolerance towards the unknown dwelling in nature.

The notion of nature in American cultural imagination as “a source of redemptive knowledge” (Weinstein, 1996: 25) is reflected in Delaney’s writings in *Wide Open Spaces*, where the coyote, before the incident, is a pastoral element singing in the forest for the sake of Delaney’s individual fulfillment:

The song of the survivor, the Trickster, the four-legged wonder who can find water where there is none and eat hearty among the rocks and the waste places. He is out

there now, ringing-in the night, gathering in his powers and dominions, hunting, gamboling, stealing like a shadow through the scrub around me, and singing, singing for my benefit alone on this balmy seamless night. And I? I lie back and listen ... The waterfall trick-les. The coyotes sing. I have a handful of raisins and a blanket: what more could I want? All the world knows I am content (79, emphasis in original).

Nature, in Delaney's imagination is designated to an abstract space, external to the human being, an exotic realm populated with wild species, existing solely for his benefit. For a nature/human relationship, there are only two alternatives: human either tames this unknown territory or destroys it. Delaney's liberal stance contradicts with the idea of destruction, so there remains only one option, to bring it under control. In a column piece he writes after the coyote trespasses onto his private property, he warns the reader against the unexpected interventions of the other. In his scientific contemplation on the natural life around him, he criticizes the urban encroachment into the coyote's wild territory, which results in the coyote hunting a three-year-old girl –an anecdote he tells in his piece - and domestic animals from the estates. This can also be read as a metaphor in the novel, because the immigrant providing cheap labor for the gated community also trespasses into the estates and stealing food when the labor exchange is closed. Delaney is relatively more understanding of the survival mechanisms of the coyote, compared to his growing hatred towards the squatters in the canyon, but still he cannot put his human-centric position aside: The coyotes will not stop coming and transgressing the civilized order in the wilderness, "*breeding up to fill in the haps, moving in where the living is easy. They are cunning, versatile, hungry and unstoppable*" (215). The coyote, fortunately, gives the pilgrim "*the thrill of the wild,*" but he "*can't help thinking too of the missing pets, the trail of suspicion, the next baby left unattended on the patio*" (214-15, emphasis in original). He criticizes human intervention in the balance of nature, and still he cannot come to terms with the idea that those singing coyotes are acting in a way that is beyond his imagination:

After all, my pilgrimage is for the attainment of wonder, of involving myself in the infinite, and not for the purpose of limiting or attempting to control the uncontrollable, the unknowable and the hidden. Who can say what revolutionary purpose the coyote has in mind ... And yet something must be done, clearly, if we are to have any hope of coexisting harmoniously with this supple suburban raider (213, emphasis in original).

This piece draws a lot of criticism from the magazine's readers, yet Delaney insists on measurements of control. They "*cannot eradicate the coyote, nor can [they] fence him out*" (214, emphasis in original), which is also the case with the immigrants camping in the canyon. Both the coyote and the illegal immigrants meddle with "Delaney's "experience of nature," leaving him no "adventure here, no privacy" anymore. While he is apparently helpless against the coyote, when it comes to the immigrants, the idea is to "call the sheriff and getting these people and their garbage heap out of here, of hustling them right back to wherever they'd come from, slums, *favelas*, *barrios*, whatever they called them" (117). Out of the hatred towards the other figure embodied in both the animal and the human rises a wall, but that makes the whole attractiveness of Arroyo Blanco fade away because Delaney now has to walk all the way out to the gate, rather than directly stepping out into the chapparal from his own private garden. With the arrival of fall, the whole purpose of moving to Arroyo Blanco becomes meaningless, because nature in this season does not look anything like the Emersonian landscape of the East. The materiality of the place falls far short of the abstract ideal that has brought him to the estates in the very beginning. The meaning of nature as abstract space does not meet his expectations; in other words, the contract between the pilgrim and the nature has now expired:

in the bleached hills above Los Angeles, fall was just another aspect of the eternal summer, hotter, drier ... What was there to recommend in hundred-degree temperatures, zero-percent humidity and winds that forced fine grains of degraded sandstone up your nostrils every time you stepped out the door? Where was the charm in that? Other writers could celebrate the autumnal rituals of New England or the Great Smoky Mountains – watching the birds flock overhead, cutting wood for the stove, cracking up the cider press or stalking somnolent bears through the leafless woods with the first wet scent of snow in the air? –but what could Delaney do to color the dismal reality of the season here? (241).

Delaney's last bit of humanism falls apart when fall arrives, and nature does not offer him any individual wisdom. His territorial claim rests on the notion of nature as external to human, and human nature as inherently evil, which functions as an ideological strategy to justify domination over nature. The hostility of nature, represented by the wild coyote, merges with the bestiality of the human, the illegal immigrant appropriating nature as a space for shelter. He ends up in a war against those that dwell in nature and outside of his control. His investigations of the species

in the canyon take on a whole new dimension, the pilgrim's battle in nature becoming "a crusade, a vendetta" (318). He is now a civil patrol in the canyon, "unable to focus on the natural world when the unnatural one was encroaching on everything he held sacred" (318).

While Delaney projects all that is wrong in his hygienic and highly scheduled life on to the squatters in the canyon, and Candido's wife, América is slowly losing the hope she will one day move out of the canyon, and have the decent life that *el norte* has promised to her. Candido, on the other hand, faces each difficulty with improved survival skills in nature. When the labor exchange is closed and Candido cannot earn money any longer and moving to an apartment in a Mexican neighborhood is now out of the picture, the immigrant/coyote analogy becomes more dramatic. Delaney, as a nature enthusiast, knows well about the "migratory animal species and how one population responded to being displaced by another" (192). Clearing up the labor exchange lot, then, means a war between diverse species, "until one group had decimated the other and reestablished its claim to the prime hunting, breeding or grazing grounds" (192). Candido cannot go back to Mexico where basic human necessities are denied to him, as they are in the US, and the only option other than killing himself is to try to live off the land, or cross the wall into the estates, when it is necessary. At one point he cuts and bends a switch into a loop and sews it with the mesh he finds by the side of the main road. "Using a length of discarded fishing line and América's two-inch sewing needle," he makes "a net to snare some of the birds that were constantly flitting in and out of the chaparral" (196). In a more catastrophic moment, América gives birth in a maintenance shed in Arroyo Blanco, while the estates are all evacuated due to a bushfire in the canyon. Their former shelter by the car wreck in the ravine now destroyed by the fire, Candido crosses the wall surrounding the community, to provide for his wife and newly-born daughter the two most basic human necessities: food and shelter. He steals "cucumbers, tomatoes and squash, topping them off with oranges and grapefruits from the trees" (300), and construction materials, "a hammer, a box of three-and-a-half-inch nails, four burlap sacks hanging from a hook ... a bow saw and a hatchet" promising himself to "sneak them back in the night" (299). Using the pallets standing in the corner of the maintenance shed, Candido spontaneously imagines "an architecture,"

an instant shelter that will help them survive at least until the fire is over and América gains her strength back. And “[if] the fates were going to deny him his apartment, well then, he would have a house, a house with a view” (302). The shelter that he builds, appropriating materials from nature, as well as from the estates, has “a good design, especially for something he’d thrown together on the spur of the moment” (302). The immigrant squatting in the canyon, which Delaney treats as his private backyard, is now very much like the coyote trespassing across the borders and stealing to fulfill his very basic needs and necessities. The animal’s unexpected attacks on the estates as a strategy of survival are thus complemented at the end of the novel with the immigrant’s act of trespassing, which brings the universal notions of nature into question once again.

The universal formulation of nature that Delaney abides by is a dualistic one, which derives from the production of nature as an abstract form, alienated from the lived experience. Abstract space “implies a tacit agreement, a non-aggression pact, a contract,” and “anyone who transgresses this law is deemed guilty of a criminal act.” (Lefebvre, 1991: 56). Here, human state of nature serves as a disruptive element to the tacit agreement between the gated community and the immigrants. In that sense, the immigrant dwelling in the canyon is brought to the level of the animal, and his transgressions are explained with the idea of bestiality of human nature. This becomes a justification for the violation of the basic right to life, specifically from Delaney’s humanist position. The epigram of the novel, “they ain’t human,” therefore, emphasizes the problem with human/animal and human/nature dichotomies. The bestiality of the coyote attacking children is transferred to the human being, and thus, all immigrants, either squatting in nature or simply standing at the labor exchange, become subject to racism and exclusion. The right to life is terminated once the immigrant is an animal, as universal human rights are only granted to human beings, and in this case, certain human beings only. This hierarchy is clearly represented in the novel between the private property owners and the squatter immigrants.

From the opening scene of the novel, where Delaney hits the undocumented immigrant, Candido, on the freeway, certain human beings are reduced to the level of animals from the perspective of the community residents, which becomes an excuse

to deny them their right to life, right to shelter or self-preservation. “The man must have been crouching in the bushes like some feral thing, like a stray dog or bird-mauling cat” (3-4) before the accident, and “[t]o his shame, Delaney’s first thought was for the car (was it marred, scratched, dented?), and for his insurance rates (what was this going to do his good-driver discount?), and finally, belatedly, for the victim” (4). Candido’s being illegal helps, and Delaney does not have to call the doctor or report the accident, and he lets Candido leave with the 20 dollars he gives him, with his “limbs dangling, as loose-jointed as a doll flung in a corner by an imperious little girl” (7). After a short relief that the man will not sue him, Delaney’s sense of guilt transforms into anger. Wondering what the man might have been “doing on Topanga Boulevard at one-thirty in the afternoon, out there in the middle of nowhere,” he comes up with two options: he might be “a picnicker, a bird-watcher, a fisherman ... some naturalist from South of the Border studying the gnatcatcher” a hiker, a naturalist, or an illegal immigrant (11). The first scenario is initially preferable, but in that case the man would sue him. In the second scenario, he has to picture Candido as one of those “people like this Mexican or whatever he was who were irresponsible, thoughtless people, stupid people, people who wanted to turn the whole world into a garbage dump, a little Tijuana” (11). At the car dealership office after the accident, he says he hit a dog, or maybe a coyote, “but kind of big for a coyote” (13). From this very beginning in the novel, the immigrant figure is associated with a degraded form of human that disrupts the order of his everyday life. The Acura dealership showroom, where he goes right after the accident, however, is a vivid reminder of civilization:

...a great ugly crenellated box of a building he’d always hated – it didn’t blend with the surrounding hills ... but somehow, today, he felt strangely comforted by it. Driving up with his cracked lens and disarranged signal housing, he’d seen it as a bastion of the familiar and orderly, where negotiations took place the way they were supposed to, in high-backed chairs, with checkbooks and contracts and balance sheets (13)

The accident leaves an indelible mark on Delaney’s reified notion of nature, and from then on he is haunted by the existence of Mexicans all around him. Any Spanish-speaking person he meets in the canyon while he is hiking transforms into one single enemy, contaminating nature. On one of his solitary expeditions into the canyon area, he sees “a pair of dirty sleeping bags laid out on the high sandy bank

opposite ... here they were, brazen, thoughtless, camping under the nose of authorities” (112). Those who leave their waste in that very spot, and the man he hit on the canyon, as well as all the rest of the Mexicans at the labor exchange, are totalized into one single entity, a debased form of humanity that “degraded the better part of the planet, paved over the land and saturated the landfills till they’d created whole new cordilleras of garbage” (112). The problem is that “there was no law here” in the canyon, and it becomes harder to enforce the order of the abstract space out there in nature as “[t]he city was here, now, crouched in the ravine” (113-4). “While all the technical forces of capitalism contributes toward various forms of separation,” Guy Debord states in his *Society of Spectacle*, “urbanism provides the material foundation for those forces and prepares the ground for their deployment” (Debord, 1970: 171). Here, production of nature, embodied by the Arroyo Blanco estates of Topanga Canyon and promoted by “back-to-nature” commercials, leads to fragmentation and separation between city/nature, human/animal, resident/squatter. These dualities are based on a universal ideology that reduces human spatial experience into scheduled slots. In encounters with the residents in nature, “hiking,” for example, becomes a safe word used by the squatters, hiking, not dwelling, as an acceptable form of spatial experience in nature.

While the immigrants are associated with uncleanness and reduced to the level of uncivilized beings, they are also exposed to waste and contamination arriving from the gated community located above. Candido, for example, never lets his pregnant wife drink from the creek, as he well knows that the toxic waste of Arroyo Blanco is drained into the water of the canyon:

This was the U.S.A., plumbing capital of the world, the land of filtration plants and water purifiers and chlorine, and everyone knew of the *gringo* fascination with toilets: how could the water be unsafe? Here, of all places? But it was. He’d been here before, in this very spot, and he’d been sick from it. Could she even begin to imagine how many septic fields drained off of those mountains? ... Or how many houses were packed up there all the way to the asshole of the canyon, and every one of them leaching waste out into the gullies and streams that fed into the creek? (53).

Candido himself has to drink the water after the accident, and so soon comes “the stirring in his gut, the cramping, the desperate uncontrollable rush that every man, woman and child knew so intimately in his country, a poor underdeveloped place in which sanitation was a luxury” (52). The third world is produced within the

first world through the process of the production of nature as part of capitalist urbanization. The uneven spatial development stretches from the inner parts of the cities to the edge of the city and reproduces global spatial cleavages right there.

One Mexican and one Indian man, Jose Navidad and his friend, are the two other squatters in the canyon with whom the residents of the community frequently come into conflict with. For the residents, there is no distinction between the Mexican immigrants all around them. Jose Navidad, for example, never attacks anybody from the Arroyo Blanco community, but the residents scapegoat him several times. When Delaney sees him within the borders of the community delivering fliers, and once after fire starts in the canyon area. Jose rapes América and steals her money when she is back from the labor exchange one day, and it is Candido who accidentally starts the fire in the canyon, but who commits what crime does not in fact matter at all, because at the end of the day the immigrants are all “Barbarians outside the gates of Rome, only they were inside,” as Kyra states (311). With the fire, the enmity towards the strangers dwelling out there unfolds further, and whereas Delaney knows well that “the canyon was a tinderbox this time of year” (11), the external nature with its potential of hostility, now combined with the bestiality of human, is more intolerable. Although the Arroyo Blanco people experience the same panic and have to evacuate the settlement once every year due to seasonal fires, Jose Navidad and his Indian friend coming out of the canyon in that moment become the scapegoat they aggressively accuse and turn in to the police. In the midst of the catastrophe created by the fire, however, one of the affluent residents, Dominick Flood, a wealthy businessman, “got entangled in some unwise investment,” as his lawyer, as well as the president of the property owners’ association of Topanga, Jack Jardine puts it, and has been on a house arrest with an ankle bracelet, manages to escape (190). Private property overrules the issues of justice, which means the neoliberal ethic replaces the liberal standing of the community. The narrative brings all together, unmasking the residents’ moral directions inscribed in a hierarchical socio-spatiality.

2.4. PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE RIGHT TO LIFE

The contemporary “back to nature” trend and the gated community lifestyle is reflected in the novel in association with the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, after which “[t]hey all wanted something out of the way, something rustic, rural, safe” (107). Down in the city, as one of the potential real estate buyers tells Kyra, it is so crowded that “you get this feeling of the city closing in on you ... There’s just so many – he’d waved his hand in exasperation, searching for the judicious term – people, you know what I mean” (107). Gentrification projects as a medium of creating the “urban frontier” (Smith, 1996a) expand into *wide open spaces* in the case of Los Angeles, and the reified pastoral ideal lures people to the outer limits of the city. This is the repetitive dynamic of accumulation, as Neil Smith puts it: “In search of profit, capital stalks the whole earth. It attaches a price tag to everything it sees and from then on it is this price tag which determines the fate of nature” (Smith, 2008: 78). The price of the estates in the canyon depends on fulfilling the dream of nature away from the crowd in the city, away from those “people” that the real estate agent complains about. Arroyo Blanco residents, in this sense, aspire to a vision of nature that is predictable, unlike the city that is collectively put into flames by its immigrant inhabitants. The flow of immigrants into the Topanga Canyon area is, on the other hand, bad for both the pilgrims and the real estate agent’s business.

The racial anxiety of the mainstream white population of Arroyo Blanco overcomes the democratic ideals of community, which is portrayed in the novel by the discussions at the property owner’s association meetings.⁵ “The Salvadorans, the Mexicans, the blacks, the gangbangers and taggers and carjackers they read about in the Metro section over their bran toast and coffee,” the very reason why “they’d abandoned the flatlands of the Valley and the hills of the Westside to live up here, outside the city limits, in the midst of all this scenic splendor” (39) are now all around them in the canyon; therefore, the majority come to defend the idea of building a gate and a wall. Jack Cherrystone, an Arroyo Blanco resident who makes

⁵ For further discussions, see George II, Joseph A. *Neighborhood Associations: Security and Hospitality in American Fiction*, Ph.D. Thesis, The University of North Carolina (2013)

movie trailers for Hollywood with “his voice rumbling across America like a fleet of trucks, portentuous, fruity, hysterical,” and who is “as liberal as anybody as he claims to be” at the meeting, urges that stronger borders are necessary because “Los Angeles stinks” (44). While Delaney, in the beginning, thinks, “the gate was an absurdity, intimidating and exclusionary, antidemocratic even, and he’d spoken against it privately,” at the meeting he keeps quiet about the whole thing because “it was a *fait accompli* ... and he didn’t relish being one of the few dissenting voices” (41). His reaction towards the building of the gate derives from a self-absorbed mentality as the gate will make him “feel like a criminal driving into his own community, excusing himself to some jerk in a crypto-fascist uniform, making special arrangements every time a friend visited or a package needed to be delivered” (41). Delaney’s perspective represents how self-preservation entails bending the democratic ideals of Arroyo Blanco, a modern community as a microcosm of the mainstream white population. Liberal humanism, embodied by Delaney and Arroyo Blanco residents, therefore, begins to lose its meaning when the safe homogeneity of the Arroyo Blanco environment comes under threat. The novel, in that sense, continuously brings the liberal ideals of universal humanism into conflict within the conjecture of neoliberalism.

As Hannah Arendt puts it, “[t]he idealism of the humanist tradition of enlightenment and its concept of mankind look like reckless optimism in the light of present realities” (Arendt, 1983: 83-84). Strong private property rights as the characterizing feature of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007: 2) determine the fate of the liberal humanist attitude towards the immigrants in the novel, and Delaney’s drifting into racism dramatically portrays this contradiction between universal human rights and concrete human necessities. Delaney’s dilemma regarding democratic ideals at the property owners’ meeting is repeated several times in the novel, until the neoliberal ethic that the Arroyo Blanco community adopts entirely dominates his liberal humanism: “There’d been a moment there, handing over the keys to the young Latino, when he felt a deep shameful stab of racist resentment – did they *all* have to be Mexican? – that went against everything he’d believed in all his life” (149). The same dilemma occurs when Kyra and her boss, Mike, ask one of their

acquaintances, who has a powerful voice in the city's decision-making centers, to evacuate the labor exchange area:

Delaney didn't know what to say. He was wrestling with his feelings, trying to reconcile the theoretical and the actual. Those people had every right to gather on the street corner – it was their inalienable right, guaranteed by the Constitution. But whose constitution? Mexico's? Did Mexico even have a constitution? But that was cynical too and he corrected himself: he was assuming they were illegals, but even illegals had rights under the Constitution, and what if they were legal, citizens of the U.S.A., what then? (185)

Similarly, for Kyra, what they have done is not something to be “proud of” because “everybody's got a right to work and have a decent standard of living, but there's just so many of them” (185). However, the increasing number of people makes real estates look bad and decreases their value on the market. Therefore, the right to life as an alienable right in US formulations of freedom becomes subject to the rights of private property and the free market, and for Kyra, the excuse is “in terms of simple business sense” (159).

The underlying concern of the discussions at the property owners' association meetings is the idea of self-preservation, which is embedded in the United States' founding political texts and which also underlies the exclusionary spatial practices of the community as the microcosm of the country. “Safety. Self-protection. Prudence” is the reason to build a wall, as Jack Jardine, the president of the association insists upon, because the country has no “control of the borders” (101). To protect the community against the existence of the other takes the form of a civilian action, particularly when the state is unable to sufficiently do so. Self-preservation, however, becomes a synecdoche for the protection of private property, and in the case of Delaney, this encompasses nature, as an extension of his life and property. “The right to self-preservation” in John Locke's *Second Treatise* resonates with the right to private property, which provided the source for Thomas Jefferson's formulation of the right to life (Jayne, 2015). Locke's triad, “Life, Liberty, and Estate” was rewritten by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence as “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” (Erler, 1989: 50), and the replacement of private property with the “pursuit of happiness” inscribed a long-standing tension within the country's foundation, “an unceasing struggle between persons and property” (Bassani, 2004: 46). Throughout the narrative in *The Tortilla Curtain*, the estates -- or the lives -- of the community residents are never violently attacked by those people whom they

fear. The idea of self-preservation on behalf of community members, on the other hand, is soon transformed into the violation of the right to life of those who do not have the privilege of owning private property. When Delaney encounters Jose Navidad face to face in the daylight within the borders of Arroyo Blanco, “right there in his own community, right there on his own street,” he gets physically aggressive because, obviously, the man could be nothing but “a thief, a liar, the stinking occupant of a stinking sleeping bag in the state forest, a trespasser, a polluter, a Mexican” (229). The man keeps saying “I deliver these flies,” and in the end it turns out he is delivering fliers from the president of property owners’ association, urging the residents to attend a meeting “on an issue vital to the security” (229). Another confrontation, this time between Kyra and Jose Navidad, camping with his friend in the backwoods of Kyra’s favorite estate that is for sale again brings up the question of the priority of private property over the right to housing and the right to life. In certain moments, Kyra feels uneasy about her job at the real estate market, “[s]eeing that Mr. and Mrs. whoever found or sold or leased or rented their dream house while the world was falling to shit” (75). She gets over these moments of individual crisis, however, assuring “herself that what she did was important, vital, altruistic even – after food and love, what was more important than shelter?” (75) The concept of shelter has a one-dimensional meaning in Kyra’s socio-economic circle, defined by the concept of private property. Ironically enough, an unoccupied property is the best for Kyra; it is a space that grants her a mighty feeling, in a manner similar to that of the relationship between Delaney and nature:

A vacant house became hers in a way – it had been abandoned, deserted, left in her hands and hers alone, and sometimes the sellers were off in another state or country even – and she couldn’t help feeling proprietorial about it. Sometimes, making the rounds of her houses – she had forty-six current listings, more than half of them unoccupied – she felt like the queen of some fanciful country, a land of high archways, open rooms and swimming pools that would have made an inland sea if stretched end-to-end across her domain (70).

All the unoccupied houses that are kept in the market for the best buyers dramatically illustrate the socio-spatial injustice in the city as they are recurrently put in contradiction with the conditions of the homeless immigrants. Kyra’s colonial fantasy over big vacant houses is interrupted by the immigrants as trespassers, the two men camping in the backyard of her favorite vacant estate. When she finds a

shopping cart at the gate, her altruism as a provider of shelter directly turns into hatred: “Bums. The homeless and displaced. Crazies. Mexicans. Winos;” the intruders that were covertly “camping here, squatting, living out in the bushes” (163). The modern myth of urban decay that paves the way for gentrification and an elite-dominated urbanism echoes with Kyra’s confusion that this should be “the sort of thing she’d expect to find out back of the 7-Eleven, in Canoga Park, Hollywood, downtown Los Angeles This was just too remote” (163). In the sterile terrain of Arroyo Blanco, what she expects to see emerging out of the woods is only a deer, or a coyote, but not any human being: “But the movement didn’t halt or hesitate in the way of an animal,” and when she sees two men appear over the slope, she knows what they are: “They were Mexicans, she was sure of it, even at this distance” (164). This climactic moment when Kyra confronts the men in front of a luxury estate, restages the car accident on the highway, picturing the third world encountering the first world in a landscape of produced nature. The everyday life codified by the private property laws of the state is in both moments disrupted, first on the freeway and then at a piece of real estate, both symbolizing the colonization of urban space, as well as nature, by market exchange. On the part of the immigrants, the highway, and the gated community wall, both function as boundaries to transgress in twentieth century urban planning. The tactical acts of crossing make the illegal immigrant visible in a sterile environment, and in those moments, the marginalized other comes out from the clandestine lived space where s/he is supposed to remain invisible and leaves a concrete mark on the surface of the abstract space. When Kyra asks the Mexicans to leave because they are on private property, and the men have to say, again, that they are hiking and have simply gotten lost, which is an acceptable everyday life act from the standpoint of Arroyo Blanco residents. The immigrants continue to disrupt the sterility of the community, however, by pushing further for their own lived space.

The contention between Arroyo Blanco residents and the homeless takes the form of appropriation of the community’s symbolic spaces. Kyra finds a message left for herself on the side wall of her favorite estate, “pinche puta,” in spray-painted letters (223). Covering the exclusionary architecture of Arroyo Blanco with graffiti becomes a symbolic tactic, enacted by the day laborer immigrants against a socio-

spatial system that is built upon their labor, but forbids their visibility in both public and private spaces. “If the hegemony of capitalist representations of space and nature is reproduced through the everyday practices of production,” Janzen argues, “it is useful also to consider the possibilities for resistance and the articulation of alternatives here as well” (Janzen, 2002: 109). Distorting the everyday order in the realms of Arroyo Blanco by transgressing its borders and appropriating its spaces, the immigrants in the canyon assert their basic right to shelter and the right to life. Another spatial tactic as an act of appropriation is performed right after the security gate is built at the entrance of Arroyo Blanco. At the property owners’ meeting, one of the residents argues against the militarization of their community: “If we’d wanted a gated community we would have moved to Hidden Hills or Westlake, but we didn’t. We wanted an open community, freedom to come and go – and not just for those of us privileged enough to be able to live here, but for anyone – any citizen – rich or poor” (43). The Arroyo Blanco community quickly transforms from a democratic space as imagined by its residents into “a community that closes its streets to somebody just because they don’t have as fancy a car ... or as big a house” (43). The right to life, which is denied to the underprivileged, is claimed through *representational spaces*, through spatial tactics that remind the residents of the existence of the human dwellers in the canyon. The entrance gate of the wall that is built by the immigrants at the labor exchange is painted by graffiti on both sides, this time in a more artistic way, “with big bold angular strokes in glittering black paint,” which “almost looks like the writing on the stone outside the Mayan temples,” as Jack Jardine says, while “tracing the jagged hieroglyphs with his fingers” (316). After each step the community members take for spatial exclusion, a non-violent reaction comes from the other. “It’s like an animal reflex, isn’t it?” Jack Jardine asks, “marking their territory?” And Kyra replies, “[o]nly this is our territory” (316). Here, the production of space and nature takes two contradictory dimensions: on one side, a more sophisticated architecture of security that serves for the product, and on the other side, an artistic graffiti that serves as a tactic to rewrite over the abstract spaces of the city.

Increasing security measures through architecture as a strategy against the trespassers, however, deepens the polarization of inside and outside, fueling the

anger and hatred, even among the youngsters of the community. Having heard Jack's teenage son talk about immigrant Mexican women in quite a racist and sexist way, Delaney thinks, "the *Vias* and *Calles* and *Avenidas* of this, his exclusive private community in the hills, composed entirely of Spanish Mission-style homes with orange tile roofs, where the children grew into bigots, the incomes swelled and the property values rose disproportionately" (225). Reproducing the whole space as a panopticon, an open prison with high-tech security measures, Delaney feels, "might keep *them* out, but look what it keeps in" (224). The income and property values will certainly continue to swell in this process, as the narrative hints, with Kyra's future plans for investment after the fire, "developing – not selling – developing," because "that's where the money was" (339). From Delaney's initial standpoint, however, the canyon is the "state property down there, rescued from the developers and their bulldozers and set aside for the use of the public, for nature" (11). The fire as a natural disaster, which the residents blame upon the whole Mexican race, however, opens up new spaces for more huge, vacant, houses to be built on top of the hills and put on the market for the best price. Urban development will then encroach deeper into the canyon, and renewal projects will be carried out in the midst of nature to attain more accumulation. The novel, in that sense, puts the classical liberal formulation of self-preservation and the right to private property into question, and traces the production of the nature process in the context of LA's neoliberal urbanization.

2.5. UNDOCUMENTED LABOR AND *THE RIGHT TO THE CITY*

The visibility of labor in the produced nature/space is a source of tension in the novel embodied within the space of the labor exchange market. The idea that the immigrants in the canyon are wetbacks from the lowest strata, or as in the Steinbeck epigram given in the novel suggests, that they are not human at all, underlies the hate discourse represented by the residents of the gated community. In the Topanga Canyon area, the production of nature requires the alienation of concrete labor from the surface, from the sterilized everyday life. The rise of technology, or using the popular phrase, "the machine in the garden" operates in tandem with the universal

ideology of nature that alienates human labor, thus “denying working class its history” (Smith, 2008: 30). In this sense, the very sight of work in the everyday public spaces poses a threat to the pastoral ideal of the bourgeoisie. “Eden, Paradise, the Golden Age, and the idyllic garden,” as Annette Kolodny states in *Lay of the Land*, “were subsumed in the image of an America promising material ease without labor or hardship, as opposed to the grinding poverty of previous European existence” (Kolodny, 1975: 6). The presence of the wetbacks in Arroyo Blanco thus brings about the outrage against the working class, subjecting them to spatial marginalization. Within this framework, the question of *the right to the city* in the novel is thematically interwoven with questions about undocumented immigration and the visibility of immigrant labor in public spaces.

