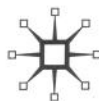


Unmasking L.A.
Third Worlds and the City

Edited by
Deepak Narang Sawhney

palgrave



UNMASKING L.A.

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Journey Beyond the Stars

Los Angeles and Third Worlds

Deepak Narang Sawhney

Humanity enveloped Los Angeles like a tidal wave.

—Morrow Mayo

MANUFACTURING A CITY

Once a shantytown on the outskirts of America's manifest destiny, Los Angeles is now poised to lead the United States into the Pacific century. From *el pueblo* to city of the future, from Iowa's seacoast to city of the apocalypse, Los Angeles's financial, cultural, and digital preeminence appear unchallenged in the changing worlds of globalization. Los Angeles, whose arid landscape was the first in the world to be showered in the incandescent beauty of electric lights, has, through its economic boom-and-bust cycles, become a magnet for the world's manufacturing, e-commerce, film, and science sectors. From its early years as a crater of genocide of the original peoples to present-day, dystopian metro-galaxy, Los Angeles defines the future of cities to come.

Beneath the bright lights and the spectacle of Hollywood glamour, and away from Malibu beachfront homes is an epic tale of racial disharmony, territorial conquest, and the attempted extermination of the original peoples.

Underneath the city's capitalist veneer of profits and the expanding market share that comes with globalization is a story of boom and bust, of reinvention, recreation, hype. It is a tale that continues to unfold to the present day, as L.A.'s tumultuous history, volatile economy, and racial politics reshape the city for future generations. Since the city's birth in 1781, Los Angeles has come to define both the material and spiritual force of the American civilization. In Los Angeles, the successes and failures, the discoveries and losses, and the hopes and desires of immigrant generations create an urban landscape uncharted before in American history. The American dream is realized, experienced, and lost in the City of Angels. Los Angeles is simultaneously an economic powerhouse and sweatshop—a paradigm of First and internal Third Worlds; it is a global marketplace of speculative investment, a refugee camp of capitalism's dispossessed, an industry of celluloid fantasy, a factory of cheap labor, a site of resistance. With a continuous supply of refined South American coca seeping into the city, Los Angeles, which is the major conduit for the importation, transportation, and selling of cocaine in the United States, is operating its own unique Free-Trade Area of the Americas. The free-trade agreement with the Americas is by all accounts efficient, profitable, and independent of the U.S. government.² Los Angeles is America's manifest destiny run amok.

The city is the site in which catastrophic extremes coexist seamlessly. From natural disasters to climatological paradise, from urban uprisings to gated communities, from internal Third Worlds to the center zones of the First, Los Angeles is the city of unmitigated contradictions. Even the navigational compass of America is reversed with the birth of Los Angeles: America "put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle; its West is the edge of the East."³ The raw contradictions, the grim paradoxes, and the understated ironies that give texture and substance to the reality of Los Angeles's myriad communities continuously redefine, reshape, and restructure the city.

Los Angeles is often dismissed as a concrete fabric of vast freeway networks, homogeneous tract housing, and ubiquitous mini-malls. But the city's landscape reveals much more than cracked asphalt. Los Angeles portrays a portentous choreography of opposing forces, depicts the religious tension of good versus evil, colors the hatred of white versus black, and illustrates the immense inequalities of wealth versus poverty. Each opposition paints roles for the other, each produces visions of ambiguity in the face of the other, and each creates maelstroms of uncertainty. Los Angeles is an urban blueprint from which the citizens of the world voyeuristically gaze upon each other through the city's industries of reality and unreality, its smog-laden decay of urban life, and its internalization of America's manifest destiny. Such choreographies of opposing forces bring together

histories of racial segregation and tales of class conflict, and the present realities of inter-and intra-racial warfare.

The aim of this collection of essays, dialogues, poetry, and photographs is to reveal the Third World geographies, cultures, and populations of Los Angeles. This collection unearths interdisciplinary analysis, critique, and commentary on Los Angeles as world city, as internal Third World, and as an evolving and adapting metropolis of globalization by covering a wide spectrum of the city's culture, economy, philosophy, art, and history. In tracing the evolution of the city's birth to its present-day status of self-appointed city of the Pacific century, this collection examines how Los Angeles has grown from *el pueblo* to become one of the most innovatively successful cities in the world. The chapters investigate the multifaceted, oftentimes contradictory histories and theories that have come to dominate L.A. scholarship. By exploring the social and cultural forces that have made Los Angeles such an un-American American metropolis, this volume responds to the urban paradoxes and noir ironies that have created the metropolis of the twenty-first century. By bridging numerous disciplines to produce an objective assessment of Los Angeles, the essays and photographs utilize a wide range of perspectives to chart the city's complex historical dynamics, multicultural patterns, socioeconomic narratives, urban structures, and literary creations. The collection employs various intellectual and artistic mediums, such as historical texts, images, artistic perspectives, and dialogues, to uncover the complex layers of culture, economy, literature, society, and politics that have contributed to the creation of contemporary Los Angeles. In particular, the dialogues with Deepak Chopra, Mike Davis, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offer an intimate, detailed, and personal look into the City of Angels. Each dialogue covers areas of Los Angeles that are usually glossed over or simply ignored in discussions about the city. The dialogues represent the geographical vastness and cultural heterogeneity of the metropolis. They provide intellectual engagement and stimulate civic discussion about the issues and problems facing Angelenos today.

