

CITY OF QUARTZ

*Excavating the Future in*

*Los Angeles*



**MIKE DAVIS**

**Photographs by**

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*Vintage Books*

His friend laughed. 'If you were on TV you would just get deported anyway and have to pay some *coyote* in Tijuana \$500 to sneak you back to L.A.' He argued that it was better to stay out in the open whenever possible, preferably here in the desert, away from the center. He compared L.A. and Mexico City (which he knew well) to volcanoes, spilling wreckage and desire in ever-widening circles over a denuded countryside. It is never wise, he averred, to live too near a volcano. 'The old gringo *socialistas* had the right idea.'

I agreed, even though I knew it was too late to move, or to refound Llano. Then, it was their turn to interrogate me. Why was I out here alone, amongst the ghosts of May Day? What did I think of Los Angeles? I tried to explain that I had just written a book . . . .

### NOTES

1. Despite the incautious claims of Lynne Foster in her recent Sierra Club guide (*Adventuring in the California Desert*, San Francisco 1987), there is absolutely no evidence that 'many thousands of pronghorn antelope roamed the area' in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, small numbers of pronghorn were introduced in the Space Age, partially to allow the Valley to live up to its name!
2. 'Los Angeles: The Ecology of Evil', *Airforum*, December 1972.
3. *Los Angeles Times*, 3 January 1988; Antelope Valley Press 29 October 1989.
4. For demographic projections, see Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), *Growth Management Plan*, Los Angeles, February 1989. To the rather arbitrary five-county SCAG area I have added projections for San Diego and Tijuana.
5. County research quoted on KCEI-TV's, 'A Class by Itself', May 1990.
6. *Los Angeles Business Journal*, 25 December 1989; *Press* 14 and 19 January 1990.
7. *Ibid.*, 17 and 19 January.
8. *Daily News*, 4 June 1989. (It was months before the *Los Angeles Times* reported the Aborn murder in its main edition.)
9. Harriman quoted in Robert Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies*, San Marino, Calif. 1953, p. 117; and Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias*, Cambridge, Mass. 1976, pp. 289-90.
10. Llano chronicler Ernest Wooster quoted in Nigey Lenon, Lionel Rolfe, and Paul Greenstein, *Bread and Hyacinths: Job Harriman and His Political Legacy*, unpublished manuscript, Los Angeles 1988, p. 21.
11. Cf. Hayden, pp. 300-1 (on Austin's design); and Sam Hall Kaplan, *L.A. Lost and Found*, New York 1987, p. 137 (on Ain's attempts to design for cooperative living).
12. Hines, p. 127.
13. 'Ozymandias, The Utopia that Failed', in *Tomorrow and Tomorrow . . . .*, New York, 1956, pp. 84-102.
14. Of course I deliberately beg the question of the Joshuas ploughed away to build Llano (ominously . . . .)

## CHAPTER ONE

### SUNSHINE OR NOIR?

## LOS ANGELES INTELLECTUALS: AN INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles, it should be understood, is not a mere city. On the contrary, it is, and has been since 1888, a *commodity*; something to be advertised and sold to the people of the United States like automobiles, cigarettes and mouth wash. *Morrow Mayo*<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1989, a well-known fashion magazine constantly on the prowl for lifestyle trends reported from Los Angeles that 'intellectualism' had arrived there as the latest fad. From celebrities buying armloads of 'smart-looking eyeglasses' to the 'people of L.A. who . . . have elevated intellectualism to a life style', the city was supposedly booming with bookish behavior for its own sake: 'There's a real feeling here about becoming intellectual, removing superficiality, getting culture.'<sup>2</sup> The magazine's West Coast editor noted approvingly that the 'new intellectualism' was sweeping Los Angeles on the same wave of messianic hype that had brought its local predecessors, 'the perfect body' and 'New Age spirituality'. Angelenos, moreover, had already recognized that the crucial point of the new pastime was that 'books are for sale' and that a surge of commodity fetishism and feverish entrepreneurship would accompany the laying on of Culture.<sup>3</sup>

As this anecdote implies, to evoke 'Los Angeles intellectuals' is to invite immediate incredulity, if not mirth. Better then, at the outset, to refer to a mythology – the destruction of intellectual sensibility in the sun-baked plains of Los Angeles – that conforms more to received impressions, and that is at least partially true. First of all, Los Angeles is usually seen as peculiarly infertile cultural soil, unable to produce, to this day, any homegrown intelligentsia. Unlike San Francisco, which has generated a distinctive cultural history from the Argonauts to the Beats, Los Angeles's truly indigenous intellectual history seems a barren shelf. Yet – for even more peculiar reasons – this essentially deracinated city has become the world capital of an immense Culture Industry, which since the 1920s has imported myriads of the most talented writers, filmmakers, artists and visionaries. Similarly, since the 1940s, the Southern California aerospace industry and its satellite think-tanks have assembled the earth's largest single

concentration of PhD scientists and engineers. In Los Angeles immigrant mental labor is collectivized in huge apparatuses and directly consumed by big capital. Almost everyone is either on a corporate payroll or waiting hopefully at the studio gate.

Such relations of 'pure capitalism', of course, are seen as invariably destructive of the identity of 'true' intellectuals, still self-defined as artisans or rentiers of their own unique mental productions. Snared in the nets of Hollywood, or entrapped by the Strangelovian logic of the missile industry, 'seduced' talents are 'wasted', 'prostituted', 'trivialized', or 'destroyed'. To move to Lotusland is to sever connection with national reality, to lose historical and experiential footing, to surrender critical distance, and to submerge oneself in spectacle and fraud. Fused into a single montage image are Fitzgerald reduced to a drunken hack, West rushing to his own apocalypse (thinking it a dinner party), Faulkner rewriting second-rate scripts, Brecht raging against the mutilation of his work, the Hollywood Ten on their way to prison, Didion on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and so on. Los Angeles (and its alter-ego, Hollywood) becomes the literalized Mahagonny: city of seduction and defeat, the antipode to critical intelligence.

Yet this very rhetoric (which infuses a long tradition of writing about Los Angeles, since at least the 1920s) indicates powerful critical energies at work. For if Los Angeles has become the archetypal site of massive and unprotesting subordination of industrialized intelligentsias to the programs of capital, it has also been fertile soil for some of the most acute critiques of the culture of late capitalism, and, particularly, of the tendential degeneration of its middle strata (a persistent theme from Nathanael West to Robert Towne). The most outstanding example is the complex corpus of what we call *noir* (literary and cinematic): a fantastic convergence of American 'tough-guy' realism, Weimar expressionism, and existentialized Marxism – all focused on unmasking a 'bright, guilty place' (Welles) called Los Angeles.

Los Angeles in this instance is, of course, a stand-in for capitalism in general. The ultimate world-historical significance – and oddity – of Los Angeles is that it has come to play the double role of utopia *and* dystopia for advanced capitalism. The same place, as Brecht noted, symbolized both heaven and hell. Correspondingly, it is the essential destination on the



ORANGES ON SIDEWALK  
Temple-Beaudry district

itinerary of any late twentieth-century intellectual, who must eventually come to take a peep and render some opinion on whether 'Los Angeles Brings It All Together' (official slogan), or is, rather, the nightmare at the terminus of American history (as depicted in *noir*). Los Angeles – far more than New York, Paris or Tokyo – polarizes debate: it is the terrain and subject of fierce ideological struggle.

With apologies for the schematic compression inevitable in so cursory a survey, I explore, first, the role played by successive migrations of intellectuals (whether as tourists, exiles or hired hands), in relation to the dominating cultural institutions of their time (the *Los Angeles Times*, Hollywood, and, most recently, an emergent university-museum megacomplex), in constructing or deconstructing the mythology of Los Angeles. I am interested, in other words, not so much in the history of culture produced in Los Angeles, as the history of culture produced about Los Angeles – especially where that has become a material force in the city's actual evolution. As Michael Sorkin has emphasized, 'L.A. is probably the most mediated town in America, nearly unviewable save through the fictive scrim of its mythologizers'.<sup>4</sup>

I begin with the so-called 'Arroyo Set': writers, antiquarians, and publicists under the influence of Charles Fletcher Lummis (himself in the pay of the *Times* and the Chamber of Commerce), who at the turn of the century created a comprehensive fiction of Southern California as the promised land of a millenarian Anglo-Saxon racial odyssey. They inserted a Mediterraneanized idyll of New England life into the perfumed ruins of an innocent but inferior 'Spanish' culture. In doing so, they wrote the script for the giant real-estate speculations of the early twentieth century that transformed Los Angeles from small town to metropolis. Their imagery, motifs, values and legends were in turn endlessly reproduced by Hollywood, while continuing to be incorporated into the ersatz landscapes of suburban Southern California.

As the Depression shattered broad strata of the dream-addicted Los Angeles middle classes, it also gathered together in Hollywood an extraordinary colony of hardboiled American novelists and anti-fascist European exiles. Together they radically reworked the metaphorical figure of the city, using the crisis of the middle class (rarely the workers or the poor) to expose how the dream had become nightmare. Although only a few works directly

attacked the studio system,<sup>5</sup> *noir* everywhere insinuated contempt for a depraved business culture while it simultaneously searched for a critical mode of writing or filmmaking within it. Although some principal *noir* auteurs, like Chandler, went little further than generalized petty-bourgeois resentment against the collapse of the Southern California dream, most claimed Popular Front sympathies, and some, like Welles and Dmytryk, alluded to the repressed reality of class struggle. Despite the postwar witch hunt that decimated Hollywood progressives, *noir* survived through the 1950s to re-emerge in a new wave in the 1960s and 1970s. The huge popularity of Didion, Dunne, Wambaugh, *Chinatown*, *Blade Runner*, the Chandler and Cain remakes, and, finally, the arrival of the 'post-*noir*' of James Ellroy's *Los Angeles Quartet*, stand as proof of the genre's durability. Although recuperated as an ambience shorn of its 1940s radical affinities, *noir* has nonetheless remained the popular and, despite its intended elitism, 'populist' anti-myth of Los Angeles.

While the cinematic translation of the *noir* vision of Los Angeles engaged some of the finest European writers and directors resident in Hollywood in the 1940s (giving them an invaluable medium for political and aesthetic resistance), the relationship between the city and the community of anti-fascist exiles deserves separate consideration. It was a potent common moment in the cultural histories of Southern California and Europe, generating its own mythology that helped shape critical reaction to the postwar Americanization of Europe. Without necessarily subscribing to the 'nightmare' anti-myth of *noir*, the exile sense of Los Angeles was unremittably pessimistic. Here was the ultimate city of capital, lustrous and superficial, negating every classical value of European urbanity. Driven by one epochal defeat of the Enlightenment to the shores of Santa Monica Bay, the most unhappy of the exiles thought they discerned a second defeat in Los Angeles as the 'shape of the things to come', a mirror of capitalism's future.

It is hard to exaggerate the damage which *noir*'s dystopianization of Los Angeles, together with the exiles' denunciation of its counterfeit urbanity, inflicted upon the accumulated ideological capital of the region's boosters. *Noir*, often in illicit alliance with San Francisco or New York elitism, made Los Angeles the city that American intellectuals love to hate (although, paradoxically, this seems only to increase its fascination for postwar

European, especially British and French, intellectuals). As Richard Lehan has emphasized, 'probably no city in the Western world has a more negative image'.<sup>6</sup> To repair this image, especially among the cultural elites, local corporate patrons have sponsored a third major immigration of intellectuals, comparable to the Hollywood-bound diaspora of the 1930s, but now dominated by architects, designers, artists and culture theorists.

As Los Angeles – propelled by financial, real-estate and military booms – has rushed forward to Manhattanize its skylines (increasingly with offshore capital), it has attempted to Manhattanize its cultural superstructure as well. The largest land developers and bankers have coordinated a major cultural offensive, whose impact has been redoubled, after decades of mere talk, by a sudden torrent of arts capital, including the incredible \$3 billion Getty endowment, the largest in history. As a result, a wealthy institutional matrix has coalesced – integrating elite university faculties, museums, the arts press and foundations – single-mindedly directed toward the creation of a cultural monumentality to support the sale of the city to overseas investors and affluent immigrants. In this sense, the cultural history of the 1980s recapitulated the real-estate/arts nexus of early twentieth-century boosterism, although this time around with a promotional budget so large that it could afford to buy the international celebrity architects, painters and designers – Meier, Graves, Hockney, and so on – capable of giving cultural prestige and a happy 'Pop' veneer to the emergence of the 'world city'.

These, then, are the three major collectivized interventions by intellectuals in the culture formation of Los Angeles: what I somewhat awkwardly abbreviate as the *Boosters*, the *Noirs*, and the *Mercenaries*. The *Exiles*, as a fourth, more parenthetical, intervention, have linked the indigenous process of city-myth production and its *noir*-ish antipode to European sensibilities about America and its West Coast. They have integrated the spectre of 'Los Angeles' into fundamental debates about the fate of Modernism and the future of a postwar Europe dominated by American Fordism.

It may be objected that this historical typology is one-sidedly slanted towards literateurs, filmmakers, musicians and artists – that is, toward fabricators of the *spectacle* – and neglects the role of practical intellectuals – planners, engineers, and politicians – who actually build cities. And where

are the scientists, Southern California's most precious crop, who have shaped its rocket-propelled postwar economy? In fact, the fate of science in Los Angeles exemplifies the role reversal between practical reason and what Disneyites call 'imagineering'. Where one might have expected the presence of the world's largest scientific and engineering community to cultivate a regional enlightenment, science has consorted instead with pulp fiction, vulgar psychology, and even satanism to create yet another layer of California cultdom. This ironic double transfiguration of science into science fiction, and science fiction into religion, is considered in a brief account of the *Sorcerers*.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the paramount axis of cultural conflict in Los Angeles has always been about the construction/interpretation of the *city myth*, which enters the material landscape as a design for speculation and domination (as Allan Seager suggests, 'not [as] fantasy imagined but [as] fantasy seen').<sup>7</sup> Even though Los Angeles's emergence from the desert has been an artifact of giant public works, city-building has otherwise been left to the anarchy of market forces, with only rare interventions by the state, social movements or public leaders. The city's most Promethean figure – water engineer William Mulholland – was enigmatic and taciturn to an extreme (his collected works: the Los Angeles Aqueduct and the injunction 'Take it'). Although, as we briefly note, residential architecture has episodically served as a rallying point for cultural regionalism (for example, the Craftsman bungalow of the 1910s, the 'case-study' home of the 1940s, the Gehry house of the 1970s), celluloid or the electronic screen have remained the dominant media of the region's self-expression. Compared to other great cities, Los Angeles may be *planned* or *designed* in a very fragmentary sense (primarily at the level of its infrastructure) but it is infinitely *envisioned*.

Yet we must avoid the idea that Los Angeles is ultimately just the mirror of Narcissus, or a huge disturbance in the Maxwellian ether. Beyond its myriad rhetorics and mirages, it can be presumed that the city actually exists.<sup>8</sup> I thus treat, within the master dialectic of sunshine and *noir*, three attempts, in successive generations, to establish authentic epistemologies for Los Angeles.

First, and at some length in the section called *Debunkers*, I examine immigrant writer Louis Adamic's anti-romantic insistence upon the

centrality of *class violence* in the constitution of the social and cultural landscapes of Los Angeles, an interpretation that was carried further in detail and scope by his close friend, Carey McWilliams. McWilliams's *Southern California Country (An Island on the Land)* is analyzed as the climax – and terminus – of Popular Front attempts to unmask Booster mythology and to recover the historical roles of labor and oppressed minority groups. Secondly, I survey the careers of several very different *avant gardes* (the Black Arts Movement, the Ferus Gallery group, the alternative Hollywood of Kenneth Anger, the solo flight of Thomas Pynchon) which formed a Los Angeles cultural underground during part or all of the 1960s. These collaborations (*Communards*) – broken up or expatriated by the early 1970s – represented the coming-of-age of the first L.A.-bred bohemias (indeed, in some cases, tracing their roots back to local high-school cliques of the 1940s), unified by their autobiographical search for representative phenomenologies of daily life in Southern California in experiences as different as those of Black jazz musicians, white hotrodgers and gay bikers.

Thirdly, in a concluding section I sketch, in broad and very tentative outline, the fledging attempts (after an intellectual/cultural hiatus in the 1970s) to contest the current corporate celebration of 'postmodern' Los Angeles. I argue that neither the neo-Marxist academics of the 'Los Angeles School' nor the community intellectuals of 'Gangster Rap' have yet fully disengaged themselves from the official dream machinery. On the other hand, the cultural definition of the poly-ethnic Los Angeles of the year 2000 has barely begun.

## THE BOOSTERS

The missions are, next to our climate and its consequences, the best capital Southern California has. *Charles Fletcher Lummis*<sup>9</sup>

In 1884 a malarial journalist from Chillicothe, Ohio decided to change his fortune and improve his health by going to Southern California. Unlike the thousands of other health-seekers beginning to discover the curative powers of sunshine, Charles Fletcher Lummis did not take the train. He walked. On his arrival in Los Angeles 143 days later, the owner of the *Times*, Colonel

(later General) Harrison Gray Otis, was so impressed that he appointed Lummis city editor.

When Otis greeted the footsore Lummis, Los Angeles was just a back-country town (the 187th largest in the 1880 Census) tributary to imperial San Francisco, with little water or capital, and no coal or port. When Otis died thirty-five years later, Los Angeles was the biggest city in the West, approaching a million inhabitants, with an artificial river tapped from the Sierras, a federally subsidized harbor, an oil bonanza, and block after block of skyscrapers under construction. Unlike other American cities that maximized their comparative advantages as crossroads, capitals, seaports, or manufacturing centers, Los Angeles was first and above all the creature of real-estate capitalism: the culminating speculation, in fact, of the generations of boosters and promoters who had subdivided and sold the West from the Cumberland Gap to the Pacific.

The first boom occurred a few years after Lummis's arrival and brought one hundred thousand fortune- and health-seekers to Los Angeles County. After the collapse of this railroad-engineered land rush, Colonel Otis – representing the toughest of the new settlers – took command of the city's business organizations on behalf of panic-stricken speculators. To revive the boom, and to launch a reckless competition with San Francisco (the most unionized city in the world), he militarized industrial relations in Los Angeles. Existing unions were locked out, picketing was virtually outlawed, and dissidents were terrorized. With sunshine and the open shop as their main assets, and allied with the great transcontinental railroads (the region's largest landowners), a syndicate of developers, bankers and transport magnates led by Otis and his son-in-law, Harry Chandler, set out to sell Los Angeles – as no city had ever been sold – to the restless but affluent babbity of the Middle West. For more than a quarter century, an unprecedented mass migration of retired farmers, small-town dentists, wealthy spinsters, tubercular schoolteachers, petty stock speculators, Iowa lawyers, and devotees of the Chautauqua circuit transferred their savings and small fortunes into Southern California real estate. This massive flow of wealth between regions produced population, income and consumption structures seemingly out of all proportion to Los Angeles's actual production base: the paradox of the first 'postindustrial' city in its preindustrial guise.

As Kevin Starr emphasizes in his widely acclaimed account of the cultural history of Southern California in the Booster Era (1885–1925), *Inventing the Dream*, this transformation required the continuous interaction of myth-making and literary invention with the crude promotion of land values and health cures. In his view, the partnership of Lummis and Otis was the prototype for the conscription of a whole generation of Eastern (usually Brahmin) intellectuals as the cultural agents of the Boom. The original cadre consisted of the journalists and errant *littérateurs*, led by Lummis, whom Otis brought to the *Times* during the Gilded Age: Robert Burdette, John Steven McGroarty ('the Poet of the Verdugo Hills'), Harry Carr, and others.