The residents of the gated community and the immigrants coexisting together in one area represents the relationship between the US and the Mexican day laborer immigrants, which is most of the time determined by the interests of the host country, depending on the current economic situation (Knapp, 2008). The geographical positions of these two populations in the US metropolis are illustrated within the spatial designation of Arroyo Blanco and its surroundings. In doing so, the novel points to the socio-spatial division in Los Angeles, and the city’s changing demographics in the post-industrial era, when blue-collar workers of African-American descent lost their jobs and had to leave the city to find work elsewhere in the country. “This exodus” as Engh puts it, “opened entire communities to Latin Americans willing to labor for less than minimum wage, without benefits, and frequently in unsafe conditions” (Engh, 2000: 1679). The novel also underlines the close link between American neoliberal policies in Mexico and the flow of immigration to Southeastern California. “The central role played by the United States in the emergence of a global economy over the past 30 years,” as Saskia Sassen states, “lies at the core of why people migrate here in ever-increasing numbers” (Sassen, 1992: 14-15), which is dramatically displayed by Candido in his flashbacks of his village in Mexico, where “farmers were burning their crops and nobody but the rich had enough to eat” (200). The relationship between the Arroyo Blanco residents and the day laborers is set upon this background, illustrating the socio-economic ties between the US and the Mexican immigrants in the era. As Knapp

states, the US's immigration policy has always "been wildly inconsistent, the logic behind it has been unswerving ... Mexican workers have variously been considered pests who steal jobs, bring crime, and dollars from deserving Americans or as hard-working immigrants who have provided necessary agricultural, industrial, and domestic labor" (Knapp, 2008: 121). *The Tortilla Curtain*, Knapp puts it, questions the role of economic interest in positioning the immigrants in the social arena. The recurrent image of immigrants building the gate, the fence, and the wall of Arroyo Blanco forms the background of this fundamental dilemma, as well as the economic dynamics of socio-spatial inequality in Los Angeles.

Immigrant day laborers do the unwanted work in the community in *The Tortilla Curtain*, but their condition is stigmatized the moment it comes to the prestige of the estates. The immigrants can dwell in the labor exchange market as long as it is temporary and they stick to regulated hours: "they might have been liberal and motivated by a spirit of common humanity and charity, but they didn't want a perpetual encampment of the unemployed, out of luck and foreign in their midst" (58). The market area has a "wall-less shelter the *gringos* had built to keep the itinerant job-seekers out of the sun (and coincidentally off the street, out of the post office parking lot and out of sight)," and it has to be closed down at noon without leaving any trace behind (55). The visibility of labor has to be concentrated within the space of the market, and the laborers are constantly warned by the organizers not to be seen around once the work is done: "They were very strict about camping in the ravine or in the brush along the road" as they all "knew that one encampment could ruin it for them all. There was nothing to stop the *gringos* from tearing down this building and calling in the cops and the hard-faced men from the INS" (58). Nobody ever calls in the cops or the INS, however, although that "would be like shooting fish in a barrel" (56).

The everyday life of Arroyo Blanco residents relies on the cheap labor of the immigrants at the camp, and no one complains about it as long as they are invisible. It is not until Delaney hits Candido on the freeway that he actually becomes aware of the increasing number of Mexican immigrants around him:

He'd been in Los Angeles nearly two years now, and he'd never really thought about it before, but they were everywhere, these men, ubiquitous, silently going about their business, whether it be mopping up the floors at McDonald's, inverting trash cans in the alley out back of Emilio's or moving purposefully behind the rakes and blowers

that combed the pristine lawns of Arroyo Blanco Estates twice a week. Where had they all come from? What did they want? And why did they have to throw themselves under the wheels of his car? (12)

The reality of the multicultural city begins to unfold, however, when Delaney literally crashes into one of the immigrants. Delaney's dilemma vividly portrays the contradictions embedded within the socio-spatiality of the multicultural city, which is "a slippery notion" that signifies both the abstract universal of 'the (ideal) city' and the concrete particular of 'this (my) city'" (Shields, 1996: 235). The "urban uncanny" haunts the everyday life in the metropolis, embodying a "potentially dangerous difference, surrounded with the aura of something impenetrably Other" (Cohen, 2003: 318). Ironically enough, when the Mossbacher couple decides to build a fence around their estate to protect themselves from the coyote, Candido is one of the undocumented immigrants employed by the construction company to build the fence. Throughout the whole process, he is invisible to Delaney and Kyra, and only in the end does Kyra becomes aware of his deformed body and realizes that he might actually be the man Delaney has crashed into on the freeway:

she noticed him for the first time, the man with the limp and the graying mustache, his face bruised and swollen like bad fruit ... This was the man, the very man – it had to be ... she felt a space open up inside her, a great sad empty space that made her feel as if she'd given birth to something weak and unformed. And as he passed by her again, jaunty on his bad leg, the space opened so wide it could have sucked in the whole universe (161).

The laborer takes the form of a human being in this scene, becomes someone who actually lives, works, and suffers. It is a moment of confrontation, of crash, in a literal and a metaphorical sense, a moment when the abstract collides with the concrete and the ideal of multicultural city is trumped by the concrete wall.

Despite Kyra's confused feelings about the worker in her own garden, she is the one who makes the labor exchange market close. Labor is alienated from the sterilized spaces of Arroyo Blanco, and its visibility both disturbs Kyra's everyday life and affects her real estate business. The labor exchange, in that sense, represents the 'minimal difference,' in the way that Lefebvre formulates it, a form of deviation within the community, which is non-threatening to the homogeneity of abstract space. Minimal difference works for the hegemony of abstract space, residing "on the margins of the homogenized realm ... the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games, of guerilla war, of war" (Lefebvre, 1991: 373). Minimal

difference is a strategy of power to keep the unwanted under control and exclude them from its borders when necessary. The labor exchange market, in that sense, becomes threatening when only when it gets bigger and uncontrollable and disrupts the homogeneity of the Topanga Canyon area. This is what Kyra provides as an excuse to overcome her liberal guilt, “because when it gets to be a certain number – ten maybe, ten is okay, but any more than that and you can see the buyers flinch when you drive by” (184). The prestige of the neighborhood depends on the domesticity of its environment, and the immigrant “invasion from the South,” for Kyra, “had been good for business because it had driven the entire white middle class out of Los Angeles proper and into the areas she specialized in” (159). However, the labor exchange on the street corner, with more and more laborers that are “all stretched out up and down the block, sitting on the sidewalk, leaning up against the walls” is now intimidating for potential buyers (184-5). The labor exchange located at the 7-eleven parking lot, right next to the post office, makes the public space of the nation “look like fucking Guadalajara or something down there” (192). In that sense, the labor exchange market becomes a leitmotif in the novel that questions the right of the undocumented immigrants to the city, where they labor but do not officially exist.⁶ This is a dilemma that the Arroyo Blanco residents recurrently experience, but in the end the regulation of public space is determined by the real estate market, not by their idealism. Chains now encircle the area, with warning signs, “PRIVATE,” “ALL PERSONS WARNED AGAINST TRESSPASS” (198). American cities have a tradition of enforcing city ordinances to regulate immigration on a local level and the novel exemplifies this process, with the real estate company pushing the decision-making centers for the sake of private property. This contradiction that lies within the private property rights ruling over the right to life is simply voiced by a Latino laborer at the market: “I’m going to stand right here till somebody hires me – it’s a free country, isn’t it? (200). Obviously, the idea of freedom is defined by the neoliberal ethic in the modern metropolis and it is limited to the interests of the private property. The labor exchange market located at the

⁶⁶ Varyansi (1993) emphasizes the lack of study on the issue of illegal immigration in the right to the city scholarship, particularly the day labor markets as “a longstanding feature on the American economic landscape” (31).

heart of and in stark contradiction with the privatized urban space embodies this dilemma in its fullest sense.

Closing of the day labor market is followed by a full-scale catastrophe, a devastating flood that razes Arroyo Blanco to the ground. When tactical movements of the disenfranchised are brought to halt and there is no hint of “maximal difference” claimed by any collectivity ahead, Boyle envisions an explosion as a response by nature itself. The ending scene, Candido holding Delaney’s hand to save him from death in the midst of the flood, is set on the remnants of the post-office, from which Candido was earlier expelled, due to his shabby looks. The public space becomes a shelter for both Candido and Delaney in the conditions of bare life, when there are no more fences or gates standing. The ending of the novel offers a “promise of redemption” which “is personal, not systemic;” however, by offering a hand to Delaney, “Candido exercises the only freedom left: the freedom to act in humanity towards another” (Stoneham, 2000: 92). The act for the common good of humanity is performed in practice only at the end of the level, which, I believe, is mimicry of the universal human rights represented by the white mainstream community residents. On the other hand, imagining a natural disaster that ends it all, in a way, supports the liberal environmentalist position that brings the individual face to face with nature as a punishment for any collectively given damage. Also, as one of the characters in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation, says hinting at Rodney King’s speech advising peace during the riots, it is “[g]onna take more than holdin’ hands to start the revolution” (Yamashita, 1997: 251).

From another perspective, the natural disaster bringing the end of the Arroyo Blanco estates has a subversive role against the production of nature/space on behalf of capitalist urbanism that not only segregates and militarizes the city, but also literally prepares the total destruction of its nature. “Los Angeles has deliberately put itself in harm’s way,” Mike Davis states in his urban ecological history of the city. “For generations, market-driven urbanization has transgressed environmental common sense,” and “as a result, Southern California has reaped flood, fire, and earthquake tragedies that were as avoidable, as unnatural, as the beating of Rodney King and the ensuing explosion in the streets” (Davis, 1999: cover page). While the

ending of the novel does not offer a concrete solution, nature exploited by capital and brought to the service of the privileged urbanites brings the final catastrophe that hints at a new beginning, which is symbolized by the final image of the novel, the swirling flood that Delaney, Candido, and América find themselves surrounded by, a spatial vortex of unknown possibilities that might open up an alternative future. To sum it up, I argue that *The Tortilla Curtain* voices “the cry” for *the right to the city*, the right to life, basic material necessities and the use-value of space. Although it does not stage a visible collective “demand,” *The Tortilla Curtain* fits well within the body of Los Angeles literature that takes a critical stance towards the capitalist mode of urbanization and its effects upon transnational collectivities, and therefore it contributes to *the right to the city* discourse in the present conjecture.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TATTOOED SOLDIER BY HECTOR TOBAR

“Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography,
none of us is completely free from the struggle over
geography.” Edward Said

“The fact of the matter is, whether we like it
or not, riot, is the voice of the unheard.”
Maxine Waters

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Hector Tobar’s first novel *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998) is considered one of the first examples of Central American-American⁷ fiction produced in the United States.⁸ Along with Francisco Goldman and Castellans Moya, noteworthy American writers of Guatemalan origin whose works have also been subject to much scholarly criticism, Hector Tobar has made a significant contribution to the emerging body of work within the specific category of Central American-American fiction and to the US Latino/a literary and cultural corpus.⁹ Tobar’s Guatemalan parents migrated from Central America to the United States in the early 1960s, and Tobar was born and grew up in the city of Los Angeles. He worked as an Los Angeles-based journalist for many years and won the Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles

⁷ First used in a poem by Maya Chinchilla, titled “Central American-American,” the term is now a commonly used concept in scholarly works referring to people of Central American descent who live in the United States.

⁸ Arturo Arias categorizes Tobar’s *The Tattooed Soldier* “as the first novel written in English by a Guatemalan author” and adds that Francisco Goldman’s *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992) is also identified as the first Central American Latino text by critics. However, he counters this argument on the basis of the fact that Goldman is the son of an American citizen father and a Guatemalan mother, and his knowledge of Guatemala is limited as he only lived in Guatemala for a very short period during childhood (Arias 2003). Marta Caminero-Santangelo, on the other hand, questions such kind of identity formulations that propose “whom we decide to “count” as a Guatemalan American author” (Caminero-Santangelo, 2009).

⁹ Leading scholars who work on the history, identity and politics regarding Central American-Americans emphasize the significance of the specificities of separate minority groups that are reduced to the homogenizing category of US Latinos. (Arias, 2003; Rodriguez, 2013; Hamilton and Chinchilla, 2001).

Riots in the *Los Angeles Times*. In the course of his writing career, Tobar has written three other books: a semi-autobiographical literary reportage, *Translation Nation* (2005), a critically acclaimed novel, *The Barbarian Nurseries* (2011), and a New York bestseller, *Deep Down Dark: The Untold Stories of 33 Men Buried in a Chilean Mine and the Miracle That Set Them Free* (2014). Tobar's works focus mainly on the Latino/a immigrant experience in the US, and the socio-political relationship between the US and the American South. It is in his first novel, *The Tattooed Soldier*, however, that Tobar's Guatemalan roots and his vast knowledge of Los Angeles has a compelling presence. In this sense, *The Tattooed Soldier* can be best described as "a novel about the Los Angeles that he observed in the run-up to the 1992 riots" (Ortiz, 2008: 20).

The novel sets as its backdrop both the US-sponsored Guatemalan civil war, which lasted for 36 years, from 1960 to 1996, and the city of Los Angeles of the early 90s, a critical period of time when the 1992 Los Angeles uprising occurred, which is also the denouement of the novel. The two parallel narratives center around two Guatemalan refugees, and their interconnected stories begin in their homeland during the civil war and come to an end in Los Angeles, at its most turbulent times. Antonio Bernal is a young Guatemalan intellectual who flees to the US after his wife and his son are murdered by a Guatemalan death squad soldier, Guillermo Longoria. Guillermo is also the second protagonist, as well as the antagonist in the novel, and is in turn, the character who gives the novel his name. The present and past storylines in the novel, given through the perspectives of two adversaries, Antonio and Longoria, frame a post-national refugee experience in a global US city, where violence and death continue to haunt them.

The Tattooed Soldier, first of all, poses a critique against US imperial interventions in Latin American politics, with the portrayals of Antonio and his activist wife Elena, and their struggles against the destructive state forces in Guatemala in the course of the civil war, and a Mayan peasant boy, Guillermo, who transforms into a deadly weapon against his own indigenous community. Concurrently, through the refugee perspectives of Antonio and Longoria, the novel illustrates Los Angeles as a center for global neocolonial/neoliberal strategies, where socio-spatial inequality marks the everyday life of refugees, immigrants, and the

homeless at the turn of the century. Through the representation of Los Angeles uprising as a backdrop to the ending of the story, the novel also restages the past civil war memories of the two Guatemalan refugees, and articulates their present condition in the US. While the spatio-temporality of the novel clearly displays the US's neocolonial and neoliberal policies in Latin America that have brought massive flows of immigration into the country, such policies, concentrated at the heart of the US global city, remain as the underlying cause of a segregating and alienating urban design and the crises that the modern metropolis has gone through.

The majority of the critical work regarding the *The Tattooed Soldier* focuses on the issues of national trauma, diasporic memory and refugee identity within the framework of Central American-American literature (Arias, 2003; Kim, 2008; Minich, 2013). *The Tattooed Soldier* as a contemporary city novel that deals with “the urban question”¹⁰ as a central motif, however, has been discussed in only a few scholarly works. Caren Irr, for example, reads the novel through the lens of Umberto Eco's neologism “neomedievalism,” which stands for the postmodern version of medieval practices outside the boundaries of the homogeneous nation-state. This is also referred to as “the empty time” in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (Irr, 2015). In Tobar's postmodern version of neomedievalism, global supra-national organizations function in a similar way to the medieval communities of power, now involved in urban affairs in the form of a neomedieval practice. The dynamics of the global city, in this case, repeat the social and economic disparities of the medieval city state (Irr, 2015: 41-44). Tobar's novel, as Irr states, along with the two selected Latino texts that she analyses, “all turn away from a teleological progress narrative that celebrates the emergence and expansion of democratic citizenship toward universalizing norms. In this sense, these texts are not only anti-national but also anti-global” (450).

Caminero-Santangelo, on the other hand, reads *The Tattooed Soldier* as a transnational work that uses pan-ethnicity as a subversive stance against US-made identity categories (Caminero-Santangelo, 2009). In other words, Tobar reimagines

¹⁰ The phrase is also the title of Manuel Castell's prominent work, *The Urban Question* (1977).

the concept of pan-ethnicity as an instrument against the homogenizing ideology of universalism. “A homogeneous notion of “Hispanic” or “Latino” identity,” in the novel, Caminero-Santangelo states, “is revealed as an impossibility in part because *nation itself* is utterly disrupted; political divisions, as well as ethnic divisions, rip apart the category of “Guatemalan” (Caminero-Santangelo, 2009:186, emphasis in original). The city, in this case, becomes a central spot for alliances between ethnic categories against such reductive notions, offering the possibility of alternative pan-ethnic coalitions that are “forged in the urban crucible of poverty and disenfranchisement” (189).

In a different context, Julie Minich focuses on the issue of cleanliness and hygiene in the novel, in relation to the representation of body. Cleanliness and hygiene as corporeal metaphors in the novel, according to Minich, are juxtaposed with the Latin American discourses of *mestizaje* and US ideology of multiculturalism and racial equality as a national ideal. From this perspective, “the novel presents seemingly disparate events in the United States and Guatemala (police brutality and military violence) as emerging from related historical consciousness” (Minich, 2013: 216). While Minich’s argument takes the representation of homelessness, along with the corporeal metaphors of cleanliness and hygiene, as accounts of universalizing discourses of *mestizaje* and multiculturalism, I approach homelessness in the novel from a different perspective. I agree with Irr’s argument of neomedievalism as a practice of the postmodern novel that treats globalization and the global city through the lens of the medieval city-state and its supra-national practices. I also concur with Santangelo’s idea of a reimagined pan-ethnicity as a subversive coalition, within the urban center, against the repressive forces of power. Departing from both views, I suggest that *The Tattooed Soldier*, first of all, places the compelling question “who has the right to the city” in a transnational framework, through the representation of a homeless encampment built and inhabited by people from diverse racial populations in the city. The question resonates with the complex norms of identity and citizenship, specifically with their changing relations to the ways of existence and experience in the urban center. While also reflecting on the Central American refugee experience in the US, the novel, I argue, poses a broader critique on immigration and the American metropolis with a particular interest in the

notions of the right to space and *the right to the city*. The global city, within this framework, while serving as a strategic territory for global capitalism and US neoliberalism, also becomes an area of contestation and resistance, a transnational solidarity platform for those disenfranchised from their right to inhabit the city.

The Tattooed Soldier contributes to the body of Los Angeles literature that writes against the age-old image of the city as a multicultural contact zone that is full of opportunities for every newcomer. Tobar himself eloquently expresses this contradiction with a reference to the 92 uprising on his official website:

I had grown up in Los Angeles, but the Los Angeles of the late twentieth century bore little resemblance to the optimistic, gleaming metropolis I remembered from my youth. Instead, I came to see Los Angeles as an imperial capital whose central core had been abandoned, left to the refugees of the empire's wars, the detritus of the empire's failures. It almost made sense when the city erupted in flames in the 1992 riots (Tobar).

The experience of the two refugees in Tobar's novel illustrates this tension in the city that results in a great catastrophe, a vendetta for the urban disenfranchised. Also, the novel rewrites Los Angeles and its everyday life from below, thus making a significant contribution to the oeuvre of alternative literary and cultural representations of the city. In this sense, Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory, specifically his idea of *the right to the city*, and its relation with art and literature as a means of appropriation, becomes an essential tool in reading Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* as a novel centered on a contested city. If *the right to the city* is an ongoing project that will take form through the reflections of future possibilities in present realities, then, Tobar's literary rendition of Los Angeles in the early 1990s, imagines an *urgent utopia*, in Lefebvre's terms, that "opens the road, clears a new way," and then "practice takes it; it produces the route and the space" (Lefebvre, 2009: 288). The writer's experience of the city as a journalist takes new and alternative forms through his imagination, and the city as a work is projected into a work of literature, thus creating new possibilities for the future.

3.2. CENTRAL-AMERICAN REFUGEES AND THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NOVEL

The Tattooed Soldier is set in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period marked by massive waves of immigration from Central America to the United States. The 1980s is known as the “Lost Decade” in South America, as many countries in the hemisphere were torn by political turmoil in the time (Chinchilla and Hamilton, 2001). In Guatemala, after the democratically elected government of president Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown by a CIA-assisted coup d'état in 1954, the country was led to a civil war that lasted 30 years under the US-sponsored military dictatorship (Chinchilla and Hamilton, 2001). The conflicts between the insurgent movements and the repressive governments continued in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua to the end of the twentieth century, which cost the lives of a quarter of a million people and forced over one million people to leave their countries and find refuge elsewhere (Garcia, 2006: 13). The flow of immigration was also influenced by economic reasons, as worldwide stagnation and high unemployment rate during the 1970s had a devastating effect on Central America (Chinchilla and Hamilton, 2001).

Immigration from Central America to the United States continued in the post-war era, due to continuing economic problems in the war-torn geography, as well as family reunions in the US (Zong and Batalova, 2017). During this entire period, Southern California, and Los Angeles in particular, had been the major region where Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants settled. “By 1990,” Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants “represented 80 percent of the Central American population in the Los Angeles region” (Chinchilla and Hamilton, 2001: 2). Their immigrant status, however, has been subject to change as the peace accords ended the civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1990s. “During the 1980s,” Hamilton and Chinchilla state, “Salvadorans and Guatemalans were widely seen as refugees or temporary immigrants,” while the following decade “has brought increased recognition of their status as a relatively permanent population group confronting many of the same problems and difficulties as other immigrant and inner-city groups” (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 2004).

The period of mass migration from Central America to Los Angeles was also unique in terms of changing economic structures in the U.S., due to the effects of rising globalization.¹¹ This “was a time when the region was both reinventing itself as a prospective capital of the Pacific Rim and being reinvented through the juxtaposition of old and new ethnic groups as a major multicultural center” (Chinchilla and Hamilton, 2001: 1). As a result, the “white flight” from the urban centers to the suburbs once again gained momentum, and the massive increase in the immigrant population changed the demographics of the city considerably. Minorities, for the first time in the city’s history, became the majority (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 2004). Along with the economic recession in the 1990s, the demographic dispersion enormously influenced the socio-spatiality of the region, mainly the places densely inhabited by Latino immigrants.

The Tattooed Soldier is set upon a spatial framework that covers, through flashbacks, Guatemala, while specifically focusing on Downtown Los Angeles, Westlake, MacArthur Park, Pico Union, and also the South-Central area, where the 92 uprising erupted. The novel opens with a conflicting moment between two immigrants, Antonio Bernal, the tenant, and his Korean landlord, Hwang, in the entryway of an apartment in Pico-Union, a Los Angeles neighborhood primarily populated by Central-Americans. It is the moment before Antonio and his Mexican roommate, José Juan, are evicted from their apartment because their rent is long overdue, and Antonio and his Korean landlord are struggling to understand each other as neither is able to speak English well enough to communicate freely. For Antonio, who is trying to convince the landlord not to call the police to help evict him, the root of all this complication is the very city that they live in. “English belonged to another part of the city,” he thinks, “not here, not downtown” (Tobar, 2000: 3). While in this quarter of the city, he is able to survive without having to speak English, and “let his Central American cheese and erred roll off his tongue to his heart’s desire” (3), he is excluded from the places in the city that belong to people with good English, good jobs and comfortable homes. His physical dwelling in Los Angeles is constrained by his status as a refugee, and whenever he crosses an urban

¹¹ For a detailed analysis, see Jonas and Rodriguez (2014)

boundary, his existence is reduced to another level.

Antonio's desperate struggle to fit in any kind of space where he will finally feel safe begins back in his homeland and gains a whole new dimension in Los Angeles. First, he has to leave his home and all of its privileges behind, and flee the Guatemalan capital because the city had long been a space of political conflict, violence and death. Once in San Cristobal, a small town far from the dangers of the capital, Antonio's politically active wife, Elena becomes involved with the indigenous Mayan community living in dire conditions on the periphery. Upon her attempt to expose the government's act of genocide by way of contaminating the drinking water of the Mayan district, a death squad assigned by the army and led by Guillermo Longoria, "the tattooed soldier," murder Elena and her three-year old son. Once again Antonio has to leave his home, this time heading to the North, to the city of Los Angeles, where he is stripped of his middle-class intellectual status, along with all "the ideas and learning that made him strong in Guatemala" (4). In the end, having lost his job as a busboy after years of struggling to survive in the city, he is now on the verge of being homeless, and for him, "Los Angeles was the problem" and therefore, to blame for (3). The word "homeless" sounds alien to Antonio, because "it did not seem right to him that a man who loved to read, a man with *Crimes y Cantigo* and *El Idiota* and countless other works of real literature scattered on the floor of his apartment, would be called this ugly word" (5). Still, "it made perfect sense," for Antonio, because it is "the logical conclusion to years of living in this cold, alien city" (5, emphasis original).

Tobar builds his literary rendition of Los Angeles through the perspectives of both Antonio, and his antagonist Guillermo Longoria,¹² the murderer of his family, who also immigrates to Los Angeles. While the former becomes homeless and begins to live in a homeless encampment in Crown Hill of Downtown at the beginning of the novel, the latter lives in a tiny apartment in Westlake Arms, a highly populated Latino neighborhood located in Central Los Angeles. The paths of the two Guatemalan refugees in the city cross at MacArthur Park, a leisure space mainly used

¹² The character is mentioned in the novel as Guillermo in the parts telling the story of his childhood as a Mayan peasant boy, and as Longoria referring to his identity as a (retired) soldier. I prefer to use Longoria within the context of this study.

by Central American immigrants, also an area notorious for drug trafficking and gang activities. Antonio's plan to take revenge on Longoria forms the novel's main storyline, and his chase of the other during the long hours of walking unfolds the map of an urban setting filled with the lived experience of an invisible underclass. From this perspective, Antonio acts as a flaneur figure, although the meaning of flanerie is redefined in the novel in the context of the modern metropolis. Baudelaire's flaneur, the urban romantic figure, who walks the streets of nineteenth century Paris to observe and experience the deepest meanings of its everyday life literally cannot survive in Los Angeles where the urbanscape stretches upon a dense network of freeways and where mobility is limited to driving. Whereas the rebuilding of Paris through urban renewal projects by Baron Haussmann during the reign of Napoleon III, limited the movement flaneur, today's global city design, where pedestrian activities are programmed and kept under surveillance, has destroyed the wandering figure completely (Harvey, 2003). In Tobar's Los Angeles, homelessness is represented as a reversed form of flanerie, through a reformulated mode of dwelling, which is, as Benjamin states in his *Passages*, the true knowledge mastered by the flaneur: "it is they that are the dwelling place of the eternally restless being who is eternally on the move, the being that experiences, learns, knows, and imagines as much between the houses as the individual between his four walls" (Benjamin, 2001: 264). In the novel, it is through losing everything and becoming a homeless man that Antonio develops a new sense of dwelling, and thus reaches a state of knowing the city. This is, he thinks, "the power to see differences, another layer of truth near the surface but invisible to so many. It was a gift to be treasured, the exile's reward, this special vision" (241).

In the course of Antonio's transition from a habitat assigned to him and regulated according to his refugee status, to an uncoded lived space in the homeless encampment, Antonio's buried past comes alive as well: his diasporic consciousness merges with his homelessness, thus bringing him to the innermost stratum of both the city and his individual memory. Sleeping in the encampment for the first time, "his lips touched the soil, grains of earth sticking to his tongue until he spat them out. The taste was not unpleasant. It reminded him of eating dirt, something he must have done when he was less than two, a memory older than

words” (14). The encampment becomes a point of aleph¹³, an all-encompassing space from which he can see everything, and thus can become somebody again. After all, “it might not be so bad to camp out in the open” (13). The encampment comes to serve as a threshold to reconnect his past with his present. Los Angeles becomes a Guatemalan city, within distorted concepts of time and space.

In Guatemala, Antonio had seen cornfields set ablaze, swirling rains of ash and ember, veils of smoke that lingered for days like fog in the mountain valleys. He remembered bridges that fell into rivers, asphalt and steel swallowed by white tongues of water. He looked at the wild urban grasses before him and remembered the hills near Huehuetenango, where he once encountered a single file column of soldiers, a camouflage serpent on the march, disappearing suddenly into the dense foliage ... The vacant property, the plastic shelters, the ruined homes. The more he thought about it, the more Antonio began to feel a kinship with the flattened earth around him (16).

In the production of the urban space and everyday life, *representations of space*, the conceived space that is designed and produced in abstract form and thus filled with ideology, imposes its supremacy over lived space. *Representations of space* “causes practice to disappear along with life, and so does very little justice to the ‘unconscious’ level of lived experience *per se*” (Lefebvre, 1991: 34). *Representational spaces*, on the other hand, is the level of space filled with “childhood memories, dreams, uterine images and symbols,” and it speaks the untold (Lefebvre, 1991: 42). When there is no more socially produced barrier between Antonio and his lived space, that is, when he becomes homeless and inhabits the most clandestine layer of the city, *representational spaces* come alive and open a path to his past and his buried trauma. Seven years after his family’s murder, it is in Los Angeles that he meets the tattooed soldier, the murderer that he briefly saw before departing San Cristobal, Guatemala. The backdrop to his taking revenge on his ultimate enemy is the “quemazones,” the great burning and explosion that releases the tension accumulating deep down in the city from the beginning of the novel. Los Angeles starts burning in the same way as many Guatemalan cities and towns have been, and in this final metaphorical moment, the unconscious of the urban dweller crosscuts the unconscious of the city.

¹³ “The Aleph” is also the name of a short story by Jorge Luis Borges (2000).

3.3. L.A: “THE FIRST WORLD CAPITAL OF HOMELESSNESS”

The spatial consciousness of *The Tattooed Soldier* is shaped by the tension between the internal borders of the city and the notion of home and homelessness. The idea of the American city that is abound with opportunities for immigrants, gradually collapses throughout Antonio’s and Longoria’s experiences. Both characters are confined within the boundaries of urban partitions that look nothing like the city they knew of, before arriving as refugees. From the perspective of Antonio, who finally hits rock bottom and ends up in a homeless camp after spending seven years in the city, Los Angeles is nothing but a place of grand disillusionment and failure. The encampment in the novel, in that sense, serves as a foil to the universal image of the city imposed by cultural hegemony:

Years ago, when Antonio lived in Guatemala, he had an electric idea of Los Angeles. It was a place of vibrant promises, with suntanned women in bikinis and men carrying ice chests brimming with beer. It was a city of handsome, fit young people, all with bounce in their step. Long before he set foot in this country, Antonio felt he knew California because he’d seen it come to life over and over again on his television set. In Antonio’s homeland, the words “Los Angeles” sparkled, like sunlight glimmering off a mountain lake. And now this. Skinny question mark men with dirty bodies and unshaven faces, hanging clothes on a line strung between palm trees, in a lot in the center of the city (41).