The volume brings together a set of diverse responses to the complexities facing Los Angeles, such as the fluidity of border culture, the question of immigration, the attempted genocide of the original peoples, the consequences of globalization, the changing ethnic landscapes of California (and the United States), and the role of resistance art. By including studies ranging from the academic to literary romances to visual art, the collection avoids perpetuating the hype, promotion, and spectacle that have shrouded Los Angeles in a cloud of mythic glory for so long. Instead, the scope of each chapter is to present diverse, original, stimulating, challenging, and thought-provoking responses to the issues covered in this introduction.

Los Angeles is not an American city in the traditional sense. Los Angeles is more international than any Midwestern metropolis could ever hope to be; it is more ethnic than any city in the South could ever wish to be; and it is uncomfortably foreign to many Atlantic-based Americans who visit the eastern edge of the Pacific Rim.⁴ The city's vast geographical appetite for reckless urban expansion easily absorbs its surrounding, peripheral areas, while at the same time older urban clusters within Los Angeles cry out for independence through political secessionist movements. Los Angeles has neither a traditional downtown nor traditional city demarcations. Traditional city limits based upon social class structure and sustained by city planners, zoning covenants, or vote-hungry gerrymanders appear not to matter to many Angelenos as they drive their ever-larger automobiles through some of the world's most desolate, economically impoverished housing districts, which are born daily from the speculations of globalization, to some of the most exclusive residential enclaves. Los Angeles is as much a sprawling, concrete metropolis as it is a segregated, tightly planned city. Los Angeles is the first to be a city *and* a concept. Indeed, Los Angeles is as much an abstraction, an idea, a construct, a location, a profit as it is a city. Los Angeles is as much a "social imaginary," a product, a commodity as it is a geographical location. "Los Angeles, it should be understood, is not a mere city . . . it is . . . a commodity; something to be advertised and sold to the people of the United States like automobiles, cigarettes, and mouth washes."⁵

A CITY WITH TWO FACES

Los Angeles learned early on that advertising, promotion, and hype were the key to its future. It quickly caught on to the idea that selling the imaginary can be just as lucrative as selling tangible goods, like coal or cotton. People need to escape from reality as much as they need essential materials to live in reality. Utilizing the region's immense citrus groves, for example, the city sold itself as the land of health, sunshine, and rehabilitation from the miserable winters back east. The Los Angeles air was even marketed as having medicinal properties to ease respiratory ailments! Early L.A. boosters were determined to sell the city as a sanctuary of good living.⁶ Despite being labeled "The Devils" or "The Hell-hole," Los Angeles has nonetheless grown up to become one of the most important cultural and financial powerhouses the world has created. Los Angeles is admired, envied, and hated by most industrial nations because of its uncanny ability to bounce back from dire economic, racial, and social upheavals.⁷ Los Angeles is more like a phoenix rising from the flames of burning California brush, the fires of economic riot, or the conflagrations of urban disaster than it is an angel.

Los Angeles is indisputably a global city, the epicenter of globalization, the Ellis Island of the Pacific century. Yet, this status of world city is utilized by both L.A. boosters and detractors alike to showcase what is best and worst about Los Angeles. At times, it appears as if Los Angeles leads a double life. On the one hand, L.A. projects an image of immense wealth, a vision of the American Dream, a sanctuary of health, a land of opportunity for *all*; on the other, it reveals an existence of immense inequality, a life sentence of poverty, a wasteland of urbanization, a ghetto of racial strife, a desert of toxic pollution. Such a double life perpetuates First and Third World dichotomies, often leading to civil unrest and to the creation of economic, social, and residential segregation. What is certain, especially to the city's residents, is that regardless of which perspective we identify with, Los Angeles is in danger of becoming exhausted as the city's internal Third Worlds engage in low-intensity warfare, as peripheral zones seep into pristine, gated communities, and as political and economic violence threaten to disrupt Los Angeles's status as world city.