Through the talents of such men, Otis promoted an image of Southern California that dominated the popular imagination at the turn of the century and is alive to this day: a melange of mission myth (originating in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*), obsession with climate, political conservatism (symbolized in open shop), and a thinly veiled racialism, all put to the service of boosterism and oligarchy.<sup>10</sup>

The mission literature depicted the history of race relations as a pastoral ritual of obedience and paternalism: 'graceful Indians, happy as peasants in an Italian opera, knelt dutifully before the Franciscans to receive the baptism of a superior culture, while in the background the angelus tolled from a swallow-guarded campanile, and a choir of friars intoned the *Te Deum*'.<sup>11</sup> Any intimation of the brutality inherent in the forced labor system of the missions and haciendas, not to speak of the racial terrorism and lynchings that made early Anglo-ruled Los Angeles the most violent town in the West during the 1860s and 1870s, was suppressed.

If Jackson's *Ramona* transformed selected elements of local history into romantic myth (still popular to this day), Lummis was the impresario who promoted the myth as the motif of an entire artificial landscape. In 1894, as federal troops occupied Los Angeles and Otis fretted that the local Pullman strikers might draw out other workers in a general strike, Lummis organized the first Los Angeles Fiesta as a public distraction. The next year, with the class war temporarily abated, he orchestrated the Fiesta around a comprehensive 'mission' theme, influenced by *Ramona*. Its electric regional impact can only be compared to the national *frisson* of the contemporary

Columbian Exposition in Chicago: as the latter inaugurated the neo-Classical revival, the former launched an equally frenzied local 'Mission revival'.

The romanticized and idyllic theme was quickly picked up and exploited by a gallery of entrepreneurs who knew a good thing when they saw it. Everything from furniture suites and candied fruit to commercial and residential architecture stressed the mission motif.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the missions themselves were restored as pioneer theme-parks, especially San Gabriel Arcangel where a specially constructed theater next to the old church housed McGroarty's *Mission Play* – 'the American Oberammergau' – which was eventually seen by tens of thousands. At a New York advertising convention in the early 1930s, the mission aura of 'history and romance' was rated as an even more important attraction in selling Southern California than weather or movie-industry glamor.<sup>13</sup> Of course, as Starr notes, this capitalization of Los Angeles's fictional 'Spanish' past not only sublimated contemporary class struggle, but also censored, and repressed from view, the actual plight of Alta California's descendants. Pio Pico, the last governor of Mexican California and once the richest man in the city, was buried in a pauper's grave virtually as Lummis's floral floats were passing down Broadway.<sup>14</sup>

From the middle nineties, Lummis edited the influential magazine *Out West (Land of Sunshine)*, 'whose masthead . . . reads like a Who's Who . . . of California letters',<sup>15</sup> and oversaw a full-fledged *salon* that gathered around his famous bungalow, El Alisal, along the rocky Arroyo Seco, between Los Angeles and Pasadena (the famed winter retreat of Eastern millionaires). Lummis's 'Arroyo Set' regrouped Henry James's Yankee intelligentsia in an altogether more libidinal setting: indeed one of the Set's major credos, best expressed in Grace Ellery Channings's evocations of an Italianized Southern California, was the power of sunshine to reinvigorate the racial energies of the Anglo-Saxons (Los Angeles as the 'new Rome' and so on).

Lummis's passions for Southwest archeology (he founded the famed Southwest Museum a few blocks from El Alisal), mission preservation, physical culture (emulating the imagined knightly lifestyle of the dons), and racial metaphysics were recapitulated by other Arroyans. Thus the retired

tobacco manufacturer and essayist Abbot Kinney crusaded simultaneously for the Mission Indians, the mass planting of eucalyptus, citrus culture, the conservation of Yosemite Valley, and Anglo-Saxon racial purity through eugenics. As a speculator and developer, he also realized the supreme incarnation of the Mediterranean metaphor: Venice, California, with its canals and imported gondoliers. In a similarly polymathic vein, Joseph Widney was an early president of the University of Southern California, a fervent booster (*California of the South*, 1888), and author of the epic *Race Life of the Aryan Peoples* (1907), which argued that Los Angeles was destined to become the world capital of Aryan supremacy. Meanwhile, with the avid support of Otis, the doctrines of Nietzsche were being Southern-Californized by the *Times's* literary editor and Arroyan child prodigy, Willard Huntington Wright. (Wright would later, as editor of the *Smart Set*, metamorphose from booster to debunker, repudiating Los Angeles's 'provincialism' at every opportunity, while celebrating the invigorations of sexual promiscuity.)

The Arroyo Set also defined the visual arts and architecture of turn-of-the-century Los Angeles. George Wharton James, a desert health faddist like Lummis, organized the Arroyo Guild, a shortlived but seminal point of intersection between the mission-myth romantics and the Pasadena franchise of the Arts-and-Crafts movement dominated by the celebrated Greene brothers. A synthesis of the two currents, of course, was the typical Craftsman bungalow with its Navajo and 'Mission Oak' interior decoration.<sup>16</sup> If the ultimate bungalow was really a 'cathedral in wood' (like the Greene Brothers' incredible Gamble House) affordable only by the very rich, the masses could buy small but still stylish imitations in 'do-it-yourself' kits that could be thrown up on any vacant lot. For an entire generation these 'democratic bungalows', with their domestic miniaturization of the Arroyo aesthetic, were praised not only for making Los Angeles a city of single-family homes (a staggering 94 per cent of all dwellings by 1930) but also for assuring 'industrial freedom'. Thus when the United States Commission on Industrial Relations visited Los Angeles in 1914 it heard F.J. Zeehandelaar of the Merchants and Manufacturers Association brag that working-class home ownership was the keystone of the Open Shop and a 'contented' labor-force. Bitter union leaders, on the other hand, denounced the mortgage payments on the little bungalows as a 'new serfdom' that made Los Angeles workers timid in face of their bosses.<sup>17</sup>



AN ARROYO CATHEDRAL  
Gamble House (1908), Pasadena

The preeminence of the Arroyo Set in defining the cultural parameters of Los Angeles's development, and in investing real-estate speculation and class warfare with an aura of romantic myth, began to come to an end after World War One. Lummis's special relationship with Otis was not part of the inheritance that Harry Chandler took over in 1917. The *Times's* subsidy to Lummis was cut, the movies arrived as more effective promoters of immigration than *The Land of Sunshine*, and, in any case, the Mission Romantics became older and more disenchanted in rapidly urbanizing and auto-congested Southern California. Taos and Carmel began to usurp the Arroyo's role as elite culture center of the Southwest. By the early 1920s, bungalows and rugged outdoor living were passing out of vogue; the upper middle classes, enriched by oil speculations or Hollywood, were preferring servants and massive 'Spanish Colonial Revival' homes. Yet the upscale popularity of the Spanish Colonial style testified to one of the two most durable legacies of the Arroyos: the creation of an ersatz history which, through its comprehensive incorporation into landscape and consumption, became an actual historical stratum in the culture of Los Angeles.<sup>18</sup> (Contemporary mini-malls and fastfood franchises, with their Franciscan arches and red-tiled roofs, are still quoting chapter and verse from the Mission Myth – not to mention the Mission-style design of the new Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley.) The other major legacy, of course, was the ideology of Los Angeles as the utopia of Aryan supremacism – the sunny refuge of White Protestant America in an age of labor upheaval and the mass immigration of the Catholic and Jewish poor from Eastern and Southern Europe.

### THE DEBUNKERS

It seems somehow absurd, but it is nevertheless a fact, that for forty years, the smiling, booming, sunshine City of the Angels has been the bloodiest arena in the Western world for Capital and Labor.

*Morrow Mayo*<sup>19</sup>

'The weather is beautiful ...'

*The only words spoken by a Wobblie before his arrest in the  
1921 San Pedro free speech fight*

One of these immigrants, and the first (at least among the non-Jews) to become a major American writer, was Louis Adamic. His personal odyssey carried him from Carniola in the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the milltowns of Pennsylvania, then with the American Expeditionary Force to the trenches of the Somme. Like so many other demobilized veterans, he decided to try his luck in Los Angeles, ending up broke and homeless in Pershing Square (as old Central Park had just been renamed). What the *Times* would later call the 'Forty Year War' of capital and labor was drawing to its bitter close. The city's once powerful Socialist movement (they came within a hair's-breadth of the mayoralty in 1911) had retreated to Llano in the Mojave, while one AFL union after another had been broken in a succession of violent metal trades strikes and street transport lockouts. Only IWW seamen and longshoremen defied the Merchants and Manufacturers Association crusade to make the open shop complete. Adamic was swept up in this final battle of the local class war, befriending the IWW organizers, relishing their gallows humor and indiscipline, and ultimately recording their suicidal bravery in his *Laughing in the Jungle* (1932) – an 'autobiography of an immigrant in America' that was also an extraordinary documentary of Los Angeles in the 1920s from the standpoint of its radical outcasts and defeated idealists.

Adamic's 'epistemological position' was curious. Although in his guts he sided with the IWW's doomed struggle, he remained intellectually aloof from their 'naive belief in revolution and One Big Union. As he put it, 'I was not a regular Socialist, but a "Menckente"' He soon became part of a like-minded *salon* of Los Angeles bohemians, gravitating around bookdealer Jack Zeitlin's home in Echo Park, that included architect Lloyd Wright, photographer Edward Weston, critic-librarian Lawrence Clark Powell, artist Rockwell Kent and a dozen others.<sup>20</sup> Yet Adamic was also uncomfortable with these genteel rebels; as Carey McWilliams (a young member of the circle) would later observe, he had an 'instinctive hostility to typically middle-class concepts'. Eventually he withdrew to a Slavic neighborhood in San Pedro, Los Angeles's bustling port ('It was a normal seaport town . . . there were no tourists and sick old people from Iowa and Missouri').<sup>21</sup>

From this base in the harbor – with one foot in the literati camp (Mencken had begun to publish Adamic in the *American Mercury*) and the

other in the proletariat – Adamic chronicled Los Angeles of the oil-and-God-crazy 1920s. To him it was an incredible burlesque mirror of the philistinism and larceny of Coolidge America ('additional proof of the accuracy of Marx's generalization that history repeats itself, first as tragedy and then as farce').<sup>22</sup> As McWilliams recalled:

He thrived on Los Angeles. He reveled in its freaks, fakirs, and frauds. He became the magazine biographer of such eccentrics as Ottoman Bar-Azush Ra'nish and Aimée Sempie McPherson. Lost in the files of the strange assortment of magazines published by R. Haldeman-Julius will be found a long list of Adamic's contributions to Los Angeles. He was its prophet, sociologist and historian.<sup>23</sup>

Adamic's most original contribution to the debunking of the Booster myth was his emphasis on the centrality of class violence to the construction of the city. Others had already attacked Los Angeles's philistinism and skewered its apologists with Mencken-like sarcasm. (Indeed as early as 1913, Willard Huntington Wright was complaining in *The Smart Set* about the 'hypocrisy, like a vast fungus, [that] has spread over the city's surface'.)<sup>24</sup> In his historically interesting but rapidly written 1927 novel, *Oil*, Upton Sinclair (who had been a leading participant in the IWW free speech fight at the Harbor) debunked the oil boom and evoked the oppression of labor in Los Angeles. But Adamic was the first to carefully chart the sordid, bloody history of the Forty Year War and attempt a muckraking reconstruction of its central events: the bombing of the *Times* in 1910 and the subsequent trial of the labor conspiracy led by the McNamara brothers. *Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America* (1931), although scarcely flattering to the California labor bureaucracy, painted a demonic portrait of General Otis and the ruling-class brutality that had driven labor to desperation. Equally it warned readers in the early Depression years that until employers bargained with unions in good faith, outbreaks of violent class warfare were inevitable.

Shortly after publishing the first version of *Dynamite*, Adamic synthesized his various Haldeman-Julius ephemera and pages from his diary in a famous essay, 'Los Angeles! There She Blows!' (*The Outlook*, 13 August 1930), later quoted in 'The Enormous Village' chapter of *Laughing in the Jungle*. This essay was widely noticed by the critical literati, exerting a

seminal influence on McWilliams, as well as upon Nathanael West, who in *The Day of the Locust* (1939), would further develop Adamic's image of Los Angeles's 'spiritually and mentally starving' little people, the 'Folks'. Also impressed was writer and satirist Morrow Mayo, who 'paraphrased' and amalgamated Adamic's *Outlook* and McNamara pieces in his own *Los Angeles* (1933). Although *Laughing in the Jungle* was the incomparably more powerful work, Mayo's lurid, vignette-style history (for example, from 'Hell-Hole of the West' to 'The Hickman Horror') scored its own points against the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. Mayo was particularly effective in reworking Adamic's 'enormous village' theme:

Here is an artificial city which has been pumped up under forced draught, inflated like a balloon, stuffed with rural humanity like a goose with corn . . . endeavoring to eat up this too rapid avalanche of anthropoids, the sunshine metropolis heaves and strains, sweats and becomes pop-eyed, like a young boa constrictor trying to swallow a goat. It has never imparted an urban character to its incoming population for the simple reason that it has never had any urban character to impart. On the other hand, the place has retained the manners, culture, and general outlook of a huge country village.<sup>25</sup>

Not all debunking of the 'enormous village' was merely literary. The Group of Independent Artists of Los Angeles, who held their first exhibition in 1923, represented an analogous, even earlier, critical current in local art. A united front for the 'New Form', including Cubism, Dynamism, and Expressionism, they attacked the landscape romantics – the Eucalyptus painters, Laguna seascape painters, Mission painters, and so on – who perpetuated Helen Hunt Jackson in watercolor. Dominated by the 'Synchronist' painter Stanton Macdonald-Wright, who had caroused with the Cubists in Paris before World War One, and the radical Lithuanian exile Boris Deutsch, the Group of Independents were transformed by their encounter with revolutionary Mexican muralism in the late 1920s.<sup>26</sup> David Siquieros, who passed through Los Angeles in the early Depression, contributed a famous 'lost work' that was roughly the equivalent of Adamic's *Dynamite* in its Marxist view of Los Angeles history. Commissioned in 1930 to decorate Olvera Street – the contrived 'Mexican' tourist precinct next to the old Plaza – with a 'gay mural', Siquieros instead painted *Tropical America*: a crucified *peon* under a snarling eagle evokes the imperial

savagery at the origin of the Anglo occupation. Although quickly whitewashed by his shocked patroness, Siqueros's great mural survived long enough to impress the young Jackson Pollock; reportedly 'echoes of its imagery enter[ed] his later work'.<sup>27</sup>

Adamic's and Mayo's indictment of Los Angeles's 'fake urbanity', as well as the attack of the Group of Independents on landscape romanticism, simultaneously unearthed a truism and gave birth to a lasting stereotype. The anti-urban, Garden City ethos celebrated by the Arroyans was turned over to expose its malignant aspect. Intellectual emigrés, beginning to arrive in numbers from Europe in the early 1930s, were particularly disturbed by the absence of urban culture in a city-region of two million inhabitants. Alfred Döblin – the famed literary portraitist of Berlin – would actually denounce Hollywood as a 'murderous desert of houses . . . a horrible garden city'. (When asked to comment on the suburban lifestyle, he added: 'Indeed, one is much and extensively in the open here – yet, am I a cow?')<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately Adamic was not around to add his voice to the disenchantment of the exiles, or, alternatively, to guide them to the 'saner' working-class areas of the city which he knew so intimately. Awarded a Guggenheim fellowship to pursue his writing on the new immigrants, he moved to New York at the beginning of the Depression. After his departure, the mantle of Los Angeles Debunker passed to his friend, the lawyer, writer and journalist Carey McWilliams. Adamic's profound influence upon McWilliams's view of Los Angeles was acknowledged in a small volume of essays, *Louis Adamic and Shadow-America*, which the latter circulated in 1935. McWilliams reflected at length on Adamic's Menckenesque critique of Los Angeles as America, as well as upon the margin of class consciousness and 'peasant sense' that distinguished Adamic from other L.A. bohemians of the 1920s. (McWilliams also registered some of his own, surprisingly left-wing opinions, including a reference to 'the daintily eclectic fascism of Mr Roosevelt'.)<sup>29</sup> A few years later, coincident with the sensation of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1939), McWilliams published his brilliant exposé of California agribusiness, *Factories in the Field*, that led to his appointment as Commissioner of Immigration and Housing by California's newly-elected Democratic governor, Culbert Olson. Through the war years McWilliams also kept up his leading role in the progressive politics of Los Angeles, organizing the defense for the Eastside Chicanos framed in the

infamous 'Sleepy Lagoon' case of 1943, and reporting in the *Nation* and *New Republic* on the successful struggle to end the Open Shop.

In 1946, as the culmination of nearly twenty years of literary and political engagement in the region, McWilliams published his magisterial *Southern California Country: Island on the Land*, as a volume in the 'American Folkway Series' edited by Erskine Caldwell. A self-described 'labor of love', *Southern California Country* completed the debunking project initiated by Adamic in his 'Los Angeles! There She Blows!' piece almost a generation before.<sup>30</sup> It was a devastating deconstruction of the Mission Myth and its makers, beginning with a recovery of the *Mexican* roots of Southern California and the seldom-told story of genocide and native resistance during the 1850s and 1860s. But McWilliams went far beyond L.A.-bashing polemic or Menckenesque condescension. Picking up where Adamic had left off in his narratives of Los Angeles labor, McWilliams sought to integrate historical narrative with economic and cultural analysis. *Southern California Country* adumbrates a full-fledged theory of the singular historical conditions – ranging from militarized class organization to 'super-boosterism' – that made possible the breakneck urbanization of Los Angeles without the concomitant development of a large manufacturing base or commercial hinterland. McWilliams carefully explained how this 'sociology of the boom' was responsible for the city's anti-urban bias and sprawling form ('it reflects a spectacle of a large metropolitan city without an industrial base').

Three years later, *California: The Great Exception* placed the rise of Southern California within the larger framework of California's unique evolution as a civilization and social system. The year 1949 also saw the publication of his groundbreaking history of Mexican immigration, *North from Mexico*, which restated, now on epic scale, the fundamental contribution of Mexican labor and craft to the emergence of the modern Southwest. This magnificent quartet of books, together with earlier studies of California writers (Ambrose Bierce and Adamic), constitutes one of the major achievements within the American regional tradition, making McWilliams the Walter Prescott Webb of California, if not its Fernand Braudel. In his *oeuvre*, in other words, debunkery transcended itself to establish a commanding regional interpretation.

But no 'McWilliams School' followed. *Southern California Country* was falsely assimilated into the 'guidebook' genre, and, despite continuing

downwardly mobile middle stratum, 'at war with itself', was approaching a radical crossroads, and would turn either toward socialism or fascism.<sup>36</sup>

This invocation of the dual immiseration and radicalization of the middle classes applied more literally, and oppositely, to Los Angeles during the early 1930s than anywhere else in the country. The very structure of the long Southern California boom – fueled by middle-class savings and channeled into real-estate and oil speculations – ensured a vicious circle of crisis and bankruptcy for the mass of retired farmers, small businessmen and petty developers. Indeed, the absence of heavy industry (together with the deportation of tens of thousands of unemployed manual workers back to Mexico) meant that the Depression in Los Angeles was foregrounded and amplified in the middle classes, producing a political fermentation that was at times bizarre.

Political observers inured to the bedrock conservatism of Southern California's Midwest immigrants were incredulous in 1934 when Upton Sinclair, the region's most notorious socialist, captured more than a hundred thousand cross-over Republican votes for his 'End Poverty in California' (EPIC) program with its quasi-revolutionary advocacy of 'production for use'. (In an interview thirty years later, Los Angeles EPIC organizer Reuben Boroughs confirmed that the movement primarily 'spoke to the broken down middle class' with little attention to labor or to the unemployed.)<sup>37</sup> Four years later, journalists were warning of the potential for local fascism as the voting tide switched toward the shadowy 'Ham and Eggs' movement with its weird combination of pension reform and brown-shirt demagoguery.<sup>38</sup> Agitated middle-class voters also embraced the temporary sensations of Technocracy, Inc., the Utopian Society, and the Townsend Plan. Symptomatically, the epicenters of this turbulence were the suburban growth-poles of the roaring twenties: Glendale (a hotbed of EPIC) and Long Beach (with 40,000 elderly Iowans, the birthplace of the Townsend Plan and stronghold of Ham and Eggs).