While the representation of Los Angeles as a land of beauty and pleasure is embodied in the design of certain quarters of the city and the practice of everyday life within these quarters, Antonio and Longoria never have access to these places. The image always remains an image, an artificial narrative that masks the real below. Free and floating spaces, championed by globalization discourse, are represented with this image of the city as a center of attraction. The heavenly place on TV turns out to be a vortex for people like Antonio who cannot live up to its image. There remains the distortion of bodies and geographies that cannot be reconciled with the visible layer above. The deeper strata that never finds a place in the mainstream representations of the city, on the other hand, unfolds in the novel through Antonio’s experience of homelessness. While the lived spaces of the urban upper class are not provided for the reader in the novel, what people can do with their *representational spaces* when they are farther away from the controlled abstract space above, which is the visible image of the city, is imagined in the novel through Antonio’s experience

of the deeper layers, and by ultimately reaching the homeless encampment. Another city is rendered in the narrative through the homeless experience, and from here the spatially entrenched social dynamics in the American metropolis also stretch out. A vast barrier stands between the notion of home and homelessness in the American urban life, which goes hand in hand with the distinction between private and public space, property ownership and housing rights, visibility and invisibility.

In an analysis of the long history of homelessness in the United States, Don Mitchell defines the phenomenon as specifically having an “American style” (Mitchell, 2011). From “the ‘tramp’ of the Gilded Age, the ‘hobohemian’ of the Progressive Era, the ‘transient’ and ‘migrant’ of the Great Depression, and the skid row ‘bum’ of the postwar period,” the American homeless man has been a recurrent figure in the country’s history, and “each time he appeared at the threshold, he signaled a crisis of home that was always also one of nationhood and citizenship, race and gender” (Depastino, 2010: xix). Skid rows as the specific geographies of homelessness in the US today “developed in many American cities initially as specialized districts for housing, maintaining, and managing the massive reserve army of labor,” and during the depression era they turned into spaces of “a permanent class of the unemployed and semi-employed” (Mitchell 2011: 937). In the postwar era, Keynesian interventions, transient labor in seasonal industries transferred to the non-white immigrants through guest worker programs, and the rise of the suburban domestic ideal led to a nationwide decline of the skid row areas, and “homelessness could be made to fit a traditionally liberal ideology, in which opportunities for individual success were everywhere available, and thus lack of success was a function of either a character fault, a (bad) choice, or some combination of the two” (Mitchell, 2011: 939). However, with the post-fordist neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of deindustrialization, burgeoning global capital and its search of places for cheap labor, decreasing employment and union rights, changing rules of the housing market, urban renewal projects and gentrification as new models of capital accumulation, all deepened the crisis of homelessness in the country, even more than during its worst period in the depression era (Mitchell, 2011). The number of homeless people in this era reached 3 million a year, and homelessness became more visible than ever before, as “an

inevitable feature of American-style capitalism,” and from then on, homelessness “could not so easily be ascribed merely to personal character faults” (Mitchell 2011: 940). The worsening crisis, on the other hand, increased the intolerance towards the visibility of homeless people in metropolitan cities that were major centers of the neoliberal boom of the 1980s and 1990s. While cities like Los Angeles “were struggling to remake themselves as more “competitive” in the markets for footloose capital, tourists, suburban visitors, and gentrifiers,” more and more anti-homeless laws, forbidding people from sleeping outdoors or sitting on the sidewalks, were enacted (Mitchell, 2011: 934). From the 1990s onwards, the criminalization of the homeless and their removal from public metropolitan sites have become increasingly common in US urban politics (Davis, 2006; Mitchell, 1997; Smith, 1996a) which has also brought along a growing activism shaped by the demand for the right to housing and *the right to the city* (Foscarinis, 1996: 3).

The socio-spatial politics of *The Tattooed Soldier* rests upon this historical framework, and the novel questions the priority of private property rights over housing rights, while focusing on the condition of the homeless in Los Angeles. From the opening scene of *The Tattooed Soldier*, portraying the conflict between the tenant and the landlord, to the illustration of the homeless encampment in Los Angeles, notions of home, housing, and habitation dominate Tobar’s critique of geography. In other words, the novel deals with the idea of *the right to the city* specifically by asking questions related to housing rights and the right to urban public spaces and services. From here, homelessness and its treatment by society and the state, particularly regarding its criminalization, come to the forefront as a cauldron of social pathology. The idea that “societies riddled with persons deemed “homeless” are, by definition, societies in crisis” (Depastino, 2010: 18) is embodied in a social/spatial dialectic in the novel that delineates homelessness as a perennial problem in the city life of America, as a societal condition exemplifying at the utmost the inequalities inherent in the system.

In the course of the time that leads up to the eviction from his apartment, Antonio hears people in the neighborhood repeat the phrase, “sleep under the freeway” (7). In the urban daily discourse, the idea of sleeping under the freeway is not something unheard of, rather it has become “almost a refrain in the

neighborhood” (7). Homelessness as a common urban phenomenon brings along the social division between the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor, and the freeway at the heart of the city stands as a monument that normalizes this division. “Well, *muchacos*,” says one of their neighbors, “if they throw you out, I guess you’ll have to sleep under the freeway. That’s what everybody else does. I guess it’s warmer there” (8, emphasis in original). Though Antonio is well aware of what awaits him, he still cannot understand why “people persist in repeating the horrible phrase” (10). A man of working age, who is not able to pay his rent, is immediately distanced from his social circle, and is practically scapegoated by the public. Not having a private place of his own anymore brings him to the lowest step of the social ladder, and this makes him a spectacle, a “promise of real-life violence or chaos” which is “the only thing that could entice the apartment dwellers to break the burglar-proof seals on their doors and venture into public space” (8). As a homeless man who does not fit in with the fabricated image of the city, Antonio has to be invisible, and although he is used to “the invisibility of being a bus boy, of walking between the tables unnoticed, a shadow rolling the cart, clearing the dishes,” this is an entirely new level for him, “another kind of invisibility” (10). Carrying his belongings in a shopping cart to the homeless encampment, people turn away from him, as if trying to immediately erase this disturbing image from their minds (10). His “homeless” body, from now on, stands as a contested geography that is criminalized by the law, and once he joins the rest of the homeless, he becomes part of a larger body that is potentially threatening to the bureaucratic homogeneity of the city.

The novel specifically treats this body of collectivity as a medium of appropriation, constantly creating conflict between the center and the periphery. In an iconic moment, before the city bursts into flames at the end of the novel, the homeless all march together right onto the freeway, to move their encampment elsewhere and momentarily disrupt the designed everyday life of the urban bourgeoisie.

Grouped in dirty clusters, black men with black men, Latinos with Latinos, whites with whites, they assembled on Third Street, shivering in the rushing wind of morning traffic, a steady current of cars feeding into the orderly, pedestrian-free streets of the Financial District. They drew befuddled stares from the commuters accelerating and decelerating on Third, men in ties and women in suits who took in the spectacle of these refugees as if it were an image from a faded newsreel (238).

The lived experience of the homeless asserts itself in the downtown area, on the very spot where urban bodies are supposed to be visible only in vehicles and behind the dark shades of sunglasses. The hygienic bodies that are produced by “accumulated scientific knowledge, disseminated with an admixture of ideology” and inserted into the realm of *representations of space* (Lefebvre 1991:42) encounter the destructive bodies, the criminalized homeless population of the city. If the body is the first and most strategic geography, “the most critical site to watch the production and reproduction of power” (Soja, 2000: 361), the appearance of the homeless in the Financial District not only contradicts the disciplined bodies in automobiles, but also the abstract, pedestrian-free design of the urban space. The homeless body poses a threat to the exchange value of urban public space by defying its mainstream image and its intolerance towards difference. In such a moment of disruption, the body as a geography is transformed into a site of resistance against the power that imposes its rules and regulations, which it does firstly through the production of the body. The uprising begins shortly after this scene of conflict between contradictory spatial experiences of the urban dwellers. The tension given in the scene leads to an urban explosion and the “promise of real life violence and chaos” (8) is finally fulfilled. Controversially, the whole thing becomes a magnificent spectacle now for the entire nation. While Tobar himself leaves the ending of the novel open to question, Antonio’s narrative significantly puts an emphasis on the idea that the city being drawn into chaos is a necessary consequence of such contradictions.¹⁴

3.4. THE HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT AS REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE

The literary rendition of the encampment and the everyday life of the homeless in *The Tattooed Soldier* is based on Tobar’s documentary journalism regarding a similar encampment during his years as a journalist at the *LA Times*. In narrating the everyday life of the homeless encampment, Tobar “very effectively

¹⁴ The representation of the Los Angeles uprising will later be discussed in detail in this chapter.

avoids the easy tendency toward sentimentality potential in any treatment of homelessness by focusing rather closely on alternative forms of political contextualization marking homeless life in the heart of the late capitalist U.S. metropolis” (Ortiz, 2008: 20). In the novel, representation of the homeless experience and the architecture of the homeless encampment materialize the existing tension in urban life that emerges as a result of socio-spatial inequalities. In this sense, the encampment functions as *representational spaces* in the Lefebvrian triad, a contested space where the lived experience of people becomes free from the control of the abstract space. The encampment is also imagined as an alternative public space, in contrast to the privatized public spaces of the city. In a city notorious for its urban sprawl and its lack of an urban center that brings people together for interaction, the encampment serves as a contact zone for the exiles of the city, residing at its heart, yet in contradiction with the rest of it. As a counter public center, the place becomes a vantage point in the novel from which the rest of the urban setting stretches forward. Therefore, the representation of homeless life, and the encampment as a city within a city, opens up a literary space of oppositional consciousness. The novel thus contributes to the literature and activism of *the right to the city* in the 1990s, specifically in relation to the debates concerning housing rights and the rights of the homeless to the public spaces of the city.

Built directly across the interchange of the Harbor, Hollywood, and Pasadena Freeways, and the city’s financial district, the encampment directly confronts a bourgeois city, mismatched with its hygiene and homogeneity. The tedious panorama across the encampment is a section of the Western metropolis in the form of a geometrical abstract space that exerts hegemony over its inhabitants by simply rendering them invisible, by programming their experiences in their lived spaces. The district is a typical representation of an alienating urban design with its monuments and trade centers, concrete highways, and panoptic security systems.

The redevelopment of the downtown began in the 1970s and reached its final form with the neoliberal design trends in the 1990s that “include both entrapment and fragmentation, as well as a sense of unlimited power” (Zukin, 2010: 293). The monumental urbanscape ahead is evocative of the abstract space that is parceled out by hegemony and ruled with the law of private property. In order to reach the

homeless encampment, Antonio and his Mexican roommate, Jose Juan, pass through this urban center, “a stretch of downtown without pedestrians” (12). The atmosphere is completely alienating for them, more like a computer simulation than a real-life city street in the middle of the day. “Everything was painted tan and gray, as if an imitation of the sky and earth,” and “there were only cars and low, windowless office buildings sealed off with layers of stucco and iron” (12). It is a classical example of a panoptic city, where “[t]he surveillance systems track any movement; [e]lectronic eyes scanned garage entrances, unused doorways,” while the symbols of monumental architecture are diminutive of any human activity, and “a large white monolith with a blue sign announcing the ‘Pacific Stock Exchange,’ stands for capital forces (12). Moreover, an overpass at the freeway interchange represents a threshold between the financial district and the homeless encampment, between the abstract and the real:

They reached the freeway and stood underneath it, dwarfed by the immensity of the structure. This overpass was higher than most, an underbelly of concrete covered with a fine network of leafless ivy branches that spread out like capillaries across the gray surface. Water oozed like blood from the cement, and the damp air around them smelled of feces and urine (10).

After crossing this threshold, the contradiction between the two places becomes strongly manifest. The homeless encampment is “located on a small hill that rose over downtown, the muddy lot beneath them green with weeds grown thick from the recent rains” (13). The architecture of the place stands in stark contrast with the formality of the financial district and the grayness of the freeway that divides the urban center into geometrical voids. Standing as “some sort of geographic anomaly, a lush knoll of wild plants and grasses in the middle of the city” (13), the whole area is a deviation on the modularity of urban fabric, a distortion of the homogeneous urban grid. It is an irregularity that is generated by the regular itself, a deformed unintended grid cell that uniquely stands within the flow and flux of urban forces. The encampment, overall, emerges on the hill as an inevitable form of equilibrium, against the monochromatic dominance of the downtown. In its random organization, the place defies the order of the neoliberal public space by giving priority to the lived experience of people in spatial production. As a “blank slate in the center of the city” (232), the encampment holds the promise for new possibilities of urban design and everyday life.

Ironically enough, the vacant lots on which the encampment is built are the abandoned spaces of the nineteenth century Victorian mansions, demolished years ago by urban developers. What is left of a bourgeois community and their spaces are now merely conceptions, “the squares and rectangles, the geometry of a home that had been demolished many years ago” (15). The place left with only its geometrical contours is literally an example of *representations of space* conceived through geometrical signs that do not signify anything related to the lived experience:

Underneath these ephemeral structures were the ruins of a lost community, a forgotten neighborhood built with brick and cement. On the hill, and on the flat plain that extended from its base, he could see a grid of city streets, blocks of land cut in rectangles and bordered with sidewalks, asphalt avenues with iron manhole covers for the sewers. Dozens and dozens of concrete stairs led from the streets to what used to be front lawns. In all, Antonio counted more than forty demolished lots, a whole section of the city leveled to an expanse of wild grasses (15-16).

The relationship between the capitalist over-accumulation problem and urban renewal processes is embodied in the geometrical shapes reminiscent of by the demolished mansions. The lived experience of people residing in the mansions is now literally mere abstraction, and these abandoned spaces are soon to be reproduced in a new architectural master plan. The signboard near the homeless encampment reads, “Coming Soon: Crown Hill Hotel and Finance Park,” reminding trespassers that the place is a private property for future investments, while in the meantime it has to be kept unused and fortified by signs and rules.

The homeless encampment and the everyday activities performed in the area, on the other hand, defy the alienating design of the downtown, as well as the private property laws that aim to protect the vacant space against its use by people in need. The symmetrical parcels of the land as reminiscent of the Victorian mansions are appropriated by the homeless in accordance with their use-value and transformed into asymmetric temporary homes. The contradiction between both illustrates the tension between private property rights, which “are necessarily exclusive” (Mitchell, 2003: 19), and the right to housing, which is inseparable from *the right to the city*. In this sense, the illegal occupation of an unused space in the city and its reorganization by those in need becomes a collective act of transgression into private property, thus opening up the potential for the realization of *the right to the city*.

In a Lefebvrian context, the “housing question” is closely entwined with the “problematic of the city and the *urban*,” as without housing, the inhabitant is “deprived of a present or possible urban life” (Lefebvre, 2000: 146). Private property, when it collides with housing rights, constitutes an impediment to basic rights, such as the right to access urban services (Rolnik, 2014: 295). More significantly, private property rights bring along the right to evict people, sometimes through force and violence, which is also a right granted and secured by state apparatuses. Private property also adds to the alienating effects of the multidimensional flow of forces in the urban landscape, restricting creativity in lived spaces. Private property, therefore, stands against the concept of *the right to the city*, as it limits the potential of people to recreate the city as an *oeuvre*, through creativity and spontaneity. “In the contemporary city of homelessness,” therefore, “the right to inhabit the city must always be asserted not within, but against, the rights of property and returned to the right to inhabit” (Mitchell, 2003: 20). Considering that real estate and urban development composes much of the global economy in present context,¹⁵ the right to housing, and concurrently *the right to the city*, gains increasing relevance in contemporary American society and urban politics.

This is the central question in the novel in its representation of the homeless encampment as an alternative public space where human activities are not restricted to the bureaucratized everyday life in the modern city. All the urban exiles come together on the remnants of an industrial city and reorganize the place outside the constraints of exchange-value. The homeless build temporary homes using the left over materials that are of no value to the city’s consumerism. Some of the shelters, for example, are in the form of an igloo, made of “wool blankets and a blue tarpaulin attached to a round skeleton of wire and wood planks” (12). The shelters have plenty of room inside as they are built upon the whole area of vacant lots. Once the basic need of shelter is met, the appropriated urban space is collectively transformed into a fully lived space: “Voices came from the igloo shaped tent now, people speaking in Spanish and English, men with Central American accents, lilting voices that felt familiar and comforting” for Antonio, on his first night at the encampment. “There

¹⁵ For a recent discussion on this topic, see Madden and Marcuse (2016)

must be a hundred people living here,” he thinks “chapines and guanacos too, living here as if it were the most normal thing in the world, as if they’d been here for years and years” (13). Daily life activities are performed here in the encampment with all its specificity, right on the edge of the downtown, unfitting with its spectacular sight and sound:

Saturday morning in downtown Los Angeles. On Third Street a car zoomed past the vacant lot every minute or so, streaks of waxed metal screaming out a Doppler hello and goodbye as they headed for the bridge that somersaulted gracefully over the Harbor Freeway into the Oz of the Financial District. Antonio sat just a few blocks away, in a checkerboard of rubble-covered lots where weeds poked through crumbling layers of concrete, brick, and asphalt (40).

Watching his neighbors inside the encampment doing “their morning chores with a serious and practiced efficiency,” Antonio quickly becomes a member of the homeless community. “Even here in a barren lot,” after all, “people could settle into a domestic routine” (43). Falling outside the rule of capitalist city, the encampment stands as an oppositional place of “habiting,” in Lefebvrian terms. The problematic of habitat that is produced as a commodity and assigned with a supremacy over “habiting”¹⁶ has its roots in the 19th century, with the beginning of industrialization and the formation of industrial urban space. It is since then that the term “habiting” has been replaced by the concept of “habitat” in urban literature (Lefebvre: 2003, 81). “Habitat” was, in historical context, imposed from above as a homogeneous, global, and quantitative space, a requirement that “lived experience” allow itself to be enclosed in boxes, cages, or “dwelling machines.” Simultaneously, as an ideological imposition, it “repulsed or buried habiting in the unconscious” (Lefebvre, 2003: 81). To reverse this process, the repressed should assert their right to “habit,” the right to space. For the buried to come alive, “everyday existence” should be liberated from the “form of advertising or the embodiment of a world of commodities, exchange having abolished use or over-determined it” (Lefebvre, 2003: 82). Only then can dwelling become a poetic act in Heideggerian sense; man poetically dwells. One of the oldest camp dwellers, Frank, has his shelter “on a choice piece of real estate where the little plateau of Crown Hill dropped off sharply,

¹⁶ Lefebvre uses the word “habiting” to refer to the lived experience in his earlier works.

providing a panoramic view of the Harbor Freeway, The Financial District, and City Hall, a stubby white stone building dwarfed by towers of glass and steel” (46). Here on this spot, across from the great monuments of urban space, he welcomes his neighbors from the camp, “leaning back and stretching his legs, like a suburbanite entertaining his guest in his living room,” and they have their daily fun watching occasional accidents on “[t]he most dangerous stretch of freeway in California” (48). Unlike the alienating urbanity of the global metropolis, the sense of place is not reduced to abstract signs and symbols of decorporealized space, which is *representations of space*, but rather is *lived* to its fullest extent. “Here we all got our little piece of earth,” as Frank states, it is therefore “like a liberated zone” (48). The act of habiting thus collectively flows into a commodified urban habitat and subverts its homogeneous spatial structure. The narrative, from this framework, reimagines the encampment area as an alternative space, where the act of habiting is revitalized.

As an American micro-cosmos, populated by unwanted bodies from diverse nationalities, the encampment also offers a potential of alternative socio-spatial configurations outside the boundaries of nation and traditional forms of citizenship. As Ortiz puts it, “the figures in Tobar’s camp only secondarily bear the marks of race or ethnicity” (Ortiz, 2008: 22). Rather, the physical ground on which they dwell gives them a collective identity. The act of occupying and transforming the vacant lots into a lived space is represented as a politicized collective resistance, and from here, new imaginaries of citizenship arise. In the beginning, the whole setting is unfathomable for Antonio simply because there are “gringos” living in the encampment, along with African-Americans and Latinos: “Refugees. That was the term for people who lived like this, in makeshift tents, on barren ground. This was something new. He did not know that gringos could be refugees” (41). Having spent seven years in Los Angeles, Antonio knows well that “it was the nature of Los Angeles that the many races stayed separate, everyone on their own turf, Latinos with Latinos, blacks with blacks, whites with whites;” and now, “only in the little camp” he sees all the “races mixing, all thrown together because they had no place else to go” (261). Homelessness is imagined outside of the lines of ethnicity that segregate the city, and it becomes a state of “statelessness,” an overarching illustration of the refugee experience. In the encampment, neither Antonio nor the

other *indocumentados* reside in a lower or higher level than their American co-dwellers. “The bareness of the ground,” in this sense, “refers to a generalized deterritorialization that renders all inhabitants of such ground indiscriminately stateless, bereft of any meaningful and enfranchised belonging to any given polis” (Ortiz, 2008: 22).

Hannah Arendt defines “statelessness” as a condition “when human beings lacked their own government and had to fall back upon their minimum rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution was willing to guarantee them” (Arendt, 2003: 32). The homeless as urban refugees are legally banned from the privatized public spaces of the city, and they are deprived of urban services that are necessary for basic human needs. The encampment, on the other hand, is imagined as a zero-place, where *the right to the city* and the rights of citizens within the traditional formula of national citizenship are questioned on the ground. A new way of establishing collectivity stands against the traditional notion of “national” citizenship, thus opening up possibilities for redefining the meaning of human rights. What Tobar presents in his representation of the homeless encampment is a model of urban citizenship that is based on momentary and tactical spatial experience outside the rules of neoliberalism.

In his interpretation of Lefebvre’s idea of *the right to the city* in the present conjecture, David Harvey argues that universal human rights, in the sense that they are promoted by modern supranational organizations, “do not fundamentally challenge hegemonic liberal and neoliberal market logics, or the dominant modes of legality and state action” (Harvey, 2008: 23). Harvey explores the potential of *the right to the city* as “another type of human right” in today’s world, “in which the rights of private property and the profit rate trump all other notions of rights” (Harvey, 2008: 23). James Holston, in a slightly different context, defines the tactical movements of the disenfranchised urban population as “insurgent citizenship to confront the entrenched regimes of citizen inequality that the urban centers use to segregate them” (Holston, 2009: 245). The notion of urban citizenship has been gaining scholarly interest since the end of the century, as social inequalities deprive

people of their basic human rights in modern cities.¹⁷ Simultaneously, Tobar's illustration of the homeless encampment and its everyday life maps out the connections between notions of citizenship, human rights, and *the right to the city*. It offers a model of urban citizenship that involves participation in the decision-making process for urban issues once the right to space is claimed through the appropriation of private property. The idea of urban citizenship is exemplified in the novel, specifically through the representation of a homeless character, Larry Greene, whom the rest of the community calls the "Mayor." Participating in the meetings of the Board of Supervisors in the city hall every Tuesday, the Mayor serves as a representative of the homeless community at an institutional body that does not recognize the homeless as citizens. What the Mayor is simply after is to make their voice be heard by the center, and to take part in the decision-making processes that impact their lives. If occupying and appropriating private property is a subversive tactic against the capitalist market logics that segregates the city, the mayor then attempts to take the resistance to a higher level, to step forward from appropriation to participation.

"The right to the city," first of all, "legitimizes the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization" (Lefebvre, 1996: 195). The fullest accomplishment of *the right to the city*, on the other hand, is to remake the city "after one's desire" (Harvey, 2012: 4). The mayor's perpetual struggle is towards this right, to take part as a civilian in the making and remaking of the city. No matter the fact that he loses each time he tries, he continues to fight, and makes himself physically visible in the monumental spaces of law and regulation: "A real orator, the Mayor is. He's got his name on a couple of lawsuits too. Greene versus the County of Los Angeles. Has a nice sound to it, like a boxing match. In this corner, Los Angeles County. The county's a real heavyweight. The Mayor's got a good left hook, but the county's got the fancy lawyers, the best money can buy" (47). The mayor also complains about the General Relief payment to the authorities, how the two hundred and ninety-seven dollars a month keeps them broke

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the concept of urban citizenship, see Appadurai and Holston (1996), Purcell (2003), Baubock (2003), Smith and McQuarrie (2012), Bridges and Fortner (2016).

and without indignity: “You go to the check-cashing place, they take out their chunk. That’s a whole little Mafia right there. Go to a regular bank, and they laugh at you. You get angry, you raise your voice, and they call the security guard to throw you out because you’re stinking up the place and making all the legitimate customers nervous” (47). Here, conforming to the norms of national identity does not grant a person, in the case of the homeless, their civic rights, because to be recognized by governmental institutions entails economic independence. The mayor as a homeless person and an American citizen questions this dilemma inherent in the notion of national citizenship. His bodily resistance in public spaces, therefore, brings to the fore the idea of urban citizenship and its relation with the urban dweller’s right to the city.

While mass migrations all around the world defy traditional norms of citizenship and transnational/post-national citizenship is also becoming a prevalent concept, the notion of citizenship still resonates with the notion of nation, and the rights of the immigrants and refugees remain limited within the codes of the nation state as well. In this sense, the words “homeless” and “American refugees,” as Antonio generalize them all (54), are used as synecdoches in the novel, as both request to exist, to live, and in the case of the mayor, to have civic participation in the making of the city and urban life. The fight for the space and spatial production process is thus used as a common resistance strategy for all of the marginalized in the city. Tobar, in his non-fiction work, *Translation Nation*, also discusses this intriguing relation between the city and civic participation in urban life, in the context of Los Angeles and its growing Latino immigrant populations in the early 90s:

Most Latino immigrants then remained studiously distant from the institutions of American government, and especially courthouses, which were known as places where Spanish-speaking people went before they got carted off to jail. Much hand-wringing was taking place in English-speaking Los Angeles about this phenomenon – the so-called ‘Third World-ization’ of the city – and the implications of living in a metropolis where millions didn’t understand the rules of governance and civic life ... Most immigrants to the city, it seemed, had civic identities that were completely on the other side of the border (Tobar, 2005: 28).

Based on the real story of a Latino refugee who keeps showing up at a courthouse to stand up for his civic rights against an urban developer, Tobar creates a backstory for Jose Juan, Antonio’s room-mate, in *The Tattooed Soldier*, in order to

delve further into the question of citizenship and the immigrant experience. Cheated by an Armenian contractor, Jose Juan, “with his usual perseverance,” never gives up seeking justice, but the only thing that he can do is to take the case to the small claims courts due to his immigrant status. In the end, he never gets his money back, as he is not an institutionally recognized civic body. Like the rest of the urban damned, Jose Juan, the real, as well as the fictional persona, “takes his revenge during the anarchy of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, the municipal day of settling accounts” (Tobar, 2005: 64). In both *The Tattooed Soldier* and *Translation Nation*, Tobar posits a tension that derives from the lack of equal access to the urban center, while an increasing number of the urban population does not have a home or a homeland to dwell in.

The fight for a space as a tactical movement of the homeless to assert their existence is also represented in the repetitive act of rebuilding the encampment and organizing the space on the basis of its use-value. When security forces hired by the corporation that own the vacant lots attempt to evict the homeless and disperse the community with the help of the LAPD, the Mayor asks for the warrant, but one of them answers: “We don’t need any warrant, asshole ... All these shacks, it’s a health hazard. Plus this is private property” (236). The homeless resist, because it is their “squatter rights” that they are defending, as the Mayor shouts, “[t]his my home. I ain’t going! I ain’t going!” (236-7). The whole encampment, however, is razed to the ground by city sanitation services:

The bulldozer advanced across the lot and crushed the igloo hut, the huge shovel descending in a cacophony of shattered wood and snapping plastic. The Mexicanos who lived there were gone, off looking for work. The bulldozer scooped up their possessions and deposited them in the garbage truck, a remarkably clean vehicle with a fresh coat of pale green paint and the word “Sanitation” stenciled on its door. (237).

Yet the homeless quickly and easily organize again, to reclaim their rights to space. Moving from the hill, the homeless “all looked angry but not confused, and they appeared to be heading for a destination” (238). Antonio and Jose Juan also now move “in the fashion they had perfected after that first eviction” (238). The homeless walk only two blocks down and occupy another unused urban area, “an open lot surrounded by a chain-link fence, a vast concrete floor, V-shaped, like a funnel, enclosed by two concrete walls that converged toward a tunnel entrance” (239). The chain-link fences covering the entrance to the lots are “systematically torn to pieces

until only a few support poles and strands of fence remained,” and, “every inch of the place was covered with spray paint, a vast canvas shimmering like an acrylic rainbow sea” (238-39). The concrete walls have been transformed into the “private gallery” of graffiti artists (239). Outside the tunnel is “a concrete temple, a huge cement box with the words “Pacific Electric Rail Co.” etched across the top” (239). Like the land of the demolished Victorian mansions, this part of the neighborhood is also emblematic of the industrial urban design that will be replaced by the process of capitalist production of space. While urban spaces are produced and reproduced depending on market needs, unused spaces are also appropriated through repetitive spatial tactics by people in need. The new encampment area, similarly to the previous one, demonstrates this contradiction, and the tunnel at the end of the new encampment illustrates another threshold, a promise into a liberated urban life. It is this place where Antonio kills Longoria, finally releases his traumatic past and steps into a new life. The murdering scenes coincide with the uprising scenes, which similarly suggests crossing the threshold metaphor for the city itself. In the meantime, The Crown Hill area is fortified with “a new cyclone fence and freshly painted warnings against trespassing,” and “maybe in a week or so, people would begin to tear down the fence and reinhabit the place” (283). The claim for the right to space is embodied in the rebuilding of the encampment, which also exemplifies the inherent conflict between *representations of space* and *representational spaces*, between private property and housing rights, between norms of citizenship and urban dwelling. Occupation of private property and the struggle to participate in the decision-making process by the homeless represents an alternative collectivity that does not exclude the ones at the bottom of the social ladder but brings all together on the common ground of the right to the city.

3.5. HYGIENIC BODIES / INFECTED BODIES

The representation of the homeless encampment as a space of struggle is accompanied in the novel with the treatment of body as a space of both discipline and resistance. Neocolonial practices of the US and Central American countries are reflected in the novel through the representation of body, as well as the city, that has

to be either hygienized/disciplined or ostracized/destroyed. There is a sharp contrast in the novel between the hygienic bodies that conform to the codes of *representations of space*, and the threatening bodies that stand out as scars in the urbanscape. The flashbacks to Guatemala bring two different portrayals of Antonio together, the one who does not want to get involved in the fight against the genocide committed towards Mayans, and the one who himself becomes part of a marginalized community in a first world country. Biopolitical warfare towards the Mayans in Guatemala repeats itself in a slightly different way in Los Angeles in the context of the homeless, the ones who are at the bottom of the social ladder. It is, however, mainly Guillermo Longoria, the tattooed soldier, who represents the body as a strategic medium of spatial production by neocolonial/neoliberal power.