Behind this double life and behind this dubious distinction of global city is a metropolis whose economy, politics, culture, and civic life remain fundamentally insecure, radically unequal, and socially polarized. Los Angeles is one of the first American cities to showcase to the world the horrors of low-intensity warfare between militaristic tribal sects to the terror of police brutality; it is one of the first to destroy its natural environment systemically in pursuit of unregulated urban and industrial growth while methodically depleting its downtown of civic resources. "Racialized spaces," social and economic apartheid, LAPD brutality and scandal, housing segregation, threats of secession are just a handful of contributing factors that separate Angelenos from each other and that divide the city's residents along lines of race, city, county, district, housing, and zip code. Another form of division is that of a prison underclass living in and around Los Angeles. There are approximately 41,000 parolees, many of whom are repeat offenders, searching for some kind of redemption in Los Angeles. With an indelible scar stamped "criminal" on their future prospects, the chance of crawling out of their present predicament is nearly impossible in a city obsessed with background checks, drug tests, and personality tests for low-end, service economy employment. Gaining such employment, which imprisons nearly a quarter of Angelenos at or below the federally set poverty level, is further incentive for freshly minted parolees to embark on a vicious cycle of street-bound to prison-bound to street-bound existence.⁸

Such contradictory forces, which wreak havoc on any form of social and civic dialogue, prevent concerned citizens, "undocumented" Americans, frustrated parents, corporate developers, parolees, and aliens from reaching a common ground so that all constituencies within Los Angeles

can be adequately served. With corporate, global, familial, ethnic, religious, and cultural interests at stake, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the city to find a common voice that will unite Angelenos. Regional constituencies, interest groups, and homeowners associations appear to be in deadlock over how the city ought to be governed, how districts ought to be expanded, and how resources ought to be divided. Disagreement over public schools, environmental regulation, green-area allocation, land development, and secessionist movements prevents the exchange of ideas and shared commitments from emerging. Such conflicts often result in the absence of racial and economic harmony within Los Angeles. With such absence comes further distrust and social discord, creating a double life for the City of Angels. The metropolis remains stratified along color lines of race, urban lines of housing, and economic lines of opportunity. Los Angeles needs to find a common vision so that the city's myriad communities can come together to share the opportunities that ought to be available to all residents, both "illegal" and legal, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, language. Without a common racial, ethnic, cultural dialogue for the 12 million or so Angelenos, the city continues to partition itself along racial, urban, and economic lines, which ultimately keeps L.A. from realizing its potential as a city of opportunity for all.

One reason why Los Angeles leads a double life is a result of the boom-and-bust economy that has dominated *el pueblo* since its birth. The city continuously reinvents itself so as to keep up with the changing faces of globalization around the world. The city is always ready to sell itself; it is always ready to embrace the latest economic bubble without realizing what the consequences are to its residents, environment, urban infrastructure, and to future generations. Carey McWilliams, whose superb history of Southern California remains an undisputed guide to the culture and economy of Los Angeles, understands this cycle of invention and reinvention, of boom and bust: "The boom-cycle largely accounts for the curious lack of social continuity in Southern California. Projects begun in the enthusiasm of boom years have collapsed with the particular boom or have been abandoned like a wagon wheel in the desert. Reform movements inaugurated during short periods of comparative stability, when the population has begun to take stock of its environment, have been quickly disrupted by new avalanches of population."⁹ With boom and bust comes social unrest; and with social unrest comes civil uprising. With each boom-and-bust cycle occurring at a shorter interval, the ever-expansive gulf between the super-rich and the rest of humanity widens. Such cycles of economic prosperity and economic depression give rise to the myriad Third Worlds that have come to populate the L.A. area.¹⁰ Such cycles release the top tiers of the economic community into unbridled, speculative channels of profit while at

the same time stratify the majority of L.A.'s working and shrinking middle-class populations into sporadic, short-term, benefit-free, (post)industrial labor. Without a modicum of hope for many Angelenos, the dialectic of lord and serf between owner and employee continues to unravel the social and economic fabric of Los Angeles. Los Angeles has been unable to "take stock of its environment" since its birth because it has been unable to create the necessary civic, social, and environmental structures to sustain and assist the immigrant populations that arrive from over 120 countries. The city squanders precious civic resources as it attempts to build the preeminent metropolis of the Pacific century. Having spent the better part of two decades embracing deregulation that comes with globalization, we find ourselves without adequate resources. The city is unable to create proper social nets for the homeless, the destitute, the poor who find it increasingly difficult to compete in the world of corporate capitalism. We arrive today in the twenty-first century without a common identity and with a failing civic structure, a scandalized police force, a public school system on the verge of collapse, a contaminated ecosystem, a public transportation system stuck in a quagmire of corruption, and an apathetic citizenry. These problems and others continue to crack the social and cultural foundation of the metropolis, creating immense difficulties for an increasingly uncertain future that is torn between the First Worlds of globalization and the Third Worlds of marginalization.¹¹