These Depression-crazed middle classes of Southern California became, in one mode or another, the original protagonists of that great anti-myth usually known as *noir*. Beginning in 1934, with James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, a succession of through-the-glass-darkly novels – all produced by writers under contract to the studio system – repainted the image of Los Angeles as a deracinated urban hell. 'Writing against the

popularity, produced little commentary and few progeny. The implicit political groundwork of McWilliams's writing – the labor-reformist popular front in California – was demolished by Cold War hysteria. Called to New York to oversee an emergency 'civil liberties' issue of the *Nation*, McWilliams stayed there for the next quarter of a century as the magazine's editor.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, research on Southern California devolved once again into trivial genealogy or boosterism; until the late 1970s, with the appearance of Gottlieb and Wolt's massive history of the *Times*,<sup>32</sup> fewer serious monographs, let alone synoptic studies, were annually produced about the region than of any other major metropolitan area.<sup>33</sup> Virtually alone among big American cities, Los Angeles still lacks a scholarly municipal history – a void of research that has become the accomplice of cliché and illusion. The chapters that would update and complete *Southern California Country* are absent; Los Angeles understands its past, instead, through a robust fiction called *noir*.

### THE NOIRS

From Mount Hollywood, Los Angeles looks rather nice, enveloped in a haze of changing colors. Actually, and in spite of all the healthful sunshine and ocean breezes, it is a *bad* place – full of old, dying people, who were born old of tired pioneer parents, victims of America – full of curious wild and poisonous growths, decadent religious cults and fake science, and wildcat enterprises, which, with their aim for quick profit, are doomed to collapse and drag down multitudes of people . . . a jungle. *Louis Adamic*<sup>34</sup>

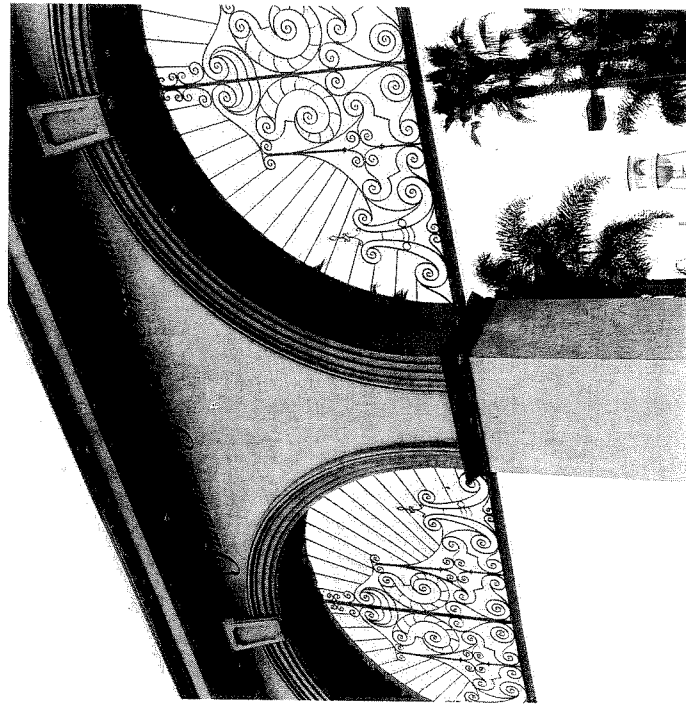
You can rot here without feeling it. *John Rechy*<sup>35</sup>

In 1935 the famous radical author Lewis Corey (née Louis Fraina) announced in his *Crisis of the Middle Class* that the Jeffersonian Dream was moribund: 'That middle-class ideal is gone beyond recall. The United States today is a nation of employees and of propertyless dependents.' As jobless accountants and ruined stockbrokers stood in the same breadlines as truckdrivers and steelworkers, much of the babbity of the 1920s was left with little to eat except for obsolete class pride. Corey warned that the

myth of El Dorado, they transformed it into its antithesis; that of the dream running out along the California shore . . . [they created] a regional fiction obsessively concerned with puncturing the bloated image of Southern California as the golden land of opportunity and the fresh start.<sup>39</sup>

*Noir* was like a transformatonal grammar turning each charming ingredient of the boosters' arcadia into a sinister equivalent. Thus, in Horace McCoy's *They Shoot Horses Don't They?* (1935) the marathon dance hall on Ocean Pier became virtually a death camp for the Depression's lost souls. The 'changeless monotonous beautiful days without end . . . unmarred by rain or weather' of William Faulkner's *noir* short story, *Golden Land* (1935) were a Sisyphian imprisonment for the matriarch of a Midwestern family corrupted by L.A. success. Similarly, Cain, in *Double Indemnity* (1936) and *Mildred Pierce* (1941), evoked poisoned bungalows, whose white-walled, red-tiled normality ('as good as the next, and perhaps a little better') barely hid the murderous marriages within. In Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939), Hollywood became the 'Dream Dump', a hallucinatory landscape tottering on apocalypse, while in successive Chandler novels the climate ('earthquake weather' and mayhem-inspiring Santa Ana winds) was increasingly eerie; there were even 'ladies in the lakes'.

Collectively, the *declassé* middle strata of these novels are without ideological coherence or capacity to act except as McCoy's sleepwalkers or West's stampeding 'flea people'. Individually, however, their petty-bourgeois anti-heroes typically expressed autobiographical sentiments, as the *noir* of the 1930s and 1940s (and again in the 1960s) became a conduit for the resentments of writers in the velvet trap of the studio system. Thus the very first hardboiled Hollywood detective, Ben Jardinn, the hero of a 1930 serial in *The Black Mask*, echoed the studio-weary cynicism of his creator, Raoul Whitfield, bit actor turned hack screenwriter.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Tod Hackett in *The Day of the Locust* is portrayed in a situation similar to West's own: brought to the Coast by a talent scout for the studios and forced to live 'the dilemma of reconciling his creative work with his commercial labors'.<sup>41</sup> Chandler's Marlowe, by the same token, symbolized the small businessman locked in struggle with gangsters, corrupt police and the parasitic rich (who were usually his employers as well) – a romanticized simulacrum of the writer's relationship to studio hacks and moguls.<sup>42</sup>



NOIR UNDER CONTRACT  
Paramount Gates, Hollywood

Budd Schulberg, on the other hand, examined the exploitative relationship between writer and mogul from the top down. A studio brat (son of Paramount's production chief) turned Communist writer, he portrayed Hollywood capitalism with almost documentary realism in *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1940). Sammy Glick, the rising young mogul, batters off the creativity of the friends and employees whom he, in turn, betrays and crushes. As one of Schulberg's characters observes, 'he is the *id* of our society'.<sup>43</sup>

Schulberg's psychoanalytic perspective, however, was exceptional. One of the distinguishing traits of first-generation 'Los Angeles fiction' was its emphasis on economic self-interest rather than depth psychology. Thus something like the labor theory of value supplied a consistent moralizing edge in the novels of Chandler and Cain. There is a constant tension between the 'productive' middle class (Marlowe, Mildred Pierce, Nick Papdakis, and so on), and the 'unproductive' *declassés* or idle rich (the Sternwoods, Bert Pierce, Monty Beragon, and so on). Unable to accumulate any longer through speculation or gambling, or having lost their inheritance (or merely desiring to speed it up), the *noirs declassés* invariably choose murder over toil. Invariably, too, the fictional opposition between these different middle strata suggests the contrast between the 'lazy', speculative Southern California economy (real-estate promotions and Hollywood) and America's hard-working heartlands.

These motifs of the 1930s 'Los Angeles Novel' – the moral phenomenonology of the deprived or ruined middle classes; the insinuation of the crisis of the semi-proletarianized writer; and the parasitical nature of Southern California – underwent interesting permutations in the *film noir* of the 1940s. Sometimes *film noir* is described in shorthand as the result of the encounter between the American hardboiled novel and exiled German expressionist cinema – a simplistic definition that leaves out other seminal influences, including psychoanalysis and Orson Welles. For our purposes, however, what was significant was the way in which the image of Los Angeles was reworked from novel to screenplay (sometimes incestuously as in Chandler rewriting Cain or Faulkner rewriting Chandler), then translated to the screen by such leftist *auteurs noirs* (some of them emigrés) as Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner Jr., Ben Maddow, Carl Foreman, John Berry, Jules Dassin, Abraham Polonsky, Albert Maltz, Dalton Trumbo and Joseph Losey.

In their hands, *film noir* sometimes approached a kind of Marxist *cinéma manqué*, a shrewdly oblique strategy for an otherwise subversive realism.<sup>44</sup>

After the first adaptations of Cain and Chandler, *film noir* began to exploit Los Angeles settings in new ways. Geographically, it shifted increasingly from the Cainian bungalows and suburbs to the epic dereliction of Downtown's Bunker Hill, which symbolized the rot in the heart of the expanding metropolis.<sup>45</sup> Sociologically, 1940s *noir* was more typically concerned with gangster underclasses and official corruption than with the pathology of the middle class; politically, the implicit obsession with the fate of the petty producer was supplanted by representations of political reaction and social polarization. Of course, *film noir* remained an ideologically ambiguous aesthetic that could be manipulated in dramatically different ways. Thus Howard Hawks chose to flatten the deep shadows of *The Big Sleep* (Chandler's most anti-rich novel) into an erotic ambience for Bogart and Bacall, while the more toughminded Edward Dmytryk and Adrian Scott (both future members of the Hollywood Ten) evoked premonitions of fascism and brainwashing in their version of *Farewell, My Lovely* (*Murder, My Sweet*).

The experiments of *film noir* were mirrored by new directions in hardboiled Los Angeles writing during the 1940s. John Fante, who together with Adamic and Cain had been discovered by Mencken's *American Mercury* in the early Depression, founded a one-man school of 'wino writing' that autobiographically chronicled life in Bunker Hill's single-room-occupancy hotels and Main Street taxi dancehalls during the Depression and war years.<sup>46</sup> Charles Bukowsky would later acquire a hyped-up celebrity (including two 'autobiographical' films) for his derivative, Fantesque descriptions of a Hollywood demimonde of fallen 'stars in bars' – a world better evoked in the phantasmagorical autobiography of jazzman and junkie Art Pepper.<sup>47</sup>

Aldous Huxley's two Los Angeles novels (*After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* [1939] and *Ape and Essence* [1948]), on the other hand, prefigured the postwar fantastic novel (on a spectrum that includes Thomas Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49* [1966] as well as Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Gold Coast* [1988]) that exploited Southern California's unsure boundary between reality and science fiction. As David Dunaway has pointed out, Huxley's important contributions to Los Angeles's anti-mythography are seldom

Hughes's disillusionment in Los Angeles was recapitulated, more harrowingly, by the experience of Chester Himes. At the beginning of the war, Himes (who had spent the early Depression in the Ohio State Penitentiary on a robbery charge) headed West with his wife Jean for a fresh start as a screenwriter for Warner Brothers. Despite a formidable reputation as a short story writer for *Esquire* (the first 'convict writer' of renown), Himes encountered an implacable wall of racism in Hollywood. As his biographer describes the incident, 'he was promptly fired from . . . Warner Brothers when Jack Warner heard about him and said, "I don't want no niggers on this lot"'.<sup>53</sup> Racebaited from the studios, Himes spent the rest of the war years as an unskilled laborer in internally segregated defense plants wracked by outbursts of white violence. As he recalled later in his autobiography, it was a searing experience:

Up to the age of thirty-one I had been hurt emotionally, spiritually, and physically as much as thirty-one years can bear. I had lived in the South, I had fallen down an elevator shaft, I had been kicked out of college, I had served seven and one half years in prison, I had survived the humiliating last five years of the Depression in Cleveland, and still I was entire, complete, functional; my mind was sharp, my reflexes were good, and I was not bitter. But under the mental corrosion of race prejudice in Los Angeles I had become bitter and saturated with hate.<sup>54</sup>

Himes's Dostoyevskian portrait of Los Angeles as a racial hell, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), is *noir* as well-crafted as anything by Cain or Chandler. Set in the long hot summer of 1944, it narrates how white racism, acting in utterly capricious circumstances, launches the self-destruction of Bob Jones, a skilled 'leaderman' in the shipyards. As a critic has noted, 'fear is the novel's major theme . . . the progressive deterioration of a personality under the deadly pressure of a huge and inescapable fear'.<sup>55</sup> Himes's next novel, *Lonely Crusade* (1947), is also given a nightmare setting in the racially tense Los Angeles war economy. This time fear eats the soul of Lee Gordon, a Black UCLA graduate and union organizer under the influence of the Communist Party. Together, Himes's two Los Angeles novels, ignored in most critical treatments of the *noir* canon,<sup>56</sup> constitute a brilliant and disturbing analysis of the psychotic dynamics of racism in the land of sunshine.

acknowledged these days. If *Swan*, with its grotesque and scarcely veiled portraits of William Randolph Hearst and Marion Davis, inspired Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1940), then *Ape and Essence*, with its savage vision of the post-apocalypse, was the 'predecessor of science fiction films on the environmental destruction of Los Angeles and human devolution' – a list that includes *Planet of the Apes*, *Omega Man*, and *Blade Runner*.<sup>48</sup>

The early science fiction of Ray Bradbury, meanwhile, showed a strong *noir* influence derived from his sci-fi mentor, Leigh Brackett, who styled herself after Chandler and Hammett. Bradbury's uniqueness was that he was a son of the Folks turned 'poet of the pulps'. A Depression emigré from Wisconsin, he attended L.A. High (but never learned to drive) and became an enthusiastic member of West's dreaded fanocracy:

I was one of Them: the Strange Ones. The Funny People. The Odd Tribes of autograph-collectors and photographers. The Ones who waited through long days and nights, who used other people's dreams for their lives.<sup>49</sup>

Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* (1950) revolves around contradictions between the Turnertian, 'westerling' quest for new frontiers and poignant nostalgia for small-town America. In a sense, Bradbury took the angst of the dislocated Midwesterner in Los Angeles and projected it as extra-terrestrial destiny. As David Mogen has pointed out, Bradbury's Mars is really Los Angeles's metaphysical double: 'a product of fantasies imposed upon it . . . magical promises and disorienting malevolence'.<sup>50</sup>

But the most interesting transit across Los Angeles's literary scene in the 1940s was probably the brief appearance of Black *noir*. Los Angeles was a particularly cruel mirage for Black writers. At first sight to the young Langston Hughes, visiting the city in the Olympic year of 1932, 'Los Angeles seemed more a miracle than a city, a place where oranges sold for one cent a dozen, ordinary Black folks lived in huge houses with "miles of yards", and prosperity seemed to reign in spite of the Depression.<sup>51</sup> Later, in 1939, when Hughes attempted to work within the studio system, he discovered that the only available role for a Black writer was furnishing demeaning dialogue for cotton-field parodies of Black life. After a humiliating experience with the film *Way Down South*, he declared that 'so far as Negroes are concerned, [Hollywood] might just as well be controlled by Hitler'.<sup>52</sup>

However inadvertently, Himes's caricature of the local 'red conspiracy' in *Lonely Crusade* also prefigured the emergence of an 'anticommunist noir' in the Korean War years. While the Hollywood Inquisition was cutting down the careers of a majority of the writers, directors and producers of hardcore *film noir*, a red-baiting, bastard offspring – frequently set in Los Angeles – appeared on the B-movie circuit (for example, *Stakeout on 101*) and the drugstore paperback-rack (Mickey Spillane's sado-McCarthyite thrillers). Meanwhile through the 1950s, Ross Macdonald (Kenneth Millar) continued to churn out reasonably well-written detective *noir* in a Chandleresque mode, usually with some pointed contrast between the primitive beauty of the Southern California seacoast and the primitive greed of its entrepreneurs.<sup>57</sup>

A major revival of *noir* occurred in the 1960s and 1970s as a new generation of emigré writers and directors revitalized the anti-myth and elaborated it fictionally into a comprehensive counter-history. Thus Robert Towne (influenced by Chandler and West) brilliantly synthesized the big landgrabs and speculations of the first half of the twentieth century in his screenplays for *Chinatown* and *The Two Jakes*. Where *Chinatown* established a 1920s genealogy for 1930s and 1940s *noir*, *The Two Jakes* and John Gregory Dunne's *True Confessions* extrapolated it into the postwar suburban boom; while Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (cleverly reworking the plot of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*) depicted a stunningly Chandleresque Los Angeles of the third millennium. More recently, Ray Bradbury, returning to the genre for the first time in forty years, has 'softboiled' *noir* in an unabashedly nostalgic mode to recall Venice Beach of the 1950s – before urban renewal and gentrification – in his *Death is a Lonely Business* (1985).

Parallel to this project of a *noir* history of Los Angeles's past and future (which actually has come to function as a surrogate public history), other writers in the 1960s re-experienced the moral chill that shivered down the spines of Cain's and West's anti-heroes. John Rechy's *City of the Night* (1963) captured, from the standpoint of its gay 'Lost Angels', the image of the city as a fugitive midnight hustle – 'the world of Lonely America squeezed into Pershing Square' between anonymous sex acts and gratuitous police brutality. But where Rechy could ultimately find a certain nihilistic exhilaration along the shore where 'the sun gives up and sinks into the

black, black sea',<sup>58</sup> Joan Didion found only nausea. More haunted than anyone by Nathanael West's dystopia, she described the moral apocalypse of 1960s Los Angeles in her novel *Play It As It Lays* (1970) and her volume of essays, *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* (1968). For Didion – on the edge of a nervous breakdown – the city of the Manson murders was already a helter-skelter of demeaned ambition and random violence. Her visceral revulsion was recalled years later by Bret Easton Ellis, L.A.'s 'bratpack' writer of the 1980s. His *Less Than Zero* (1985), a Cainian novel of gilded Westside youth, offered the darkest Los Angeles yet: 'Images of parents who were so hungry and unfulfilled that they ate their own children. . . . Images so violent and malicious that they seemed to be my only point of reference for a long time afterwards. After I left.'<sup>59</sup>

Finally, sixty years after the first short stories in *The Black Mask* and *The American Mercury* announced the genre, Los Angeles *noir* passes into delirious parody in the over-the-top writing of James Ellroy, the self-proclaimed 'Demon Dog of American Literature'. Although other contemporary tough-guy novelists, including Arthur Lyons, Robert Campbell, Roger Simon, T. Jefferson Parker and Joseph Wambaugh, keep pace with the Chandler/Macdonald tradition on its native turf, Ellroy's sheer frenzy transports his work to a different plane.<sup>60</sup> His *Los Angeles Quartet*,<sup>61</sup> depending on one's viewpoint, is either the culmination of the genre, or its *reductio ad absurdum*. At times an almost unendurable wordstorm of perversity and gore, *Quartet* attempts to map the history of modern Los Angeles as a secret continuum of sex crimes, satanic conspiracies, and political scandals. For Ellroy, as for Dunne in *True Confessions*, the grisly, unsolved 'Black Dahlia' case of 1946 is the crucial symbolic commencement of the postwar era – a local 'name of the rose' concealing a larger, metaphysical mystery. Yet in building such an all-encompassing *noir* mythology (including Stephen King-like descents into the occult), Ellroy risks extinguishing the genre's tensions, and, inevitably, its power. In his pitch blackness there is no light left to cast shadows and evil becomes a forensic banality. The result feels very much like the actual moral texture of the Reagan-Bush era: a supersaturation of corruption that fails any longer to outrage or even interest.