A retired soldier of the right-wing Guatemalan army, Longoria receives some of his military training in the US, at a military base in North Carolina with other Central-American soldiers during the US-sponsored civil war in Central America. Later he is assigned as a member of a death squad who kidnaps, tortures and murders persons with anti-government leanings in the country, such as leftist students, union leaders, writers and politicians. The son of a Mayan peasant, Longoria is recruited to the army by state force, like so many of the poor Mayan boys in that era, and is then trained as a professional soldier working against his own community. His subjectivity is completely negated by the state, through the ideologies of the “[d]ead dictators and demagogues” who “lived on in these cold brow eyes” (24). After he has retired, Longoria joins the massive number of refugees that migrate from Central America to the United States. “Guatemala was like a human body,” as his Lieutenant once says, “and if you didn’t kill these organisms the body could die” (64). Longoria’s experience of Los Angeles is also shaped by this motto: “There were days when Longoria thought the same kind of infection was spreading here in Los Angeles, although the symptoms might be different from the ones in Guatemala. Los Angeles could use a thorough cleansing” (65). This analogy between the body and the city, the two strategic geographies for power recurrently occurs in the novel in its criticism of neocolonial/neoliberal practices of the US both inside and outside.

Longoria’s traumatic past, back in Guatemala, weighs heavily upon him in the US, though in a different way from Antonio’s. His immigrant experience in the

Los Angeles contradicts with the hygienic discipline and order that he has deeply internalized during his military training in Fort Bragg, “that army base in a place called North Carolina, the promise and perfection of a city run by professional soldiers” (219). His sense of self, which is already problematic due to the rupture with his Guatemalan past, is continuously distorted in the city, and he slowly loses his mental stability. Longoria is, in a sense, the Los Angeles version of Scorsese’s taxi driver, the war-inflicted veteran who is obsessed with the idea of washing off the dirt of the city: “*This place, this Los Angeles, is a cloud of filth, even the sky is muddy brown.* He found condoms and hypodermic needles on the street. There were needles everywhere: in the park, on the lawns, by the bus benches, in the gutters. All it took was one little poke, one little drop to infect you (23, emphasis in original).

Like many of the Central-American refugees in Los Angeles, Longoria also lives in Westlake. He does not have access to the more “sterile” quarters of the city, therefore he is “disillusioned” with a reality that is incompatible with the image of the city he had in mind, back in his country. He does not interact with his neighborhood community, keeping his distance from all of the “janitors, garment workers, and housekeepers, scrambling off to work every morning,” and “living in dense apartments, two or even three families sharing one room” (21). He keeps his one-room apartment extremely clean, and his body hygiene is his daily priority. “The self imposed discipline and Spartan lifestyle set him apart,” he thinks, “from the rabble that lived around him, the Salvadorans, Mexicans and Guatemalans who filled the Westlake Arms” (21). He is still paralyzed with the fear that the dirt from the streets of his neighborhood will creep into his apartment, “no matter that his palms were wrinkled and white from scrubbing” (21). The big American city Longoria imagines before moving to Los Angeles is the embodiment of military order and cleanliness; nevertheless, his refugee status locates him with the group of people he used to fight against when he was in the army. Back in Guatemala he is dictated that the other is the source of an infection to be destroyed immediately, and in a different context in Los Angeles, he suffers from the illusion that he is being contaminated by the other. In the scenes of the uprising at the end of the novel, Longoria finally loses all control, and he imagines the rioters as the children of the revolutionaries spreading disease in Guatemala: “Even when you killed the children, the infection

still spread ... Children were all around him now, their bodies painted like this, a guerilla army of tattooed cholos assaulting the pawnshops and malls. How many children would have to die before the infection went away?" (297). Thus, as a Central-American refugee, Longoria cannot find a place for himself within the fragmentations of the city, and he ends up dead in the dark tunnel by the homeless encampment.

In the alternate chapters of the novel that are set in Guatemala and then in the United States, bio-politics is represented as a state apparatus to regulate or exterminate the unwanted bodies. While the "sanitation" trucks destroy the homeless shelters in Los Angeles and cleanse the private property of the outsider, the Mayan community in San Cristobal is considered equal to the city dump, also being banished to the garbage hills. In Los Angeles, there is no clean water in public space, and the homeless have to clean their bodies in the Los Angeles River. One of the iconic symbols of the city that forms the setting for so many Hollywood movie scenes, the Los Angeles River used to provide drinking water for the city in the past. In the context of *The Tattooed Soldier*, the river now carries the city's garbage, and while it runs through the heart of the city, it cannot be used as a public facility for its inhabitants. Mike Davis describes this transformation as the "white-collar residential colonization of downtown," and points to the fact that it is becoming harder for the poor and the homeless to meet their most basic needs such as bathing and the use of toilet facilities. It is a "variant of low-intensity warfare" (Davis, 2006: 232), and the Los Angeles River in the novel is the representation of this warfare, as it is a central source of water running through the veins of the city, but it is cut off by neoliberal urban policies and contaminated by the ever-increasing urban waste:

The Los Angeles River was a giant concrete channel through the center of the city. At the bottom of this huge chasm ran a brackish stream; except for a few weeds that poked their way through the cement, it contained no signs of natural life. During heavy rainstorms, the pathetic trickle became a raging torrent of fallen trees and trash bobbing in white water: tires, furniture, bottles, cans, newspapers, and bicycle frames from the suburbs upstream (75).

Back in San Christobal, biological warfare is at its most extreme. Before Antonio's family is killed and he flees to California, his wife Elena, finds out that the primary cause of infant mortality in Colonia La Loya, a slum built on the peripheries of San Christobal, is the contamination of drinking water. Searching around the

shantytown, the couple discovers that the entirety of city's garbage dump is draining into the river, causing diarrhea and killing newborns:

Before them was an entire hillside covered with trash, a panorama of filth. Plastic bags, toilet paper, animal bones ... The leftovers of a thousand meals filled this place every day. People came here to dump the buckets of excrement-soiled paper they kept next to their toilets to avoid clogging their pipes ... All this rotting food and shit was becoming a permanent part of the landscape, altering the topography of the slope, killing off the vegetation (133-4).

Elena writes to state officials about the situation, and it is revealed that the authorities are already aware of it, which means the Mayan community in the slums is subjected to a systematic genocide by the Guatemalan state. Watching coffins as they pass by the window, Elena looks at one of the men at the funeral, a resident of the shantytown, and thinks, "*my child lives, his child dies*" (130, emphasis in original). Taking action against this injustice leads to her own and her son's death at the hands of the death squad and to Antonio leaving the city.

The guerillas in the countryside fighting for the rights of the disenfranchised is "a romantic dream" for Antonio, a privileged student back in the Guatemalan Capital, and when he and his family move to the countryside, the dream becomes real, but Antonio does not want to take part in Elena's struggle. As a refugee in Los Angeles, Antonio himself becomes subject to the city's waste, as the city "made him stoop and it cast him out with its untouchables, the lifters of dirty dishes, the silent sweepers of bathroom floors, the men and women who placed their hands in the city's toilets and urinals, scrubbing everything antiseptic clean" (54). As a homeless man, it is only in the Los Angeles River, with its waste and chemicals, where he can wash himself. Somebody's child lives, and the other's dies; somebody drains away the dump into the river, and the other has to step into that river. The novel's political valence rests upon this dialectic that vividly evokes the spatially entrenched injustice in a transnational context.

Julie Minich argues that metaphors of corporeality and cleanliness are used in the novel to represent national ideals, both from the Guatemalan and US perspectives, and their role in maintaining racial inequality and disenfranchisement. From this perspective, the national ideal of multiculturalism in the US context and *mestizaje* in Latin American context fall in contradiction with the homogenizing state politics (Minich, 2013). While contaminated rivers are represented, in part, as

warfare towards an ethnic group in the Guatemalan context, the opposition between clean and unclean bodies, in the case of Los Angeles, is related more to the unjust distribution of urban resources. The politics of hygiene is centered upon the tension between private property and homelessness in the novel, specifically in relation to having public space become a commodity. Public health and sanitation becomes subject to private property rights and the body is alienated from the use-value of the public space. Increasing privatization of public space thus brings a dialectics to the novel, between freedom and homelessness, which has been a hot debate in relation to the organization of global cities since the early 90s. “What is emerging-and it is not just a matter of fantasy” as Waldron states, “is a state of affairs in which a million or more citizens have no place to perform elementary human activities like urinating, washing, sleeping, cooking, eating, and standing around” (Waldron, 1991: 301). In his representation of Los Angeles, Tobar, first and foremost, focuses on these basic human rights and in what ways the urban population is dispossessed of these. In regulating the city as a space of capital, hygiene becomes a strategic medium to segregate the city, to locate certain populations into manageable abstract space, and debase the others to the dump accumulating below. Continuous spatial reproduction changes these locations in regards to the organization of the city, and new places with high exchange value are created, while the old become a wasteland, however the unjust distribution of space and resources remain constant. The novel’s critique of geography, in this sense, extends from the body to the city, from colonial biopolitics in Guatemala to neoliberal urban politics in Los Angeles.

3.6. CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF THE CITY: THE LOS ANGELES UPRISING

The *Tattooed Soldier* stages the 1992 Los Angeles uprising as an inevitable consequence of an ever-widening socio-spatial injustice, which has its roots in neocolonial/neoliberal US ideology. The novel portrays a heightening tension that pushes at the threshold of the city, exploding in the end into an urban uprising. Here I use the notion “threshold of the city” as it is termed and used by Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Projects*, and David Harvey, in referring to mid-nineteenth and twentieth

centuries Paris, the phases when the city was subject to massive urban development projects, that created alienation and distress in the city's everyday life. (Harvey, 2003). Benjamin describes the threshold of the city "as a zone of transition," a moment before "transformation, passage, wave action" (Benjamin, 1999: 494). As one of the few novels in contemporary American Literature representing the 1992 Los Angeles uprising,¹⁸ *The Tattooed Soldier*, while serving as a historical text providing insight into and background about one of the most tumultuous moments in the US's history mainly focuses on the processes that lead up to the uprising, the very moment of crossing the threshold. In doing so, the novel deploys the homeless and refugee perspectives as urban experience from below. Homelessness and the refugee experience, in this process, is represented as "a downward spiral that ended right here," at the innermost layers of the city, "the sewer line at the bottom of the drain" (240) that finally blows up into the streets.

The uprising starts soon after the encampment in the Crown Hill is flattened to the ground and the homeless have to move into another area. The unrest among the homeless, "disheveled men shaken from sleep, holding blankets and bedrolls in their arms, scrambling to pick up shoes, boxes, sweatshirts, hats," (232) blends into the noise of the bulldozers that symbolize urban renewal at the expense of the urban dwellers: "Their mouths were open in protest, but Antonio couldn't hear what they were saying over the din of the engines. A dust cloud grew behind them, and they seemed to be retreating from its fury, dropping papers and clothes in their rush to get away before it swallowed them up and turned them to dust men" (232).

Ashes and dust, and the smell of fire, soon swallow the whole city, once the great burning, "quemazones," begins: "Flakes of ash floated in the air like snow ... after all those scrap-wood campfires, smoke had seeped into Antonio's clothes, his hair, his skin. Today the smell was everywhere, carried aloft by hundreds of fires, a city of mini-malls and palm trees ablaze" (298). Sitting by the fire at their latest location and chatting, the tension that leads up to the uprising is also voiced by the Mayor, who is reminiscing about the old days, when trolley cars would go into the

¹⁸ Ryan Gattis's *All Involved* (2015) and Aris Janigian's *This Angelic Land* (2012) are the other two novels set before and during the 1992 uprising, but neither have received much critical acclaim.

downtown through the tunnel, which is now occupied by a homeless encampment: “Today is different. These are the last days, and so all the evil comes out. The Ottoman Empire. It was like that at the end. Constantinople. Everyone grabbing at everybody else” (242). In the meantime, Antonio meets Longoria at MacArthur Park for the first time after he flees to the US, and he begins to plot his revenge. He follows Longoria’s every movement in the city, and the steps of the two refugees provide a picture of the landscape right before the catastrophe erupts. At one point Longoria visits a friend from the army, who is now a depressed alcoholic living in South Central Los Angeles, the place where the riots first erupted:

Here and there he saw buildings that were only empty shells: four walls and no ceiling, painted announcements on the fronts almost erased by time. A few buildings seemed to have been burned many many years ago: scorched brick walls left standing alone, like part of a movie set, broken iron bars, twisted and rusting. Longoria looked at those buildings and thought a war must have been fought here, though he had no idea when (192).

The place reminds Longoria of the villages burned down by him and his soldier friends back in Guatemala. “The scattered ruins along Hoover Street looked familiar,” bringing back memories filled with violence and death (192). “A conquering army leaves this sort of landscape, the sooty signature of fire, the hand of random, celebratory destruction,” an image he cannot easily identify with an American city (192). These are also the images the novel portrays, before one last big fire starts in Los Angeles. By juxtaposing the spatial imprints of urban degeneration in the U.S. with the scenes of the civil war in Guatemalan villages, the narrative opens another frame to the historical event of the 1992 uprising, one that is different from the images within mainstream media. In this sense, *The Tattooed Soldier* makes a significant contribution to the debates about the political reasons and contents of the event.

David Harvey describes cities as major centers for collective organization and counter-attack, against forces that push the threshold of the city to its limits through maintaining a socio-spatial inequality. Neoliberal urban policies of segregation and ghettoization design cities and public spaces in a way that it becomes more difficult for people to come together and organize. Harvey, on the other hand, gives the 1992 uprising as an example of the collective organization of the disenfranchised against neoliberal urbanity: “You’ve dispersed what’s termed “the ghetto” more and more, so

low-income communities are no longer highly concentrated enough to organize themselves. There's been moments where they've been able to come together, like in Los Angeles with Rodney King" (Harvey, 2012b). Edward Soja, in his comprehensive analysis of the 1992 uprising, also describes such events as a product of periods of social crisis, during which "bodies, cities, and texts become key sites of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic contestations" (Soja, 2000: 367). Soja defines the Los Angeles uprising as part of a global condition of disorder "that is marked in Los Angeles, as in other global cities, by major economic, cultural, and demographic structurings, by territorial struggles for voice and space" (Soja, 2000: 368). Also, in a Lefebvrian context, the assertion of "maximal difference" as a revolutionary act "can be found both within the interstices of everyday life and in the midst of urban uprisings" (Kipfer, 2008: 192).

There are various names given to the 1992 uprising, and after so many years and so much research produced about it, it seems that there is still no agreement on how to name it. "Civil disorder," "uprising," "riot," "urban unrest" are the names that are used by various scholars and researchers (Baldassare, 1994; Chang and Leong, 1994; Ong and Hee, 1993). James H. Johnson, on the other hand, categorizes it as a "rebellion," emphasizing the fact that it grew out of socio-economic inequalities: "We have purposefully defined this civil disorder as a rebellion, as opposed to a riot, because of the gaping disparity in economic opportunity and in treatment by the criminal justice system of poor residents in South-Central Los Angeles, the site of conflagration" (Johnson et al., 1992: iii). Urban sociologists also focus on the tension growing below the city due to the segregational urban processes, and interpret the uprising as a momentary resistance against oppressive urban processes. It is actually no coincidence that "the wave of urban riots in American cities during the 1960s emerged first in Los Angeles — in the Watts riots of 1965" (Dreier, 2003: 39), and it is the same city where the largest urban unrest in American history occurred in 1992. The "suburban sprawl and downtown redevelopment, locking out the poor from the benefits of poor" in the post-war era, continued with the rise of neoliberal ideology at the end of the twentieth century, increasing the urban tension both before Watts and the Los Angeles Riots. "More than any other urban area," as Peter Dreier states, "Los Angeles has reflected the impact of federal government

policies and subsidies that encouraged suburbanization, auto dependency, and racial segregation” (Dreier, 2003: 39).

While the increasing socio-spatial injustice paved the way for a “ground zero” movement, the triggering reason was ethnic-related, as the uprising erupted right after the jury acquitted the four police officers that were recorded beating an unarmed African-American man, Rodney King. Before that, along with Operation Hammer, the harassments and criminalization of Black Youth from different economic backgrounds had long increased the tension within the Black communities (Davis, 2002). Also two months before the uprisings, Latasha Harlins, a 15-year-old Black girl was shot dead by a Korean shop owner, who was given a 500 dollar fine and sentenced only to four hundred hours of community service. During the riots, Korean businesses were mainly targeted and 95 percent of Korean businesses in South-Central Los Angeles were destroyed (Cheung, 2005). One reason for the attacks on Korean businesses was ideological, as Mike Davis states, “the idea that a kind of scorched earth of Korean businesses would somehow be fertile ground for a black renaissance” among black gangs and youth population (Katz, Smith, and Davis, 1992: 21). The uprisings thus initially started as a large protest by the African-American community in the city, however, it soon spread to other ethnically marked areas that had long been dealing with unemployment, insufficient urban infrastructures, and gentrification. The American mainstream media, in this sense, have been fiercely criticized for manipulating people by reflecting the event as a Black uprising.

In an interview, Mike Davis, the renown Los Angeles geographer, describes the event as “an extremely hybrid uprising, possibly the first multi-ethnic rioting in modern American history” (Katz, Smith and Davis, 1992: 19). Unlike the media coverage that broadcasted specific images that still prevail in the national memory, it was not “a unitary Black riot,” as Davis insists, but rather “an archipelago of multi-ethnic uprisings” (Davis, 2002). As statistics show, only a third of the rioters arrested were black, and 51 percent were Latino, mostly young men (Lieberman, 1992). Valle and Torres also point to the fact “that only one in ten of those arrested during the riot had gang affiliations,” and “the arrest records indicated that the rioters were united more by lives of joblessness, homelessness, and educational failure than by race”

(Valle and Torres, 2000: 47). Hector Tobar also emphasizes the multi-ethnic character of the event in his non-fiction *Translation Nation*, focusing on its class dimension: “It was the first Latin American-style class uprising in United States history, the same kind of visceral expression of rage that over the centuries had led peons to burn down the *hacendado*’s home, or villagers to turn up the cobblestones of their streets and throw them at marching soldiers” (Tobar, 2005: 31).

Right after the uprising, then-Mayor Tom Bradley, who is notorious for his segregating urban policies before the eruption of the riots, enacted the “Rebuild Los Angeles Program,”¹⁹ which aimed “to spend five years harnessing the power of the private sector to replace and improve on what was lost” (Jaffe, 2012). The program was a failure and it is still criticized because the “ninety-four board members included a wide spectrum of business, government, civic, religious, and celebrity names ... but it had no organic connection to the riot-torn neighborhoods it was supposed to serve” (Dreier, 2003: 50).

The Tattooed Soldier questions the rioting and looting during the uprising through the perspective of Antonio at the end of the novel, but in general, represents the whole event as an expected explosion, a counter act by those whose voices are unheard. From the beginning of the novel, tension grows in the city, with an added impetus of a spatial injustice that is illustrated through the homeless population and their encampment. The scenes of the uprising are designed in the form of “wave actions,” in Walter Benjamin’s terms, happening at the threshold of the city, when the inhabitants react against the injustice, and intervene in the regular order and law, with chaos and disruption. The Mayor and Frank portray the rebellious side of the uprising, and they are the first to take action when they hear that the police officers beating Rodney King are free, that “[T]hey’re walking the streets now. With smiles on their faces. Not guilty. Every last one of them, not guilty” (278). The two homeless men also represent the recent collective memory of the city, and this, for them, is a historic moment:

“we’re back from the war,” Frank said. “Back from the revolution.” “Victorious

¹⁹ “Rebuild Los Angeles” is also mentioned in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*, which will be discussed in the following chapter, as an allusion to the 1992 Los Angeles uprising.

days,” the Mayor said. “These are victorious days.” Both men were grinning, their faces more alive than Antonio had ever seen them. “The battle of Parker Center,” the Mayor said bombastically. “That’s what they’ll call it. The historic battle of Parker Center. When the people got theirs” (280).

It is a time when iconic buildings of the city are attacked and occupied by people, including the Los Angeles Times, which was one of the leading representatives of the mainstream media: “I never thought I’d live to see the day when we’d attack the Los Angeles Times ... We besieged the place, that’s the word. We Besieged,” (280) the Mayor says. In certain moments, the sieges and battles take the form of an alternative urban festival, where new rhythms are created through spatial appropriation: “The whole thing was too much like a street fair, with alarm bells and shattering glass and crashing metal substituting for carnival music. People were breaking windows, cars were driving up to the intersection and smashing into each other” (287). Similarly, in his *Translation Nation*, based on his experiences as a journalist during the uprising, Tobar emphasizes the festivity atmosphere of the uprising, describing some of its moments as “a fiesta, an expression of ‘the inflammable desires we carry within us’ ... For a fleeting moment,” he adds, “the city’s stultifying sociological discipline was in ruins” (Tobar, 2005: 31). The novel maps out those moments of laughter, desire, and chaos nested with each other, and shows how there is the potential for *representational spaces* to set free when law and order in the city is replaced by the catastrophic interventions of the people.

The novel traces the repressed *representational spaces* from the villages of Guatemala to the streets of Los Angeles, both unfolding in a public space, such as the El Pulgarcito Express, the Central-American post office in Los Angeles, where Longoria works. The place represents the Guatemalan state and US neocolonialism, which leads to people leaving their homeland and seeking refugee elsewhere. People attack the post office and tear down the Guatemalan right-wing presidential candidate’s posters decorating the walls. A grandmotherly woman, whom in an earlier chapter in the novel is beaten by Longoria because she recognizes him as the assassin of her son and daughter-in-law back in Guatemala, now returns to the scene, shouting at the rioters: “The packages never got there ... Or when they did half of what we sent was missing ... Take everything. Take it all. Gusanos sinvergüenzas. They deserve it. Burn the place down!” (293). With the eruption of the uprising, the

subaltern now have the chance to exact their revenge for the injustice they had been subjected to for so long. Jose Juan, for example, plans to take his money back from his former Armenian boss, who has not bothered to pay him for his labor because he is undocumented. He decides to “get even” by setting his office on fire, “which seems to be popular today” (287). As a homeless flaneur walking along the tracks of Longoria and watching the city burn, Antonio thinks, “[s]omeone had declared this the municipal day of settling accounts, a day for all vendettas, private and public”²⁰ (287). Antonio himself begins to get carried away with his plan for revenge, as the scenes of the uprising become more intense.

Towards the end of the novel, Antonio’s and Longoria’s chapters merge, the same story now being told from two different perspectives. Antonio buys a gun with the money he borrows from Jose Juan, and he plots revenge with Frank in the camp. “*My madness is everyone’s madness*” (299, emphasis in original), he thinks as he takes one last tour, following the soldier on the streets with his homeless friend Frank. Frank is willing to help Antonio because he thinks the soldier “is a real-life Nazi, living in our time” or just because “the idea of meeting out justice, of fighting against the darkest evil appealed to him” (242-3). The encampment becomes the stage of a “war-time drama,” Antonio imagines, and the “two men standing on the edge of history, like partisans camped in the hills” (244). Similarly, in the same uprising chapters, the madness of the city devours Longoria as well, and his traumatic past comes alive: “the demons of his memory had taken flight and were loose on the streets of Los Angeles. A trick of the mind, a hallucination. Everything spilling from his head onto the streets” (297). From his perspective, the people who take to the streets in Los Angeles are not any different from the insurgent citizens of Guatemala, the Mayans, peasants, and the leftists who rebel against the government. The rioters on the streets are “hoodlums” that “would melt into the city just as the guerillas disappeared into the hills” of Guatemala (230). The whole thing now “spread northward from its cradle on faraway Florence Avenue, past the university, finally spilling over the bridges and through the underpasses of the Santa Monica

²⁰ The phrase “municipal day for settling accounts” is also used by Tobar in his non-fiction work *Translation Nation*.

Freeway” (290), and it all happened so quickly that, Longoria thinks, there should be “some guerilla cell masterminding the operation deep within the fabric of the city” (291). Unlike the army and death squads in Central America, the LAPD, is not the military force he considers it should be. “Black and brown and white arms emerging from the T-shirts rock the police car like a seesaw” (277), and “cholos climbing on top of it ... raising their arms in defiant celebration” (230). Now that he is not a participant on the side suppressing the rebellion, but simply stands in the middle of the chaos as a city dweller, “[m]emories rush forward, taking hold of him by the chest. Fire and laughter” (277). When the police shoot an unarmed young Latino boy three times in the back, and people yell at the police, “¡Asesinos!,” a word he has heard many times, the city of Los Angeles and the squares, towns, and villages of Guatemala, all come together into common ground. When the threshold of the city is crossed and an unprecedented flow of humanity occupies the streets, the wave action begins. Then the dweller on that ground digs deep and finds the innermost stratum, where both individual and collective memories, desires, and dreams are buried.

At the end of the novel, Antonio shoots the tattooed soldier in Westlake, but the soldier, now wounded, follows him back to the encampment. Antonio drags him to the end of the tunnel, where Longoria dies imagining the Mayan village of his childhood. Before Antonio steps out of the tunnel, to leave the encampment for a new beginning, he thinks, *[t]he city is burning all around us. The sirens are singing goodbye to the soldier* (300 emphasis in original). However, the dilemma that Antonio faces, twice in the novel, once when he sees white people living in the homeless camp in Los Angeles, and again when he first meets his arch-enemy, Longoria, in Los Angeles and hears him speak Spanish with a peasant Mayan accent, still prevails. Though Longoria represents a repressive ideology, both in the Guatemalan and American context, he also possesses a refugee status, and thus lacks *the right to the city*. While the parallelism between the town square in San Christobal and MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, the two symbolic spaces the two men first meet each other on the Northern and Southern sides of the border, sounds poetic, the way justice is brought about in the end, is highly questionable. While Los Angeles, at the beginning of the novel, is “this freeway-covered plain,” where Antonio is “wandering ... in an amnesiac daze, far from even the memory of the soil” (73), the

uprising unravels the hidden paths to individual memory and releases the trauma, but Tobar does not directly hint at a collective awareness in the urban level once the uprising is over.

The Tattooed Soldier not only depicts the uprising as an explosion after so much accumulation of urban tension, but also questions its moments of looting. In doing so, however, the narrative emphasizes the “Latin American class dimension” of the uprising, as Tobar also discusses in *Translation Nation*. The Latin American population joining the uprising is illustrated in the novel through the socio-economic perspective, as a portrayal of the immigrant labor force finally breaking free:

Housekeepers, garment workers, bus boys. Mexican, Honduran, Costa Rican, Nicaraguan. And of course his countrymen, the Guatemaltecos. It was a day without submissiveness, a day without coffee to pour or strangers’ babies to feed or the whirl of sewing machines in the factory. It was a day to liberate toolboxes and diapers from their glass cages. A day when all the pretty objects in the store windows would mock them no longer (288).

When the uprising ends in the novel, people of the city collectively begin to clean the streets to start all over again, as Antonio also prepares to move into an apartment with Jose Juan, located in South Central. People cleaning the streets is the picture of “the true brotherhood of the city,” Antonio thinks, “sweeping and sweeping, strangers meeting to collect a treasure of shimmering yards” (311).

The uprising, first of all, is a disruptive moment that offers the possibility of challenging the hegemonic socio-spatial organization by reasserting *representational spaces*. Here, catastrophe and destruction opens up a path towards the imagination of a new “brotherhood,” an alternative collectivity. As Antonio puts it, both literally and metaphorically, “the brooms could not do their work without fields of broken glass, without the soggy ashes that covered the sidewalks” (311). However, while Antonio imagines that his rebel wife “Elena would have loved to see throngs of nannies taking over the streets of an American city” (311), he also reflects upon the problem of looting in a scene he witnesses in Westlake Arms: a couple struggling hard with a stolen sofa too large to take inside their tiny apartment. For Elena, the act of revolution always begins with an act of love, but Antonio is confused “if throwing a rock was an act of revolution and thus also an act of love ... but Antonio was willing to allow for the possibility” (311). In *Translation Nation*, Tobar similarly questions the morality of looting through the eyes of his childhood hero Che

Guevera, but concludes that it was, overall, an expected outburst:

Che would have disapproved of what I saw on the streets of Los Angeles that day ... Still he would have understood the collective desire to run down the street with ill-gotten canned goods, disposable diapers, imported beer, and other valuable objects as the predictable response of a people with a lesser legal and political status, a people who had come to believe ... that they lived outside the protective shelter of American democracy (Tobar, 2005: 30).

The Tattooed Soldier depicts the uprising as an expected result of an urban tension, during which the homeless, refugees, illegal immigrants, ghettoized African Americans, and the rest of the disenfranchised claimed the streets of Los Angeles. The uprising as the denouement of the novel unravels the threshold of the city, and the possibilities that might ensue once this threshold is crossed. As Longoria regrets, once the uprising begins, “he would have sensed the explosiveness of the city, the correlation of forces on the street” (277). By emphasizing the multi-ethnic character of the event, Tobar urges for a correlation that may bring redemption in the end, and thus an urban uprising, in a sense, is a rehearsal of such action. The uprising, in this sense, is illustrated as something “to get hold of,” as is also illustrated in Homi Bhabha’s poem:

This twilight moment / is an in-between moment. / It’s the moment of dusk. / It’s the moment of ambivalence / and ambiguity / The in clarity, / the enigma, / the ambivalences, / in what happened in the Los Angeles / uprisings / are precisely what we want to get hold of. / It’s exactly the moment / when the Los Angeles uprisings could be something / else / than it was / seen to be, / or maybe something / other than it was seen to be... (qtd. in Soja, 2000: 355)

The implications of the 1992 Los Angeles uprising are still subject to debate. The conditions that led to an uprising that cost 44 lives, and 1 billion dollar in damages in 1992, still prevail in the American global city today, and continue to deepen the urban tension below. Hence Peter Dreier’s question on the matter is more relevant than ever: “Who can say whether the ticking time bomb will eventually explode again?” (Dreier, 2003: 38).