UNEARTHING LOS ANGELES

Though a common dialogue, collective vision, and shared perspective may not be present in contemporary Los Angeles, the city nevertheless sells itself extremely well.¹² Indeed, Los Angeles captures the global imagination. The fascination with Los Angeles as world city, as capital of the First World and metropolis of the Third, has captivated generations of Americans and non-Americans alike. Restless imaginations find refuge in L.A.'s celluloid fantasies that are played out on the city's streets, alleys, and high rises, while desperate souls find solace in Tinseltown's dreams of fame and fortune. The extreme inequalities of material capitalism—for instance, the salaries paid to corporate CEOs compared to the wages earned by office cleaners who sweep up after them—coexist on the same geographical planes, gridlocked boulevards, residential streets, forgotten alleys, and corporate high rises. The social and economic tensions arising from the uncomfortable juxtaposition of unimaginable wealth and poverties of globalization sharpen the city's urban, gritty edge of First World greed and Third World resistance.

The question of how we begin to understand this dynamic, contradictory city preoccupies countless films, journals, articles, books, websites,

and radio programs. Eager participants of mass consumption, whose insatiable appetite devours everything that *is* L.A., are fed analytical and scripted perspectives on what it is that makes Los Angeles unique in the digital age of special effects and global capitalism. Local writers, international historians, urban theorists, geophilosophers, screenwriters, artists, and film directors devote entire careers to charting the unfolding urban tale that is taking place beneath their feet and on the surface of the city's glitz, glamour, and glitter.

Upon arrival to the shores of Los Angeles, asylum seekers, "illegal" recruits, determined actors, fluid nomads, promising directors, and hopeful immigrants find themselves mesmerized by the city's seemingly infinite economic and geographical vastness, the year-round sunshine, the ostentatious wealth seeping out of gated communities, and the sheer possibility that anything can happen. They are simultaneously appalled by the superficiality of the city, the plasticity of the residents, the sprawling mess of traffic jams, and the polluted atmosphere of *el pueblo* bent on suffocating itself to annihilation. They are terrified of what they watch on the local news, as reporters each night present diverse and compelling issues Angelenos care about the most, which range from deadly police car chases to Hollywood movie premieres to drive-by shootings to diet tips to brutal domestic violence to the latest fashion styles to LAPD corruption to cocaine usage among Angelenos to the latest Hollywood star who gets busted for having sex with a prostitute to the latest politician who is publicly humiliated for having sex with an impressionable young intern.

There are as many definitions, textures, contours, perspectives, ideas, and angles masking Los Angeles as there are Angelenos who struggle to make ends meet on a daily basis. There are as many theories, constructs, and conjectures created to explain the enigmatic dynamics of Los Angeles as there are struggling thespians trying to get the next big Hollywood role. Urban theorists, postmodernists, artists, professors, writers, and architects compete directly with each other as they try to sell *the* ultimate, unique, "inside" look into Los Angeles. There are multiple, competing L.A. histories, each with its own version of what makes the city so unique, that vie to present the definitive urban truth. Walk into any decent L.A. bookstore and you will find as many historical and pictorial books on L.A. as there are self-help manuals to sustain a healthy L.A. lifestyle.

With each attempt to explain the city, there is always the feeling that something is missing, that something is lacking from the unique perspective presented. It feels as if a particular angle of *el pueblo* is being promoted, marketed, sold, exploited. With each new theory, viewpoint, and edition presented to the masses, there is the feeling that the city is once again up for sale. Something never seems right with the meticulous historical ac-

counts, carefully crafted interviews, polished prose, lucid film scripts, avant-garde images, or academic articles that claim to give the truth about the city. The truth is never as important as the dollars that will be generated from the hype, promotion, and sale of that unique look into L.A. Whichever angle is utilized to understand Los Angeles—film, monograph, sound, canvas, electronic—it seems as if that particular perspective fails to bring out the entirety of Los Angeles; it fails to represent those who *are* Los Angeles. The question that always arises is how do we understand Los Angeles without being taken in by the glossy, sleek imagery of the city's hype and promotion machine? How do we visualize *all* of Los Angeles—particularly those without agents, publicists, PR machines, lawyers, and "deals"? How do we provide a voice to those who do not have a share of the global audience but who may nevertheless have traveled the Americas to find a modicum of prosperity in the age of American globalization? Such voices are rarely if ever represented within the temples of Hollywood or the shrines of American publishing, or in the digital age of global capitalism. What is the relationship between the global representation of Los Angeles and the residents who actually give life to the city on a daily basis? How does the world economy contribute to L.A.'s division of First and Third Worlds? Is Los Angeles a mirrored image of the changing forces of globalization? Is Los Angeles the future of cities to come? Is it the American Dream, or America's worst nightmare? Can Los Angeles sustain itself economically and culturally in the spheres of globalization, or will internal warring factions based upon race, ethnicity, religion, *barrios*, or 'hoods tear away at the fabric of the city? How do we begin to unmask L.A.—to peel away the layers of promotion, hype, spectacle, and fantasy that have dominated the way we perceive the metropolis? How do we burst L.A.'s bubble that has for far too long perpetuated a plastic vision of what the city is really like? How do we uncover the films of fiction so that we can begin to understand the city in all of its perspectives?