Indeed the postmodern role of L.A. *noir* may be precisely to endorse the emergence of *homo reaganus*. In an afterword to the fiftieth anniversary

edition of *What Makes Sammy Run?*, Budd Schulberg confesses consternation that his savage portrayal of avarice and ambition has been recuperated as a 'handbook for yuppies':

The book I had written as an angry exposé of Sammy Glick was becoming a character reference. . . . That's how they're reading it in 1989. And if that's the way they go on reading it, marching behind the flag of Sammy Glick, with the big dollar sign in the square where the stars used to be, the twentieth-century version of Sammy is going to look like an Eagle Scout compared to the twenty-first.<sup>62</sup>

Pynchon forsees even worse 'repressive desublimations' (a Marcusean expression peculiarly apt to the context) of *noir*. In *Vineland* (1990) – his wily, California-centered novel about 'the restoration of fascism in America' – he envisions the Disneyfication of *noir* to sell deodorants and mineral water to Schulberg's coming hyper-yuppies. In a memorable scene, his 'mall-rat' teeny-boppers, Prairie and Che, rendezvous at Hollywood's 'new Noir Center':

This was yuppification run to some pitch so desperate that Praire at least had to hope the whole process was reaching the end of its cycle. . . . Noir Center here had an upscale mineral-water boutique called Bubble Indemnity, plus The Lounge Good Buy patio furniture outlet, The Mall Tease Flacon, which sold perfume and cosmetics, and a New York style deli, The Lady 'n' Lox. . . .<sup>63</sup>

### THE EXILES

Shirley Temple lived across the street. Schoenberg was incensed when guides on the frequently-passing tour buses would point out her home and not his. *Dika Newlin*<sup>64</sup>

Between the Nazis' seizure of power and the Hollywood witch hunts, Los Angeles was the address in exile of some of Central Europe's most celebrated intellectuals.<sup>65</sup> Desperate and 'very modest' (Eisler), having just escaped the camps and the Gestapo, they arrived with few initial demands upon their sanctuary. They were stunned by the opulence of the movie colony. Even the most shirtless among them usually received so-called 'life-

saving' contracts from the studios that guaranteed work visas and \$100 weekly stipends. The more famous joined the exclusive salons established in Santa Monica and the Palisades by the pre-Hitler immigration of European film stars and directors.<sup>66</sup> Yet, despite their acknowledgement that Los Angeles did indeed appear like 'paradise', many of the anti-fascist exiles grasped at the first opportunity to leave for New York or, later, to return to the ruins of war-ravaged Europe. However, their recoil from 'paradise' is only seemingly paradoxical.

In part they were tormented by their own incestuous choice. Adorno in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (a journal he kept in Los Angeles during the war) recalled the 'isolation [which] becomes worse through the formation of exclusive, politically controlled groups, suspicious of their members, hostile towards those branded as different. . . . Relations among outcasts are even more poisonous than among the residents.'<sup>67</sup> (Adorno certainly knew what he was talking about; Brecht thought that the Los Angeles *soirées* of the Institute for Social Research (the 'Frankfurt School') resembled 'graduate seminars in a wartime bunker'.<sup>68</sup> Segregated from native Angelinos, the exiles composed a miniature society in a self-imposed ghetto, clinging to their old-world prejudices like cultural life-preservers.

But their collective melancholia was also a reaction to the landscape. With few exceptions they complained bitterly about the absence of a European (or even Manhattan) *civitas* of public places, sophisticated crowds, historical auras and critical intellectuals. Amid so much open land there seemed to be no space that met their criteria of 'civilized urbanity'. Los Angeles, for all its fleshpots and enchantments, was experienced as a cultural antithesis to nostalgic memories of pre-fascist Berlin or Vienna. Indeed, as the September song of exile wore on, Los Angeles became increasingly symbolized as an 'anti-city', a Gobi of suburbs.

The formation of a critical consensus about Los Angeles/Hollywood (the two hopelessly conflated in the minds of most exiles) was, moreover, a seminal moment in the European reconceptualization of the United States. What had been largely romance – European fantasies of cowboys, Lindbergh and skyscrapers – was now mediated through actual experience in a city that stood in the same quasi-utopian relationship to the rest of the United States as America as a whole had stood to the Weimar imagination of the

designed to perpetuate the individual as a supposedly independent unit in a small hygienic dwelling make him all the more subservient to his adversary — the absolute power of capitalism.<sup>72</sup>

Despite their heady discovery, however, Horkheimer and Adorno were scarcely the Columbus and Magellan of this brave new world. The Los Angeles landscape of movie studios and single-family homes was already being chronicled by curious European observers long before the Weimar diaspora arrived in force. In the late twenties, for example, the foremost muckraker of German-language journalism, Egon Erwin Kisch, had set his acerbic wit against Open Shop Los Angeles. Famous for his exposé of the Colonel Redl affair which shook the Hapsburg Empire on the eve of World War One, Kisch was a prominent member of the Austrian Communist Party by the time he arrived in Los Angeles. His ironic travelogue, *Paradies Amerika*, echoed Adamic in its savage satirization of make-believe landscapes and speculative manias. Unimpressed with a city seemingly built only on sunshine, Kisch asked, 'Will this immense real-estate business end as a boom, as a speculative maneuver followed by a crash?'<sup>73</sup>

A few years later, after the 'crash' — and as the 1932 Olympics riveted world attention on Los Angeles, the 'mystery' of its growth, and its excess of cults — the German geographer Anton Wagner, who had relatives in the old German colony at Anaheim, meticulously mapped, photographed and described the Los Angeles Basin. His *Los Angeles . . . Zweimillionenstadt in Sudkalfornien* (1935) was a monument to old-fashioned Teutonic scholarship; Reynier Banham praised it forty years later as 'the only comprehensive view of Los Angeles as a built environment'.<sup>74</sup> Although awash with garbled pseudo-scientisms and racial allusions, *Los Angeles* offered an extraordinarily detailed panorama of the city's districts and environs in the early Depression. Wagner was particularly fascinated by the penetration of the principle of the movie set into the design of 'façade landscapes', particularly Hollywood's elaborate, but doomed, attempt to generate a Europeanized 'real urban milieu':

Here, one wants to create the Paris of the Far West. Evening traffic on Hollywood Boulevard attempts to mimic Parisian boulevard life. However, life on the Boulevard is extinct before midnight, and the seats in front of the cafes, where in

1920s. Put another way, exile in Southern California ultimately transformed the terms for understanding the impact of Modernism, at least in the minds of the intellectuals influenced by the Institute for Social Research, which had moved to Santa Monica at the beginning of the war.<sup>69</sup>

Adorno, who wrote the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with Max Horkheimer in Los Angeles during the war, said after his return to Frankfurt years later, 'It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that any contemporary consciousness that has not appropriated the American experience, even if in opposition, has something reactionary about it.'<sup>70</sup> In Los Angeles where Adorno and Horkheimer accumulated their 'data', the exiles thought they were encountering America in its purest, most prefigurative moment. Largely ignorant of, or indifferent to, the peculiar historical dialectic that had shaped Southern California, they allowed their image of first sight to become its own myth: Los Angeles as the crystal ball of capitalism's future. And, confronted with this future, they experienced all the more painfully the death agony of Enlightenment Europe.<sup>71</sup>

The Frankfurt critique of the 'Culture Industry' became the primary theoretical representation of this encounter. The focus of their time in Los Angeles being Hollywood, and its specular double 'Hollywood!', the Germans were soon adding a Hegelian polish to homegrown *noir* sensibility. They described the Culture Industry not merely as political economy, but as a specific spatiality that vitiated the classical proportions of European urbanity, expelling from the stage both the 'masses' (in their heroic, history-changing incarnation) and the critical intelligentsia. Exhibiting no apparent interest in the wartime turmoil in the local aircraft plants nor inclined to appreciate the vigorous nightlife of Los Angeles's Central Avenue ghetto, Horkheimer and Adorno focused instead on the little single-family boxes that seemed to absorb the world-historic mission of the proletariat into family-centered consumerism under the direction of radio jingles and *LIFE* magazine ads. The sun rises over Mount Hollywood in Adorno and Horkheimer's famous opening section of 'The Culture Industry':

Even now, the older houses just outside the concrete city center look like slums, and the new bungalows on the outskirts are at one with the flimsy structures of world fairs in their praise of technical progress and their built-in demand to be discarded after a short while like empty food cans. Yet the city housing projects

Paris one can watch street life in a leisurely manner, are missing. . . . At night the illuminated portraits of movie stars stare down from lampposts upon crowds dressed in fake European elegance – a declaration that America yearns to be something other than American here. . . . Yet, in spite of the artists, writers and aspiring film stars, the sensibility of a real Montmartre, Soho, or even Greenwich Village, cannot be felt here. The automobile mitigates against such a feeling, and so do the new houses. Hollywood lacks the patina of age.<sup>75</sup>

This notion of 'counterfeit urbanity', which, as we have seen, was already a cliché in the Menckente critique of Los Angeles, would be further elaborated in the writing of the exiles (some of whom, presumably, were disembarking at San Pedro as Professor Wagner, maps in hand, was returning to his academic sinecure in the Third Reich). The contemporary 'adventures in hyperreality' of Eco and Baudrillard in Southern California, which have caused such a stir, strictly follow in these earlier footsteps. For example, in the German version of his Hollywood book, *Shadows in Paradise*, Erich Maria Remarque perfectly anticipated Eco and Baudrillard's idea of the city as 'simulacrum':

Real and false were fused here so perfectly that they became a new substance, just as copper and zinc become brass that looks like gold. It meant nothing that Hollywood was filled with great musicians, poets and philosophers. It was also filled with spiritualists, religious nuts and swindlers. It devoured everyone, and whoever was unable to save himself in time, would lose his identity, whether he thought so himself or not.<sup>76</sup>

But for most exiles the perceived lifelessness of the city grew to even more unbearable proportions once one left the Parisian stage-set of Hollywood Boulevard. Remarque reportedly fled from Los Angeles because he could not enjoy himself during his customary morning walk. 'Empty sidewalks, streets and houses' were too redolent of the 'desert' from which Los Angeles originally had been conjured.<sup>77</sup> For his part, Hanns Eisler denounced the 'dreadful idyll of this landscape, that actually has sprung from the mind of real-estate speculation because the landscape does not offer much by itself. If one stopped the flow of water here for three days, the jackals would reappear and the sand of the desert'.<sup>78</sup>

Yet not all Europeans were estranged by either the façade or the desert behind it. Aldous Huxley – part of a 'Bloomsbury' set of expatriate British

pacifists that included Christopher Isherwood, Gerald Heard, and, briefly, Lord Russell (at UCLA) – relished precisely those qualities of the local landscape that the Germans most despised. In a headlong escape from both war and Hollywood, Huxley moved his family to a ranch in the desert near the ruins of the original 'anti-Los Angeles' of Llano del Rio.<sup>79</sup> Here, while he searched for the 'godhead' in the silence of the Mojave, his wife Maria devoured the astrology columns in the *Times* that Adorno made fun of. Huxley and Heard, embracing mysticism, health-food and hallucinogens, would later in the 1950s become the godfathers of Southern California's 'New Age' subculture.<sup>80</sup>

It would be amusing to know if Huxley and Brecht ever discussed the weather. None of the anti-fascist exiles seemed more spiritually desolated by Los Angeles than the Berlin playwright and Marxist aesthetician. As he put it in a famous poem:

On thinking about Hell, I gather  
My brother Shelley found it was a place  
Much like the city of London. I  
Who live in Los Angeles and not in London  
Find, on thinking about Hell, that it must be  
Still more like Los Angeles.<sup>81</sup>

Yet Brecht's desperate ennui was compounded out of strange contradictions. One moment he was complaining that his Santa Monica bungalow was 'too pleasant to work in', the next he was promoting Los Angeles as a 'hell' of Shelleyan proportions. It borders on the absurd, as Lyon and Fuegi point out, 'to imagine an original European like Brecht shopping in an American supermarket, or passing the California driver's test, or in a drugstore picking up canned beer and running into Arnold Schoenberg'.<sup>82</sup> (Huxley, by contrast, first opened the 'doors of perception' with mescaline in the 'world's biggest drugstore' on La Cienega.)<sup>83</sup> By the same token, however, it is odd that the creator of *Mahagonny*, who in Berlin favoured lumpen demimondaines and working-class conversation, should have shown so little apparent interest in exploring Los Angeles's alternative side: Boyle Heights dancehalls, Central Avenue nightclubs, Wilmington honky-tonks, and so on. Real-life Mahagonny was always to hand, as was a

collectivized intellectual production and the disappearance of the author, now bitterly denounced Taylorized 'breadwork', as Brecht called it, and the futility of 'writing for nobody'.<sup>91</sup> For Adorno, Hollywood was nothing less than the mechanized cataclysm that was abolishing Culture in the classical sense. ('In America, one will . . . not be able to dodge the question, whether the term culture, in which one grew up, has become obsolete. . . .')<sup>92</sup>

Secondly, whatever their material situation, secluded (Adorno) or integrated (Billy Wilder), forgotten (Heinrich Mann and Man Ray) or celebrated (Thomas Mann), dependent on charity (Döblin) or housed in the Palisades (Feuchtwanger), the exiles were all vulnerable to changes in the political climate. Concentrated in the movie colony under an increasingly hostile public eye, they played out their final role in Los Angeles as scapegoats of the Hollywood Inquisition. With the entire industry increasingly held hostage by cold war brainwashing, and ten of their American colleagues on the road to prison (with hundreds more blacklisted for a generation), many of the exiles chose to take the first boat back to the Old World. Others hung on, as best they could, writing or directing the occasional *noir* film that intimated the cancer of political and cultural repression.

Later, back in *Modell Deutschland* (which he had chosen over Brecht's DDR), Horkheimer reorganized the Frankfurt School and began to publish the rest of his and Adorno's notes from the mid twentieth century's 'most advanced point of observation'. The Frankfurters briefed the new European intelligentsia about the coming order for which the Marshall Plan was laying the foundation. Bittersweet memories of 'exile in paradise' (New York and Los Angeles) were sublimated into a preemptive critique of cultural Americanization and the consumer society. Southern California, meanwhile, might have forgotten that it had ever housed the Institute for Social Research, except for the unexpected arrival of Frankfurt's most famous prodigal son, Herbert Marcuse, in the early 1960s – the last of the exile generation to arrive on the West Coast.

Recruited from Brandeis to anchor the philosophy program at the spectacular new sea-cliff campus of the University of California at San Diego, Marcuse willingly walked back into the same storm of rabid anti-radicalism and anti-intellectualism from which Brecht, Eisler and scores of others had fled in the late 1940s. During what Barry Katz has called his

thriving local labor movement, largely led from the left. But if the 'stench of oil' occasionally penetrated his garden in Santa Monica, Brecht fabricated the myth of the convergence of heaven and hell without really knowing what the 'hellish' parts of Los Angeles looked like.<sup>84</sup>

Not all the Germans, of course, spent their time in Los Angeles in existential despair. Thomas Mann (according to Brecht) pictured himself in the Pacific Palisades as a 'latter-day Goethe in search of the land where the lemons grow'.<sup>85</sup> Schoenberg may have resented Shirley Temple, but he loved playing tennis with his other Brentwood neighbor, George Gershwin, as well as the sunlight that flooded his study each morning while he composed.<sup>86</sup> Max Reinhardt, for his part, boasted that Southern California would become 'a new center of culture. . . . there is no more hospitable landscape'.<sup>87</sup> Indeed for a while the more famous of the exiles could fancy themselves Hollywood sahibs: happy white people under the palm trees, feeding themselves on an economy run by invisible servants. But even the most suntanned of the exiles, including Mann and Reinhardt, woke up to the fact that behind the Mediterraneanized affluence lurked exploitation and militarism.

In the first place, virtually all the Europeans railed against Hollywood's proletarianization of the intelligentsia. Here the complaints of the Weimar and Bloomsbury groups echoed the already alienated writers' colony (the Screen Writers Guild had been formed in 1933), and retraced a theme, as I have argued, that was central to Los Angeles fiction. Thrown into a 'totally alien, opaque environment, where creative ideas, artistry and originality did not count, where everything was tuned to the ways one finds in workshops and offices',<sup>88</sup> the exiles experienced artistic degradation amid affluence. Despite his initial euphoria about the cultural prospects of Southern California, Max Reinhardt found himself expected to punch a studio timeclock like any factory worker – 'in 1942 he left dejectedly for New York City'. Brilliant, anti-fascist actors of the Weimar theater like Fritz Kortner, Alexander Grenach, and Peter Lorre were restricted by studio bosses to ridiculous impersonations of the Nazi leadership.<sup>89</sup> Stravinsky's big break was rearranging the *Rite of Spring* as a soundtrack for dancing brooms in Disney's *Fantasia*, while Schoenberg, otherwise invisible, tutored studio composers who made musical suspense for *noir* thrillers and monster movies.<sup>90</sup> Marxists, who earlier in Germany had praised the advent of

'years of cheerful pessimism', Marcuse took Adorno's 'collapse of culture' thesis a step further, positing a 'democratic totalitarianism' undermining the very possibility of critical subjectivity. Undoubtedly he found plentiful confirmation for this claim in surrounding San Diego County, with its eerie landscape conjugation of seaside resorts and Marine Corps bases.

But even in this 'one-dimensional society', Marcuse welcomed emergent 'forces of liberation': praising soul music and jazz (which Adorno excoriated), supporting Angela Davis and the Panthers, and urging his students to spread the gospel of classical Marxism across California.<sup>93</sup> He was able to make the organic connection to indigenous radicalism that had eluded a majority of his exile comrades in the 1940s. Unfortunately the Last Dialectician in Lotusland fell afoul not only of rising Nixonian hysteria (every day brought fresh death threats from San Diego's fascist fringe), but, fatally, of the fickle attention of the Culture Industry. Unwonted media celebrity first 'gurufied' Marcuse (*Time* magazine's 'Pied Piper of Insurgent Youth'), then stamped his thoughts with the killing censorship of a fad whose time has passed.

Yet the spectre of Frankfurt Marxism (Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse) still haunts Southern California, even if their once ironic observations have been reduced to guidepost clichés for the benefit of Postmodernism's Club Med. If the Weimar exiles appeared in Los Angeles as tragedy, then today's Fifth Republic tourists come strictly as farce. What was once anguish seems to have become fun. As a local critic has observed with regard to a recent visit of the current Parisian philosopher king:

Baudrillard seems to enjoy himself. He loves to observe the liquidation of culture, to experience the delivery from depth. . . . He goes home to France and finds it a quaint, nineteenth-century country. He returns to Los Angeles and feels perverse exhilaration. 'There is nothing to match flying over Los Angeles by night. Only Hieronymous Bosch's Hell can match the inferno effect.'<sup>94</sup>

## THE SORCERS

If Southern California is to continue to meet the challenge of her environment . . . her supreme need . . . is for *able, creative, highly endowed, highly trained men in science and its applications.*

Robert Millikan<sup>95</sup>

In the South of California has gathered the largest and most miscellaneous assortment of Messiahs, Sorcerers, Saints and Seers known to the history of aberrations. *Farnsworth Crowder*<sup>96</sup>

Not every Los Angeles intellectual of renown ended up behind a studio gate in the 1940s. Even adjusting for the relative exchange values of literary and scientific prestiges, the famed writers' stable at MGM was small cheese compared to the extraordinary concentration of Nobel laureates gathered around the recently founded California Institute of Technology in Pasadena from the mid 1920s onward. With a permanent or visiting faculty that included Einstein, Millikan, Michelson, von Karman, Oppenheimer, Dobzhansky, Pauling and Noyes, Cal Tech was the first institution in the West to claim national preeminence in a major science, physics.<sup>97</sup> More importantly, Cal Tech was no mere ivory tower, but the dynamic nucleus of an emergent technostructure that held one of the keys to Southern California's future. While its aeronautics engineers tested airframe designs for Donald Douglas's DC-3 in their wind tunnel and its geologists solved technical problems for the California oil industry, other Cal Tech scientists were in Pasadena's Arroyo Seco, above Devil's Gate Dam (where NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory stands today), helping launch the space age with their pathbreaking rocket experiments. Cal Tech, together with the Department of Defense, substantially invented Southern California's postwar, science-based economy.