The Tattooed Soldier situates the compelling question, “who has the right to the city,” in a transnational framework through the representation of a homeless encampment that is populated by people from diverse nationalities. In this sense, the word “homeless” becomes a metaphor for the disenfranchised urban population, refugees, immigrant laborers, and lower class Americans, who are deprived from

their right to housing, and inevitably their right to the city. The novel is also considered as one of the primary examples of Central American-US fiction. The Central American refugee experience in Los Angeles is staged upon the background of the US's political interventions in Central America, and Los Angeles is represented as a microcosm of US's neoliberal/neocolonial practices. While the Guatemalan government sponsored by the US subjects minority populations to discrimination and segregation, the refugees leaving their homeland and immigrating to the North experience a similar socio-spatial injustice in Los Angeles as well. The neoliberal/neocolonial role of the US in the continent is brought into scrutiny through a spatial analogy of Guatemalan geography and Los Angeles, and the 1992 LA uprising as the denouement of the novel restages the civil war memories of the Central American refugees, juxtaposing their past in Guatemala with their present condition in Los Angeles.

Through the steps of two Central-American refugees, Tobar rewrites the social geography of Los Angeles at the end of the twentieth century and sheds light on the neocolonial imbrications of notions of body and space. The spatial consciousness of the novel, which centers upon the homeless encampment as an alternative public space, represents the social structure of the city from the below, leading us to the final catastrophe, the Los Angeles uprising. If "[r]edemption depends upon the tiny fissures in the continuous catastrophe," as Walter Benjamin promises (Benjamin, 2003: 185), then the weeds poking through the cement, which is the novel's dominant trope, create such fissures in the urban space. From this perspective, the representation of the uprising as a crack on the cityscape shows a potential for a more promising urban future. Drawing on his own experience as a native of Los Angeles and a journalist, Hector Tobar reimagines Los Angeles before and during the uprising, and draws attention to the material conditions of today's global city. The novel, therefore, represents an urgent call for *the right to the city*.

CHAPTER FOUR

TROPIC OF ORANGE BY KAREN TEI YAMASHITA

“When you get there,
there is no there there.” Gertrude Stein

Europe, Asia, America - vanish!
Our march of vengeance
has occupied every place,
Cities and countrysides!
We shall be smashed!
The volcanoes will explode!
And the Ocean, smitten...
Arthur Rimbaud

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Since its publication in 1997, Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* has been subject to much critical and scholarly debate. The novel not only sets a classic example for the transnational turn in contemporary American literature, but it also addresses issues that are related to a multi-disciplinary field of critical inquiry, broadly termed as Globalization Studies. A Japanese-American writer who spent years living in the US, Brazil and Japan, “Yamashita's fiction does not sharply focus on the meaning of Japanese-American identity and experience in the United States and thus defies literary categorization in long-established U.S. ethnic and national terms” (Thoma, 2010: 7). While contributing to the cultural politics of difference, Yamashita's literary imagination goes beyond national borders and resists essentialist identity politics. Her novels, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (1990), *Brazil-Marú* (1992), *Tropic of Orange* (1997), *Circle K Cycles* (2001), *I Hotel* (2010), all containing groups of characters from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as their settings, which range over a number of global geographical locations, have been discussed through a transnational perspective that has emerged and gained popularity in Western critical and literary studies since the turn of the twentieth century.

The transnational character of Yamashita's body of work reflects a combination of a critique of globalization, its material effects on people and their

lands, and the discordant discourse surrounding it. Major issues associated with globalization, such as the transnational movement of goods, capital and people, the flow of cultures and consumerism trends, worldwide integration of financial markets, and the expansion of a digital information network, pervade all of Yamashita's novels, but most profoundly the *Tropic of Orange*. The majority of scholarly criticism regarding the novel has, therefore, centered around its engagement with the negative impacts of globalization in all three spheres, the political, the cultural and the economic (Chuh, 2006; Adams, 2007; Lee, 2007; Mermann-Jozwiak, 2011; Vint, 2012). Some of the criticism on the novel have specifically focused on social, spatial and environmental justice, widening economic disparities, and neoliberal politics and its colonial roots (Wald, 2013; Zhou, 2014; Blyn, 2016). I draw upon the recent Yamashita scholarship that has studied the spatiality of *The Tropic of Orange* with a focus on spatial fragmentation in Los Angeles, but more specifically, I offer a close reading of the novel through a Lefebvrian lense and locate Yamashita's narration as a significant contribution to *the right to the city* discourse in art and literature. The novel's envisioning an urban revolution based on spatial appropriation and participation, I argue, provides a creative way of realizing *the right to the city*, based on Henri Lefebvre's formulation of the notion.

The question of geography has grown in significance in tandem with globalization and has inevitably brought a spatial dimension to transnational American literature. In an interview with Yamashita, Ryuta Imafuku describes "the crucial agenda" of the *Tropic of Orange* as an attempt "to shift temporal consciousness to a spatial consciousness" and underlines the significance of Yamashita's tendency as a writer to create a new spatial and geographical image of the world different from the historicized lens of postmodernist and new-historicist thinking (Imafuku and Yamashita). "The interethnic imaginative axis" (Rody, 2004: 141) of *Tropic of Orange* is intertwined with a critique of space shaped by an increasingly globalized world, which places the novel at the heart of a paradigm shift

in literary studies, and at the intersection of transnationalism and globalization.²¹ This paradigm shift is alternatively termed as “American literary globalism” by Rachel Adams, in her definitive study, “The Ends of America, The Ends of Postmodernism” (Adams, 2007). Through an analytical comparison of Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, an exemplary work of American high modernism, and Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*, Adams explores how the content of American fiction that has been produced since the turn of the 20th century differs from that of American literary postmodernism in terms of how it deals with changing notions of space in a globalized world. Taking Yamashita’s novel as one of those “representative texts that might stand in for the larger shift from postmodernism to globalism as a dominant conceptual and thematic force in contemporary American fiction,” Adams suggests that the Cold War vision that marked the literary works of high modernism, is no longer a concern in the works created in the era of globalization (Adams, 2007: 251). Rather, “geopolitical cleavages” as well as “a shared perception of community whereby for better or worse, populations in one part of the world are inevitably affected by events in another” have now become a dominant thematic concern in this new literary phase. (Adams, 2007: 268).

For the transnational writers who reflect on the debilitating effects of globalization, the global city as a strategic territory for economic, political and cultural globalization has necessarily become a major setting. The global city is represented not only as a place where global capitalist processes take material form, but is also a place of discontent and struggle, and a place engaged in tactical movements against such processes. In the case of American transnational literature, Southern California, and Los Angeles in particular, has been represented as “a nodal point where globalization threatens to erupt into environmental and human catastrophe,” and, also where, “mobilization of political coalitions across race, class, and other identitarian categories” becomes possible (Adams, 2007: 252). In *Tropic of Orange*, Yamashita’s critical stance towards a US-led economic policy that is grounded in neoliberal capitalist ideology and operating on a global scale through the

²¹ For a recent, detailed discussion of how the “transnational turn” in literature and critical literary studies, produced in English speaking geographies, have been driven by globalization processes, see Jay (2010).

help of a celebrating discourse of globalization unfolds in Los Angeles, a pioneering global city. In its representation of Los Angeles, the narrative settles in a materialist position that downplays the metaphorical notions of hybridity, flexibility, border crossing and cosmopolitanism, all of which provide an ideological support for globalization discourse. While presenting a critique of globalism and its neoliberal economic strategies, the radical politics of the novel challenges the socio-spatial unevenness in the city of Los Angeles, which are increasing as a consequence of American neoliberal policies, both in global and hemispheric contexts.

In my reading of *Tropic of Orange*, I take Rachel Adams' argument as a point of departure, offering a deeper focus in regards to the concept of "geopolitical cleavages" that come as a consequence of globalization. "The way life gets lived in spaces, places and environments," as the renown geographer and sociologist David Harvey puts it, "is the beginning and the end point of political action" (Harvey, 2000: 560). Broadly, within this perspective, I read the novel as a political project that intervenes in the geography of contemporary economic globalization. The emancipatory politics framed by the critique of global capitalism in the novel not only works as a common catalyst for the kind of coalitions across identity categories that Adam mentions, but also offers new perspectives into critical urban movements that have been emerging in parallel with globalization. In this sense, Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory, specifically his notion of *the right to the city*, and its reinterpretation by David Harvey in the present context, frames my reading of the novel as a subversive text that contributes to wide-ranging discussions concerning *the right to the city* movement in terms of art, culture, and politics. Through a Lefebvrian lens, I aim to reinterpret the spatial consciousness of Yamashita's narrative as an urban consciousness that reimagines the city as an *oeuvre*, a creative product that prioritizes the lived experience of people who dwell in the city. Also, I argue that locating the novel itself as a part of the literary *oeuvre* that voices "a cry and a demand" for *the right to the city* will offer a new cultural interpretation for the longstanding tension lying deep within American urban life and for the upheavals that an American global city faces today.

4.2. MAPPING LOS ANGELES IN A HYPER-CONTEXT

Tropic of Orange takes Los Angeles, one of the main global cities in the world and a vanguard force of global capitalist economy, as its main character and asks the question that has been lingering in multiple social, political, cultural and epistemological contexts: whose city is it? For David Harvey, “the contemporary form of globalization is nothing more than yet another round in capitalist production and reconstruction of space” (Harvey, 2004: 24). Within this framework, Mike Davis, whose *City of Quartz* has been an invaluable source for understanding the shaping of Los Angeles through global capitalist processes and is also mentioned by one of the characters in *Tropic of Orange*, describes the city as “a stand-in for capitalism in general” (Davis, 2006: 18). In her definitive work on the concept of the global city, Saskia Sassen also describes Los Angeles as a “cross-border geography of centrality,” and “as a strategic site not only for global capital, but also for the transnationalization of labor” (Sassen, 2005: 38). Los Angeles, in this sense, acts as the perfect stage for global capitalism, as it is “a city whose urban sprawl reaches and is shaped by the border” (Sadowski-Smith, 2008: 59). This connection between global capitalist processes along the US-Mexico Border, and Los Angeles as its spatial extension, is pictured by one of the border-crossing characters in *Tropic of Orange* as “a graceful movement of free capital, at least 45 billion dollars of it, carried across by hidden and cheap labor” (Yamashita, 1997: 200). The novel portrays the urban reality of Los Angeles on such a level, side-by-side with the post-NAFTA reality of the US-Mexico border area.

The picture of the border, the city, and urban everyday life in the novel, is framed upon a materiality that defies the abstract conception of Los Angeles as a multicultural “border” city. “The ultimate world historical significance – and oddity – of Los Angeles,” Davis continues, “is that it has come to play the double role of utopia and dystopia for advanced capitalism” (Davis, 2006: 18). The symbolic images of the city in popular imagination, the ones that falls within the abstract categories of sunshine and noir, utopia and dystopia, are emblematic of *representations of Space* in Lefebvre’s spatial triad, which is ideologically conceived, produced and traded across the world. Yamashita rewrites the city against its abstract

position in cultural and literary imagination, by excavating the material social relations below. In other words, the narration unravels the *representational spaces* in Lefebvre's triad, through the rendition of lived experience against the domination of a centrality. The globalist image of a multicultural and welcoming space, where all sorts of differences come into play, is thus subverted in Yamashita's literary landscape, by giving voice to the people who *actually* inhabit the space but whose spatial experiences remain under control and invisible.

As a counter-act against the idea of a welcoming border city, the urbanscape in the novel is basically marked with the problematic of *the right to the city*. Rather than a contact zone of multiple border crossings and flexible identities, "the Los Angeles of *Tropic of Orange* is a divided, ungenerous home where people are separated by freeways, lifestyles, languages; race, ethnicity, and class;" but mostly with their "access to housing, safety, transportation, the air-waves, and the Internet" (Rody, 2004: 134). In dealing with the set of social/spatial injustices that come as a consequence of economic, political and cultural processes of globalization, Los Angeles thus provides the preeminent literary setting for the representation of the Lefebvrian right to the city. It is "a representative window" as Edward Soja puts it, "through which one can observe in all their uniquely expressed generality the new urbanization processes that have been reshaping cities and urban life in the world over the past thirty years" (Soja, 2000: xvii). Los Angeles is also the city where "a critical spatial imagination entered the world of political practice earlier and more deeply," again in Soja's words, "than in almost any other major metropolis in the country" (Soja, 2010: 44).

The geometry of Los Angeles and other global spaces that are interconnected with the city is given at the very outset in the novel. Yamashita creates a hyper-context, a disjointed map on which the stories of the seven characters are interconnected with each other within multifarious layers of spatial quarters, within seven days of a week: Gabriel, a Chicano journalist who aspires to contribute to his community and help the disadvantaged populations of the city; Gabriel's girlfriend Emi, an assimilated Japanese American woman who has every privilege to experience the cosmopolitan life in the city but who is also deeply dissatisfied with it; Buzzworm, the African-American Vietnam veteran from the darker alleys of LA

and an informant for Gabriel providing him with knowledge concerning the invisible parts of the city; Rafaela, the housekeeper in Gabriel's summer house in Mexico who in a way serves as a connection with Gabriel's Mexican roots; Rafaela's husband Bob, an immigrant from Singapore who passes for a Vietnamese refugee while immigrating to the US and represents the urban proletariat; Manzanar Murakami, a Japanese American medical surgeon, a modern-day Bartleby, who has given up everything and become a homeless man living in a freeway encampment, and finally Arcangel, a mystical character travelling from South America to the North to wrestle with a notorious hero called SUPERNAFTA, dragging a magical orange with him along the journey, an orange that symbolizes the latitude of the Tropic of Cancer, which divides the Northern Hemisphere from the South. This hyper-context table given at the beginning of the novel draws a timeline from Monday to Sunday, each of which is a crosscut chapter that focuses on one character and their lived experience in the city. In the bigger picture, their stories, most of which are titled with a geographical reference or connotation, are connected through an inter-web of relations. Regarding her narrative strategy in the novel, Yamashita states that she used a spreadsheet system called Lotus, similar to an earlier version of Microsoft Excel, for the draft version of the novel. The hyper-context strategy provides each character with a space of their own, in which their lived experiences of the city are told in detail as a subversive act against confining cityscapes. Overall, the hyper-context stands for the main concern of the novel: the claim for lived space, to speak out against the dominance of abstract space in urban life.

The claim for *the right to the city*, first of all, manifests itself in the novel as a right to create your own map of the city. The digital Lotus program that Yamashita used in her creative writing process serves as a means for cognitive mapping and evolves into a multi-vocality in the narrative. It later unfolds multi-layered maps and the multiple rhythms of the city that have been rendered invisible and unheard by power and geographical knowledge. Cognitive mapping, Frederic Jameson's influential term used for a broad range of areas in postmodernism is a postmodern aesthetic strategy that holds the potential to subvert the "structural coordinates" imposed on the "immediate lived experience" of people via multinational capitalism (Jameson, 2005: 278). The production of space by late capitalism locates the

individual spatial experiences within an abstract geometry that is filled with ideology. This is reversed in the novel through the hyper-context, which functions as an alternative space created out of stories told through subjective perspectives. In this sense, the hyper-context as a medium of cognitive mapping in the novel acts as a rewriting practice against the forms of traditional mapping. The narrative strategy that initially questions the one-dimensionality of dominant spatial discourses and map-making as its ideological strategy, therefore, forms the basis for the socio-spatial dialectic in the novel, which mainly operates on the levels of abstract and lived space. Buzzworm, the African American character that represents the novel's spatial consciousness as he has the knowledge of the innermost layers of Los Angeles, looks at an old city map and thinks,

Old map. 1972 ... Even if it were true, whose territory was it anyway? Might as well show which police departments covered which beats; which local, state and federal politicians claimed which constituents; which kind of coloured people (brown, black, yellow) lived where; which churches/temples served which people; which schools got which kids; which taxpayers were registered to vote; which houses were owned and rented; which businesses were self-employed; which houses were crack; which houses banging; which houses on welfare; which houses making more than twenty thou a year ... If someone could put down all the layers of the real map, maybe he could get the real picture (81).²²

The map Buzzworm is looking at is a conventional map produced by city cartographers and planners at the level of *representations of space*, a conceptualized form of space that homogenizes all differences existing within its boundaries into one singularity. The dominant ideology asserts itself into this level of space through abstract signs and symbols, totalizing everyday life in the urbanscape (Lefebvre, 1991: 40-41). Buzzworm searches throughout the novel to find the real picture of the city outside of these conventional maps, to decode the real meaning hidden behind them, and to map the local within the universal. The same act also echoes in the

²² Walter Benjamin, in his "A Berlin Chronicle," flirts with the similar idea of creating one's own map that shows the "lived" spaces of the city, "lived Berlin" that is not visible on the official map. Buzzworm's interior monologue might be a reference to Benjamin's passage: "I have evolved a system of signs, and on the gray background of such maps they would make a colorful show if I clearly marked the houses of my girlfriends, the assembly halls of various collectives, from the "debating chambers" of the Youth Movement to the gathering places of Communist youth..." (Benjamin, 2001: 596).

urban experience of a homeless character in the novel, Manzanar Murakami. Spending his days watching the activity in Harbor Freeway from the overpass he occupies, Manzanar performs his own cognitive mapping using the rhythms of urban life. He transforms the abstract signs on conventional maps into the music of everyday life in the city by conducting the freeway traffic of Los Angeles: “There are maps and there are maps and there are maps. The uncanny thing was that he could see all of them at once, filter some, pick them out like transparent windows and place them even delicately and consecutively in a complex grid of pattern, spatial discernment, body politic” (56). The layers that are invisible on one-dimensional maps and urban projects unravel through Manzanar’s mapping, thus opening an outlet for *representational spaces*, the lived space in which imagination appropriates the abstract spaces of power (Lefebvre, 1991: 41). The daily existence of the homeless are never shown in any map, as well as the marginalized neighborhood of Buzzworm, because they are “the insects and scavengers of society, feeding on leftovers, living in residue, collecting refuse, carting it this way and that for pennies” (56), but for Manzanar, the everyday life of the homeless is an essential part of the multi-layered urban rhythm. Therefore, his own mapmaking is equivalently important, because “who would use the residue of sounds in the city if Manzanar did not?” (56). For him, “[e]verything had its sound. Genius disguised, as always, with innocent simplicity,” and “each of the maps was a layer of music, a clef, an instrument, a musical instruction, a change of measure, a coda” (56-57). Bringing together all the sound organically inherent in urban space, Manzanar’s imaginative mapping thus serves as an act of subversion against the marginalizing and homogenizing codes of conventional cartography. The music of the freeway in this way becomes an instrument to refill the absolute space against the version of it that is created by power. The concrete space, “into which the lethal abstraction of signs inserts itself” and reduces it into a single dimensionality as in the way of city planning or mappings (Lefebvre, 1991: 251) is first appropriated, and later in the novel, transformed into an alternative community by the homeless of the city. Yamashita’s narration deploys a coherent spatial politics as it brings into play the act of mapping both in the material and metaphorical sense, through the hyper-context

that shows spaces and interrelated stories in a relational model, and then through Manzanar's imaginary mapping that excavates the sound of urban everyday life.

From its colonial origins to the present globalized world, map-making has been inscribed with "a standard scientific model of knowledge and cognition" through which "distinctions of class and power are engineered, reified and legitimated in the map by means of cartographic signs" (Harley, 2002: 158). In the present context, developers and capital owners act as imperial powers who decide where the lines of the city shall be drawn, as well as, who shall stay inside or outside of certain borders. "In our time," as Edward Said suggests in *Culture and Imperialism*, "direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism," however, "lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices" (Said, 1994: 9). The imperial ideology of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and its relation to geopolitical mapping maintain "a colonial actuality existing at the heart of metropolitan life" (Said, 1994: 9). The way the imperial space "used boundaries as a mechanism for equating abstract space with the concrete reality of territory" (Harvey, 2009: 48) is repeated with the implementation of imperial ideology of spatial production and territorial organization in modern metropolis. In other words, imperial geographical knowledge manifests itself in the global city of advanced capitalism, and the abstract space it produces operates through spatial injustice, gentrification, and displacement. Yamashita's seven characters, all from different socio-economic stratas and with different immigrant backgrounds, experience a different version of Los Angeles, but what unites them is that their lived experience within the city is fabricated by the decision-making centers of a colonized metropolis. Whatever socio-economic privileges they have or they lack, their existence in the city is marked by fragmentation, segregation, race and class lines, gentrification and alienation. The novel thus exposes the spatialized hierarchy that is established within the transnational politics of globalization as a form of neocolonialism. Within this framework, the novel's rewriting the traditional city map thus subverts "certain complicit ideologies like imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, and the overall principle of the nation state" (Imafuku and Yamashita).

4.3. EXCAVATING THE CITY BELOW

Tropic of Orange centers its critique of globalization on the architectural reflections of global capitalism in the urban sphere. Unlike the romantic rendering of Los Angeles as a “postborder city,” Yamashita’s Los Angeles is shaped by a spatial fragmentation that determines the race and class lines according to the changing needs of the global economy. Los Angeles is one of the most fragmented cities in the US, as it has several downtowns, each of which is geometrically cut off from the other. The novel conducts a “spatial archeology,” an excavation of these neighborhoods, “which reveals various layers – of past and present inhabitants of the city, of regulations that restrict access to certain areas, and of the distribution of resources and development of infrastructures in those neighborhoods” (Mermann-Jozwiak, 2011: 2). As an African American street hobo and a Vietnam War veteran, Buzzworm represents the disadvantaged population of the city, the people who do not have any access to the upper stratas of the city as they are regarded as threatening when they cross the racial and class lines.

Living in the South Central Los Angeles ever since his childhood, Buzzworm’s everyday life is marked by abstract lines and borders of urban segregation. “Line wasn’t something drawn on the ground,” he thinks, “[w]hen he came home, he realized he was considered the enemy. If he stepped over the invisible front line, he could get implicated, arrested, jailed, killed. If he stepped back, he’d just be invisible” (217). Having grown up in a historic neighborhood of Los Angeles, the Corner of Jefferson and Normandie, where the 1992 Los Angeles uprising first began, Buzzworm’s early years in life are shaped by the socio-spatiality of this very place: “when he was growing up, never noticed trees. No trees to mention. Bushes, dried-up lawns, weeds, asphalt, and concrete” (31). This is a place where Los Angeles sun is cruel, because there are no trees and no shades. Los Angeles’s symbolic palm trees do not grow in this quarter of the city, and when, as a school kid, he draws pictures of the ugly poles located in the neighborhood rather than “some real trees with real shade,” his childhood voice mimics a colonial teaching: “Poor people don’t get to have no shade. That’s what porches are for” (32). His later perspective on life is also profoundly shaped by the socio-spatial inequality in the

city, and he grows into a famous figure in his neighborhood, always there to help those in urgent need. He even has a calling card that reads, “Buzzworm, Angel of Mercy, Central & South Central, Pager #213-321-2BUZZ, 24 hrs/7 days,” and “everyone on the street got his calling card with something jotted down on the back: rehab number, free clinic, legal services, shelter, soup kitchen, hot line. He was walking social services” (26). Buzzworm’s spatial consciousness also makes him an active spectator of his neighborhood, keeping tracks of all the layers and transformations that the city has gone through as a result of endless redevelopment projects. He acts as an anti-flaneur figure in the global city, one who strolls in the very below, and resists the domination of the abstract space, “through intervention in the production of knowledge about his neighborhood and its relations to other parts of the city” (Zhou, 2014). His vision of the city is evocative of Walter Benjamin’s aspiration to reach the invisible parts of the city that a modernist flaneur normally does not have any access to. In his *Berliner Chronik*, contemplating on the diverse ways of seeing and knowing the urbanscape, Benjamin writes, “I never slept on the street in Berlin... Only those for whom poverty or vice turns the city into a landscape in which they stray from dark till sunrise know it in a way denied to me” (Benjamin, 2001: 612). In a way, Buzzworm represents the postmodern version of this modernist search for the true knowledge of metropolitan life in a global era.

Los Angeles as a class-bound city is one of the underlying themes in the novel, and the lived experiences of all seven characters are portrayed from this angle. Among them, Buzzworm is the most class-conscious character who continuously reflects upon the various layers of the city and their transformation throughout time. The way Buzzworm knows the city differs from those inhabiting the upper strata, such as Gabriel, a Chicano journalist, who aspires to know more about what is occurring below, as in the case of Benjamin and his Berlin. As one of the central characters in the novel, Gabriel works as an editor at a local newspaper, and the inspiration for his work comes from another Chicano reporter, Rubén Salazar, who was killed during the East Los Angeles uprising in the seventies (39). A Chicano middle-class intellectual and a dissatisfied white collar resident of L.A., Gabriel works towards an ideal, that is, to know more and write about the poorer dwellers of the city, and to reveal the injustice that underprivileged minorities, as well as the

Mexican-American community, have been subjected to. Although he is a member of a privileged population who have the right to enjoy the city's promises, Gabriel still wants to dirty his hands, and to achieve that, he tries to think outside of the boundaries of his class: "This was going to be my contribution to La Raza," he says, "to follow in his footsteps ... I'm not so pretentious as to think I'm some kind of modern day Salazar, but remembering my roots can keep me on track" (39). Buzzworm and Gabriel thus become two sides of the same coin, and together, they perfectly draw a picture of the spatial segregation and class lines of Los Angeles. Buzzworm calls Gabriel, "you, downtown," which is one of the many spatial references in the novel that directly associate the socio-economic positions of the characters with certain urban areas. Marked with monuments that signify the power of capital and global finance, Downtown Los Angeles is a manifestation of "one of the largest postwar urban designs in North America" and its redevelopment in the history of Los Angeles has always operated with a "socio-spatial strategy" that ultimately aims "to raze all association with Downtown's past and to prevent any articulation with the non-Anglo urbanity of its future" (Davis, 2006: 229). Coming from South-Central Los Angeles, Buzzworm, in this sense, dramatizes the material divide between himself and Gabriel by calling him "downtown," and he therefore emphasizes the socio-economic divide that is first and foremost embodied by the production of urban spaces.

Besides his relationship with Rafaela, the Mexican-American housekeeper of Gabriel's newly bought summer house in Mazatlan, Mexico, Gabriel needs Buzzworm to be able to reach the other side and write about it, so that he will be able to serve the community, as he aspires to do. Like in Los Angeles detective noir movies, which Gabriel loves to watch, the man from a lower class provides the ambitious journalist with the real knowledge of the city, that is, the secrets of the poor streets. As Walter Benjamin suggests in *The Arcades Project*, "streetcorners, curbstones, the architecture of the pavements ... heat, dirt, and edges of the stones under naked soles..." are what we need to search in order to get to know the reality of the city (Benjamin, 1999: 517). In the same manner, Buzzworm, who knows well about the urban quarters that are not shown in conventional maps or the marketable image of the city, serves as the "primo contact in the city scene" for Gabriel, always

providing him with “the latest conspiracy theory on the street” (165). He tells Gabriel unconventional stories from the streets, all of which turn the sunshine image of the city upside down.

Just like Gabriel needs Buzzworm for his own goal of contributing to society, Buzzworm also needs Gabriel’s public voice, “to make sure that people noticed” (33). The juxtaposition between Gabriel and Buzzworm, specifically their ways of seeing the city, is a representation of diverse forms of knowledge inscribed in spatial practice. Their socio-economic status grants them different perspectives on the city, and their coming together enables them to reach beyond the borders they are confined into. This is a counter-act against the power structures that organize the city, an act of dismantling of “the antagonism between a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power” (Lefebvre, 1991: 19). As Gabriel thinks of him, Buzzworm “wanted desperately to see in print the stories of the life surrounding him, to see the wretched truth, the dignity despite the indignity” (43). The lived experience of people who are invisible on the official maps comes alive, therefore, through Buzzworm’s storytelling, finds voice in newspaper and becomes public. It is an attempt to bridge the divide between the lived space that is rendered invisible and the official public space regulated by the center.

In a pager conversation with Gabriel, Buzzworm reports from the iconic Los Angeles River: “Write this down. Los Angeles River. I’m checking out the transvestite camp along there. We get a wall of rain. And I mean a wall of rain. Flood conditions ... Shit floating down the river. Car parts, hypodermics, dead dogs, Neanderthal bones, props from the last movie shot down there, you name it...” (41). The description of the River in this single talk frames a microcosm of the city and its collective memory that is made up of multiple spatial layers and everyday life details. Los Angeles River as an iconic space for Hollywood action movies gains new dimensions here, other than its abstract image produced for the public. In a single description, Buzzworm tells the untold story of the river, one that is marked by contamination and destruction, filled with the dirt of the city. Flowing through Los Angeles County, the history of the river has been the history of a constant battle, from the first Indian tribes who settled on the fertile land nourished by the river and then the first European settlers building on its banks, to the present urban processes

that reshape the river along the lines of urban sprawl (Wainright, 2015). In the early twentieth century, the river was encased in a concrete channel by the US Army Corps of Engineers, “in a spectacular piece of depression-era job creation” to prevent the devastating floods (Wainright, 2015). Since then the river has been deprived of its use value, and contaminated with the waste of the city, thus being transformed from a natural resource into a dead space (Rossner, 2014). The river, for so many residents of the city, does not even look like a river, and many others do not even know it actually exists as it “has a 51-mile long cement gutter, a linear dumping ground so bleak that it’s best known for providing a post-apocalyptic backdrop in Hollywood movies” (Wainright, 2015). In this sense, the river’s transformation into an urban waterway that is more like a replica of Los Angeles’s freeways uniquely exemplifies the inherently exploitative nature of capitalist urbanism. More significantly, the river divides the city into the East and West Los Angeles areas, and thus symbolizes, the major ethnic and class lines separating the advantaged from the disadvantaged residents. Specifically in Marsh’s words, “the chanelization also represents the city’s proven disregard for nature and its lower class, ethnic minorities (which resided overwhelmingly along the River corridor) by actively choosing to deprive the latter of the former” (Marsh, 2012: 21). Poverty and ghettoization in East Los Angeles and palms and sunshine in the West, and the concrete river running in between, have consequently become one of the distinct images for uneven development in Los Angeles. Associated with dirt, violence, and disaster the river as a resource of nature, carries all that is wrong with Los Angeles’s urbanization processes, and stands for a “causal lens for further understanding the socio-political construction of Los Angeles” (Marsh, 2012: 8). Buzzworm’s reporting first from the Los Angeles River is therefore symbolic in the novel, as the river clearly reflects the neoliberal urbanization of the city.