nia's "new maturity." Much of the media around this time started to think of California—particularly Los Angeles—as having entered a more mature phase of cultural, urban, and economic development. Los Angeles at this time was on a steady trajectory of growth; the shocking images of race/economic riot were starting to fade from our collective consciousness, and the fractured tectonic fault lines of the Northridge earthquake had started the healing process. California floods had become a vague, distant memory. Los Angeles was riding another boom cycle and was leading the nation in the rediscovery and reinvention of itself. From all accounts, Angelenos seemed to embrace their new outlook on life in the metropolis. When asked to reflect on the trials and tribulations that had engulfed California—those of natural disaster, economic depression, riot—Kevin Starr observed, "It's helped us grow up. The idea is dawning on Californians that there's a middle ground between Utopia and Dystopia."

For much of its history, Los Angeles has been torn between extremes of utopia and dystopia—a dichotomy that can be traced to biblical scripture, which of course had a profound influence upon the founding of the city.¹³ The eternal battle of the New Testament—the war between paradise and damnation, salvation and purgatory, God and Satan—continues to influence the way we perceive the city. The City of Angels finds itself heavily immersed in Christian doctrine, theological dichotomies, double binds, and anathemas. Los Angeles experiences the extremes of Nature's (or the Holy Trinity's) wrath, which creates a city with a bipolar disorder, an urban identity that oscillates between a Garden of Eden and a Paradise Lost, between the American Dream and American Holocaust, and between the First and Third Worlds. The hype, promotion, and spectacle that can at one moment glorify and mythologize Los Angeles as Paradise, and at the next as Paradise Lost, do not help us to bridge the extremes of utopia and dystopia. With so many slanted, revisionist, and fabricated tales woven into the fabric of the city's cultures, geographies, and peoples, it is difficult to go beyond the extremes that largely dominate our perception of the city. The extremes end up playing on our fears, producing deep-seated differences that keep Angelenos apart and that continue to misrepresent the realities of the city.

The questions remain. Is there a middle ground? In a city where it is often difficult to separate myth from reality, fact from hype, where do we start to find a middle zone of engagement? How do we begin to bridge the inequalities of global L.A.? How do we find a voice that will help us understand the environmental effects of unfettered, (sub)urban growth, which starves the inner city of civic resources? Many Angelenos seek to find such a middle ground but feel that discussion on Los Angeles is oftentimes contaminated by individuals and groups that place their interests ahead of the

IS THERE A MIDDLE GROUND?

In the mid-1990s, just when the Internet had taken off, Kevin Starr, State Librarian of California and historian, was asked to comment on Califor-

city's. How do we acquire alternative perspectives on Los Angeles, views that are not dominated by corporate interests, homeowners associations, secessionist movements, mini-mall developers, and so on? How do we begin to understand the city's birth and development—processes that have profoundly influenced the way we see, think, perceive, discuss, intellectualize, visualize Los Angeles? *Unmasking L.A.: Third Worlds and the City* is one of the first attempts to answer such questions, to bridge the extremes—the differences—that, at present, keep the city polarized. This collection goes beyond the dichotomy of utopia and dystopia by seeking a middle ground so that all voices within the metropolis find adequate representation. This volume aims to stimulate dialogue so that Los Angeles can start the process of building a more cohesive, tolerant, encompassing, less volatile, multiracial city. Trying to generate a unifying, civic dialogue will be Los Angeles's greatest, and most arduous, challenge of the Pacific century. "What it needs, more than foreign trade or factories, is simply to look in the glass. Some day it will catch up with itself mentally. When that time comes a great, vibrant, world metropolis, worthy of the name, will be emerging as the center of the Pan-Pacific area."¹⁴ When will that time come?