But Cal Tech itself was largely the invention of George Ellery Hale, pioneering astrophysicist and founder of the Mount Wilson Observatory. Smitten with Pasadena and its extraordinary concentration of retired, 'surplus' wealth, Hale envisioned a vast scientific-cultural triangle around the *Observatory* ('already the greatest asset possessed by Southern California, not excluding the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce'), the *Institute*, and the *Huntington Library* (whose creation he also influenced).<sup>98</sup> The indefatigable Hale (closely associated with the Carnegie interests) was also the chief catalyst in organizing the National Research Council in 1917 to support Woodrow Wilson's war mobilization. The NRC was the scientific-military-industrial complex in embryo, bringing together the nation's leading physical scientists, the military's chief engineers, and the heads of science-based corporations like AT&T and GE. Moreover it was the model

for the triangular regional collaboration that Hale wanted to establish around Cal Tech, and whose ultimate offshoot was the Los Angeles aerospace industry.<sup>99</sup>

In order to realize this dream, Hale convinced one of his NRC colleagues, and America's leading physicist, Robert A. Millikan, to forsake his beloved University of Chicago for the presidency of Cal Tech. A key factor in Millikan's recruitment was apparently a promise by Southern California Edison to provide him with a high-voltage laboratory for experiments in atomic physics. Hale and Millikan shared an almost fanatical belief in the partnership of science and big business. It was their policy that Cal Tech be allied to 'aristocracy and patronage' and shielded 'from meddling congressmen and other representatives of the people'.<sup>100</sup>

Their chief apostle in mobilizing the local aristocracy was Edison director Henry M. Robinson, also president of the First National Bank and intimate of Herbert Hoover ('his Colonel House'). Robinson had personally advanced science in Southern California by applying Einstein's theories to capitalism in a little book entitled *Relativity in Business Morals*. (Critics suggested that Robinson had acquired experimental evidence for his treatise while participating in the great Julian Petroleum swindle of the 1920s.)<sup>101</sup> With unbounded enthusiasm for alloying physics and plutocracy, Robinson helped Millikan and Hale recruit more than sixty local millionaires (Mudd, Kerkhoff, O'Melveny, Patton, Chandler, and so on) into the California Institute Associates, the most comprehensive elite group of the era in Southern California.

In his role as Cal Tech's chief booster, Millikan increasingly became an ideologue for a specific vision of science in Southern California. Speaking typically to luncheon meetings at the elite California Club in Downtown Los Angeles, or to banquets for the Associates at the Huntington mansion, Millikan adumbrated two fundamental points. First, Southern California was a unique scientific frontier where industry and academic research were joining hands to solve such fundamental challenges as the long-distance transmission of power and the generation of energy from sunlight. Secondly, and even more importantly, Southern California 'is today, as was England two hundred years ago, the westernmost outpost of Nordic civilization', with the 'exceptional opportunity' of having 'a population which is twice as Anglo-Saxon as that existing in New York, Chicago or any of the great cities of this country'.<sup>102</sup>

Millikan's image of science and business reproducing Aryan supremacy on the shores of the Pacific undoubtedly warmed the hearts of his listeners, who like himself were conservative Taft-Hoover Republicans. An orthodox Social Darwinist, Millikan frequently invoked Herbert Spencer (the 'great thinker' in his fulminations against socialism ('the coming slavery'), the New Deal ('political royalists'), Franklin Roosevelt ('Tammanizing the United States'), and 'statism' in general. In the face of headlines, he boasted 'the common man . . . is vastly better off here today in depressed America than he has ever been at any other epoch in society'. Yet, as private support for scientific research collapsed during the Depression years, Millikan reconciled his anti-statism with Cal Tech's financial needs by advocating military research as the one permissible arena where science and industry could accept federal partnership - an \$80 million windfall to Cal Tech in the war years.<sup>103</sup>

In an important sense, this utter reactionary, who was totally out of step with younger, more progressive scientific leaderships in places like Berkeley and Chicago, defined the parameters - illiberal, militarized and profit-driven - for the incorporation of science into the economy and culture of Southern California. Nowhere else in the country did there develop such a seamless continuum between the corporation, laboratory and classroom as in Los Angeles, where Cal Tech via continuous cloning and spinoff became the hub of a vast wheel of public-private research and development that eventually included the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Hughes Aircraft (the world center of airborne electronics), the Air Force's Space Technology Laboratory, Aerojet General (a spinoff of the latter), TRW, the Rand Institute, and so on.

But the rise of science in Southern California had stranger resonances as well. Just like Hollywood, that other exotic enclave, Cal Tech struck sparks as it scraped against the local bedrock of Midwestern fundamentalism. It was not unusual for Albert Einstein to be lecturing at Cal Tech on his photoelectric equation, while a few blocks away Aimée Semple McPherson was casting out the devil before her Pasadena congregation. At the height of the Scopes Trial controversy, and amid the efforts of the Bryan Bible League of California to make the King James Bible a required textbook in schools, Millikan - 'to a great many people in Southern California (Babbitts and quacks included) the greatest man in the world' - intervened

to reconcile God and Science. Millikan went on the stump as a 'Christian scientist' proclaiming, via radio, a national lecture tour and a book, that there was 'no contradiction between *real* science and *real* religion'. The 'debunker' Morrow Mayo, disgusted by the capitulation of America's leading scientist to the fundamentalist backlash of the 1920s, described his performance as follows:

When he got through with science and religion, they were so wrapped up in each other that a Philadelphia lawyer could never untangle them. The closest this great scientist ever came to a definite stand was a full gallop on a supernatural race-track running from Fundamentalism to theism, but his powers of occult observation would have done credit to any crystal-gazer in Los Angeles. . . . The whole thing was a conglomeration of metaphysical aphorisms and theological sophistry, suffused in a weird and ghostly atmosphere of obscurantism, with occasional and literal references to Santa Claus.<sup>104</sup>

At the same time that Millikan was trying to soothe evangelical ire with reassurances about Jesus, the electron and Santa Claus, Los Angeles's powerful 'New Thought' movement was avidly assimilating Einstein and Millikan to Nostradamus and Annie Besant as 'Masters of the Ages'. Contemporary 'science', in the guise of astounding powers and arcane revelations, became the progenitor of an entire Southern California cult stratum. As Farnsworth Crowder explains the origin of 'good vibrations' in his 'Little Blue Book' classic, 'Los Angeles - The Heaven of Bunk-Shooters':

Science is the first-assistant Messiah inspiring many a sect. . . . What psychology will not supply can be lifted from the physical sciences. Einstein, Michaelson, Millikan and company are unwitting contributors. . . . Whatever waves, oscillates, vibrates, pulses or surges contributes, by analogy, to the explanations of harmony, absent treatment, telepathy, magnetic healing, vibratory equilibrium, spiritualism or any other cloudy wonder. Surpassing are the powers of these scientific sects. One awed citizen referring to a busy group of vibrators cloistered in the hills, whispered, 'My lord, man! - they wouldn't *dare* release their secrets. The race isn't ready - not advanced enough. The world would go to pieces. It would be like giving everybody a handful of radium. Ignorant people would have too much power.'<sup>105</sup>

In Southern California physics and metaphysics continued to rub shoulders in a variety of weird circumstances. Crowder specifically had in

mind those 'superscientists', the Rosicrucians and Theosophists, as well as more ephemeral sects (the Church of Psychic Science, the Metaphysical Science Association, and so on), who exploited the public's simultaneous awe and mystification in the face of strange new disciplines like quantum mechanics and psychoanalysis. Before the emergence of a full-fledged, alternative 'science fiction' milieu in the 1940s, and in the absence of any truly popular culture of science, they filled in the cracks between ignorance and invention, and mediated between science and theology. A more bizarre liaison, however, directly connected the oldest metaphysic, the Luciferian Magick or Black Art, to Cal Tech and the founders of the American Rocket State, and then, through an extraordinary *ménage à trois*, to the first world religion created by a science-fiction writer.

Cal Tech's connection with the emergence of Scientology can be briefly retold here (relying heavily on Russell Miller's account). Sometime during the 1930s one Wilfred Smith founded a Pasadena branch ('the Agape Lodge') of the *Ordo Templi Orientis* (OTO) - a German-origin brotherhood of magicians (and spies) that had come under the spell of Aleister Crowley, the notorious Edwardian sorcerer and 'most hated man in England'.<sup>106</sup> For several years the Agape Lodge quietly succored Satan and his 'Great Beast' (Crowley) with contributions, while secretly diverting Pasadenans with the amusements of sexual necromancy. Then, sometime in 1939, the Lodge fell under the patronage and leadership of John Parsons, a young L.A. aristocrat and pioneer of Cal Tech rocketry (later a founder of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory). During the day, Parsons worked at the Cal Tech labs or the Devil's Gate test range with the great Theodore von Karman, perfecting propellant systems for liquid-fuel rockets; at night, he returned to his mansion on Pasadena's 'millionaires row' (South Orange Grove Avenue) to perform blasphemous rituals (with, for example, naked pregnant women leaping through fire circles) in his secret OTO 'temple' under the long-distance direction of Crowley.<sup>107</sup>

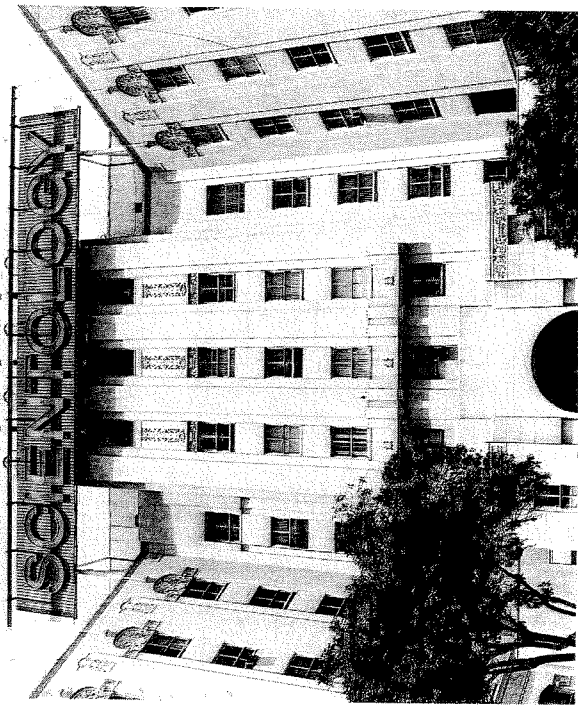
Aside from being a world-famous rocket pioneer and a secret wizard, Parsons was also a devoted science fiction fan who attended meetings of the Los Angeles Fantasy and Science Fiction Society to hear writers talk about their books. One day in August 1945, to Parsons's delight, a LAFSFS acquaintance showed up at the Orange Grove mansion with a young naval officer, Lt. Commander L. Ron Hubbard, who had already established a

reputation as a master of sci-fi pulp. Captivated by Hubbard's 'charm' and expressed desire to become a practitioner of Magick, Parsons welcomed him as house guest and sorcerer's apprentice. Hubbard reciprocated by sleeping with Parsons's mistress. Perturbed by this development, but not wishing to show open jealousy, Parsons instead embarked on a vast diabolical experiment, under Crowley's reluctant supervision, to call up a true 'whore of Babylon' so that she and Parsons might procreate a literal Antichrist in Pasadena.

'With Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto* playing in the background', Hubbard joined Parsons in the 'unspeakable' rites necessary to summon the 'scarlet woman', who, after many mysterious happenings (inexplicable power failures, occult lights, and so on), was found walking down South Orange Grove Avenue in broad daylight. After Parsons seduced the young woman in question, Hubbard and Parsons's previous mistress ran off with the rocket scientist's money to Florida. There is no need to relate the ensuing complex chain of events, except to say that Parsons – the renowned explosives expert – managed to blow himself and his Orange Grove mansion skyhigh in June 1952. Debate still rages as to whether it was an accident, suicide or murder.<sup>108</sup>

Hubbard, meanwhile, was ready to employ the occult dramaturgy and incantatory skills that he had imbibed in Parsons's OTO temple to more lucrative uses. Frustrated with the small-change earnings of a pulp sci-fi writer, he founded a pseudo-science, Dianetics, which he eventually transformed into a full-fledged religion, Scientology, with a cosmology derived from the pages of *Astounding Science Fiction*. Russell Miller, in his fascinating biographical debunking of the Hubbard myth, described the notorious Shrine Auditorium rally, at the height of the original Dianetics craze in 1950, when Hubbard introduced the world to his own equivalent of Parsons's 'scarlet woman':

As the highlight of the evening approached, there was a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation in the packed hall. A hush descended on the audience when at last Hubbard stepped up to the microphone to introduce the 'world's first clear'. She was, he said, a young woman by the name of Sonya Bianca, a physics major and pianist from Boston. Among her many newly acquired attributes, he claimed she had 'full and perfect recall of every moment of her life', which she would be happy to demonstrate.



SCIFI RELIGION

Hollywood

'What did you have for breakfast on 3 October 1942?' somebody yelled. ... 'What's on page 122 of *Dianetics*? ... someone else asked. Miss Bianca opened her mouth but no words came out. ... As people began getting up and walking out of the auditorium, one man noticed that Hubbard had momentarily turned his back on the girl and shouted, 'OK, what colour necktie is Mr Hubbard wearing?' The world's first 'clear' screwed up her face in a frantic effort to remember, stared into the hostile blackness of the auditorium, then hung her head in misery. It was an awful moment.<sup>109</sup>

Despite this temporary setback, Hubbard went on to become filthy rich (and increasingly paranoid) from peddling his amalgam of black magic, psychotherapy and science fiction to gullible hippies in the 1960s. Five years after his death was announced to two thousand of his followers gathered in the Hollywood Palladium, Hubbard's original *Dianetics* was enjoying a resurrection on bestseller lists - a discouraging reminder of science's fate in local culture.

## THE COMMUNARDS

L.A. needs the cleansing of a great disaster or founding of a barricaded commune ... *Peter Plagens, 1972*

Los Angeles has almost no cultural tradition - particularly no modernist tradition - to overthrow. *Peter Plagens, 1974*<sup>110</sup>

Living in Skid Row hotels, jamming in friends' garages, and studying music theory between floors during his stint as a elevator operator at Bullocks Wilshire, Ornette Coleman was a cultural guerrilla in the Los Angeles of the 1950s. Apotheosized a generation later as 'the most influential single figure to emerge in African-American music since Charlie Parker', he spent the Eisenhower years as a lonely, messianic rebel: bearded, dressed in eccentric clothes, 'the complete antithesis of the clean-cut, Hollywood High School undershirt and tidy crew-cut image of the cool jazz musician'.<sup>111</sup> The revolution that Coleman, a Texan, and a small circle of Los Angeles-bred musicians (Eric Dolphy, Don Cherry, Red Mitchell, Billy Higgins and Charlie Haden) were trying to foment was 'free jazz'<sup>112</sup> - an almost 'cataclysmic'

widening of the improvisational freedom that Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie had pioneered in the 1940s. At the time of Coleman's revolutionary 1958 album, *Something Else!*, they were a veritable 'underground within the underground', on the margin of a 'hard bebop' community that was itself locked out of Los Angeles's white-dominated 'cool jazz' scene.<sup>113</sup>

Coleman's underground situation was indicative, not only of the color bar in Los Angeles cultural institutions (just beginning to break down in music with the integration of the Musicians' Union, initiated by Charlie Mingus and Buddy Collette), but of the predicament of L.A.'s young Modernists in general. Abstractionism in either jazz or painting faced similar repression. If the so-called 'bebop invasion' of Los Angeles in 1946 had been repelled and Bird incarcerated in Camarillo, abstract expressionism fared little better in face of cold war hysteria married to cultural philistinism. Ancillary to the great Hollywood witch-hunt, a satellite inquisition in 1951 was mounted against 'subversive modern art' at the (old) County Museum in Exposition Park.

A group called Sanity in Art swore they detected maps of secret defense fortifications sequestered in abstract paintings, and one painter, Rex Brandt, was accused by an investigating committee for the City Council of incorporating propaganda in the form of a thinly disguised hammer-and-sickle within a seascape. Finally, the City Council resolved that the artists were 'unconscious tools of Kremlin propaganda' and didn't rescind that opinion for eight years.<sup>114</sup>

If Los Angeles's architectural modernists of the Exile generation (Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler) and their younger contemporaries (Raphael Soriano, Gregory Ain, and Harwell Harris) fared better in the early cold war than jazz musicians or modern artists, it was partly because of the circumscription of their project. Their Hollywood Hills pleasure domes and 'case-study' homes corresponded better to evolving middle-class sensibility on Los Angeles's *nouveau riche* Westside.<sup>115</sup> Yet increasing acceptance of the International Style in domestic architecture was accompanied by a new intolerance for public housing - virtually outlawed by a 1952 ordinance directed against 'socialistic projects'.

On the whole, however, the younger generation interested in new forms and practices was driven towards bohemia. For partisans of hard(er)

jazz and its canvass counterpart (New York's abstract expressionists had already acknowledged bebop's seminal influence on their work), as well as what might be labelled 'late surrealism' in both art and film – that is to say, for the Los Angeles 'hipster' generation that came of age in the late 1940s and 1950s – there was little alternative but to form temporary 'communes' within the cultural underground that burgeoned for almost a decade.

One of the qualities shared by these diverse groups was their concern for critically reworking and re-presenting subcultural experience – a quality that made them the first truly 'autobiographical' intelligentsia in Los Angeles history. For Coleman, Dolphy, and other local jazz guerrillas, that shared existential ground was Black Los Angeles's distinctive Southwestern blues tradition. Coleman had started his musical career honking out heavy, if slightly unorthodox, blues riffs in Texas and Louisiana juke joints, later playing the emergent 'R&B' sound that synthesized blues and swing. Los Angeles in the late 1940s, with the greatest number of independent studios, was the capital of R&B recording, while Central Avenue's dazzling 'Main Stem' offered an extraordinary spectrum of jazz, blues and R&B, dominated by musicians from the Southwest circuit of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Louisiana (the region that had sent the most Black migrants to work in the West Coast's war plants).

However, with the slow decline of the Central Avenue scene, partly as a result of police antipathy to 'race mixing' in the clubs, and with Black musicians excluded from lucrative studio jobs, the music of the younger ghetto jazzmen became leaner and harder, seeking through introspection and experiment to fashion a hegemonic alternative to the deracination of the 'cool jazz' played in beach nightclubs.<sup>116</sup> In 1961, after Coleman, following Dolphy, had left for New York, the pianist and composer Horace Tapscott founded the Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension (UGMAA) and the Pan Afrikan Peoples' Arkestra. Like the similar jazz collectives organized by Sun Ra and Roscoe Mitchell in Chicago, UGMAA communalized and utopianized the struggle for free music – striving simultaneously to become a performance laboratory, people's school, and local cultural arm of the Black Revolution.<sup>117</sup>

The art counterpart to the jazz underground (although never with such radical aspirations) was the informal cooperative organized by a score of younger artists during the late 1950s around Edward Kienholz's and Walter

Hopps's Ferus Gallery on La Cienega Boulevard. 'A motley batch of beatniks, eccentrics, and "art types"', they became the 'seminal source for the blossoming of modernist art in Los Angeles during the sixties'.<sup>118</sup> The Ferus core, including Billy Al Bengston, Ed Moses, Craig Kauffman, Robert Irwin, Larry Bell and Ed Ruscha (along with Kienholz himself) were far too individualistic to form an identifiable 'L.A. school', but they were temporarily unified by common passions. One was their desire to break the academicist stranglehold over Los Angeles's backwater art world, although they differed on the means towards that end (abstract expressionism versus hard-edge abstractionism, for example). Another was a biographical and aesthetic camaraderie based on enthusiasm for the hotrod and motorcycle subcultures that had developed in Southern California from the 1940s.

