

**Magic Capitalism and Melodramatic
Imagination—Producing Locality and
Reconstructing Asian Ethnicity in Karen
Tei Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the
Rain Forest****

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Abstract

This paper investigates the production of locality in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (1990). The production of locality as dramatized by the novel consists of two phases of local spatialization in the context of time-space compression: deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Yamashita employs a specific narrative style that wavers between magic realism and melodrama to address the uncertainty, rupture, and incongruity derived from the condition in which transnational capitalism exerts both negative and positive impacts on local places in the

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margin. While the novel's magic realist narrative mode manifests the uncanniness of deterritorialization, its melodramatic mode of narrative seems to reveal the process of reterritorialization with which the local people come to terms with the condition of globalization. It is within the process of reterritorialization, I contend, that the issue of Asian ethnicity can be investigated. In the novel, Asian ethnicity is redefined in materialistic terms to serve as social agents and means of cultural production whose power of mediation both challenges the violence of Western capitalism and supplements the rupture and the gap Western capitalism leaves behind in the local place. Asian ethnic specificity is thus reformulated by means of weaving family value and domestic cultural and imaginary production together. The novel's engagement with the production of locality, consequently, opens up a discursive and imaginary pattern that patches/matches the odd couple of magic capitalism and melodramatic imagination in an Asian style.

Key Words: magic realism, melodramatic imagination, the production of locality, Asian ethnicity