Notes

1. Morrow Mayo, *Los Angeles* (New York: Knopf, 1933), 78.
2. See endnote 6 of my chapter, "Forces of Nature: The Pasts and Futures of Los Angeles. An Introduction to Morrow Mayo and 'The Birth of Los Angeles,'" for an examination of how the transportation and sale of cocaine in L.A. has become an "employer of last resort" for many of the city's Third World citizens.
3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 19.
4. Mayo, writing in 1933, discovered how really different Los Angeles is from the rest of the nation: "Los Angeles is not really an American town; the Mexicans are dominated, but not swallowed; the gringos rule, but they are outnumbered" (64).
5. Mayo, 319. Once a paradise of natural beauty, present-day Los Angeles houses 6,000 people an acre, which can only suggest that the urban sprawl will flow unabated to the hinterlands of the Southern California desert. For a detailed examination of Los Angeles/Los Angeles County's urban and suburban composition, refer to Lawrence D. Bobo et al., "Analyzing Inequality in Los Angeles," in *Prismatic Metropolis: Inequality in Los Angeles*, eds. Lawrence D. Bobo et al. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 43, endnote 1: "Los Angeles County, one of California's original 27 counties, was established February 18, 1850. Los Angeles County is one of the

nation's largest counties, with 4,083 square miles. . . . [Los Angeles County] has the largest population (9.8 million in January 1999) of any county in the nation, and is exceeded by only eight states. Approximately 29 percent of California's residents live in Los Angeles County. There are 88 cities within the county, each with its own city council." This chapter, like *Prismatic Metropolis*, uses the "terms *Los Angeles* and *Los Angeles County* interchangeably."

6. Los Angeles of 1867, as described by Carey McWilliams, was a " . . . town of crooked, ungraded, unpaved streets; low, lean, rickety, adobe houses, with flat asphaltum roofs, and here and there an indolent native, hugging the inside of a blanket, or burying his head in a gigantic watermelon . . ." (*Southern California: An Island on the Land* [Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1983], 116). Carey McWilliams, whose *Southern California: An Island on the Land* examines the economic and geographical factors that led to L.A.'s status as world city, argues that the continuous influxes of populations into the L.A. basin and the hype generated from tourism and land speculation created the Los Angeles we know today. Los Angeles started to discover itself from around 1890, when there were 50,000 people living in the city, up to the 1940s, at which point the city became increasingly industrialized due to the war effort and mass migration. L.A. was trying to establish an identity during these formative years. It wanted to find a place it could call its own. The city wanted to be known and represented within the temples of American commerce. Los Angeles desired white Christian settlers and financial investment. Fearing an identity crisis, Los Angeles sold to the rest of America its one and only major asset: the sun. The young city thought it could grab people and money by selling the warm, sunny climate to a nation that found itself buried in snow winter after winter. But the city's identity crisis during the 1800s continued to plague Los Angeles, which, as Morrow Mayo elaborates, found itself increasingly alienated from the rest of the state and nation. Instead of being recognized as an equal contender for the vacation dollars of middle-class Americans, Los Angeles found itself further removed from the economic prosperity it so desperately craved. The city wanted to sell itself as a haven of health, prosperity, and well-being, but the truth was far different. The rest of California simply referred to Los Angeles as "Pest-house": "Throughout the state Los Angeles became known as Los Diablos, or The Devils, and letters thus addressed had no difficulty in reaching their proper destination. Colloquially, the town was simply called Los, meaning 'The'—perhaps implying 'The What Is It?'—which seems to have been appropriate, for during this period there was hardly any other name to give Los Angeles except 'the Hell-hole,' and the 'Pest-house,' as it was frequently called" (Mayo, 42).

The moniker "Los Diablos" seems to have stuck. The notion of the city as "The Devils" persists in our vision of contemporary Los Angeles, especially in the minds of Hollywood moviegoers. Hollywood is instrumental in creating a Los Angeles that is perceived as macabre, unholy, satanic. In

selling to the world the destruction, torture, and annihilation of its own hometown, Hollywood, in its ever-desperate attempts to fill movie theater seats, appears to be trying to cleanse its backyard of past sins. Having reduced the concept of Los Angeles to its basest, most crass form, Hollywood portrays Los Angeles as city run amok, evil metropolis, or "The Devils," which no doubt is a comfortable profit machine for the largest industry in Southern California. For a further examination of Hollywood's profitable destruction of Los Angeles, see Mike Davis's "The Literary Destruction of Los Angeles" in *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998).