In his talks with Lawrence Weschler, Robert Irwin (who had attended L.A.'s Dorsey High School with Eric Dolphy) repeatedly emphasized the importance of custom-car 'folk art' to the emergence of the Ferus group and the 'L.A. Look' which they eventually created. Earlier, critic Nancy Marmer, in contrasting the Northern and Southern California avant gardes, had made the same point:

Aside from the backdrop influence of Hollywood and the hypertrophied 'neon-fruit supermarket', there has also existed in California an idiosyncratic welding of subcultures and a body of small but curiously prophetic art, whose influence, if not always direct, is at least in an askew relation to contemporary Pop Art. For example, the Los Angeles hot-rod world, with its teenage rites, baroque car designs, kandy-kolors, its notion of a high-polish craftsmanship, and, perhaps most influential, its established conventions of decorative paint techniques, has flourished in the southern part of the state since the 1940s. If the imagery ('Mad Magazine Bosch', one writer has called it) has fortunately not been especially important, the custom-coach techniques of air-brush manipulation, 'candy apple-ing', and 'striping' have been variously suggestive.<sup>119</sup>

In the evolving work of motorcycle racer Billy Al Bengston's heraldic auto surfaces, Ed Ruscha's gas station and parking lot books, Craig Kaufmann's Plexiglas paintings, and Larry Bell's Minimalist cubes, folk car culture was transformed into the 'cool', semitechnological, industrially pretty art' that became the patented 'L.A. Look' of the 1960s.<sup>120</sup> It was the avant-garde counterpart to the 'Endless Summer' depicted in Roger Corman movies, the

Gidget novels (based on a Hollywood writer's actual surfer-girl daughter), and the falsetto lyrics of Beach Boys' songs. It was the mesmerizing vision of a white kids' car-and-surf-based Utopia.

Kienholz was the major exception. As Anne Bartlett Ayres has pointed out, his 'assemblages developed as a shadow side to the famous "L.A. Look"',<sup>121</sup> a kind of hotrod noir juxtaposed to the Pop luster of his colleagues. His *Back Seat Dodge - 38* of 1964 - a work that so infuriated a right-wing County supervisor that he tried to have the new County Museum of Art shut down because of it - summarized the Southern California Dream in a single noir tableau. Literally hotrodding, Kienholz 'chopped' a '38 coupé and set it in a 'Lovers' Lane' complete with discarded beer bottles on the grass and 'mushy' music. Dead lovers, locked in a grim missionary embrace on the front seat, seemed to symbolize an adolescence gone to seed in eternity - Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello petting after the Holocaust. Kienholz's imagery - set in a fateful year - anticipated the worst.

This car-sex-death-fascism continuum also emerged as a dominant vision in L.A. underground film. In the notes to his 'lost' classic, *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1964-65), Kenneth Anger - comparing L.A. eroticized custom cars to 'an American cult-object of an earlier era, Mae West' - emphasized that for the Southern California teenager, 'the power-potentialized customized car represents a poetic extension of personality'.<sup>122</sup> Anger - leader of the Hollywood film underground at various times in the 1950s and early 1960s - knew all about Southern California adolescence. This Hollywood brat reputedly 'played the role of the child prince in Max Reinhardt's movie of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and had Shirley Temple for a dancing partner at cotillions of the Maurice Kossloff Dancing School', before launching his filmmaking career at age eleven. Another avid follower of Aleister Crowley, Anger was obsessed with the diabolics of Hollywood, homosexuality and speed machines of all kinds. His book, *Hollywood Babylon* has been described as 'a slander catalogue amounting to a phenomenology of the myth of the scandal in Hollywood', while two of his films, *Scorpio Rising* (1962) (which contains the seed of the 1980s film *Blue Velvet* in one of its segments) and *Kommandos*, explored the Nietzschean porno-mythology of motorcycle gangs and hotrodders.<sup>123</sup>

Adding to the L.A. car-culture phenomenologies of the Ferus artists and Anger, as well as inaugurating an improvisational voice that has been

compared to Joyce but sounds more like Dolphy or Coleman, Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) provided the ultimate freeway-map ontology of Southern California. A former technical writer in the West Coast aerospace industry (forced to produce eroticized descriptions of Bomark missiles and the like), Pynchon understood (better than some of the Ferus Gallery's Pop artists) that in Southern California custom cars and their makers grew up into ICBMs and their makers. As radically 'decentered' as any contemporary Althusserian could have wished, *Lot 49* wastes no time grappling with the alienation of its subject (as in Joan Didion's 'L.A. car book', *Play It As It Lays*) but moves immediately into a postmodern lane. It maps a baroquely layered but ultimately one-dimensional reality (Marcuse à la Klein bottle?) 'in which the city is at once an endless text always promising meaning but ultimately only offering hints and signs of a possible and final reality . . . like a "printed circuit"' - or a freeway.<sup>124</sup>

But the Endless Summer of the avant garde (expressed in the new painting as a 'bright ethereality') came to an abrupt end in August 1965. Southcentral Los Angeles exploded in rage against police abuse and institutional racism, creating for a few days the 'barricaded commune' (Plagens) and 'burning city' (West) that Los Angeles intellectuals had frequently dreamt about as a kind of liberation from the Culture Industry. In fact, the Watts Rebellion, as well as the police attack on peaceful anti-war demonstrators at Century City in July 1967, politically galvanized artists and writers on the first broad scale since the Hollywood witch-hunt. Pynchon wrote a stirring sympathetic and unpatronizing piece called 'A Journey into the Mind of Watts' (really a meditation on urban segregation), Ruscha painted *The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire* (1965-8), Schulberg organized a Watts Writers' Workshop, anti-war artists contributed scores of pieces to the 'Artists' Peace Tower' on the Sunset Strip, the underground *Los Angeles Free Press* flourished, and Kienholz's tableaux denounced war (see his *Portable War Memorial* [1968]).<sup>125</sup>

Most importantly, the Rebellion inspired unity and élan in Southcentral Los Angeles, giving birth to a local version of the Black Arts Movement across a full spectrum of practices from Tapscott's Arkestra to the rap poetry of the Watts Prophets. Bernard Jackson and J. Alfred Cannon founded the Inter-City Cultural Center in 1966 which grew into a flourishing theater center with its own press and school. Wanda Coleman,

Kamau Daood, Quincy Troupe, K. Curtis Lyle, Emory Evans, and Ojenke established a distinctive Watts idiom in fiction and poetry, while Melvin Van Peebles pioneered an alternative Black cinema with his outlaw odyssey, *Sweet Sweetback's Badasssss Song*. The Watts Festival, meanwhile, brought cultural cadres together with the community in annual celebrations of unity and rebellion.

But the heroic moment of Underground Los Angeles Culture quickly passed. As a local art historian pointed out, 'the high-flying spirit of the '60s . . . crashed and burned.'<sup>126</sup> The local dearth of jazz clubs and modernist galleries/collectors irresistibly drove part of the late 1950s and early 1960s avant garde (including L.A.'s *Artforum* magazine) to Manhattan (or, sometimes, in the case of experimental film and poetry, to San Francisco). After a student rebellion in 1966, Disney endowers moved Chouinard Art Institute, reborn as the California Institute of the Arts, to an isolated suburban fringe where their conservative proprietary interests would be maximized. Inner-city cultural institutions, meanwhile, were starved of financial support and media attention. Then, amidst the recession of avant-garde hopes, there were suddenly the seductions of Los Angeles's own emergent corporate arts nexus.

Maurice Tuchman, the curator of the County Museum of Art, 'conceived [in the late 1960s] the somewhat dubious notion of placing artists with corporate sponsors in a vast Art and Technology program.'<sup>127</sup> With the patronage of 'Missy' Chandler of the *Times* dynasty, Tuchman 'married' seventy-six artists to forty major local corporations.<sup>128</sup> As Peter Plagens notes, the resulting exhibition in 1971 was the 'swan song of sixties art' – a programmatic turning-point towards the mercenary, corporate-dominated arts dispensation of the late 1970s and 1980s.

The exhibition's catalogue is not so much the narrative of a completed project, but an interim report on a hoped-for ongoing metamorphosis of modern art, centered in Los Angeles. Its candid and lengthy description/documentation of every attempted collaboration between the museum-matched artists and corporation admits to every artist's arrogance . . . as well as the easy alignment of artists with hard-core capitalism and war-related industries (while the war in Vietnam was at its height).<sup>129</sup>

The 'L.A. Look', which in the early 1960s suggested the possibility of a critical-artistic strategy that interpreted the city from an indigenous

sensibility, progressively collapsed into mere self-affirming veneer, 'mock worship of California's earthly paradise'.<sup>130</sup> Christopher Knight, writing about the 1970s, has described the implosion of the Los Angeles arts scene as a febrile, Popish 'regionalism' – based on pastel sentimentality and 'a distrust of intellectualism' – which attempted to fill the cultural vacuum left from the defeat of the 1960s. But out of this 'morass of determined provincialism' no 'broadly convincing local aesthetic' emerged, only a 'gruesome' celebration of trivialized made-in-Los-Angeles productions.<sup>131</sup>

The itinerary of Edward Ruscha probably best typifies the post-1960s gentrification of the Ferus generation. Although he still describes himself as an 'underground artist', he has become in fact a reigning art god whose own Broodingnagian portrait looms over Downtown in a five-story-high mural by Kent Twitchell. As critics have pointed out, Ruscha's progression has been from advertising art, via some brief subversions in the 1960s, to 'advertising art advertising itself as art that hates advertising'.<sup>132</sup> If Ruscha-like images now emblemize L.A.'s good life on the walls of myriad corporate waiting rooms and beachfront condos, it is perhaps because (as Edward Lucie-Smith suggests) 'willed neutrality is [his] essence'.<sup>133</sup> His slogans and trademarks shimmering on the warm, dayglo Los Angeles landscape, which once seemed ironic, now are reassuring advertisements for the postmodern condition:

Ruscha wants to mirror the dream-like state which many people find typical of California living, to give the feeling that there is no longer any hierarchy – of ideas, emotions or events. He is the essence of California cool.<sup>134</sup>

While Pop was cooling down into neo-boosterism, the survivors of the original L.A. underground totted up the body count: Eric Dolphy dead of a heart attack in a Berlin nightclub in 1964;<sup>135</sup> Kenneth Anger lost in a Rimbaud-like flight into obscurity after the theft of his personal film archive in 1967. Pynchon, of course, went successively deeper into his personal underground, becoming the B. Traven of West Coast writing (*Vineland* [1990], however, celebrates the inter-generational continuity of a counter-culture of resistance). Kienholz – disgruntled by the superficial 1970s art scene – simply moved back to his hometown in Idaho.

What survived best was what was most deeply rooted in local soil: the 'Watts Renaissance' and the other ethnic community arts movements

(including Chicano muralism) which were inspired by its example. Although, as we shall see, the corporate culture bonanza of the 1980s has actually impoverished the arts infrastructure in inner-city communities, new vigor has come from rap as well as from the arrival of an exile contingent of younger Latin American artists, poets and writers. A remarkable local example of the perdurance of communitarian cultural values is the magisterial five-suite history of Black America (*Roots and Folklore*) recently composed by John Carter, another Texas blues-rooted L.A. jazz veteran. In this work, as well as in the dogged persistence of Horace Tapscott, Bernard Jackson and numerous other inner-city cultural workers, a fragile continuity is preserved between the progressive avant gardes of the past and future.

### THE MERCENARIES

With galleries and museums springing up like weeds, with the Getty Trust and its money glittering like the spires of Oz, with the hot-shot L.A. Festival grabbing important performance premieres even before the Brooklyn Academy of Music . . . well, what other choice is there? L.A., the Jewel in the Pacific Rim, has got to be the arts mecca of the coming century. Even *New York* magazine says so. . . .

*Linda Frye Burnham*<sup>136</sup>

I think of the best efforts of the '60s, of all the pain we went through.

Now we find we're sinking to the bottom.

*C. Bernard Jackson (director, Inner-City Cultural Center)*<sup>137</sup>

Like the anti-hero of *Less Than Zero*, Didion and Dunne – publicly critical of almost every aspect of Los Angeles in the 1980s – voted with their feet. Yet, even the defection to New York of the city's most celebrated writers was hardly noticed amidst the tide of prominent new arrivals. The stretch limousines from LAX continued to disgorge Houston architects, London painters, New York critics, Tokyo designers, Boston composers, Oxford historians, and Parisian fakirs.<sup>138</sup> Indeed the current continental and international shift of the intelligentsia to the West Coast invites comparison to the great Hollywood immigration of the 1930s. The 'push' factors of this

migration are predictably diverse: ranging from the impact of Thatcherite cuts upon the British university system to the relative decline of architectural commissions in the rest of the Sunbelt. More important, however, is the major 'pull' factor: a boom in cultural investment at the level of the design professions, fine arts institutions, and elite university departments – as well as a new siren song from the studios. The broad trend of this immigration, moreover, is thoroughly mercenary, as the new wave of designers, artists and professors have come to praise Caesar – in this case, international real-estate capital.

The large-scale developers and their financial allies, together with a few oil magnates and entertainment moguls, have been the driving force behind the public-private coalition to build a cultural superstructure for Los Angeles's emergence as a 'world city'. They patronize the art market, endow the museums, subsidize the regional institutes and planning schools, award the architectural competitions, dominate the arts and urban design taskforces, and influence the flow of public arts monies. They have become so integrally involved in the organization of high culture, not because of old-fashioned philanthropy, but because 'culture' has become an important component of the land development process, as well as a crucial moment in the competition between different elites and regional centers. Old-fashioned material interest, in other words, drives the mega-developers to support the general cultural revalorization of Los Angeles, and, more specifically, to endorse the concentration of cultural assets in nodes of maximum development.

This culture strategy has a long history behind it. Since the 1920s, the 'Downtown elite' (composed of old guard families, led by the Chandler dynasty of the *Times*, who had sunk their patrimonies in Downtown real estate), faced with the centrifugal movement of investment westward along Wilshire Boulevard, have struggled to 'recenter' the region around a revitalized central business district. At various times, they have tried to repel, or assimilate, the autonomous 'Westside' power structure that arose out of Jewish interests in the entertainment, savings-and-loan, and suburban real-estate sectors. Contrastingly, the Jewish elites have pursued their own spatial strategy of centering academic and cultural institution-building on the Westside. More recently, as offshore capital has partially supplanted this old ruling-class antinomy, central-place rivalries have been subsumed into

a more ambitious neo-regionalism geared up to compete with San Francisco and New York.

Public cultural investment has been an integral variable in these 'place wars' since at least the mid 1940s, when twenty-five of the most powerful Downtown leaders formed the Greater Los Angeles Plans Incorporated (GLAPI) to plot a strategy to 'recenter' the rapidly suburbanizing region. In their original conception an opera house on Bunker Hill was visualized both as a beachhead for the renewal of that neighborhood, and as a counterweight to the westward drift of cultural life. Direct public financing of the proposed opera house, however, was defeated in the 1951 municipal election, and again in 1953, despite the appendage of a sports arena for the masses. This led GLAPI to switch to a public-private financing strategy and to replace the opera proposal with the idea of an omnibus 'music center'. The leadership of the fundraising drive (coordinated with simultaneous initiatives to clear Bunker Hill and build Dodger Stadium) passed in the 1950s to Dorothy ('Buffy') Chandler, wife of the *Times* publisher, mother-in-law of 'Missy', and empress of the paper's society page.

In a fascinating reconstruction of the *Times's* role in the politics of culture in postwar Los Angeles, Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt explain how Buffy, to the consternation of the anti-semitic old guard, 'crossed over' to the Westside to find allies for the music center amongst the Jewish Hillcrest Country Club elite.<sup>139</sup> Her masterstroke was to manipulate the bitter rivalry between the savings-and-loan *nouveaux riches*, Mark Taper and Howard Ahmanson, so as to extract the decisive donations that allowed the Music Center – with its Dorothy Chandler Pavillion, Mark Taper Forum and Ahmanson Theater – to finally open in 1964, alongside of the final evictions from Bunker Hill. For a brief moment, it seemed as if the renaissance of Downtown property values and the arrival of high culture in Los Angeles were meant to go hand in hand.<sup>140</sup>

But, as if to precisely counterbalance the Music Center's pretensions to anchor Culture securely in Downtown, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, heavily endowed by the Ahmansons and other Westside patrons, opened a few months later in the Jewish Hancock Park area. Since the late 1940s the Westside had been staking claims for a distinctive cultural identity beyond mere affinity with Hollywood. *Arts and Architecture* magazine, which organized the postwar case-study homes project, crusaded

for the International Style amongst affluent Westsiders with the same zeal that *Land of Sunshine* had once advocated the Mission Revival. Indeed, John Entenza, *Arts and Architecture's* editor/publisher (1940–62), was transfixed with a Miesian vision of Wilshire Boulevard and the Hollywood Hills every bit as compelling as Lummis's Craftsman ideal of the Arroyo and Pasadena. From his case-study home in Santa Monica Canyon (the Westside's El Alisal), Entenza presided over a latter-day *salon* that included such important local design pundits as Peter Krasnow, Charles Eames and Alvin Lustig. Any perusal of *Arts and Architecture's* 1950s files reveals the extent to which architectural and design Modernism became emblematic of a Westside cultural divide separating new money from old, Jew from Gentile, transplanted New Yorker from hereditary Pasadenan.

In this period of crosstown *Kulturkampf*, while Joan Didion was distilling her most dyspeptic imagery, a visiting British design historian, Reyner Banham, was penning the first serious celebration of the city since the booster days of the 1920s. Chief ideologue of the 1950s British 'Independent Group' – the midwife to the Pop Art explosion of the 1960s – Banham had once defined Pop as a 'firing squad without mercy or reprieve' against hieratic art traditions.<sup>141</sup> From this perspective, Southern California, with its aggressive Present-mindedness, was a land purified by an exemplary design terror.<sup>142</sup> *Los Angeles: The Architecture of the Four Ecologies* (1971) found virtue in almost everything disdained by traditional critics, including the automobile,<sup>143</sup> surfboards, hillside homes, and something called 'Los Angeles architecture'. Rejecting the Exiles' criterion of comparability with 'classical' urban space, Banham claimed that Los Angeles's polymorphous landscapes and architectures were given a 'comprehensible unity' by the freeway grid in a metropolis that spoke the 'language of movement, not monument'. He found the city's 'essential dream' – 'the dream of the urban homestead . . . the great bourgeois vision of the good life in a tamed countryside' – a 'sympathetic ecology for architecture' and excoriated the elitism of critics who failed to consult the actual desires of the masses. Lest anyone mistake the punchline of his book, Banham also made a companion BBC television documentary, *Reynier Banham Loves Los Angeles* (1972).