In a similar fashion, Gabriel and Buzzworm’s conversations about the diverse spaces of the city reveal an increasing spatial tension, an economic inequity manifesting itself in the control and use of space: “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 McDonald’s looking for a crust of bread and

leftover fries” (43), says Buzzworm regarding the reproduction of space on the basis of hyper-consumption. The narrative, through the guidance of Gabriel and Buzzworm, brings socio-spatial disparities in the city, specifically the vacant spaces occupied by American auto culture and freeways as urban monuments, which stand in sharp contrast with homelessness and poverty. Through their searches in the darker alleys of the city, Gabriel and Buzzworm reach the heart of the city, the Harbor Freeway, where the growing urban tension evolves into an urban revolution. The two characters, together, cross the lines and borders drawn on the official city map, and their transgressive strolls in the city bring the climax of the novel, the moment when the homeless population claims and appropriates the iconic freeway.

4.4. A PROPOSAL FOR *THE RIGHT TO THE CITY*

“The state and each of its constituent institutions,” as Lefebvre writes, “call for spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements” (Lefebvre, 2000: 85). In the present conjecture, the production of urban space by power structures is performed within the flexibility of neoliberal ideology. The service sector replacing heavy industry in urban areas and class dynamics changing accordingly have brought an entire reconstruction process to the urban centers, operating through gentrification. The attraction points of the city and its leisure activities have also been re-organized, and in the meantime the underprivileged populations have been uprooted (Smith and Williams, 2015: 19). The most profound effects of gentrification as a neoliberal urban phenomenon have been seen in American global cities (Williams, 2015: 92). Through the ideological reenactment of the “urban frontier” in the late twentieth century, the “uncivilized city” of the postwar era has been transformed into a territory to be conquered and civilized by the heroic pioneers. The American frontier discourse that marked the whole continental settlement process has been reimagined as a new romantic ideal during the rise of global capitalism to manipulate this new class war in the heart of American cities (Smith, 1996a). In *Tropic of Orange*, Buzzworm’s narration of urban collective memory bears witness to the reshaping of whole neighborhoods and their socio-economic structures in the hands of capital. Buzzworm’s storytelling gives a full

account of Los Angeles's urbanization process based on gentrification, dispossession and displacement. State officials grant urban developers with flexible rights in their renewal projects, which is based on the displacement of people and stigmatizing the neighborhood. When another redevelopment process is required for capital accumulation, the urban wilderness is first tamed by the arrival of "poor artists" as urban pioneers, as Buzzworm says (83), later to be followed by the urban bourgeoisie. In Buzzworm's hood, all commences with an official plan to widen the freeway that will cut the whole neighborhood in the middle, which Buzzworm's grandma resists at the very outset, and she wants to see the master plan to find out whether people will be affected. In the end, the whole neighborhood is transformed into an abandoned space marked with poverty and decay. Profit-based urban development erases the lived experience that is embedded within multi-layered spaces and opens the way for new investments. In the hands of the bureaucratic power, capital reproduces the cityscapes to extract surplus value through a continuous process of destruction and recreation, which leads to a constant uneven development. Buzzworm reflects these dynamics of capital and urbanization in one single picture:

Situations change, bureaucrats don't. So they said it wasn't gonna affect her. They'd be around to make sure. Make sure it took five years to clear out the houses. Make sure the houses left to be broken and tagged. Let the houses be there for everyone to see. Use for illegal purposes. Pass drugs. House homeless. Make sure the ramp took another five years. Slow down the foot traffic and the flow. Break down the overpass crossing the freeway. Make it impossible for people to pass. Stop people from using the shops that used to be convenient. Stop people from coming to her dress shop. Used to be a respectable shop. Anybody who's anybody, she did it custom. Haute couture. Entire wedding line-ups. Now homeless, dope dealers, prostitutes only ones passing her shop. No master plan. No ma'am. Wasn't gonna affect her no way (83).

In Los Angeles's urban history, gentrification is edged with freeway construction and transportation projects that mostly affect the neighborhoods of low-income people.²³ Many of the freeway projects in Los Angeles "physically isolate residents from their institutions and businesses ... contribute to urban sprawl, subsidize infrastructure decline, create traffic gridlock, and subject residents to

²³ Wald (2013) discusses the freeway construction and its colonial implications in her comparative study of Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* and Viramontes's *Their Dogs Came with Them*, through the lens of "Mobility Studies."

elevated risks from accidents, spills, and explosions from vehicles carrying hazardous chemicals and other dangerous materials” (Bullard, 2004: 4). Historically, it is with the beginning of industrialization that car and transportation technologies have played a crucial role in the commodification of cities (Lefebvre, 2000: 167). While freeway constructions transform the whole neighborhood in Buzzworm’s narrative, human needs are entirely disregarded. The once familiar places then turn into a source of “urban alienation,” in Fredric Jameson’s terms, which result from “the mental unmapability of local cityscapes” (Jameson, 2005: 282). Urban renewal projects erase the collective memory of the city’s inhabitants, alienate them from their lived spaces, and commodify public spaces: “Now here or there is a shopping mall, locate the old house somewhere between Mrs. Field’s and the Footlocker. Or here or there is now the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, or Union Station, or the Bank of America, Arco Towers, New Otani, or the freeway” (82). If “the form of a city changes faster than a human’s heart,” as Baudelaire says of the nineteenth century Paris (Lloyd, 2002: 26), Buzzworm, struggles to trace those changes and map the spaces that are no longer mappable. In this sense, Buzzworm’s parts in the hyper-context rewrite the city as a text outside the destructive practices of power, recreate the urban fabric that is deprived of lived urban experience.

Against the strategy to reproduce urban spaces and reorganize social relations accordingly, Buzzworm imagines a revival of urban consciousness, an alternative way of performing urban everyday life. This is a counter-plan that directly targets gentrification, starting from one’s own neighborhood: “Buzzworm had a plan. Called it gente-fication. Not the sort brings in poor artists. Sort where people living there become their own gentry” (83). This is an anti-colonial/capitalist move that prioritizes the will of the people over power, a subversive tactic that resonates with Lefebvre’s notion of *the right to the city*: “Self gentrification by a self-made set of standards and respectability. Do-it-yourself gentrification” (83). Buzzworm imagines a class strategy through recreating the city as an *oeuvre*, in Lefebvrian terms, the city as a collective work not as a product (Lefebvre, 2000: 75). While gentrification processes produce the city as a product on the basis of the changing needs of global capital, gente-fication locates human needs at the center with the direct agency of those who inhabit the city. Inhabiting then becomes a conscious act, free from the

prescriptions of commodified everyday life. This is a coalition to be formed across racial and class lines, as the word “gente” in Spanish suggests: “Latinos had this word, gente. Something translated like us. Like folks. That sort of gente-fication. Restore the neighbourhood. Clean up the streets. Take care of the people. Trim and water the palm trees” (83). A collective consciousness will bring the “gente” together for the appropriation of the city, which will evolve into the participation of the decision-making process. Gente-fication, as “DIY gentrification” entails people’s involvement into shaping their own *representational spaces*, where the lived experience of people comes alive. The urban inhabitants in this counter plan challenge hegemonic spatial practices, first by claiming their right to these spaces, which is, in most cases, simultaneous with the right to exist, and then by making decisions, collectively, for the transformation of these spaces. Buzzworm’s idea of “gente-fication” as a political alliance should first start on the level of everyday life and evolve into a form of urban citizenship that focuses on self-management in the city. From this idea of claiming *the right to the city* through collective participation, the narration takes a further step and imagines an urban revolution towards the end of the novel, through a full-scale occupation of the heart of the city by all its disenfranchised populations.

4.5. ‘NEW AGE’ COSMOPOLITANISM VS. THE URBAN PROLETARIAT

Tropic of Orange brings diverse sets of characters and their everyday life together to illustrate the spatial fragmentations in the city. Urban spaces and everyday life in Buzzworm’s neighborhood contradict with Gabriel and his girlfriend Emi’s experience of the city, and the juxtaposition between different social classes interweaves the disconnected urban quarters on the narrative map. Emi, one of the two Asian American characters in the novel, represents the “U.S.-born third-generation Americans who have assimilated to the U.S. ideal of upward class mobility” (Sadowski-Smith, 2008: 63). A member of “the city’s majority minority,” (Mermann-Jozwiak, 2011: 7). Emi’s interactions with Buzzworm make the visible and invisible lines drawn on the cityscape clearer. A Japanese-American woman, who considers herself “so distant from the Asian female stereotype,” Emi is dating

Gabriel because he is a “hot latino ... interested in tango” but not “what you call the stereotype” (19). Whereas she is one of the two upper-middle-class urbanites, along with Gabriel, Emi is always suspicious and cynical about the privileges that the city offers to their social class. She mocks Los Angeles’s image as a multicultural haven, and those economically advantaged Angelenos, who like to boost about the idea “That *Los Angeles is a desert paradise, sunshine, blond people, insipid, romantic*” (123, emphasis in original). When eating at a sushi restaurant with Gabriel, Emi observes the cultural mosaic of people in the place; the white woman wearing chopsticks in her hair, the white guy with the Nirvana t-shirt and dreads, the “Caucasian Japanophiles who talk real Japanese with the sushi man” (127), all of whom she thinks are representative of a fabricated ideal of multiculturalism. The woman with chopsticks in her hair hears Emi speaking cynically about Los Angeles’s being such a multicultural place, and she gets angry, ignoring Emi and talking to the sushi man in a patronizing way. As a reaction, Emi says to the sushi-man, “[s]ee what I mean, Hiro? You’re invisible. I’m invisible. We’re all invisible. It’s just tea, ginger, raw fish, and a credit card” (128). For the white woman, on the other hand, Los Angeles’s multiculturalism is the very reason she chooses to live there: “I adore different cultures. I’ve traveled all over the world. I love living in Los Angeles because I can find anything in the world to eat, right here. It’s such a meeting place for all sorts of people. A true celebration of an international world” (129). The sushi woman’s description of the city sounds like a TV commercial promoting the global village and its consumerist lifestyle. “The picture of Los Angeles as a bazaar of ethnic (although not necessarily indigenous) cultures” as Mike Davis states, is a well-fitting image for its globalized economy, and “multiculturalism seems an obvious emblem for its new globe-trotting pretensions” (Davis, 2006: 80-81). The Japanophile woman’s discourse celebrating cultural diversity resonates with the Western enlightenment ideal of cosmopolitanism, which basically undermines the economic dynamics behind the interaction of different cultures, effacing differences while ostensibly celebrating them. Cosmopolitan thought, for this reason, maintains to be an underlying philosophy of global capitalism, especially for its global village discourse (Harvey, 2009). Multicultural global cities, such as Los Angeles, are thus produced and marketed as places where the cosmopolitan lifestyle is the norm, as

well as a source of touristic attraction. Within this framework, Cosmopolitanism as a label for the collective identity of the privileged in the city functions as an abstract category that totalizes differences.

The term cosmopolitanism is first used by Stoics and stands for “the idea of the cosmos as encompassing the whole of humanity in an ideal of universal belonging” (Held, 2010: 15). During the enlightenment period, particularly with Kant, cosmopolitanism gained a new political dimension; identified with public reason and “the right to free membership in the global community of argument,” the term *weltbürger*, or “world citizen”, became an important concept of enlightenment cosmopolitan thought (Held, 2010: 15). The concept of the world citizen, who is free from borders and stable identities as offered by the cosmopolitan thought, however, brings along its own contradictions. Kant’s “anthropological conception of the nation-state as a civil society based on a common descent” is regarded as questionable by urban thinkers, such as Harvey, as it includes the right to refuse entry to those who create trouble (Harvey, 2009: 25).

In the contemporary global context, the notion of world citizenship is reconfigured with the globalization discourse. Global capitalism, and the changing logic of the nation state, requires the notion of international borders that are becoming increasingly insignificant, which serves for a more flexible accumulation of global capital. Historically, “the bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market,” as Marx and Engels put it, “gives cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country” (Marx and Engels, 2010: 16). From Lefebvre’s perspective, it is “minimal difference,” or “difference as same-ness,” as an ideological strategy of cosmopolitan politics to reinforce “the potentially hegemonic character of abstract space,” which accordingly, “rests on a successful production and incorporation of (minimal) difference in all its dimensions” (Kipfer, 2008: 202). Envisioned as an ethnic bazaar where all sorts of cultural differences are welcome (and on sale), Los Angeles’s multiculturalism, interwoven with the Western ideal of cosmopolitanism, serves for the economic interests of the global economy. The Japanophile woman as a touter of the global village cannot tolerate Emi because she falls behind the city’s cosmopolitan standards, but the woman has no problem

with the Japanese sushi chef, as he does not cross any border and stands obedient within the territory of “minimal difference.”

The global village discourse, typified by the sushi woman, is critiqued in the novel through the illustration of a prescribed everyday life imposed upon white-collar residents of the city. It is a total package lifestyle, programmed with hyper-consumption and homogeneity. Emi names it “a new age tan,” a label for those who can make it in L.A.:

Somebody on Venice Beach reads your astrological forecast. You find out you’re a star-crossed Aquarian with a future as a bisexual. You get a tattoo on your right ankle and pierce your navel. You join a gym, start up on the Nautilus, and get regular bodywork. You take up yoga, do a thorough detox, and go macrobiotic: miso, tofu and brown rice. You become religiously organic. You join an animal rights support group to heal your inner animal. You try to write a screen play and get an agent. You go to bed under pyramid with your therapist/healer. Your folks come to see you, Disneyland, Universal Studios, and Marilyn Monroe’s grave. They say, “California seems to be doing you some good. Got some color in your face for a change.’ Voila! A New Age tan! (234-235).

The new age self-help program that Emi describes is part of the image of the global city, an attractive spot for consumers, a space to dispose surplus product through automatized consumption. It is a “*global strategy*,” as Lefebvre puts it, to “concretize a directed consumer society” by designing and producing the urban spaces accordingly (Lefebvre, 2000: 85). The bodily movement of the urbanites is programmed in accordance with the spatiality of consumption; the new age tan lifestyle of Los Angeles is, for instance, performed in specifically designed urban areas. These areas and the everyday life performed in them sharply contradict with the peripheries, which are economically and socially regulated in different manners. For Buzzworm, who thought “having skin color was just so as to define what’s white,” (235) the new age tan concept is totally unfamiliar. This is why when Buzzworm and Emi, the two Angelenos, talk to each other about their own Los Angeles; it is like they belong to two completely different worlds. The distinction between them is defined in the novel not by their ethnic backgrounds, but by the city quarters they are supposed to inhabit. One of their dialogues, comparing the Western coast of Los Angeles where Emi lives with the South where Buzzworm is from, draws a vivid picture of the spatial fragmentation in the city, represented in its architectural details:

“What? No light and space? No stucco and tile roofs? No shrubs, brick paths, bougainvillea? No poison oleander?”

“No,” Buzzworm growled. “And no jacaranda, climbing roses, topiary, sidewalk bistros, tanning parlors, pillowed weenie-dogs, golf courses, or decaf espressos either! ... Not to mention major supermarkets, department stores, pharmacies, medical and dental clinics, hospitals, banks, factories and industry. In this city, you have to risk your life; go farther, and pay more to be poor” (175).

The fissures in the designation of urbanscape in this sense play a key role in dividing people from each other, which ironically repudiates the sushi woman’s diversity discourse. The Western coast and its new age life style continueS to be a consumable spatial product as long as it is separated and protected from the other side. The periphery population, on the other hand, is deprived from not only their right to access certain urban areas but also their right to basic urban services. The spatial segmentation in Los Angeles’s urbanism, which is continuously emphasized in the novel, remains to be the determining force for the socio-economic relations enforced upon urban inhabitants.

Similar to Emi, Gabriel also recurrently reflects his dissatisfaction with the prescribed lifestyle in Los Angeles. Due to his growing discontent in the city, he buys a summer house in Mazatlan, Mexico, which sets the beginning scene of the novel and later unfolds into a complicated geography connecting two global hemispheres. Gabriel’s summer house in Mazatlan, or his “back to nature thing,” as his girlfriend Emi names it, is supposed to be the opposite of all that is wrong with the city of Los Angeles, he imagines. Unlike his alienation from his lived experience in the city, this new place offers him a closer connection with his environment: “I don’t know how to explain it. I get a kick out of planting a tree every time I go. It’s not like this news business. I plant; I get fruits. I get to make something I can actually touch and eat for a change. Seriously, I sometimes think to hell with all this” (23). This idyllic vision, “a spontaneous, sudden passion for the acquisition of land, the sensation of a timeless vacation, the erotic tastes of chili pepper and salty breezes, and for Mexico” (5), though it derives from his desire to feel more Mexican and contribute to his community, is channeled into a romantic ideal for Gabriel, which is becoming more and more difficult to sustain practically and economically. More important of all, the house in Mazatlan embodies incompatibility between the people’s actual desires and the spaces they inhabit in the novel. Gabriel invests so much in his idea to have a

place in Mexico, but he cannot transfer his lived experience to this idealized space. Rather, he hires Rafaela for housekeeping, a Mexican-American working-class woman, who used to work as a janitor at Gabriel's workplace. Gabriel serves as a mentor for Rafaela, by helping her enter a community college and editing her papers on Mexican-American and women's issues. When Rafaela wants to break up with her husband Bobby, the other Chinese character in the novel, Gabriel helps Rafaela, and she moves to the house Mazatlan with her son, Sol. The novel's opening scene is set in Gabriel's summer house, where Rafaela puts every effort to keep things in order, "sweeping both dead and living things from over and under beds, from behind doors and shutters, through archways, along the veranda – sweeping them all across the deep shadows and luminous sunlight carpeting the cool tile floors" (3). Gabriel and Rafaela's efforts to tame the place are becoming more useless, as they both do not belong to this part of the world. Moreover, the tropic of cancer is also located in the spot, the circle of latitude that divides the Northern and Southern hemisphere. The orange that gives the novel its name is in this very place and once it is plucked from its natural environment, the axis of the Earth, both literally and metaphorically, removes.

The parallel stories of two Mexican-American characters in the novel, Gabriel and Rafaela, show the urban experience of people that belong to the same ethnic groups but different classes. Within this perspective, Rafaela and her husband Bobby together serve as a mirror image for Gabriel and Emi, and these two couples form a duality through which the novel "draws attention to socioeconomic differences between and among Latino and Asian American diasporic groups" (Sadowski-Smith, 2008: 63). After their family, back in Singapore, goes bankrupt because their local bicycle business cannot compete with a global American company, Bobby and his brother, while still children, move to the United States, passing for Vietnam war refugees. In the US, they grow up in one of the Los Angeles barrios and learn English from native Spanish speakers. They "go to school with Mexicans and centroamericanos. Even get some religion at La Placita ... Gets in good with the vats locos. A taste of la vida local" (203). Among the seven characters, Bobby represents the novel's transnational dimension the most, and he is the only

one representing the actual urban proletariat that keep the everyday life of the city clean and standard for its inhabitants:

Ever since he's been here, never stopped working. Always working. Washing dishes. Chopping vegetables. Cleaning floors. Cooking hamburgers. Painting walls. Laying brick. Cutting hedges. Mowing lawn. Digging ditches. Sweeping trash. Fixing pipes. Pumping toilets. Scrubbing urinals ... Drilling asphalt. Pouring cement. Building up. Tearing down. Fixing up. Cleaning up. Keeping up (79).

Bobby embodies the cheap immigrant labor that provides the backbone of Californian economy, and as a Chinese man living among Latinos and doing the work that are mostly associated with Latino immigrants, he exemplifies the transnationalization of labor, which sharpens the critique of global capitalist processes. Despite being the only character among the seven who lacks a political consciousness, it is through Bobby's perspective that the narrative draws the maps of places that are closely connected with each other in workings of global economy, from Singapore and Vietnam, to Tijuana and Los Angeles, from the local Mexican neighborhood in Los Angeles to Koreatown. "Bobby's immigrant story," in other words, "offers a glimpse into the impact of economic globalization, which is linked to U.S. imperial intervention in Vietnam," and "his life in Los Angeles reveals an emergent "underclass" multiethnic, multiracial community in the ghettos of the global city" (Zhou: 2014: 268).

The chapters devoted to Bobby's story in the hypercontext, overall, reflect the tension growing in the inner city, mostly in South Central and Koreatown. This tension leads to the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, which Bobby's narration hints at with brief portrayals, such as one of his neighbor, Celia, who is "[r]ebuilding LA²⁴ with a sewing machine" after the riots (78). On April 29, right after the announcement of the Rodney King verdict, a police brutality trial that acquitted four police officers of any wrongdoing despite video recordings showing police severely beating an unarmed African-American man, Rodney King, thousands of people in the metropolitan area took to the streets, and the outrage and protest turned to violence which lasted for six days. While the mainstream media portrayed the event

²⁴ This is a reference to the "Rebuild L.A. Program," enacted after the 1992 uprising by then-mayor Tom Bradley to repair the damage and improve the material condition of the city. The program has been considered a total failure.

as an African-American protest, there are still many debates concerning the complex background regarding the class dimension of the uprising. Mike Davis, renowned historian of Los Angeles's urbanism, sums it up: "The social and politico-economic tectonic plates that underlay Los Angeles" by 1990 "had accumulated such impossible stress loads that you could almost hear the Hollywood Hills groaning" (Davis, 2006: ix). In an interview on TV during the peak moment of the uprising, Rodney King delivered his famous line to calm the people of Los Angeles down. Emi repeats Rodney King's question, when she dies during the police attack on the homeless encampment on Harbor Freeway, looking into Buzzworm's eyes, "If we can jus' get along, maybe all our problems will go away" (251, emphasis in original). As Caroline Rody argues, "Rodney King's resonant question," serves as "a wistful iteration of the novel's interethnic hopes" (Rody, 2009: 142). For Buzzworm, however, it will never be easy, to live in peace, unless it is within a truly just city. Hence, he replies, "[g]onna take more than holdin' hands to start the revolution" (251). The novel, with bringing together these single characters, questions the possibilities of getting along, but the revolution comes to the nearest when a truly collective uprising begins with the participation of all the disenfranchised in the city, through the appropriation of the public space.

4.6. REIMAGINING THE CITY AS AN OEUVRE: OCCUPY FREEWAY

Written five years after the 1992 uprising, *Tropic of Orange* pictures the period leading up to the uprising by focusing on socio-spatial injustice and the tension it creates below. The novel also envisions an uprising in the end, with an alternative mode of urban dwelling created by the homeless of the city in the novel. Occupation of the Harbor Freeway, and the reinterpretation of public space by Manzanar Murakami and the homeless community stage the most emblematic moment of claiming *the right to the city*. The idea of gence-fication takes on a revolutionary form by reimagining the city as an *oeuvre* through the active participation of people. Lefebvre's right to the city formulation serves as a common denominator for those who are subject to social and spatial injustice in the city, and to the bureaucratized control of organized consumption. A collective urban

consciousness bears capacity to destroy the ideology of consumption, and to break the spatial barriers, by creating the “*urban man* for whom and by whom the city, and his own daily life in it, become the *oeuvre*, *appropriation*, use value (and not exchange value), by using all the means of science, art, technology” (Lefebvre, 2000: 80). The appropriation of the freeway and the intervention on the city’s daily life that is organized upon consumption practices leads to an urban experiment in the novel carried out on the freeway as a symbolic urban space. It is an act of reclaiming the use-value of the urban space against its exchange-value and recreating the city as a collective work of art, in the agency of the very people who have been subject to segregation and who have been rendered invisible on city maps. The homeless as the “scavengers of society” (56), as Manzanar once puts it, start the movement from the very below, and the occupation soon transforms into participation of those whose right to the city is stripped of by power.

Once a surgeon, and a respectful member of the Asian-American community in Los Angeles, Manzanar is “one of Bartleby’s literary descendants,” who “decidedly occupies the premises of freedom” (Manzanas and Benito, 2011: 56). Wall Street as the supreme symbol of American capitalism and New York City as its spatially designated territory, in the context of Los Angeles, becomes the infamous network of freeways that dramatically embody globalized capitalism on a spatial level. The homeless man occupying the overpass on the freeway thus stands for all that is wrong with Los Angeles’s spatiality, and his act of occupation offers the possibility for a new socio-spatial experience for the other characters in the novel. “There he was, larger than life” (46), Gabriel thinks, when he first sees Manzanar on the overpass. From his perspective, Manzanar represents an alternative to the consumerist everyday life in Los Angeles. What Gabriel tries to discover in his summer house in Mazatlan, or back in the darker alleys of Los Angeles through the guidance of Buzzworm, resonates in the music Manzanar is conducting out of the city traffic: “There was something I had to learn from this man, something I needed him to impart to me, not as the subject of an interview or an investigation, but something he could teach me, as if he were some sort of conducting shaman, as if he held a great secret, as if he knew *the way*” (111, emphasis in original). For a

cosmopolitan character like Gabriel, Manzanar should offer something outside of the Western way of seeing the world, something eccentric or shamanic from the East.

Being “the first sansei born in captivity” (108), Manzanar’s name comes from a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II, “Manzanar Concentration Camp,” which suggests “that archetypal Japanese American trauma may be at the root of his eventual unhinging, as well as of his acute sensitivity to the sounds of our civilization” (Rody, 2009: 126). Manzanar thus, fits well into his characterization as a disobedient figure unsettling the borders, by first severing all of his ties with society “to become a statistic under missing persons” and then by claiming public property as a homeless man. He has no possessions except for a few things of personal value that he carries everywhere, in the pockets of his black trench-coat, which makes him look like a noir version of American mobility. As a subversive figure, he lives outside time-space concepts and abstract measurements of modernity, and as an occupant of the freeway he “sensed the time of the day through his feet, through the vibration rumbling through the cement and steel, and by the intervals of vehicles passing beneath him” (34). His becoming “a fixture on the freeway overpass much like a mural or a traffic information sign or a tagger’s mark” (36) also reverses the ideology that lies behind building monuments in the city, a bourgeoisie strategy to concretize domination over the cityscape and its residents. His physical occupation of the overpass serves as a mimicry against the monumental city design that alienates human bodies and their lived experience. Against the order of “human civilization” that “covered everything in layers, generations of building upon building upon building the residue, burial sites, and garbage that defined people after people for centuries” (170), Manzanar rewrites an alternative geography through his own spatial excavation.

In a city where the homeless is either criminalized or rendered invisible, Manzanar is pictured as a *resident*, who knows more about the city than anyone else: “No one was more at home in Los Angeles than this man ... It was suggested that he could be taken by helicopter and left on a mountain top ... But those who knew Manzanar knew that he would find his way back, track the sounds back to the city, to the din of traffic and the commerce of dense humanity and the freeway” (36-37). However, with his public visibility on the freeway overpass, a spot located at the

heart of the city, he stands as a disruptive figure, as an alien for the positive image of the city. He also poses a threat, not only to the city's image, but also to his ethnic roots as well: "The Japanese American community had apologized for this blight on their image as the Model Minority. They had attempted time after time to remove him from his overpass, from his eccentric activities, to no avail ... Manzanar was destined for greater vistas" (37). Watching all the details of everyday life on the freeway, Manzanar aspires "to create the great mind of music" (57) out of the traffic on a highway interchange. The rhythms of the city that are seemingly lost in the busy freeway traffic are collected and transformed into an urban orchestra that creates the *oeuvre* in the city. "The great flow of humanity" is what he hears running "below and beyond his feet in every direction, pumping and pulsating, that blood connection, the great heartbeat of a great city" (36). Freeway interchange as a microcosm of the city pampers out all of the unique details of everyday life into a chaos with no rhythm, a cacophony with no differences. "Noise, chaotic, has no rhythm," Lefebvre writes in *Rhythmanalysis* (Lefebvre, 2004: 28). "However, the attentive ear begins to separate out, to distinguish the sources, to bring them back together by perceiving the interactions" (Lefebvre, 2004: 28). Manzanar, in that sense, finds meaning in murmurs and noises in the freeway traffic, and appropriates them into a work of art, against an alienating urbanization that restricts everyday life into a single, linear flow. The freeway as an embodiment of Los Angeles's hyper mobility becomes the very source of the *oeuvre*, and he transforms every piece of this spectacle into a new melody: "The complexity of human adventure over lines of transit fascinated him. The mass of people flowing to work and play, the activity of minds muddling over current affairs, love affairs, the absence of affairs, in automatic, toward destinations beyond streets, parking lots, or driveways..." (56). Appropriation of the freeway sound through the filter of imagination thus serves as a tactic to subvert the very logic of the imposition of abstract space, the geometrically designed freeway that blends the heterogeneity, or complexity of human nature into a uniform mixture (Lefebvre, 1991). Bringing the *oeuvre* back to the city begins as an individual act through Manzanar, but then it grows into a collective squatting by the homeless of the city, who are supposed to be the most invisible inhabitants in the first place.

The Harbor freeway as a monumental urban symbol stages the most climactic moments of the novel, during which “LA’s manifest mobility becomes a trap where nobody moves” (Manzanas and Benito, 2011: 56). Here, the history of the Harbor Freeway, from the process of its conception as an abstract master plan, to the whole construction process, exemplifies the neocolonial spatial intervention that subjected Buzzworm’s family and neighborhood to dispossession and displacement through gentrification. In her article in which she promotes the study of mobility in American literary studies and its relation to spatial justice, Sarah Wald underlines the link between “transportation geographies” and “older forms of conquest and colonization” as well as “newer model of neoliberal economic development” (Wald, 2013: 70). Comparing Karen Tei Yamashita’s and Helena Maria Viramontes’s works with a specific focus on the representations of LA freeways in both texts, Wald suggests that occupation of the freeway by the homeless in *Tropic of Orange* underlines the fact that in an American metropolitan city, “access to transportation and the negative consequences of transportation infrastructure are unequally distributed” (Wald, 2013: 71). In the novel, the freeway as the setting for its occupation by the homeless, Wald continues, “is suggestive of the socioeconomic mobility denied so many Angelenos despite the rhetoric of mobility and freedom surrounding neoliberal globalization and free trade” (Wald, 2013: 87). Manzanar’s act of occupation, complemented by the homeless community heading onto the freeway and claiming an iconic public space, should thus be taken not only as an act of struggle for *the right to the city* but also, to borrow a line from Rimbaud, as a “march of vengeance” against a colonial history (Rimbaud, 2003: 123). During the non-stop freeway construction boom between 1940s and 1970s, Harbor Freeway, “cutting the hood like a giant,” as Buzzworm describes it (33), was among the projects that displaced millions of people who were mostly Mexican-Americans. (Estrada, 2005). Therefore, its representation as a site to build a new and alternative community becomes a counter response to the trauma inflicted on the displaced people of the time, and a criticism to the urban sprawl that started with the construction of the freeway network and has divided people and their neighborhoods until the present day. Now it is as though “the freeways crashed into each other like flower beds” (237). Long before the freeway construction, it was other means of

transportation, the construction of railroads and harbors, which wrote the same story of the oppressor and the oppressed in the history of urbanization. “These were the first infrastructures,” Manzanar Murakami thinks watching the scene from the freeway overpass, “built by migrant and immigrant labor that created the initial grid on which everything else began to fill in...” (237). The urbanization process of the city depends on the exploitation of labor of those whose houses are leveled to the ground in the name of progress. Therefore, the freeway provides the perfect location for all those on the lowest ladders of social strata in the city of Los Angeles, such as workers, immigrants and the homeless, to come together and claim their right to the city against its colonial and capitalist past and present. For this reason, one of the epigrams of the novel is taken from Octavia Butler’s *Parable* series where, in a post-apocalyptic Los Angeles, a group of survivors start a new community under the freeway after their gated community is destroyed by anarchy and chaos. *Tropic of Orange* thus takes the road paved by Butler and uses the freeway as a symbolic setting in terms of its role in the country’s colonial/capitalist history.