7. Refer to Los Angeles County's website for detailed statistics on the area's economy, racial composition, geographical size, and housing: <http://www.co.la.ca.us/statistics.htm>.
8. Refer to Bobo et al., 31, for data concerning the "federally set poverty level of \$16,534 (family of four)." For an analysis of the vicious cycle of street-bound to prison-bound back to street-bound, refer to Christian Parenti's "Satellites of Sorrow: Los Angeles, Prison, and Circuits of Social Control" and Deepak Narang Sawhney's "This Side of Paradise: South Central Los Angeles and Minor Literature" in this volume.
9. McWilliams, 239.
10. The boom-and-bust cycle is of course not just restricted to Los Angeles, but what is certain is that the city's economic infrastructure has become increasingly dependent on the trials and tribulations of globalization, making the region ever more vulnerable to recession. Especially since the end of the Cold War, the Southern California economy has been unable to insulate itself from the boom and bust of global capitalism. Indeed, the end of the Cold War devastated the Southern California economy in the 1990s and, as a consequence of severe cutbacks in defense contracts, which resulted in mass unemployment throughout the region, was a major contributor to the economic race riot of 1992. Up to 500,000 jobs were lost during 1990–93, and some have called the 1990s recession the worst "economic depression" in California for sixty years. Federally subsidized defense grants will never be on the same scale as they were during California's boom years, when the population exploded from 7 million in the 1940s to the 30 million in the 1990s (see *The Economist*, "The state that beat Dystopia," March 30, 1996).
11. The concept of Third World is used in many contexts, subjects, discourses, and theories, ranging from postcolonial studies to economics to sociology to politics. Like the word *globalization*, *Third World* is utilized to describe a host of socioeconomic, cultural, political, and literary processes taking place around us. The Third World has come to mean many things to many people. The theme of the Third World weaves throughout this collection, and the dialogues with Mike Davis and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in particular seek to unravel some of the controversies, complexities, and problems associated with the use of this term.

For a brief introduction to the concept of the Third World, we turn to the pioneering work of Fernand Braudel, whose world systems theory provides us with a methodology with which we can begin to understand contemporary Los Angeles and globalization—topographies of power centers and Third World zones. Braudel's writings on the history of capitalism illuminate some of the major contradictions and inherent problems associated with globalization and the Third World. Braudel's influence in this chapter and throughout this volume is found in his cogent analysis of Third Worlds and center zones, a study of globalization's power structures, which are instrumental in marginalizing masses into disenfranchised pockets of underdevelopment. Braudel examines, in the three-volume set of *Civilization and Capitalism*, the birth, formation, and function of capitalism. The geohistorian analyzes the process of capitalism from both the center zones of the world economy and Third Worlds. Braudel writes: "The world-economy is the greatest possible vibrating surface, one which not only accepts the conjuncture but, at a certain depth or level, manufactures it. It is the world-economy at all events which creates the *uniformity* of prices over a huge area, as an arterial system distributes blood throughout a living organism. It is a structure in itself" (*Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century: The Perspective of the World*, trans. Siân Reynolds, Vol. 3 [London: Fontana Press, 1985b], 83).

Braudel argues that capitalism is designated not by particular stages of growth, as in classical economics, but rather through its uncanny ability to adapt to changing conditions. He says that capitalism can "... slip at a moment's notice from one form or sector to another, in times of crisis or pronounced decline in profit rates" (*Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century: The Wheels of Commerce*, trans. Siân Reynolds, Vol. 2 [London: Fontana Press, 1985a], 433). A common misconception about globalization, a view advocated by most classical economists and Darwinian social theorists, is that the world economy has "grown" in orderly stages to reach what is commonly referred to as "late" capitalism or "mature" capitalism, a progression resulting in "true" capitalism. This misconception of capitalism's so-called orderly progression is based upon its spectacular growth trajectory during the past five hundred years. The great advances in medical, agricultural, and technological sciences, which include supersonic transportation, super-fast computers, and super-fast food, lead many to conclude that indeed capitalism has progressed in a linear and rational fashion and that the world economy is a result of an orderly and natural outgrowth of this progression. Braudel suggests otherwise: "It would however be a mistake to imagine capitalism as something that developed in a series or leaps—from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism to finance capitalism, with some kind of regular progression from one phase to the next, with 'true' capitalism appearing only at the late stage when it took over production, and the only permissible term for the early period being mercantile capitalism or even 'pre-capitalism'" (Braudel 1985b, 621).