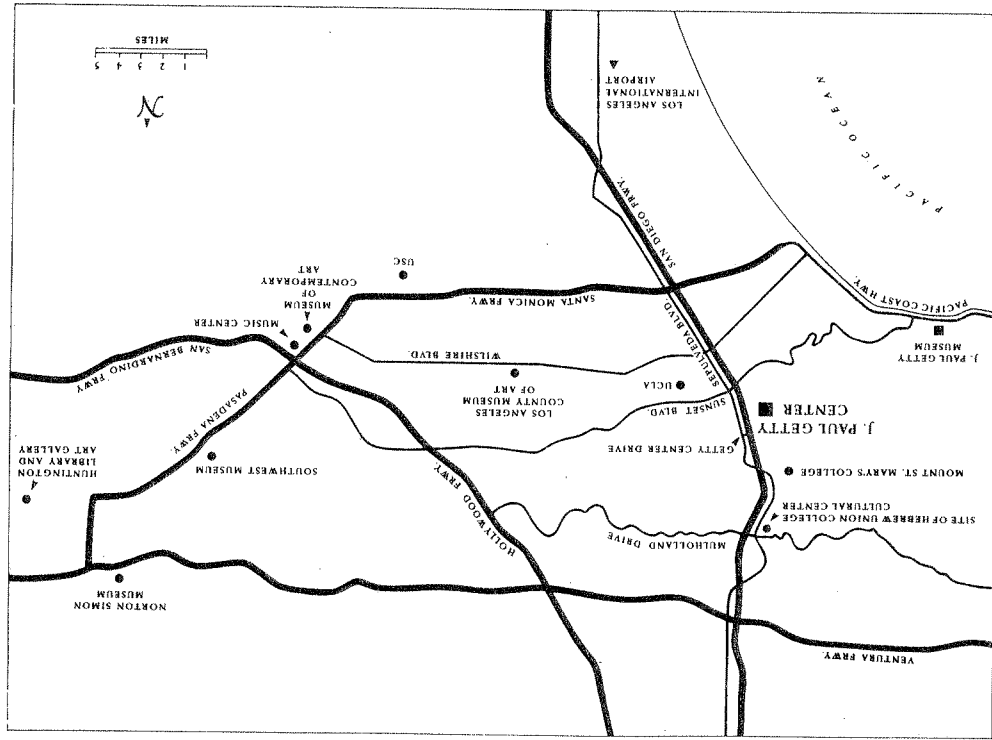
The effect of Banham's intervention was quite extraordinary. Supported by his own brilliant prose, as well as by a new aesthetic climate

prepared to reverse historic judgements in favor of 'pop' sensibilities of all kinds, *Los Angeles* . . . *the Four Ecologies* became a turning-point in the valuation of the city by the international intelligentsia. Adopted universally as *the* textbook on Los Angeles, it established standards – vernacular, decentralist and promiscuous – that continue to frame art-world views of what is happening in California south of the Tehachapis. In face of this resurgent neo-boosterism, it was left to a local art critic, Peter Plagens, to register a principled dissent against the enshrining of Banham's book:

When the frail last defenses of the progressive architect are battered on the counter of hipness, when an ostensibly perceptive specialist takes a look at this obvious dung-heap and pronounces it a groove, then the capitalist quick-buck juggernaut will all the more quickly kill off the green that's left.<sup>144</sup>

Although Plagens's bitter warning about the ideological appropriation of Banham was ignored, the latter's admirers were forced to admit that he had been in error on at least one important point. In a note on Downtown – 'because that is all downtown Los Angeles deserves' – Banham had dismissed the 'recentering' strategy and depreciated the city's need for a conventional center.<sup>145</sup> Given the Downtown doldrums of the early 1970s, it was impossible for him to have foreseen the landrush in the 1980s of Japanese and Canadian capital, in the context of epochal geopolitical shifts, that has made Downtown 1990 second only to Tokyo as a financial pole of the Pacific Rim. Nor would it have been easy in 1971 to envision how the traditional Downtown–Westside rivalry – which Buffy Chandler had tried to reconcile in the late 1950s – would be increasingly pacified by a functional sorting-out of central-place roles (i.e., Downtown as international financial center, Century City as the capital of entertainment law, LAX as aerospace headquarters, and so on), and by the gradual inter-elite acceptance of an ecumenical regionalism vis-à-vis the world market.

This new geography of power has concentrated cultural affluence in two overweening arts acropolises. On Bunker Hill, along a Grand Avenue axis, the 1964 Music Center has been joined by Arata Isozaki's Museum of Contemporary Art [1986] (which 'fills the box labeled "Culture"') soon to be followed by the Bella Lewitzky Dance Gallery and Frank Gehry's monumental Disney Concert Hall.<sup>146</sup> Other world-celebrity architects and

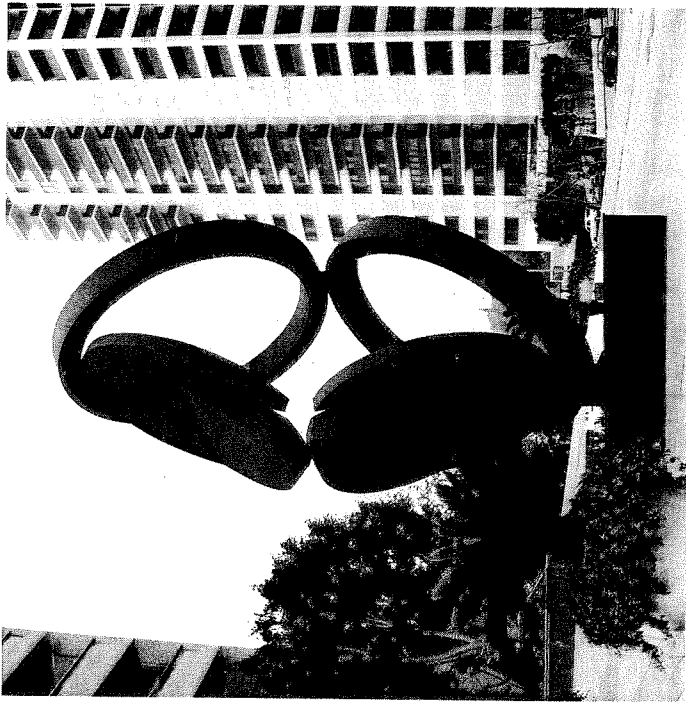


THE MUSEUM ARCHIPLAGO

artists, including Michael Graves and David Hockney, are involved in private developments focused around the Los Angeles Public Library, at the southern foot of Bunker Hill. Meanwhile, sixteen miles west, in the Sepulveda Pass near Westwood, Richard Meier ('perhaps the world's leading architect')<sup>147</sup> is designing the \$300 million J. Paul Getty Center: a museum, library and research center for the largest arts endowment in history (\$3 billion plus). On the other side of the San Diego Freeway, in Westwood proper, octogenarian Armand Hammer is preparing his own megalomaniacal art mausoleum, while the over-endowed, over-built campus of UCLA bulges with the expatriate cream of European postmodernism (including in a recent year Baudrillard, Derrida and Jencks).

As previously mentioned, large developers dominate every level of this new cultural superstructure. The chairman, for example, of the mayor's recent blue-ribbon taskforce on the arts was Thomas Maguire III, the region's biggest commercial developer, who sponsors the feature 'Art and Culture' on local public television and whose Library Tower Downtown incorporates artwork from David Hockney. Southern California's largest homebuilder, Eli Broad, is the dominating presence on the board of the Museum of Contemporary Art, which raises land values in \$1.2 billion California Plaza. Donald Bren, meanwhile, the state's leading *latifundista* as owner of the Irvine Company, is reported to 'give only for his art collection'. And, lately, the new rentier elite of Japanese corporations Downtown has also discovered that culture fertilizes real estate. Shuwa Investments, which owns more than \$1 billion of prime local property, has offered Mayor Bradley the initial contribution towards a 'Statue of Liberty' for Los Angeles (the favored proposal is actually a deconstructivist 'steel cloud' designed to be laid over the Hollywood Freeway next to the Civic Center).

The political clout of developers like Maguire, Broad and Shuwa (all major campaign donors to the mayor and the city council) ensures that municipal cultural policy maximally favors big Downtown or Westside projects, where on-site public art or adjacent museums inflate property values. The Community Development Agency's vaunted 'culture tax' of one per cent on new development — intended to promote 'the integration of the arts into all aspects of the built environment'<sup>148</sup> — has largely functioned as a sleight-of-hand subsidy to Downtown developers, whose expenditures on monumental kinetic forms, sullen pastel plinths, and fascist steel cubes, are

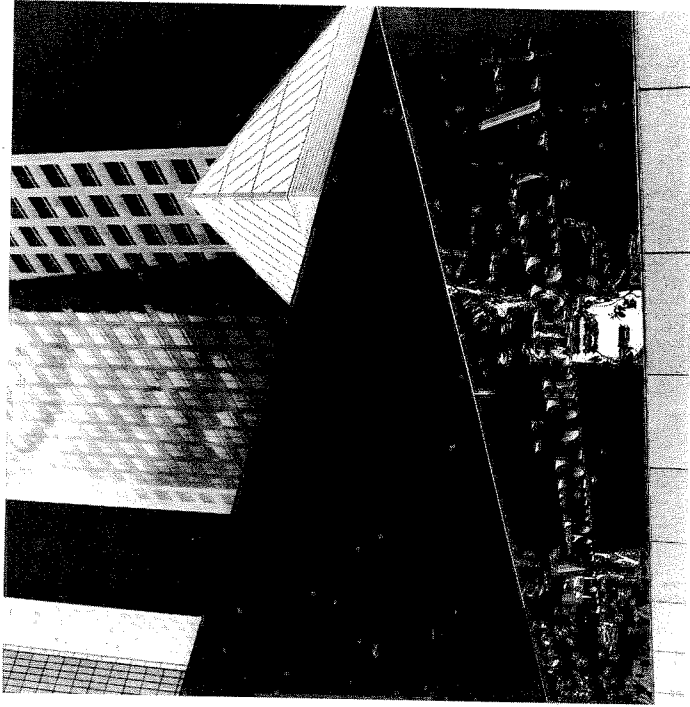


CATCHING UP WITH MANHATTAN  
Century City

partially recompensed by reduced landleases or advantageous density transfers.

Moreover, the boom in public art and cultural monumentality has gone hand-in-hand with a culture depression in most of the inner city. As Linda Frye Burnham points out, the gleaming new museums and trendy Downtown loft district are a 'Potemkin Village, so many façades hiding the fact that L.A. artists are in a desperate state, fighting over scraps, without career opportunities, funds or housing'.<sup>149</sup> Since the late 1970s, school board financing for music and arts instruction has plummeted, key community arts workshops have closed, local jazz venues have folded one after another, Black dance has been shut out in the cold, community theater has withered, Black and Chicano filmmakers have lost much of their foundation support, and the world-famous East L.A. mural movement has almost disappeared. Such vital generators of community self-definition as the Watts Towers Arts Center, the Inner City Cultural Center, and the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts have had to make drastic cutbacks to survive the 'age of arts affluence'.<sup>150</sup> The inner city, in other words, has been culturally hollowed out in lockstep with the pyramiding of public and private arts capital in Westwood and Bunker Hill. As a result Black and Chicano cultural avant gardes have either been decimated or forced to retreat from their community constituencies to the cooptative shelter of the universities and corporate arts establishment.<sup>151</sup>

The current Culture boom, and its attendant celebrity-intellectual influx, therefore, must be seen as an epiphenomenon of the larger social polarization that has revitalized Downtown and enriched the Westside at the expense of vast debilitated tracts of the inner city. Although Los Angeles now boasts of competing with New York's culture worlds, it has none of the latter's vast arts and literary patrimony, derived from successive radical bohémias and avant gardes. Even the expected 'trickle-down' from corporate culture largely fails to reach, or nurture, street culture in Los Angeles. As a result of a deliberate 'derogionalization' of cultural investment - symbolized by the 1979 decision to change the name of the future Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art to the Museum of Contemporary Art ('signifying that it would present art from an international rather than regional perspective')<sup>152</sup> - the arts fund is either spent on imported culture (especially from New York) or used to entice



*CULTURE SUPPORTING REAL ESTATE*  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Downtown

celebrity immigrants. The \$35.2 million which the Getty family recently paid for a sixteenth-century work by the little-known painter Pontormo was many times the city's annual budget for culture in Southcentral and East Los Angeles.

Given this conjuncture of arts bonanza and scorched earth, it is not surprising that imported intellectuals feel like missionaries in a cultural *tabula rasa*. Peter Sellars, the director of the corporate-endowed Los Angeles Festival (which has replaced the more populist Los Angeles Street Scene), is a modal example of the new mandarins who are 'redefining' the city. His curriculum vitae modestly relates that 'in addition to the festival, he's visiting professor in the World Arts and Cultures Department at UCLA, an artist in residence at Northwestern University, writing a book of essays on contemporary performance and preparing to launch into cinema as director of his first feature film'. Although 'huge parts of the city are unformed and confusing', Sellars loves Los Angeles because it is 'the ground floor', 'a gawky adolescent . . . [full of] nascent energy'. 'There is certainly that sense of genuine immaturity, but . . . I don't think that's entirely to be deplored - I think it's interesting.'<sup>153</sup>

Such condescending enthusiasm has become the hallmark of the *colon intelligentsia* (Sellars has been in L.A. two years). Yet, at the same time, the arts elites, without any concession to the have-not cultural world, have begun to recognize the evident contradictions in their *nouveau riche* strategy (followed by all Sunbelt cities) of buying Culture straight off the rack of the world market. Over the last few years strenuous efforts have been made to discover seductive motifs that can act as brand labels for 'culture made in L.A.'. As in the early 1900s when the Mission Revival helped dissimulate local class struggle, there is a many-sided effort to fashion a new, emollient ideology for 'postmodern' Los Angeles that emphasizes the glamorous upside of the current social polarization and stakes a claim for the city's cultural leadership. In the absence of a single controlling metaphor like the 'Mission', however, the present mythmaking proceeds on several different tracks.

One track, represented by Sellars's Los Angeles Festival and funded by Pacific Rim capital, aims to display Los Angeles as a bazaar of ethnic (although not necessarily indigenous) cultures. Since Los Angeles is the only city in the world whose ethnic diversity approaches or exceeds New York's,

(eighty-six different languages were recently counted amongst its school-children), multiculturalism seems an obvious emblem for its new globe-trotting pretensions. Yet (so far) this is still largely an import strategy, focused on an emerging network of transactions between elite cultural institutions, and designed to pluralize the tastes of Los Angeles's upscale arts consumers. As previously explained, it signifies no necessary commitment to the city's own community arts centers or diverse street cultures, who generally lack the corporate support that endorses Japanese theater or European ballet. At its worst, 'corporate multiculturalism' is an attitude that patronizes imported diversity while ignoring its own backyard. Thus, when Black performers protested that their community was 'virtually shut out' of the 1987 Festival, they received the haughty reply 'that the black community was represented in the multicultural program through foreign black artists, classical jazz performers and others'.<sup>154</sup>

Another major arts logo for 1990s Los Angeles is the deconstructed Pop architecture of Frank Gehry - heralded as the first major indigenous style since the bungalow. Gehry's work has the peculiar quality of transmuting *noir* into Pop through a recycling of the elements of a decayed and polarized urban landscape (for example, rude concrete, chain-link, empty back walls, and so on) into light and airy expressions of a happy lifestyle (law schools, aquariums, movie libraries, etc.). It is a kind of architectural alchemy that makes the best of 'bad urban spaces', like downtown Hollywood or the Pico-Union barrio, by (as we shall see in chapter four) combining delightful geometrics with complex physical security systems. Not surprisingly Gehry, who has characterized some of his own proposals as 'stage sets', has struck up a lucrative relationship with Disney CEO Michael Eisner to design 'entertainment architecture' for the Disney World expansion in Florida as well as the Disney Concert Center on Bunker Hill.<sup>155</sup> As the 'human face' of the corporate architecture that is transforming Los Angeles - uprooting neighborhoods and privatizing public space - Gehry has acquired a popular authority over regional taste that at times recalls the historic functions of Lumis, or even Disney.

The Los Angeles Festival's sponsorship of 'Pacific Rim consciousness', along with Gehry's gestures toward an architectural synthesis of 'Los Angelesness', have been mirrored by the combined efforts of planners, developers and business leaders to coin a 'new urban archetype' to

emblemize the city's official future. Under siege from angry homeowner and environmental groups protesting out-of-control development, and anxious to bolster his image for the 1986 gubernatorial race, Mayor Bradley established a corporate-dominated blue-ribbon committee to prepare a 'strategic plan for Los Angeles'. Coming on the heels of the Los Angeles Olympics (a landmark in the current booster cycle), the committee was able to mobilize an unusual degree of attention from Los Angeles's usually divided elites (including, for the first time, representatives of Asian capital). The resulting report, *L.A. 2000: A City for the Future* (1988), has become the manifesto of a 'new regionalism', aiming to forge a unity of vision between mega-developers and the haute intelligentsia.<sup>156</sup>

Interestingly, the report's epilogue (by historian Kevin Starr) reminds readers that the last 'coherent' Los Angeles, that of the 1920s, found 'community on a civic level' because it 'had a dominant establishment and a dominant population'.<sup>157</sup> The report clearly implies that because of the decline of the Anglo *herrenvolk* – i.e., the absence of a dominant culture group in an increasingly poly-ethnic, poly-centered metropolis – a 'dominant establishment' is more essential than ever. While explicitly warning of the '*Blade Runner* scenario' – 'the fusion of individual cultures into a demotic polyglottism ominous with unresolved hostilities' – the report opts for the utopia of the 'Crossroads City': 'an extraordinary city of cities, a congregation of liveable communities'.<sup>158</sup> Although it repeatedly points out the total failure to create a social infrastructure to integrate new immigrants or old poor, the social justice dimension of the report consists basically of low-cost, cosmetic programs with an occasional, half-hearted allusion to the daunting scale of effort required. The central thrust of the report is an emphasis on 'growth management' to be implemented through rationalized regional government agencies supported by state environmental planning and a regional 'goals consensus'. Symptomatically, the Southern California economy is depicted as a happy black box generating endless growth. There is no consideration whatsoever of possible contradictions within this perpetual motion machine.

This optimistic, technocratic vision of Los Angeles entering the new millennium received unusual intellectual reinforcement eighteen months later with the publication of Kevin Starr's whiggish history of the city's Promethean past: *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s*

(1990). Elaborating the themes of his epilogue to *L.A. 2000*, Starr claims that Los Angeles was conjured out of the desert as a willed act of imagination by a visionary pantheon of artists, architects, engineers, and entrepreneurs. Although particular settings (for instance, Santa Barbara in the 1920s, the utopian beginnings of Los Angeles architecture, and so on) are brilliantly evoked, Los Angeles in the Open Shop era is depicted without a *noir* cloud on the horizon. There is no hint of class or racial violence, nor, for that matter, of any historical causality other than seminal individuals attempting to materialize their dreams. It is an account that begs comparison to the hagiographic 'brag books' – so common in the early twentieth century – that depicted local history as the heroic activity of the 'leading men of business and industry'. But Starr's evident concern is less to praise the forefathers than to encourage his contemporaries in the conceit that they too are fountain-heads of the 'Southern California dream'. *Material Dreams*, by convincing us that its heroes 'designed' the city's past, offers a hubristic coda for today's mercenary intellectuals to claim that they are designing its future.<sup>159</sup>

#### EPILOGUE: GRAMSCI VS BLADE RUNNER

Los Angeles seems endlessly held between these extremes: of light and dark – of surface and depth. Of the promise, in brief, of a meaning always *hovering* on the edge of significance. *Grahame Clarke*<sup>160</sup>

If one were to attempt to distinguish the new Boosterism from the old, it might be said that while the Mission Revivalism of Lummi's generation relied upon a fictional past, the World City hoopla of today thrives upon a fictional future. If the imaginary idyll of padres and their happy neophytes erased a history of expropriation and racial violence, then the singing tomorrows of *L.A. 2000* and the Central City Association are a preemptive repression of the *Blade Runner* scenario that too many Angelenos fear is already inevitable. As Adamic and McWilliams in the 1930s and 1940s debunked the white supremacist pseudo-history of the Boosters, so today's oppositional intellectuals must contest the mythology of managed and eternal growth. As always, that contestation will be primarily a guerrilla war across a diversity of terrains, from UCLA to the streets of Compton.

One brave beginning has been made at UCLA – an institution otherwise more attuned these days to Paris than to Pasadena or Pacoima. The self-proclaimed 'L.A. School' is an emerging current of neo-Marxist researchers (mostly planners and geographers) sharing a common interest in the contradictory ramifications of urban 'restructuring' and the possible emergence of a new 'regime of flexible accumulation'. Their image of Los Angeles as prism of different spatialities is brilliantly encapsulated by Edward Soja in an essay – 'It All Comes Together in Los Angeles', that has become the latter-day counterpart of Adamic's famous 'Los Angeles! There She Blows!'

One can find in Los Angeles not only the high technology industrial complexes of the Silicon Valley and the erratic sunbelt economy of Houston, but also the far-reaching industrial decline and bankrupt urban neighborhoods of rustbelt Detroit or Cleveland. There is a Boston in Los Angeles, a Lower Manhattan and a South Bronx, a São Paulo and a Singapore. There may be no other comparable urban region which presents so vividly such a composite assemblage and articulation of urban restructuring processes. Los Angeles seems to be conjugating the recent history of capitalist urbanization in virtually all its inflectional forms.<sup>161</sup>

During the 1980s the 'L.A. School' (based in the UCLA planning and geography faculties, but including contributors from other campuses) developed an ambitious matrix of criss-crossing approaches and case-studies. Monographs focused on the dialectics of de- and re-industrialization, the peripheralization of labor and the internationalization of capital, housing and homelessness, the environmental consequences of untrammelled development, and the discourse of growth. Although its members remain undecided whether they should model themselves after the 'Chicago School' (named principally after its *object* of research), or the 'Frankfurt School' (a philosophical current named after its *base*), the 'L.A. School' is, in fact, a little bit of both. While surveying Los Angeles in a systematic way, the UCLA researchers are most interested in exploiting the metropolis, à la Adorno and Horkheimer, as a 'laboratory of the future'. They have made clear that they see themselves excavating the outlines of a paradigmatic postfordism, an emergent twenty-first century urbanism.<sup>162</sup> Their belief in the region as a crystal ball is redoubled by Fredric Jameson's famous evocation (in his 'Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism') of Bunker Hill as a 'concrete totalization' of postmodernity.<sup>163</sup>



POLYETHNIC L.A.