The futuristic/apocalyptic atmosphere in Butler’s series repeats itself in *Tropic of Orange*, on the Harbor Freeway, when a drug-laced orange carried in a car leads to a chain of accidents and brings about the main catastrophic moment of the novel. The accident causes a fire in the nearby homeless encampment, and then the homeless head to the freeway, claiming it as a public space. The tension that has been growing down below the city soon grows into chaos and anarchy, and in the end into a total collective intervention. Ironically enough, it is a hemispheric drug cartel that causes the accident while smuggling oranges filled with drugs. Economic colonization of the South through NAFTA has its negative impacts on the Northern hemisphere as well, and the orange, though one of the symbols of shiny Los Angeles, becomes an import product for Californians: “Brazil exports to Honduras. Honduras to Guatemala, Guatemala to México, and México to the U.S. Then it’s cool even though everyone knows the orange harvest is dead in México in June. Keeps everyone in business” (244). The accident caused by the orange as a symbol of neoliberal economic policies, thus, ironically, becomes an instrument that opens up the potential to claim urban space. The underground life and its clandestine culture under the freeway come into view and an alternative community is organized at the

heart of the city. A single disruptive moment, along with the music Manzanar creates out of the traffic, is revolutionized into a new model of spatial experience, and “[i]n a matter of minutes, life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways” (121).

The “spontaneous theatricalization” and the “simultaneity and encounter” of *representational spaces*, to borrow from Lefebvre, now dominate the public space (Lefebvre, 2000: 113-4), and creativity and laughter become the very sources out of which an urban form of subversion arises. As urban dwellers that are disenfranchised from their right to participate in the production and distribution of urban space, which is the basic tenet of Lefebvre’s formulation of *the right to the city*, the homeless community uses the freeway as a center to recreate the *oeuvre* through art, music, performance and poetry. *Poiesis*, as the origin of the word “poetry,” which means “to make” in Greek, becomes the basic tenet in the creation of the city as an *oeuvre*, “a feature, which contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange and *products*” (Lefebvre, 2000: 66, emphasis in original). A festive atmosphere now prevails on the freeway, full of chatter and sound. “It was one of those happy riots,” (122) Manzanar thinks, with “an uncanny sense of elasticity of the moment, of time and space” (123). The linear time upon which modern everyday life is organized is disrupted through magic and imagination, and the monumental spaces of the urbanscape are collectively distorted. On the scene, when Buzzworm looks at the overpass Manzanar is standing on, the structure seems “stretched out, curved and maybe longer even,” and he wonders if concrete could do something like that (188). Even the Hollywood Sign, Los Angeles’s landmark and one of the most famous American cultural icons, is not a fixed image anymore, as Gabriel observes. “Either it’s coming closer this way, or we’re going closer that way” (189). The architecture and planning of urban space in the hands of an accumulation-driven ideology produces public spheres that lack spontaneous creative action, and to change these homogeneous cityscapes on behalf of use-value, as Lefebvre argues, it is the inhabitants who should “insert themselves, to take charge of them, to *appropriate* them; and this by inventing, by sculpting space ...by giving themselves rhythms” (Lefebvre, 2000: 105). The concrete

monuments as embodiments of an abstract hegemonic power in urban space are, through a spontaneous collectivity, reshaped as a claim for *the right to the city*.

The occupation of the freeway as an embodiment of neoliberal urban architecture also develops into a reinterpretation of democratic public space. Occupation of the freeway by the homeless community that has been criminalized by the exclusionary urban politics offers new meanings to the use of public space. It is mainly the increasing privatization of public spaces that the homeless defy in the novel, through collective appropriation. Margaret Crawford, in her study on Los Angeles' public spaces, questions the structure of the idealized public space, classically exemplified by the old Greek Agora, early modern Paris coffee houses, or the New England town square (Crawford, 1995). The traditional public space of the bourgeoisie dichotomizes the public and the private, and thus serves the interests of the capitalist market. The abstract public space of the bourgeoisie is produced on the grounds of Kantian cosmopolitan notions of democracy, hospitality and the "common good," which excludes those who pose a threat to the homogeneity of the public (Crawford, 1995: 4). Even the Greek Agora, as Crawford emphasizes, was structured upon certain exclusions, such as slaves and women. The meaning of public space, however, is "being continually redefined in practice through the lived experience" (Crawford, 1995: 5). Within this perspective, people who claim the freeway in the novel bring out their lived experience and perform it publicly, outside control mechanisms. The lived experience of people becomes visible, and thus posits a challenge to the traditional public spaces of the first world global city. The representation of spatial appropriation in the novel contributes to the radical politics that envisions the creation of alternative public spaces based on *the right to the city*. The spatial politics that redefine the traditional public space in the novel rests on this right, and the recreating the public space begins with termination of the exchange value. Private property is transformed into public property, and the vehicles left empty on the freeway in the wake of the chaotic moment become home for the homeless of the city. In this way, the homeless also "challenge neoliberal logic that favors private property over collective ownership and ensure mobility for the wealthy and privileged and immobility for the poor and displaced" (Wald, 2013: 87).

To appropriate private property, therefore, becomes a political act of reclaiming the use-value in urban space:

The vans and camper trailers went first; then the gas guzzlers—oversized Cadillacs with their spacious pink and red vinyl interiors, and blue Buicks. A sleek white limousine with black interior was in particular favor. A spacious interior with storage space was favored, while the exterior condition of a car was deemed of secondary importance ... Boxy Volvos and Mercedes, and Taurus station wagons, had the advantages of space and sturdy structure ... Compacts were more popular than two-seater sports cars. Porsches, Corvettes, Jaguars, and Miata were suddenly relegated to the status of sitting or powder rooms or even telephone booths ... Convertibles remained as before: toys. Children clambered over them; adults sat in them and laughed (121).

Rather than being a space for the needs and use of the city's inhabitants, the city has increasingly become a strategic site for capital accumulation, through the domination of its exchange value over its use value. "Use value, subordinated for centuries to exchange value, can now come first again," Lefebvre urges, "by and in urban society" (Lefebvre, 2000: 177). The cars are chosen and appropriated not according to their prices set in the market, but on the basis of space and use they provide. Reclaiming use-value of the cars by appropriating them into shelter as a basic human necessity later opens up new experiments for an alternative society. Members of the freeway community create their own performance group, LAPD, the Los Angeles Poverty Department, as a mockery of the Los Angeles Police Department (190). A state apparatus that is often associated with police brutality and racism comes under attack by its alternative version, the Los Angeles Poverty Department, through the use of laughter and bodily performance. This is also among one of the many nuances in the novel regarding the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, as it was police brutality that sparked it at the outset. Along with the LAPD, the media and its hypocrisy also become another target for the community on the freeway, which is another reference to the uprising in the novel, because the wide media coverage of the event is known to have manipulated people through the use of certain images of violence. In the aftermath of the Los Angeles uprising, *Time* critic Richard Schickel blamed the media for inventing "a mythical city" and not questioning the authorities "about the patterns of urban unrest" (Schickel, 1992). This method of coverage is still cited as an example to display the flaws within American media, particularly as coverage of similar uprisings in American cities today continues in a comparable fashion. The way that the US media covered the recent uprisings in

Ferguson (2014) and Baltimore (2015), for instance, have also been compared with the '92 uprising and harshly criticized by popular figures, such as John Stewart (Feeney, 2015).

The biased content created by the media and followed passively by the masses during the uprising is later counterfeited in the novel upon a public stage on the freeway, which serves as an act of appropriation of the mainstream media and its ideology. A couple of “homeless anchors” are doing news from their “beat-up bucket seats behind some kind of makeshift desk with decorative hubcaps, the real Los Angeles skyline draped behind them” (190). Now that the homeless have full public visibility, they report what is happening daily in their community: “On the local front, memorial services for Newton Ford will be held near this evening near the construction heap on the southbound at Expo which has been requisitioned for a cemetery. Ol’ Newt died of complications from starvation and the elements” (190). Or another report informs the people about a birth of a homeless baby: “Saratoga Sara gave birth to a baby girl last night in the back of a VW bus ... both mother and baby doing just fine. Contributions of diapers, baby clothing, and food for the mother gratefully accepted” (191). In their discourse, the material conditions of urban life matter the most, so does their everyday life, which is deleted out of the ideologically conceived cityscape. While they are reporting the news from the freeway and telling their own stories, the real agents of the mainstream media are also broadcasting what is happening on the freeway. At the end of the day, the voice of the freeway community is heard all over the country.

Once the basic survival needs, such as shelter, are met and the inhabitation of the space is organized on the basis of use-value, new possibilities of community life arise. *The right to the city* gains new meanings through more creativity by sculpting the urban space and everyday life. An old Cadillac is transformed into an “urban garden,” where the Cad’s occupant grows vegetables as “a solution in self-sufficiency” (192). Street peddlers, as the officially banned members of Los Angeles public spaces, also join the community on the freeway and report to the press about “their side of the poisonous orange mess” (192). Public forums as a model of participatory democracy are organized to discuss and decide the matters related to the fledgling communal life on the freeway, while politicians and public figures are

also invited to join and mediate between the freeway community and the rest of the city. Furthermore, the background music to this urban transformation is produced by a “homeless choir numbering near 500 featuring three homeless tenors,” conducted by Manzanar Murakami (192). The alternative community Yamashita envisions is in all respects evocative of Lefebvre’s full definition of *the right to the city*:

the right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (citadin) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of the centre, privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos” (Lefebvre, 2000: 34).

Occupying space as a civil disobedient act against a dominating power is a long tradition in American socio-cultural history, from Melville’s *Bartleby*, to the sit-ins of the 1960s Civil Rights era, and the Occupy movements that spread across the US and to the rest of the West, even sparking various uprisings against political tyranny in other parts of the world. The act of claiming the right to space in *Tropic of Orange* adds more to this tradition through the creation of an alternative future whose roots are established in an urban revolution. “When the members of this choir grew exponentially,” Manzanar thinks, the resistance on the freeway “began to have grandiose proportions” (238). Occupation of the freeway begins as an individual act by Manzanar and evolves into a communal resistance by the homeless, taking the form of a continental uprising when Arcangel, a mythic-heroic figure, arrives from Mazatlan along with Rafaela’s son and a massive group of followers from South America. They all come together in Los Angeles, a center for globalized capitalism, and join the grassroots movement growing at the very heart of the city, Interstate 100, the Harbor Freeway. It is now the stage for one big confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed. “The entire City of Angels,” Manzanar thinks, has now “opened its singular voice to herald a naked old man and little boy with an orange followed by a motley parade approaching from the south” (238-9). Arcangel is the old man who has been dragging along the hemispheric line, in the form of an orange, and preparing for a wrestling match with another mythic figure called SUPERNAFTA.

The right to the city movement is taken to another level with the arrival of Arcangel, and his journey from the global South to the North, from “the very

hemline of the Tropic of Cancer and the great skirts of its relentless geography” (197) to Los Angeles as “the second largest city of Mexico” (211), symbolically represents the trans-continental migration from the South to the North, and the life-and-death struggle of immigrants on the road. Arcangel is portrayed as a heroic figure from Aztlan, a mythical homeland that signifies the cultural memory for the Chicano political movement. As a legendary figure, Arcangel is a no man, a wanderer, a sort of magician free from time and space constraints: “*No one knew where he came from / or how long he had lived / how many years / decades / and yet he seemed a child / yet not such a child to be without season / nor such an old man to be without reason*” (47, emphasis in original). Both physically and spiritually, he is an embodiment of the collective traumas that the Southern American people have experienced.

Having been to the places that are marked with the most climactic moments in the history of the South, Arcangel defines himself as a pilgrim rewriting the manifest destiny, against the colonial and capital exploitation of his people. He speaks in “a jumble of unknown dialectics, guttural and whining, Latin mixed with every aboriginal, colonial, slave, or immigrant tongue, a great confusion discernible to all and to none at all” (47). Inspired by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a Chicano artist who often protests against the injustice within US-Mexico Border region through his performance art work (Gier and Tejeda, 1998), Arcangel, in his own performances, interacts with the cult figures from Latin American cultural and political history, such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Eduardo Galeano and Emiliano Zapata. Arcangel's sections in the novel differ from those of the novel's other characters, as his is interrupted in each chapter by a poetical form that links his journey with the epic history of the continent, from its tribal past to colonization, NAFTA, and globalization. In a Brechtian fashion, the poetry within the novel creates an alienation effect that draws the attention of the reader to “the common struggle of workers across the continent and the America's history of cultural encounter” (Mermann-Jozviak, 2011: 15). In regards to the novel's hyper-context, the titles of the chapters allocated to Arcangel connote his association with the Latin American proletariat, specifically the repetitive everyday life of the working class: “To wake, To wash, To eat, To labor, To dream, To perform, To die.” Also known as the Big

Wetback among his followers, Arcangel is, in a sense, a working-class hero in the age of global capitalism, and his ultimate mission is to beat the villain, the SUPERNAFTA, a representation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and its policies, which have increasingly worsened the socio-economic conditions of the South American population. SUPERNAFTA, "*concerned with the / commerce of money and things*" (133), is also the arch enemy of the immigrants living in Los Angeles, as it is a legal catalyst for the neoliberalization of economy in the South and the insertion of cheap immigrant labor into the United States.

Arcangel, like the rest of all the characters, is portrayed through various spatial connotations inspiring a revolutionary change on a spatial level. His journey is associated with "a miniature Aleph," the first letter of Hebrew Alphabet, which also signifies Ezekiel, as Jorge Luis Borges describes in his short story, "Aleph," "a four-faced angel who at one and the same time moves East and West, north and south" (Borges, 1981: 161). Aleph, in Borges's story, is also "the only place on earth where all places are - seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion or blending" (Borges, 1981: 161). Arcangel envisions in his dreams the zero point of Aleph, that "is reflected from his mind to an indefinable point on his visual horizon" (51). Travelling across a "crooked" continent "but always heading North," his dream brings him to the city of Los Angeles, where Manzanar Murakami conducts the orchestra of the wretched of the Earth. Manzanar's act of bending time and space rules takes a broader dimension with Arcangel, who sees beyond the geographical conceptions that divide the continent and confine people within artificial boundaries while granting transnational corporations increasing flexibility through the agency of supranational organizations such as NAFTA.

Arcangel's role in the novel is also identified with the magical orange that gives the novel its title. During his journey to the North, he spends some time in Mazatlan and works as a construction worker at Gabriel's summerhouse building a wall in an area located between the freeway and the house. The freeway surrounding the house runs over the line of the Tropic of Cancer, the circle of latitude, which acts as an imaginary border between geographies, hemispheres, climates and cultures. The orange is located right in the spot that marks the latitude, a sort of "border made plain by the sun itself, a border one can easily recognize" (71). Seeing the orange

“rolling away to a space between ownership and the highway” (71), Arcangel plucks the orange from its natural environment before he leaves Mazatlan and carries it to the North, dragging the imaginary line of the Tropic of Cancer along with him. The axis of the Earth, thus being removed through the orange, leads to the emergence of disastrous effects. Once the orange is gone, Rafaela first sees “crabs grappling the earth and crunching beneath her feet,” “hundreds of them, large and small, crawling frantically sideways in every direction” (70), and then she finds out that the neighbor woman’s son is actually a member of an organ mafia plotting to kidnap her son Sol, who has the Spanish name for the word, the Sun. Leaving the house in Mazatlan immediately behind, Rafaela and her son join Arcangel to cross the border and return to the US, but in one of the magical realist moments of the novel, she finds herself in the mythical geography of Aztlan with archetypal female figures from Chicana history, La Malinche and La Llorona, while Arcangel takes Sol with him to the north for the wrestling match with SUPERNAFTA. The novel’s “hypertextual construction” that “exemplifies a non-linear model of chaos and complexity” (Hsu, 2006: 94) crisscrosses Arcangel’s and Rafaela’s stories, and these stories, filled with myth, magic and horror, coalesce around a criticism about the colonialist history of the geography and its re-embodiment in the present globalist ideology.

Geographical expansion and restructuring as a “spatial fix” to crises of modern capitalism, in David Harvey’s terms, helps to solve the problem of over-accumulation as an underlying cause for crises of capitalism. Spatial fix has its roots in colonial economic activities, and today, in a similar way, “the neoliberal phase of globalization has been characterized by a reconfiguration of state powers and the geographical concentration and centralization of political-economic powers within regional alliances of immense strength (with, of course, the USA very much leading the way)” (Harvey, 2001a: 29). Written three years after NAFTA, as such an alliance was enacted, the novel, mostly through the voice of Arcangel, sets out to expose the social, spatial and environmental injustices that emerged as a direct consequence of supranatural organizations and arrangements. The notion of a flexible border that permeates free movement works only for the advantage of global capitalism and disenfranchises those without power, whose voice is swallowed up by “the waves of floating paper money: pesos and dollars and reals, all floating 45 million dollars of it,

carried across by hidden and cheap labor” (200). Switching back and forth to the scenes at the border, the novel exposes the uneven development on the continent as a result of US neo-colonial hegemony and its strategies of “spatial fix,” and how NAFTA, as such a strategy, intervenes in the natural flow of things. Arcangel also poses a particular critique to the totalizing politics of the first world that is incorporated in progress discourse. He denounces the notion of border crossing as an empowering act that does not go beyond metaphor and refuses to be a part of globalist discourse that is oblivious to the materiality below. That is, in the first sense, what he assigns to himself and to the people following him across the border. Theirs is a grassroots movement rejecting the universal ideology that defines human needs within Western standards.²⁵ They are not the “rainbow of children of the world,” Arcangel recites. “This is not a benefit for UNESCO. / We are not the world.” (259).

Arcangel’s journey takes its motive from the long history of the South American working class, from the Zapatista movement to the Chiapas uprising, to which he gives references to in his poems.²⁶ The collective movement that he leads is based on the right to place, the freedom to exist on the land, similar to the Chiapas uprising. “Tierra y Libertad” he says, land and freedom, is what the displaced people of South America reclaim. “Revolution reinvented,” he recites and echoes Marx, with “the hard labor of people at the bottom / with nothing, / nothing, / to lose” (148). When he and his people make it across the border to Harbor Freeway in Los Angeles, where Manzanar and the homeless community have already started an urban revolution, he gives his final poetic performance before his fight with SUPERNAFTA, one that makes fully explicit the political engagement of the novel:

*You live in the declining and abandoned places
of great cities, called barrios, ghettos, and favelas:
What is archaic? What’s modern? We are both.
The myth of the first world is that*

²⁵ Lee (2007) analyzes in detail Yamashita’s exploration of a singular collective “we” discourse of universalism.

²⁶ Palmer (2016) links the homeless occupation and the state massacre that comes after, to the Chiapas Uprising of 1994, through a critique of neoliberalism and environmental justice.

*development is wealth and technology and progress.
It is all rubbish.
It means that the land you live on is earth
but only property.
It means that what you produce with your own hands
is not yours to eat or wear or shelter you
if you cannot buy it (259, emphasis in original).*

Arcangel's poetic call is not only addressed to the population following him across the border, but also to the people who have come to the freeway to participate in the collective resistance. The common motif is the claim for right to the city, which takes the form in the novel of a counter alliance against the global political economy of neoliberalism, in the very place that serves as a symbol of urban dispersion and segregation. Blending magic with realism and metaphor with materialism, the novel envisions a revolutionary moment that springs from an act of occupation and appropriation of the cityscape by those disenfranchised from their land and then evolves into a designation of an alternative community, one that is not based on the exchange value of the land, but its use-value.

Yamashita adds to that the idea of re-setting the time and space organization of the global modern world, operating in the name of wealth and progress. The orange and the circle of latitude, along with the sun in the personification of Sol, are in the end all displaced, just like the people inhabiting the hemisphere. To restart it all, one needs to go back to the point of "aleph," an infinite space of full potential and hope. The novel's final ambition for the reorganization of space is to create an aleph moment, right before the intervention of the state and its police force in the occupation movement on the freeway: "Sol, who loved the orange, grabbed it and ran in circles. And everything in that geographic nexus churned around and around and around" (214). In that magical moment of time and space fraction, Arcangel begins his fight with SUPERNAFTA. Although he succeeds in the beginning, NAFTA is soon joined by "[t]he rational forces of the North" that "looked south at the naughty old man who waved his penis around and show their big collective head. This was a gesture of war, was it not?" (239) Arcangel and the growing band along with him lose the fight at the end of the novel, and the seizure of public space ultimately fails to "the thunder of a hundred helicopters ... bombing the valley with tear gas and smoke ... by the coordinated might of the Army, Navy, Air Force,

Marines, the Coast and National Guards, federal, state, and local police forces” (239). The military intervention in support of NAFTA presents a final representation of contemporary Los Angeles as a corporate police state that protects interests of global capital. The apocalyptic end of the novel brings the reader back to the idea given in one of the epigrams of *Tropic of Orange*: “what follows is about the recent past, a past that *happens*” (emphasis in original). By various references to the history of both Los Angeles and the Americas, the novel stages a revolutionary moment of its own, in close relation with the use of space and *the right to the city*. Yamashita’s narration thus contributes to a stretching spatial imagination against a global order that maintains its power through the organization of space and the imposition of a relevant social existence.

Contested urban spaces and the conflicts and challenges that arise within them keep an urban tension alive, and every now and then, they create utopic moments that sabotage hegemony. The spatial consciousness of *Tropic of Orange*, in this framework, offers the motive of “the destructive character” that Walter Benjamin describes, one who “knows only one watchword: make room. And only one activity: clearing away. His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred” (Benjamin, 2001: 541). In every act of disrupting the linear flow of everyday life, alternative spaces are imagined and created and destroyed, and each time another crack is opened. The whole pattern pushes “the threshold of the city,” as a reference to Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*, where “transformation, passage and wave action” become the identifying elements of modern urban sphere (Benjamin, 1999: 494). Here the threshold stands for the transition to progressive movement and innovative change, and stands in contrast to the boundaries that limit or cut off the movement. By writing against the neoliberal/neocolonial world order and its global village discourse, Yamashita emphasizes the significance of continuously crossing the threshold of the city and envisions *the right to the city* as a transnational movement that opens up the possibilities of resistance and freedom, to borrow from Lefebvre, “through the imaginary which invests itself in appropriation” (Lefebvre, 2000: 155).

Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* contributes greatly to the wide-ranging discussions concerning *the right to the city* movement in culture and politics.

The novel takes the political imaginings in *The Tortilla Curtain* and *The Tattooed Soldier* to a higher level and envisions an urban revolution based on both appropriation and participation in the making of the city. *Tropic of Orange* similarly renders Los Angeles as a strategic site of global capitalist processes and approaches the issue of *the right to the city* through diverse perspectives of urban dwellers from different economic classes. Against the spatial apartheid in the city, the narrative subversively builds a hyper-context at the beginning of the novel, where the stories of seven characters are interconnected through a web of relations and where the urban inhabitants transgress the confined spaces they are forced to inhabit. This narrative strategy symbolizes the main concern of the novel: the claim for lived space and to speak out against the dominance of abstract space in urban life.

The novel also offers a specific model of claiming *the right to the city* through the idea of “gente-fication,” as an appropriation of gentrification. The urban inhabitants in this counter plan are urged to revitalize their lived spaces, first by claiming their right to these spaces, which is, in most cases, simultaneous with the right to exist, and then by making decisions collectively for the transformation of these spaces. From “gente-fication” as a model of claiming *the right to the city* through collective participation from below, the narration takes a further step towards the realization of *the right to the city* and imagines an urban revolution, a full-scale occupation of the heart of the city. By way of sculpting the urban space with collective creativity, the city is rewritten as an *oeuvre*, with art, music, performance, and poetry. The urban revolution Yamashita imagines grows into a continental uprising, which places US neoliberalism and neocolonialism at the center of the novel’s critique of geography. *Tropic of Orange*, as part of the transnational literary *oeuvre* that voices “a cry and a demand” for *the right to the city*, also offers a new cultural interpretation for the longstanding tension lying deep within American urban life and for the upheavals that an American global city faces today.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has approached contemporary American literature with a spatial framework to discuss selected literary texts through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's notion of *the right to the city*. T. C. Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995), Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998), and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997), the novels discussed in this work, render Los Angeles as a strategic site of global capitalist processes as well as a contested space of resistance against power structures. Tracing the urban tension that accumulates below the city as a reverberation of neoliberal urbanization processes, these texts coalesce around an urban consciousness that searches for an alternative city. The novels advance *the right to the city* as a common ground for resistance against oppressive forces that operate on a socio-spatial level. They imagine *the right to the city* not merely as an individual access to urban resources but as an alliance, "a cry and a demand" in Lefebvre's defining terms, that can transform dehumanized abstract spaces into lived and livable spaces. The three novels, in this sense, contribute to the ongoing discussions of *the right to the city* with their representation of Los Angeles as a vanguard force of capitalist spatial production and a potential site of revolutionary practices.

Henri Lefebvre's urban philosophy proposes collaboration between diverse forms of knowledge in claiming *the right to the city* as a model of emancipatory politics. In his own oeuvre, Lefebvre challenges the disciplinary boundaries and production of partial knowledge in understanding the urban phenomena, and he urges a philosophy of the city that transcends the divisions within fragmentary sciences (Lefebvre, 2000: 95). While Lefebvre's notion of *the right to the city* has been a political banner for many contemporary urban movements all around the world and has been subject to much scholarly as well as political interest in recent years, its exploration in literary studies is still insufficient. Departing from Lefebvre's idea that art and literature, alongside with philosophy, should bring new dimensions to urban studies in imagining alternative forms of urbanism and everyday life, this dissertation has aimed to forge closer ties between urban studies and literary criticism, and therefore, contribute more to the ongoing scholarship of *the right to the city*. Art and

literature cooperating with everyday resistance and creative experimentation in the city can interrupt the hegemonic spatial organization of late capitalism and open up possibilities for a revolutionary future. Within this framework, I argue that the three literary texts rewrite Los Angeles as an *oeuvre*, a collective work of art, as Lefebvre designates as the fundamental aim of *the right to the city*. Voicing a cry against the commodification of the city and a demand for an alternative urban life, Boyle's, Tobar's, and Yamashita's literary works call for *the right to the city* as a common denominator for resistance against the power structures that trade the city as a product.

T.C. Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*, Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*, and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* repudiate the idealistic multicultural image of Los Angeles and rewrite the city from below. The novels offer models of resistance on a spatial level by writing the lived experience of the urban disenfranchised. In doing so, they build up an urban consciousness that is shaped with imagination, appropriation, participation, and in the case of *Tropic of Orange*, transformation. While mapping out the socio-spatial injustice in Los Angeles, Boyle, Tobar, and Yamashita urge for a creative and revolutionary urban life against the segregating and alienating logics of the capitalist city. The three literary texts revitalize the lived space of urban dwellers by challenging the reification of the city as a product, and the novels reclaim the city as an *oeuvre*, a collective work of art, as Henri Lefebvre's *right to the city* formulation suggests. Lefebvre argues for a just city where people from every social class, gender, and ethnic background have equal right to inhabit the city, to have access to urban services, to participate in the decision-making process regarding urban life, and to make the city in the way their hearts desire. In recreating the city as an *oeuvre* as the ultimate aim of *the right to the city*, imagination and play have a central role. Through the excavation of the hidden meanings within urban rhythms and spontaneous bodily movement in everyday life, a more playful and less alienating urban life can be possible. In this sense, art and literature, in Lefebvre's socio-spatial dialectic of *the right to the city*, takes a subversive stance in claiming the city as an *oeuvre*, as a revolutionary space of imagination, play, and experimentation. Within this framework, *The Tortilla Curtain*, *The Tattooed Soldier*, and *Tropic Orange* redefine the meaning of the urban and

open up possibilities for contestation. Locating these works as part of the literary *oeuvre* that voice “a cry and a demand” for *the right to the city*, I argue, will offer a new cultural interpretation for the longstanding tension that lies deep within American urban life and for the upheavals that the American global city faces today.

The three novels are set in the 1990s, the decade that is marked with the ascendancy of neoliberal urban policies in the West. Neoliberalism is associated with a more flexible capitalist mode of production with diminishing state regulations and the increasing domination of private property and land speculations in the organization of cities. In this framework, the literary rendition of Los Angeles in the three texts is centered upon a spatial peripheralization that limits people’s access to the urban center. This is a process that restricts urban populations into separated segments and prevents them to come together, to interact and exchange. Segregation is embedded in the urban structure, as the novels illustrate, and maintained through ghettoization and gentrification, suburban enclaves and gated communities. Spatial cleavages in the novels also resonate with the practices of everyday life, creating a conflict between a consumption-oriented experience of the city and a desperate fight for basic human necessities. Everyday life of urban inhabitants is subject to a hegemonic organization that not only alienates people from each other but also alienates them from their lived spaces. Moreover, the novels present an urban tension that arises out of the priority of private property over basic human rights, such as shelter and the right to space, which simply connotes with the right to exist.