Braudel's main argument is that capitalism depends upon the perpetual creation of center zones, which in turn create exploitable Third Worlds, so that capitalist production can continue to find the cheapest labor and raw materials possible for its survival. Braudel proposes that to understand the development of modern-day capitalism, we need to realize that such a system is based on power relations, which are broken into a "jigsaw puzzle" of the world economy. The shapes and contours of each piece of the jigsaw puzzle tell us how First Worlds, or core zones, relate to each other and how such power structures create less powerful peripheries. In other words, the underlying tendency of globalization is to create systems of inequality so that powerful nation states, cities, and multinationals can sustain hegemony over less powerful geographical zones and populations: "Every world-economy is a sort of jigsaw puzzle, a juxtaposition of zones interconnected, but *at different levels*. On the ground, *at least* three different areas or categories can be distinguished: a narrow *core*, a fairly developed middle zone, and a vast *periphery*. The center or *core* contains everything that is most advanced and diversified. The next zone possesses only some of these benefits, although it has some share in them. . . . The huge periphery, with its scattered population, represents on the contrary backwardness, archaism, and exploitation by others" (Braudel 1985b, 39). With this "jigsaw puzzle" in mind, we can say that the modern version of capitalism—globalization—is defined by its accelerated ability to crisscross and interconnect economic trade routes across the earth, a lattice of production, labor, and material. The entire globe is consumed, appropriated, and absorbed into this lattice of capitalist production, a commodification of the earth into surplus production. The function of globalization has always been to chart and diagram trade routes across the earth, to create an economic topography of the world, so that trade, manufacturing, goods, and services are brought together into a profitable, cohesive whole.

Braudel continues his analysis by saying that major economic power zones, which exist within, between, and among cities, nations, and multinationals, control flows of production circulating around the world. The way in which such control is maintained is by the creation of underdeveloped zones, or Third Worlds. Third Worlds are dependent on the First Worlds for economic investment, healthcare, education, sustenance, and basic survival in the global marketplace. The sole objective of First Worlds is to maintain hegemony, control, and dominance over the peripheries because such areas provide unparalleled access to raw materials and cheap labor. An infinite supply of materials coupled with surplus, exploitable labor provides the main ingredients to perpetuate and sustain the gulf separating the First Worlds from the Third. Globalization—which has been in place in one form or another for the past five hundred years—is not guided by any rational teleology. It has never been manufactured or steered by humanistic principles. The only invisible hand guiding it has

been that of imperialism, profit, pillage, and genocide of the original peoples around the world.

It must be stressed that the First and Third Worlds are not two separate entities existing on two different planes. The jigsaw puzzle of the world economic system is very much interrelated, interconnected, and codependent. All pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are in a continuous relationship of dependence in order to sustain the global market place. Thus, power centers of the First World and the peripheries of the Third World are not separate from each other. The two worlds coexist simultaneously in the same space and time. Globalization has sped up the integration of the two worlds at such a rapid rate that it is now commonplace to find oneself simultaneously in the First and Third World in virtually any location around the globe.

The philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari appropriate Braudel's research into their study of capitalism and schizophrenia by claiming that: "The States of the center deal not only with the Third World; each of them has not only an external Third World, but there are internal Third Worlds that rise up within them and work them from the inside. It could even be said in certain respects that the periphery and the center exchange determinations: a deterritorialization of the center, a decoding of the center in relation to national and territorial aggregates, cause the peripheral formation to become true centers of investments, while the central formations peripheralize" (468–69). And, "The more the worldwide axiomatic installs high industry at the periphery, provisionally reserving for the center so-called postindustrial activities (automation, electronics, information technologies, the conquest of space, overarmament, etc.), the more it installs peripheral zones of underdevelopment inside the center, internal Third Worlds, internal Souths. 'Masses' of the population are abandoned to erratic work (subcontracting, temporary work, or work in the underground economy) . . ." (469). Los Angeles is such a paradigm of First and Third Worlds coexisting in the same urban topography. For an exploration of how Third Worlds and globalization relate to Los Angeles, refer to the dialogues with Mike Davis and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and to my chapter, "Forces of Nature: The Pasts and Futures of Los Angeles. An Introduction to Morrow Mayo and 'The Birth of Los Angeles.'"

12. Los Angeles has suffered immeasurably at the hands of economic recession, monetary depression, prohibition, natural disaster, and boom-and-bust cycles, but it always advertises, promotes, and sells itself as the place to be. One such memorable "sale" of Southern California took place in 1924: " . . . A 'Friendship Letter Contest' . . . was a Heaven-sent inspiration, and beautiful in its fulfillment. Every man, woman, and child was asked to write personal letters to persons out of the State, pointing out the glories and the incomparable advantages of living in Southern California. The idea caught on like wildfire. Prizes ranging from a thousand dollars down were offered

for the best letters. Stenographers, cops, movie stars, city officials, and bootleggers were photographed in the act of writing their 'Friendship Letters'" (Mayo, 320–21).

13. See Morrow Mayo's "The Birth of Los Angeles" and my introduction, "Forces of Nature: The Pasts and Futures of Los Angeles. An Introduction to Morrow Mayo and 'The Birth of Los Angeles.'"
14. Mayo, 329.