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# Women Crossing Tropics and Oceans: the Transgression of Female Border-Crossing in Contemporary American Literature

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## Abstract

Based on a study of three works of contemporary North American literature – Karen T. Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997), Cathy Park Hong's *Dance Dance Revolution* (2007), and Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being* (2012) – we will examine the ways women's voices travel across borders, creating a transnational disruption of space and identity, and prompting us to interrogate the dominant discourse on national and linguistic unity. By transgressing national borders and by being situated within liminal, unstable spaces, the female subject magnifies the failure of realism, of traditional historiographic discourses, and of dominant sites of power in the face of modernity, and disrupts conventional conceptualizations of identity as stable, linear, and monolithic. Set in Los Angeles, *Tropic of Orange* depicts a hybrid space that reasserts the power of indigenous knowledge and mythical historiography through the prism of motherhood and migration, a process notably embodied by Rafaela Cortes who experiences the repercussions of globalizing dynamics and the complex geographies they engender. Through the figure of the female Guide, a former revolutionary from South Korea turned touring guide in a fictional planned city, *Dance Dance Revolution* coalesces issues of nationhood, selfhood, and womanhood around dynamics of revolution and betrayal, exposing the transnational impact of imperialism and repression. *A Tale for the Time Being* layers three female voices: a Japanese Buddhist nun, her American-raised Japanese granddaughter Nao, and a Japanese-American novelist named Ruth, who finds Nao's journal in the wake of the 2011 tsunami. This collage of voices exposes the fractures in self-representation, as well as the fluidity of time and space, and of national and personal identity. This paper will thus seek to highlight how the foregrounding of female migrant voices radicalizes them and magnifies their disruptive potential in the interrogation of the nation-self continuum.

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