The Tortilla Curtain, *The Tattooed Soldier*, and *Tropic of Orange* trace the urban tension that accumulates within the deeper layers of the city and coalesce around moments of urban explosion. Published three years after the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, *The Tortilla Curtain* briefly mentions the event as a ‘big bad city’ problem that the upper-class urban inhabitants wish to avoid in their gated communities. The novel portrays the process of commodification of nature that operates in a similar way to the commodification of urban space and ends the novel with a natural disaster that razes down the whole suburban development. While the socio-spatial tension that grows throughout the narrative explodes into a catastrophe, the novel does not promise anything for the future. *The Tattooed Soldier*, on the other end, ends with an actual representation of Los Angeles uprising, portraying the

event as a natural outcome of the repressive mechanisms in the city, specifically as an urban class uprising, rather than a racial conflict. The uprising at the end of the novel, however, is not an organized political act, and the narrative does not hint at any collective awareness. Rather, *The Tattooed Soldier* depicts the urban explosion as a rehearsal of revolution, a counter-attack against the neocolonial/neoliberal forces. *Tropic of Orange*, on the other hand, takes the catastrophic moment in the city as an opportunity to create a new alternative. The urban disenfranchised occupy the freeway at the heart of the city and develop the act of occupation into transformation and thus realizes *the right to the city*. “Redemption depends upon the tiny fissures in the continuous catastrophe,” as Walter Benjamin insists in “The Destructive Character” (Benjamin, 2003:185), and these three narratives create those fissures by building up urban catastrophes at various levels and search for the reinvention of the city. These selected literary works serve as archives for one of the most turbulent events in the US’s urban history, by presenting the urban everyday life of diverse ethnic and class groups before and after the explosion.²⁷ Written shortly after the uprising, these novels can be read as aesthetic reactions to the production of space in the early neoliberal era. They claim both the right to difference and *the right to the city* against an increasingly alienating urbanism, by illustrating these rights as “a cry and a demand.” Overall, the literary texts that are examined in this dissertation rewrite Los Angeles as an *oeuvre*, “through the imaginary which invests itself in appropriation” (Lefebvre, 2000: 155). In this framework, the three literary works provide insight for today’s neoliberal cities and the potential of insurgent movements against oppression in urban spaces.

“To change life” means “to change society,” states Lefebvre, and both “phrases mean nothing if there is no production of appropriated space” (Lefebvre, 2009: 186). Claiming an urban space as a form of political struggle has been a long tradition in American socio-political and cultural history, from Melville’s “Bartleby”

²⁷ Ryan Gattis’s *All Involved* (2015) and Aris Janigian’s *This Angelic Land* (2012) are the other two novels set before and during the 1992 uprising, but neither have received much critical acclaim. *The Tortilla Curtain*, *The Tattooed Soldier*, and *Tropic of Orange* differ from Gattis’s and Janigian’s novels in terms of their focus on neoliberal urbanization processes as an underlying cause of the uprising.

to the sit-ins of the 1960s Civil Rights era. The recent “Occupy Movements” that emerged at the heart of the Wall Street and spread to the global cities of the West added more to this tradition. Also, worldwide urban uprisings, from Gezi protests in İstanbul in 2013 to Brazil’s anti-World Cup protests in 2014, have emerged as a collective demand for *the right to the city* and evolved into mass uprisings against power. Space as an instrument of both domination and appropriation is the underlying message for the political projects that take contemporary urban movements as their departure points. The renowned critical geographer, Neil Smith, in his last talk before his death, “The Future is Radically Open,” reminds one that space serves for the needs of capitalist accumulation, “but simultaneously as a lever providing opportunities for class solidarity, resistance, and emancipation” (Smith, 2012: 956). It is this very fact that *the right to the city* notion is built upon, and the notion still serves as a catalyst for a collective imagining of a future that is “radically open.”

REFERENCES

- Adams, R. (2007). The Ends of America: The Ends of Postmodernism. *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 53 (3), 248-272.
- Appadurai, A. (2003). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arendt, H. (1983). *Men in Dark Times*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Arendt, H. (2003). The Perplexities of the Rights of Man. In P. Baehr (Ed.), *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (pp. 31-45). New York: Penguin.
- Arias, A. (2003). Central American-Americans: Invisibility, Power and Representation in the US Latino World. *Latino Studies*, 1, 168-187.
- Ashcroft, B., and Ahluwalia, P. (2009). *Edward Said*. London: Routledge.
- Badcock, B. (1984). *Unfairly Structured Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Baldassare, M. (Ed.). (1994). *The Los Angeles Riots: Lessons for the Urban Future*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Banham, R. (2009). *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Barrows, A. (2016). *Time, Literature, and Cartography After the Spatial Turn*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barry, A. (2015). Geography and Other Disciplines: Genealogy, Anamnesis and the Canon. *Journal of historical Geography*, 49, 85-93.

Bassani, L. M. (2004). Life, Liberty, and...: Jefferson on Property Rights. *Journal of Libertarian Studies* , 18 (1), 31-87.

Baubock, R. (2003). Reinventing Urban Citizenship . *Citizenship Studie* , 7 (7), 139-160.

Baumol, W. J., Blinder, A., and Wolff, E. (2003). *Downsizing in America: Reality, Causes, and Consequences*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Benesch, K. (2005). Concepts of Space in American Culture: An Introduction. In K. Benesch, and K. Schmidt (Eds.), *Space in America: Theory, History, Culture* (pp. 11-19). New York: Rodopi.

Benjamin, W. (2001). *Selected Writings: Volume 2*. (M. W. Jennings, H. Eiland, and G. Smith, Eds.) Cambridge: The Belknap Press.

Benjamin, W. (2003). *Selected Writings: Volume 4*. (H. Eiland, and M. J. Jennings, Eds.) Cambridge: The Belknap Press.

Benjamin, W. (1999). *The Arcades Project* . Cambridge: The Belknap Press.

Blakely, E. J., and Synder, M. G. (1999). *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Blyn, R. (2016). Belonging to the Network: Neoliberalism and Postmodernism. *Modern Fiction Studies* , 62 (2), 191-216.

Bodenhamer, D. J. (2010). *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* . Bloomington : Indiana University Press.

Borges, J. L. (2000). *A Borges Reader*. (E. R. Monegal, and A. Reid, Eds.) New York: E.P. Dutton.

Boyle, T. C. (2003). *The Tortilla Curtain*. London: Bloomsbury.

Bridge, G., and Watson, S. (2010). Introducing Urban Politics and Planning. In G. Bridge, and S. Watson (Eds.), *Blackwell City Reader* (pp. 333-338). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Bridges, A., and Fortner, M. J. (Eds.). (2017). *Urban Citizenship and American Democracy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Briggs, L., McCormick, G., and Way, J. (2008). Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis. *American Quarterly*, 60 (3), 625-648.

Bullard, R. (2004). Introduction. In R. Bullard, G. S. Johnson, and A. O. Torres (Eds.), *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism & New Routes to Equity* (pp. 1-14). Cambridge: Southend Press.

Caminero-Santangelo, M. (2009). Central Americans in the City: Goldman, Tobar, and the Question of Panethnicity. *Literature, Interpretation, Theory*, 20, 173-195.

Campbell, N. (2000). *The Cultures of the American New West*. Edinburgh: Routledge.

Castells, M. (1983). *The City and the Grassroots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Castells, M. (1977). *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Castree, N. (1995). The Nature of Produced Nature: Materiality and Knowledge Construction in Marxism. *Antipode*, 27 (1), 12-48.

Certeau, M. de. (2010). The Practice of Everyday Life. In G. Bridge, and S. Watson (Eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (pp. 111-118). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Chang, E. T., and Leong, R. C. (Eds.). (1993). *Los Angeles - Struggles Toward Multiethnic Community*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Cheung, K.-K. (2005). (Mis)interpretations and (In)justice: The 1992 Los Angeles "Riots" and "Black-Korean Conflict". *MELUS* , 30 (3), 3-40.

Chinchilla, N. S., and Hamilton, N. (2001). *Seeking Community in Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Chuh, K. (2006). Of Hemispheres and Other Spheres: Navigating Karen Tei Yamashita's Literary World. *American Literary History* , 618-637.

Cohen, P. (2003). From the Other Side of the Tracks: Dual Cities, Third Spaces, and the Urban Uncanny in Contemporary Discourses of 'Race' and Class. In G. Bridge, and S. Watson (Eds.), *City Companion* (pp. 316-330). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Crawford, M. (1995). Contesting the Public Realm: Struggles over Public Space in Los Angeles. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 4-9.

Davis, M. (2002, 07 14). *Burning too Few Illusions*. Retrieved from *Left Turn*: <http://www.leftturn.org/burning-too-few-illusions>. (11.12.2016).

Davis, M. (2006). *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. London: Verso.

Davis, M. (1999). *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. New York: Vintage.

Davis, M. (2016). Fortress Los Angeles In R. LeGates, and F. Stout (Eds.), *The City Reader* (pp. 212-217). London: Routledge.

Davis, M. (2007a). *In Praise of Barbarians: Essays against Empire*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Davis, M. (2008). *Magical Urbanism: Latino Reinvent the U.S. City*. London: Verso.

Davis, M. (2007b). *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso.

Denning, M. (2004). *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*. London: Verso.

Depastino, T. (2010). *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shape America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Descola, P., and Palsson, G. (Eds.). (1996). *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Dikeç, M., and Gilbert, L. (2002). Right to the City: Homage or a New Societal Ethics? *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 13 (2), 58-74.

Dirlik, A. (1994). The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism. *Critical Inquiry*, 20, 328-356.

Dreier, P. (2003). America's Urban Crisis a Decade After the Los Angeles Riots. *National Civic Review*, 92 (1), 35-55.

Elden, S. (2004). *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*. London: Continuum.

Engh, M. E. (2000). At Home in the Heteropolis: Understanding Postmodern Los Angeles. *The American Historical Review*, 105 (5), 1676-1682.

Erler, E. J. (1989). The Great Fence to Liberty: The Right to Property in the American Founding. In E. F. Paul, and H. Dickman (Eds.), *Liberty, Property, and the Foundations of American Constitution* (pp. 43-64). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Estrada, G. (2005). If You Build It They Will Move: The Los Angeles Freeway System and the Displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles, 1944-1972 . *Southern California Quarterly*, 87 (3), 287-315.

Feeney, N. (2015, April 29). *How Critics of Baltimore Media Coverage Echo 1992*. Retrieved from *Time*: <http://time.com/3840363/media-coverage-baltimore-rodney-king/> (08.07.2016).

Fishkin, S. F. (2005). Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies. Presidential Address to the American Studies Association. November 12, 2004. *American Quarterly*, 57 (1), 17-57.

Foscarinis, M. (1996). Downward Spiral: Homelessness and Its Criminalization. *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 14 (1), 1-63.

Foucault, M. (2006). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16 (1), 22-27.

Fox, C. F. (1999). *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S. - Mexico Border*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Fraser, B. (2015). *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies: Henri Lefebvre and Humanities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Garcia, M. C. (2006). *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gendzel, G. (2013). The Tortilla Curtain and California's Nativist Heritage. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 33 (2), 175-183.

George, J. A. (2013). Neighborhood Associations: Security and Hospitality in American Suburban Fiction. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. North Carolina: University of North Carolina.

Gerber, J. (1995). Recession and Restructuring in the California Economy. *Frontera North*, 7 (14), 23-43.

Gibbons, W. (2001). 'Critical of What?': Past and Current Issues in Critical Human Geography. *History of Intellectual Culture*, 1 (1), 1-15.

Gier, J. V., and Tejeda, C. A. (1998). *An Interview with Karen Tei Yamashita*. Retrieved from *ncsu.edu*: <https://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v2i2/Y-AMASHI.HTM> (10.12.2017)

Gleason, P. (2009). *Understanding T.C. Boyle (Understanding Contemporary American Literature)*. Columbia: University of South Carolina.

Gregory, I. N., and Geddes, A. (2014). *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hamilton, N., and Chinchilla, N. S. (2004). *New Organizing Strategies and Transnational Networks of Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*. University of Southern California. California State University, Los Angeles.

Harley, J. B. (2002). *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*. Baltimore: John Hopkins university Press.

Harvey, D. (2007). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, D. (2015). *Consolidating Power*. Retrieved from *Roar Magazine*: <https://roarmag.org/magazine/david-harvey-consolidating-power/> (02.02.2016)

Harvey, D. (2000). Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographical Evils. *Public Culture*, 12 (2), 529-564.

Harvey, D. (2009). *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Harvey, D. (1995). Evaluation: Geographical Knowledge in the Eye of Power: Reflections on Derek Gregory's Geographical Imaginations. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85 (1), 190-164.

Harvey, D. (2001a). Globalization and the "Spatial Fix". *Geographische Revue*, 2, 23-30.

Harvey, D. (2005). *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge.

Harvey, D. (2012a). *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso.

Harvey, D. (1993). *Social Justice and the City*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Harvey, D. (2001b). *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. New York : Routledge.

Harvey, D. (2000). *Spaces of Hope*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Harvey, D. (1991). *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing.

Harvey, D. (2008). The Right to the City. *New Left Review*, 53, 23-40.

Harvey, D. (2012b, 4 9). *Urban Revolution is Coming*. Retrieved from Salon: https://www.salon.com/2012/04/28/urban_revolution_is_coming/ (12.10.2017).

Held, D. (2010). *Cosmopolitanism: Ideals and Realities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hicks, H. H. (2003). On Whiteness in T. Coraghessan Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 45 (1), 43-64.

Holston, J. (2009). Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries. *City and Society* , 21 (2), 245-267.

Holston, J., and Appadurai, A. (1996). Cities and Citizenship. *Public Culture*, 8, 184-204.

Hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Hsu, R. Y. (2006). The Cartography of Justice and Truthful Refractions in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of orange*. In S. G.-I. Lim, John Blair Gamber, Stephen Hong Sohn, and Gina Valentino (Eds.), *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits* (pp. 75-99). PA: Temple University Press.

Imafuku, R., and Yamashita, K. T. (n.d.). *The Latitude of Fiction Writer: A Dialogue*. Retrieved from *Cafe Creole*: http://www.cafecreole.net/archipelago/Karen_Dialogue.html (01.08.2015).

Irr, K. (2015). Neomedievalism in Three Contemporary City Novels: Tobar, Adichie, Lee. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 42 (4), 439-453.

Jaffe, I. (2012, 04 29). *After Los Angeles Riots, A Failed Effort For A Broken City*. Retrieved from *NPR*: <https://www.npr.org/2012/04/29/151608071/after-l-a-riots-an-effort-to-rebuild-a-broken-city> (10.09.2017).

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Jameson, F. (2005). Cognitive Mapping. In M. Hardt, and K. Weeks (Eds.), *The Jameson Reader*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Janzen, R. (2002). Reconsidering the Politics of Nature: Henri Lefebvre and the Politics of Nature . *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 13 (2), 96-116.

Jarvis, B. (1998). *Postmodern Geographies: The geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture*. London: Pluto Press.

Jay, P. (2010). *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jayne, A. (1998). *Jefferson's Declaration of Independence: Origins, Philosophy and Theology*. Kentucky: Kentucky University Press.

Johnson, J. H., Jones, C. K., Walter, F.C., and Oliver, M. L. (1992). *The Los Angeles Rebellion 1992: A Preliminary Assessment from Ground Zero*. Working paper. Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Urban Poverty.

Johnston, R. J., Gregory, D., and Smith, D. M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Jonas, S., and Rodriguez, N. (2014). *Guatemala - US Migration: Transforming the Region*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Juvan, M. (2015). From Spatial Turn to GIS-Mapping of Literary Cultures. *European Review*, 23 (1), 81-96.

Katz, C., Smith, N., and Davis, M. (1992). Los Angeles Intifada: Interview with Mike Davis. *Social Text*, 33, 19-33.

Kennedy, L. (1999). Black Noir: Race and Urban Space in Walter Mosley's Detective Fiction . In K. G. Klein (Ed.), *Diversity and Detective Fiction* (pp. 224-239). Bowling Green : Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Kim, J. (2008). Immigrants, Racial Citizens, and the (Multi)Cultural Politics of Neoliberal Los Angeles. *Social Justice*, 35 (2), 36-56.

Kipfer, S. (2008). How Lefebvre Urbanized Gramsci: Hegemony, Everyday Life, and Difference. In K. Goonewardena, S. Kipfer, R. Milgrom, and C. Schmid (Eds.), *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

Kipfer, S., Schmid, C., Goonewardena, K., and Milgrom, R. (2008). Globalizing Lefebvre? In K. Goonewardena, S. Kipfer, R. Milgrom, and C. Schmidt (Eds.), *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Lefebvre* (pp. 285-305). New York: Routledge.

Knapp, K. (2008). 'Ain't No Friend of Mine:' Immigration Policy, The Gated Community, and the Problem with the Disposable Worker in T.C. Boyle's Tortilla Curtain. *Atenea* , 28 (2), 121-135.

Kolodny, A. (1975). Chapel Hill : The University of North Carolina Press.

Lee, S.-I. (2007). 'We Are Not the World': Global Village, Universalism, and Karen Tei Yamashita's Tropic of Orange. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53 (3), 501-527.

Lefebvre, H. (2008). *Critique of Everyday Life Volume 1*. London: Verso.

Lefebvre, H. (1971). *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. New York: Harper.

Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. London: Continuum Press.

Lefebvre, H. (2009). *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Lefebvre, H. (1976). *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Productions*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Lefebvre, H. (2003). *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lefebvre, H. (1988). Toward a Leftist Cultural Politics: Remarks Occasioned by the Centenary of Death. In L. Grossberg, and C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (D. Reifman, Trans., pp. 75-88). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Lefebvre, H. (2000). *Writings on Cities*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Lieberman, P. (1992, 06 18). *51% of Riot Arrests Were Latino, Study Says: Unrest*. Retrieved from *Los Angeles Times*: http://articles.latimes.com/1992-06-18/local/me-734_1_los-angeles-riots (03.05.2016).

Lipsitz, G. (2001). *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lloyd, R. (2002). *Baudelaire's World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Luis, E. G., and Michael, P. S. (2017). The Locations of Transnationalism. In M. P. Smith, and E. G. Luis (Eds.), *Transnationalism from Below: Comparative Urban and Community Research* (pp. 3-34). New York: Routledge.

Madden, D., and Marcuse, P. (2016, 10 02). *The Permanent Crisis of Housing*. Retrieved from *Jacobin Magazine*: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/10/housing-crisis-rent-landlords-homeless-affordability> (02.05.2017).

Manzanas, A. M., and Benito, J. (2011). *Cities, Borders, and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film*. New York: Routledge.

Marcuse, P. (2014). Reading the Right to the City. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*, 18 (1), 4-9.

Marsh, E. (2012, August). A Concrete Reality: Spatial Injustice and the Los Angeles River. *Msc Dissertation in Urbanization and Development*.

Martin, P. (1995). Proposition 187 in California. *The International Migration Review*, 29 (1), 255-263.

Marx, K. (2015). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*. Retrieved 10 12, 2017, Retrieved from *Marxist.org*: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf> (03-06.2016).

Marx, K., and Engels, F. (2010). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Retrieved from *Marxists Internet Archive*: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf> (10.10.2017).

Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. London: Sage.

McCann, E. J. (1999). Race, Protest, and Public Space: Contextualizing Lefebvre in the U.S. City. *Antipode*, 31 (2), 163-184.

McDonnell, P. J. (1999, July 29). Davis Won't Appeal Prop. 187 Ruling, Ending Court Battles. Retrieved from *Los Angeles Times*. <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/jul/29/news/mn-60700> (04.04.2016).

McDonnell, P. J., and Lopez, R. J. (1994, October 17). Los Angeles March Against Prop. 187 Draws 70,000: Immigration: Protesters condemn Wilson for backing initiative that they say promotes 'racism, scapegoating.'. Retrieved from *Los Angeles Times*. http://articles.latimes.com/1994-10-17/news/mn-51339_1_illegal-immigrants (07.08.2016).

Mermann-Jozviak, E. (2011). Yamashita's Post National Spaces: 'It All Comes Together in Los Angeles'. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 41 (1), 1-24.

Merrifield, A. (2002). *Metromarxism: Marxist Tale of the City*. New York: Routledge.

Meusburger, P., Gregory, D., and Suarsana, L. (Eds.). (2015). *Geographies of Knowledge and Power*. New York: Springer.

Meyerson, G. (2004). Tortilla Curtain and the Ecology of Fear. *Contracorriente: A Journal of Social History and Literature in Latin America* , 67-91.

Minich, J. A. (2013). Mestizaje as National Prosthesis: Corporeal Metaphors in Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*. *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 17, 211-226.

Mitchell, D. (2011). Homelessness, American Style. *Urban Geography*, 32 (7), 933-956.

Mitchell, D. (1997). The Annihilation of Space by Law: The Roots and Implications of Anti-homeless Laws in the United States. *Antipode*, 29 (3), 303-335.

Mitchell, D. (2003). *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford Press.

Nolan, F. (2015, 04 29). *How Critics of Baltimore Media Coverage Echo 1992*. Retrieved from Time: <http://time.com/3840363/media-coverage-baltimore-rodney-king/> (10.02. 2016)

Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ong, A. (2006). *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ong, P., and Hee, S. (1993). *Losses in the Los Angeles Civil Unrest: April 29-May 1, 1992*. Center for Pacific Rim Studies of University of California.

Ortiz, R. L. (2008). On (Our) American Ground: Caribbean-Latino-Diasporic Cultural Production and the Postnational 'Guantanamo'. *Social Text* 94, 26 (1), 3-28.

Ostendorf, B. (2002). Transnational or the Fading of the Borders. In B. Ostendorf (Ed.), *Transnational America: The Fading of Borders in the Western Hemisphere*. Heidelberg: Winter.

Palmer, R. (2016). Citrus Noir: Strange Fruit in Karen Tei Yamashita's Tropic of Orange. *Studia Neophilologica*, 88, 96-106.

Prieto, E. (2011). Geocriticism, Geopoetics, Geophilosophy, and Beyond. In R. T. Tally (Ed.), *Geographical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies* (pp. 13-28). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Purcell, M. (2003). Citizenship and the Right to the Global City: Reimagining the Capitalist World Order. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27, 564-590.

Purcell, M. (2008). *Recapturing Democracy: Neoliberalization and the Struggles for Alternative Urban Futures*. New York: Routledge.

Rimbaud, A. (2003). *Rimbaud Complete*. (W. Mason, Ed.) New York: The Modern Library.

Rodriguez, A. P. (2013). Diasporic Reparations: Repairing the Social Imagineries of Central America in the Twenty-First Century. *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 37 (2), 27-43.

Rodriguez, A. P. (2001). Refugees of the South: Central Americans in the U.S. Latino Imaginary. *American Literature*, 73 (2), 387-412.

Rody, C. (2009). *The Interethnic Imagination: Roots and Passages in Contemporary Asian American Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rody, C. (2004). The Transnational Imagination: Karen Tei Yamashita's Tropic of Orange. In E. R. Ty, and D. C. Goellnicht (Eds.), *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen* (pp. 130-148).

Rolnik, R. (2014). Place, Inhabitation and Citizenship: The Right to Housing and the Right to the City in the Contemporary Urban World. *International Journal for Housing Policy*, 4 (3), 293-300.

Rossner, H. (2014, July 18). *Los Angeles River: From Concrete Ditch to Urban Oasis*. Retrieved from National Geographic: <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/07/140719-los-angeles-river-restoration-kayaking-greenway/> (07.09.2016).

Rowe, J. C. (1998). Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies. *Cultural Critique*, 40, 11-28.

Sadowski-Smith, C. (2008). *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Said, E. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Sandoval-Strausz, A. (2014). Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origins of a New Urban America. *Journal of American History*, 101 (3), 804-831.

Sassen, S. (2005). The Global City: Introducing a Concept. *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 9 (2), 27-43.

Sassen, S. (2015, November 24). Who owns our cities - and why this urban takeover should concern us all. Retrieved from *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/24/who-owns-our-cities-and-why-this-urban-takeover-should-concern-us-all> (11.11.2017).

Sassen, S. (1992). Why Migration? *Report on the Americas*, 25 (1), 14-19.

Schafer-Wünsche, E. (2005). Borders and Catastrophes: T.C. Boyle's Californian Ecology. In K. Benesch, and K. Schmidt (Eds.), *Space in America: Theory, History and Culture* (pp. 401-417). New York: Rodopi.

Schickel, R. (1992, 5 11). *How TV Failed to Get the Real Picture*. Retrieved from *content.time*: <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,975478,00.html> (08.08.2016).

Schueller, M. J. (2004). Postcolonial American Studies. *American Literary History*, 16 (1), 162-175.

Sesnic, J. (2011). Dreams Deferred: The Concept of the US-Mexican Borderlands between the Global North and the South. *Americana: American Studies in Hungary*, 7 (1), 2-21.

Sharpe, J. (1995). Is the United States Postcolonial; Transnationalism, Immigration, and Race. *Diaspora*, 4 (2), 181-199.

Shields, R. (1996). A Guide to Urban Representation and What To Do about It . In A. D. King (Ed.), *Re-presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital, and Culture in the 21st Century of Metropolis* (pp. 227-252). New York: New York University Press.

Sielke, S. (2005). Between, Beyond, Elsewhere: Mapping the Zones and Borderlands of Critical Discourse. In K. Benesch, and K. Schmidt (Eds.), *Space in America: Theory, History, Culture* (pp. 107-118). New York: Rodopi.

Simmel, G. (2010). The Metropolis and Mental Life. In G. Bridge, and S. Watson (Eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (pp. 103-110). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Smith, H. N. (1978). *Virgin Land*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Smith, M. P., and Mcquarrie , M. (Eds.). (2012). *Remaking Urban Citizenship: Organizations, Institutions, and the Right to the City*. London: Routledge.

Smith, N. (2015). The Future is Radically Open. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14 (3), 954-964.

Smith, N. (1996a). *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge.

Smith, N. (1996b). The Production of Nature. In J. Bird, B. Curtis, M. Mash, T. Putnam, G. Robertson, and L. Tickner (Eds.), *FutureNatural* (pp. 35-54). London: Routledge.

Smith, N. (1997). The Satanic Geographies of Globalization: Uneven Development in the 1990s. *Public Culture*, 10 (1), 169-189.

Smith, N. (2008). *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Smith, N., and Katz, C. (2005). Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics. In M. Keith, and S. Pile (Eds.), *Place and the Politics of Identity* (pp. 64-83). Routledge.

Smith, N., and Williams, P. (2015). Ortodoks Yaklaşım Alternatifler: Tartışmaya Davet. In N. Smith, and P. Williams, *Kentin Mutenalaştırılması* (M. Uzun, Trans., pp. 11-26). İstanbul: Yordam Kitap.

Soja, E. (2010). *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Soja, E. W. (2000). *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Soja, E. W. (1989). *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertation of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.

Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing.

Stanek, L. (2012). Architecture as Space, Again? *Spéciale'Z (Paris)*, 4, 48-53.

Stanek, L. (2008). Space as Concrete Abstraction: Hegel, Marx, and Modern Urbanism in Henri Lefebvre. In K. Goonewardena, S. Kipfer, R. Milgrom, and C. Schmidt (Eds.), *Space, Difference, Everyday Life* (pp. 62-79). New York: Routledge.

Stevenson, D. (2009). *Cities and Urban Cultures*. New York: Open University Press.

Stoneham, G. (2000). 'It's a Free Country': Visions of Hybridity in the Metropolis. In A. Bery, and P. Muray (Eds.), *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures. Dislocations* (pp. 81-92). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tally, R. T. (Ed.). (2011). *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thoma, P. (2010). Travelling the Distances of Karen Tei Yamashita's Fiction. *Asian American Literature: Discourses and Pedagogies*, 1, 6-15.

Tobar, H. (n.d.). *The Tattooed Soldier*. Retrieved from Hector Tobar's Official Website: <http://www.hectortobar.com/tattooedsoldier> (12.10.2017).

Tobar, H. (2000). *The Tattooed Soldier*. New York: Penguin.

Tobar, H. (2005). *Translation Nation: Defining A New American Identity in the Spanish-Speaking United States*. New York: Penguin.

Valle, V. M., and Torres, R. D. (2000). *Latino Metropolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Varyansi, M. W. (2008). *Immigration Policing Through the Backdoor: City Ordinances, The 'Right to the City,' and the Exclusion of Undocumented Day Laborers*. The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies.

Vint, S. (2012). Orange County: Global Networks in Tropic of Orange. *Science Fiction Studies*, 39 (3), 401-414.

Wainright, O. (2015, October 23). *Is Frank Gehry really the right person to revitalize the Los Angeles River?* Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/oct/23/frank-gehry-revitalise-los-angeles-la-river> (06.07.2016).

Wald, S. D. (2013). 'Refusing to Halt': Mobility and the Quest for Spatial Justice in Helena Maria Viramontes's *Their Dogs Came with Them* and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*. *Western American Literature*, 48 (1-2), 70-89.

Waldron, J. (1991). Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom. *UCLA Law Review* , 295-324.

Wallace, M. (2001). Tropics of Globalization: Reading the New North America. *Symploke*, 9 (1-2), 145-160.

Warf, B., and Santa Arias. (2009). Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space into the Social Sciences and Humanities. In B. Warf, and Santa Arias (Eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (pp. 1-10). New York: Routledge.

Weinstein, R. S. (1996). The First American City. In A. J. Scott, and E. W. Soja (Eds.), *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (pp. 22-46). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weinstein, R. S. (1996). The First American City. In A. J. Scott, and E. Soja (Eds.), *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (pp. 22-46). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Westphal, B. (2011). *Real and Fictional Spaces*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, P. (2015). Mekansal Yeniden İnşa ile Sınıf Oluşumu: Avustralya, Britanya ve Birleşik Devletler'deki Mutenalaştırmaya İlişkin Bir Yeniden Değerlendirme. In N. Smith, and P. Williams, *Kentin Mutenalaştırılması* (M. Uzun, Trans., pp. 83-110). İstanbul: Yordam Kitap.

Williams, R. G. (Ed.). (1993). *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*. New York: Routledge.

Wright, J. G. (2016). Tortillas from Grapes: T. Coraghessan Boyle Reimagines Steinbeck's Social Protest Novel. *Steinbeck Review*, 13 (2), 151-168.

Yamashita, K. T. (1997). *Tropic of Orange*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press.

Young, I. M. (2010). The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference. In G. Bridge, and S. Watson (Eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (pp. 228-242). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Zhou, X. (2014). *Cities of Others: Reimagining Urban Spaces in Asian American Literature*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Zong, J., and Batalova, J. (2017, April 5). *Central American Immigrants in the United States*. Retrieved from *Migration Policy Institute*: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/central-american-immigrants-united-states> (11.10.2017).

Zukin, S. (2010). Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World. In G. Bridge, and S. Watson (Eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (pp. 293-302). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.