

Dissertation Defense

Final Public Oral Examination for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Literary & Cultural Studies

For

Eunji Jo

Examiners:

Professor Rich Purcell, Chairperson

Professor Andreea Ritivoi

Professor Marian Aguiar

Monday, April 28, 2025

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Posner Hall 151



**Carnegie
Mellon
University**
English

Urban Elsewhere: Diasporic Imagination and Narratives of Transnationalism

“Urban Elsewhere: Diasporic Imagination and Narratives of Transnationalism” is a comparative and interdisciplinary study of representations of urban space through a diasporic lens. The structure of my research, like the subject it navigates, sits between two distinct spheres as it shifts from macro- to close-reading analysis. First, I identify the trope of “elsewhere” in diasporic literature and criticism. I argue that this term functions across diasporic texts as a rich topological signifier that troubles existing geographic arrangements: here/there, inhabitable/uninhabitable, homeland/hostland, real/imagined, and inside/outside. My study of this corpus reveals how it reconceptualizes geography and life in ways that are deterritorializing, interconnected, creative, sustainable, and radical. Building on this analysis of “elsewhere,” the second part of my dissertation examines Dionne Brand’s *Love Enough*, Elamin Abdelmahmoud’s *Son of Elsewhere*, and Min Jin Lee’s *Pachinko*, with a focus on their descriptions of urban space and how they render these spaces available for diasporan subjects while resisting exclusionary spatial politics of belonging, ownership, representations and sometimes governance. I evaluate the alternative visions these writers offer: Brand explores a radical reimagining of governance through an incident of “mishearing” “100 police force” as “100 musicians” to curtail violence, Abdelmahmoud repurposes non-place as a site of belonging while resisting reductive racialization through a hybridized understanding of his Blackness, shaped by its construction within Sudanese, Canadian, and American contexts, and Lee emphasizes intergroup solidarity and cultural citizenship.