Corner, Vermont and Olympic

By exposing the darkest facets of the 'world city' (Los Angeles's 'new Dickensian hell' of underclass poverty in the words of UCLA geographer Alan Scott) the 'L.A. School' ridicules the utopias of L.A. 2000. Yet, by hyping Los Angeles as the paradigm of the future (even in a dystopian vein), they tend to collapse history into teleology and glamorize the very reality they would deconstruct. Soja and Jameson, particularly, in the very eloquence of their different 'postmodern mappings' of Los Angeles, become celebrants of the myth. The city is a place where everything is possible, nothing is safe and durable enough to believe in, where constant synchronicity prevails, and the automatic ingenuity of capital ceaselessly throws up new forms and spectacles – a rhetoric, in other words, that recalls the hyperbole of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*.

The difficulties of breaking completely free of Los Angeles's ideological conceits are equally illustrated across town in the ghettos of Watts and Compton, with the emergence of 'gangster rap'. George Lipsitz, in his engaging 'Cruising Around the Hegemonic Bloc' (1986),<sup>164</sup> has argued that Los Angeles's spectrum of ethnic rock musicians, muralists, breakdancers, and rappers constitute a kind of 'organic intelligentsia' fomenting a cultural strategy for a 'historical bloc of oppositional groups'. Seemingly confirming this thesis, NWA (*Niggers With Attitude*) and their lead rapper Eazy-E have sowed consternation in law-and-order circles with the phenomenal popularity of their 1989 albums, 'Straight Outta Compton' (500,000 copies) and 'Eazy-Duz-It' (650,000). Disdaining recent attempts to whitewash a musical style that was meant to be the authentic sound of the ghetto ('we make these records for our people first'), NWA are 'pushing the imagery much further than anyone before them'; '[they] feature sirens and gunshots as backdrops to their brutal and ugly X-rated tales of drug-dealing, gangbanging and police confrontations'.<sup>165</sup> As Eazy-E explains it, gangster rap has become Los Angeles's alternative press:

We're telling the real story of what it's like living in places like Compton. We're giving [the fans] reality. We're like reporters. We give them the truth. People where we come from hear so many lies that the truth stands out like a sore thumb.

But one of the most persistent 'truths' that NWA report is their own avarice: 'We're not making records for the fun of it, we're in it to make

money.' In contrast to their New York Rap counterparts, Public Enemy (now defunct), who were tribunes of Black nationalism, Los Angeles gangster rappers disclaim all ideology except the primitive accumulation of wealth by any means necessary. In supposedly stripping bare the reality of the streets, 'telling it like it is', they also offer an uncritical mirror to fantasy power-trips of violence, sexism and greed. And no more than Charles Bukowski or Frank Gehry (other purveyors of L.A. 'social realism') have the gangster rappers managed to avoid retranslation by becoming celebrities. Surrounded by benignly smiling white record company execs and PR men, NWA brandish customized assault rifles and talk darkly about recent 'drive-bys' and funerals of friends – a 'polished' image like any other in the business.<sup>166</sup>

This apparent synergy between gangster culture and Hollywood (an old motif) raises some doubts about Lipsitz's thesis of a counter-hegemonic convergence. Writing about another of Los Angeles's outlaw subcultures, the punk scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s, David James expresses pessimism that any contemporary culture practice, however transitory or marginal, can escape 'virtually overnight' assimilation and repackaging by the 'hegemonic media'. The experience of NWA, and less subtly of the entire burgeoning *Colors* genre, suggests that Hollywood is eager to mine Los Angeles's barrios and ghettos for every last lurid image of self-destruction and community holocaust. If the dream factories are equally as happy to manufacture nightmare as idyll, what happens to the oppositional power of documentary realism (a question, of course, that transcends the class struggle over the ideological figuration of Los Angeles)? James's own bleak answer, informed by Los Angeles case-studies, is that 'exemplary moments' of negation can now only be visualized as transient skirmishes at the very margin of culture; resistance becomes permanently 'conjunctural'.<sup>167</sup>

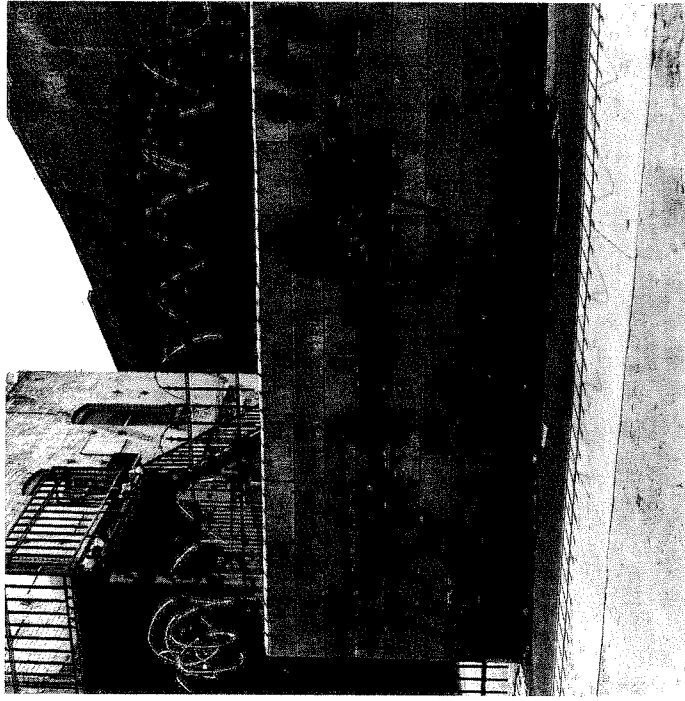
Somewhere between Lipsitz's Gramscian optimism and James's Frankfurtian pessimism lies the real possibility of oppositional culture in Los Angeles. As Gramsci almost certainly would have pointed out, a radical structural analysis of the city (as represented by the 'L.A. School') can only acquire social force if it is embodied in an alternative experiential vision – in this case, of the huge Los Angeles Third World whose children will be the Los Angeles of the next millennium. In this emerging, poly-ethnic and

*poly-lingual* society – with Anglos a declining minority – the structural conditions of intervention in popular culture are constantly in flux. Who can predict how the long years of struggle which lie ahead, before new Latino immigrants can hope to attain social and political equality, will affect the culture of the Spanish-speaking inner city? Will the city-within-the-city become colonized by a neo-Taiwanese work ethic of thrift and submission, disintegrate into a clockwork-orange of warring gangs, produce an oppositional subculture (like the Yiddish radicalism of ragtime New York) – or, perhaps, all three? Equally, will the boundaries between different groups become faultlines of conflict or high-voltage generators of an alternative urban culture led by poly-ethnic vanguards?

Certainly 'interculturalism' is an ambiguous slogan these days: defining the agenda of both 'hegemonic' culture institutions (touting the idea of a Pacific Rim nexus of corporate-sponsored art and performance) and their guerrilla opposition (dreaming of an unprecedented coalition of have-not street artists from different communities). While heeding the traditional warning – from Louis Adamic to David James – that intellectual and cultural oppositions in the capital of the Culture Industry are always conjunctural (if not conjugal), it remains to give something back to George Lipsitz's observation that when Los Angeles's street cultures rub together in the right way, they emit light of unusual warmth and clarity.

## NOTES

1. *Los Angeles*, New York 1933, p. 319.
2. See *Glamor*, August 1989.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Michael Sorkin, 'Explaining Los Angeles', *California Counterpoint: New West Coast Architecture 1982*, San Francisco Art Institute 1982, p. 8.
5. Notably Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*, West's *The Day of the Locust*, and Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?*
6. 'The Los Angeles Novel and the Idea of the West', in David Fine, ed., *Los Angeles in Fiction*. Albuquerque 1981, p. 30.
7. Quoted in Mark Winchell, *Juan Didion*, Boston 1980, p. 122.
8. No one has explained better than Michael Sorkin (see above) how a 'Los Angeles discourse' – mystification presenting itself as understanding – has come to be organized into a series of interchangeable tropes and 'mist-shrouded essences', ranging from 'the weather' and 'the apocalypse', to 'Disney', 'cars' and 'the future'.
9. Quoted in Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*, Oxford 1985, p. 85.



**KILL MICKEY!**  
Downtown

10. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 58. Starr exhaustively mines Franklin Walker's pioneering survey of the local cultural landscape, *A Literary History of Southern California*, Berkeley 1950.
12. Joseph O'Haherty, *Those Powerful Years: The South Coast and Los Angeles, 1887-1917*, Hicksville, New York 1978, p. 67.
13. John Ogden Pohlmann, *California's Mission Myth*, PhD thesis, Department of History, UCLA, Los Angeles 1974, p. 385.
14. Starr, *ibid.*, p. 86.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
16. A manic revival of the 'Mission Revival' has swept over Southern California during the 1980s as gentrifiers and collectors have rediscovered the heirlooms of the Lummiis era. *Business Week*, 31 July 1989, reports that an ordinary Mission Oak couch, factory-made by the Stackley Brothers at the turn of the century, and only worth \$100 five years ago, now sells for \$20,000. At a recent Christie's auction, Barbara Streisand - apparently a neo-Arroyan by taste - paid \$363,000 for a single Mission Oak sideboard. The craze is so formidable that only drastic action by the Pasadena City Council has prevented some of the Greene Brothers' most famous homes from being dismantled for the sale of their parts.
17. United States Commission on Industrial Relations, 'Open and Closed Shop Controversy in Los Angeles', United States Congress, *Senate Documents*, 64 Congress, 1 Session, number 415, pp. 5, 493-5, 518.
18. According to Dudley Gordon, who for many decades was the curator of a small, continuing Lummiis cult, the latter's writings remained extremely popular in Spain long after they were out of print in California - the Spanish, uncritically relishing as fact the entire 'Mission Myth'. (See the interview in Lionel Rolfe's unpublished manuscript, *Notes of a California Bohemian*, n.d.)
19. Mayo, p. 137.
20. This essentially harmless Echo Park bohemia is described in Kevin Starr's, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s*, Oxford 1990, and in Lionel Rolfe's unpublished *Notes of a California Bohemian*, which includes a wonderful interview with Jake Zeitlin, in which the aged bookdealer recounts the role of Miriam Lerner, private secretary to oil millionaire Edward Doheny (as well as an ardent member of the Young People's Socialist League and Edward Weston's model/lover), in getting jobs for young L.A. bohemians at Doheny gas stations or, in Zeitlin's case, even moving the tycoon's lawn.
21. See *Laughing in the Jungle*, New York 1932, p. 211; and Carey McWilliams, *Louis Adamic and Shadow-America*, Los Angeles 1935, pp.23-4, 32.
22. McWilliams, p. 26.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Quoted in Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*, New York 1946, p. 157.
25. *Los Angeles*, New York 1933, p. 327.
26. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, *Painting and Sculpture in California: The Modern Era*, San Francisco 1977, pp. 27-9, 93. There is virtually no historical literature on Southern California's prewar art avant gardes, or their relationship to contemporary social struggles.
27. See Ellen Landau, *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga*, New York 1989, p. 46. Pollock's brother Sande was a member of the small workshop of young artists who studied with Siqueiros and helped install his mural. However, Pollock's other recent biographers, Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, dispute Landau's account of the mural's impact on Jackson. According to them he was 'strangely untouched' by his first encounter with Siqueiros in Los Angeles, coming under his spell only later in New York as they worked together on banners and posters for the 1936 Union Square May Day demonstration. (See Landau, p. 284 passim.)

28. Quoted in Erna Moore, 'Exil in Hollywood: Leben und Haltung deutscher Exilautoren nach ihren autobiographischen Berichten', in Spalek and Strelka, eds, *Deutsche Exilliteratur seit 1933. Teil I: Kalifornien*, Bern and Munich 1976, p. 28 (our translation).
29. *Louis Adamic*, p. 77.
30. See Carey McWilliams, *The Education of Carey McWilliams*, New York 1978, pp. 119-20.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 119 passim.
32. Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times*, New York 1977. This book is the new foundation for serious writing and analysis about Southern California.
33. The major exception, between McWilliams and Gottlieb and Wolt, was Robert Fogelson's *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* Cambridge, Mass. 1967 - an important historical study of demography, planning and power, shamefully out of print.
34. Quoted in McWilliams, *Louis Adamic*, pp. 80-81.
35. *City of Night*, New York 1963, p. 87.
36. *Decline of the Middle Class*, New York 1935, pp. 15, 21-23, 34, 342-3, 361.
37. 'Reuben W. Borough and the California Reform Movements', transcript, Oral History Program, UCLA, Los Angeles 1968.
38. Carey McWilliams described pensionites shouting 'Ham and Eggs!' with 'the frenzy of storm-troopers yelling "Sieg Heil!" All meetings of the Payroll Guarantee Association are opened with the shouted salutation "Ham and Eggs!" and each speaker who appears on the platform must preface his remarks with the salutation. If he neglects to do so, the crowd will shout "Ham and Eggs!" until he does.' (*Southern California Country*, pp. 305-6).
39. David Fine, 'Introduction' in Fine, ed., *Los Angeles in Fiction*, Albuquerque 1984, p.7. H.L. Mencken was again decisive in preparing the way for the emergence of the genre. His sentimental-cynical journalistic style, his disdain for euphemism, and his patronage of underground writers - all made him noir's godfather. He premiered the short stories of Cam and Faute in his *American Mercury*, as well as founding *The Black Mask* (subsequently sold to Eitinge Warner) which printed early Hammett, Gardner and Chandler. Mencken, ironically, disliked detective fiction. (For a recognition of his influence, see Kinsley Widmer, 'The Way Out: Some Life-Style Sources of the Literary Tough Guy and the Proletarian Hero', in David Madden, *Tough Guy: Writers of the Thirties*, Carbondale, Ill. 1968, p. 6.)
40. Ron Goulart, *The Dirty Detectives*, New York 1988, pp. 100-105. Other jaded Hollywood literary proletarians who wrote noir-ish detective stories in this vein included John Butler, W.T. Ballard, Frank Gruber, Roger Torrey and Norbert Davis. (*Ibid.*, 'The New Wild West', chapter six.)
41. Gerald Locklin, 'The Day of the Painter; the Death of the Cock: Nathanael West's Hollywood Novel' in Fine, p. 68.
42. Marlowe, the avenging burgher, totters precariously on the precipice of fascist paranoia. Each successive Chandler novel focuses on a new target of Marlowe's dislike: Blacks, Asians, gays, 'gressers', and, always, women. In this regard it is useful to recall the genealogy of the hardboiled detective hero: the special 1923 issue of *The Black Mask* on the Ku Klux Klan that introduced Carroll John Daly's nativist detective 'Race Williams' as the prototype of tough guy crusaders against (foreign-born) corruption. (Cf. Goulart, pp. 27-32; and Philip Durham, 'The Black Mask School', in Madden, pp. 51-79.)
43. *What Makes Sammy Run?*, New York 1940, p. 119. The first edition sold few copies, but sparked a vehement debate amongst left-wing writers, some of whom considered the Glick character 'anti-semitic'. See Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, New York 1988, pp. 335-8.
44. 'Many left-oriented screenwriters and directors were logically drawn to the *film noir* ... [which] positively reeked of the facts of life. It was easier to instill a feeling that all was not perfect in American society by way of the ambiguities of *film noir* than to take on the system and risk the cooptation of any subversive message.' (Carlos Clarens, *Crime Movies*, New York 1980, pp. 195-6.)

- What a 'real' Marxist Hollywood film would have looked like remains a matter for arcane conjecture. Perhaps the best potential candidate was the remarkable screenplay of *An American Tragedy* which Sergei Eisenstein and Ivor Montagu wrote in 1930 during the Soviet director's brief and troubled stay in Hollywood. Dreiser supposedly loved the script, but Paramount – alarmed by its 'monstrous challenge to American society' – killed the project. See W.A. Swanberg, *Dreiser*, New York 1965, pp. 369–77.
45. An interesting convergence of *film noir*, overlapping with the avant garde of documentary film-making, was the emergence of the metropolis itself (typically as 'naked city', 'divided city', etc.) as protagonist and star. Thus, the 1950 *film noir*, *Once a Thief*, actually lists 'Los Angeles' in the credits as one of the 'characters'. (See Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia*, New York 1986, p. 235.)
46. See *Wait Until Spring Bandini* (1938), *Ask the Dust* (1939), *Dago Red* (1940), and the posthumously published 1930s novel, *1933 Was a Bad Year* (1985).
47. See Art and Laurie Pepper, *Straight Life: The Story of Art Pepper*, New York 1979. Son of one of the San Pedro Wobblers admired by Adamic, Pepper grew up in Watts, studied bebop on Central Avenue, did graduate work on heroin in Boyle Heights, and became emeritus at San Quentin. His tormented autobiography eclipses that of any character in the Bukovskian hell.
48. David King Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, New York 1989, pp. 222–3.
49. From 'W.C. Fields and the S.O.B. on Rollerskates', quoted in David Mogen, *Ray Bradbury*, Boston 1986, p. 5.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
51. Quoted in Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, vol. 1, New York 1986, p. 236.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 371.
53. Stephen F. Milliken, *Chester Himes: A Critical Appraisal*, Columbia, Mo. 1976, p. 56.
54. *The Quality of Hurt*, New York 1972, p. 75.
55. Milliken, p. 75.
56. Himes, for example, is never mentioned in any of the twelve essays on Los Angeles fiction in the *Fine anthology*.
57. See Jerry Speir, 'The Ultimate Seacoast: Ross Macdonald's California', chapter six in *Fine*, ed.
58. *City of Night*, New York 1963, pp. 93, 87.
59. *Less Than Zero*, New York 1985, pp. 207–8.
60. A different tangent, of course, from the original noir generation is the reworking of West's image of the little people stranded in the hollowiness of the L.A./Hollywood/California Dream. Probably the best contemporary representative of this genre (also covered by Sam Sheppard) is Burbank-born playwright John Stepping, who charts broken lives along Los Angeles's 'low-rent periphery'. For a discussion of his work, see Jan Breslauer, 'Chronicles of the Dream Coast', *LA Weekly*, 26 January–1 February 1990.
61. The *Los Angeles Quartet* includes *The Black Dahlia* (1987), *The Big Nowhere* (1988), *L.A. Confidential* (1990), and *White Jazz* (forthcoming). Eltroj produces his 'post-Noir' potboilers in a basement office in Eastchester, New York – 3,000 miles from the scene of the crime.
62. Quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 1990.
63. *Vineland*, New York 1990, p. 326.
64. Dika Newlin, *Schoenberg Remembered*, Pendragon, New York 1980, p. 42. This is the diary of a thirteen-year-old whizz kid who studied with Schoenberg in the 1930s.
65. The émigré French composer Milhaud marveled that Los Angeles could contain 'a whole world of artists, writers and musicians'. Altogether some ten to fifteen thousand European refugees – mostly professionals – were allowed to settle on the West Coast. Perhaps half that number lived for some period in Southern California. (See Gerald Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War*, Bloomington, Ind. 1985, pp. 194–5.)
66. There were also some 'precocious' refugees from reaction, like the radical Jewish painter Boris Deutsch who arrived from Lithuania in 1920.

67. Quoted in Gross, 'Adorno in Los Angeles: The Intellectual in Emigration', *Humanities in Society*, Fall 1979, p. 342. Old differences were magnified, not forgotten in exile. Despite repeated efforts of friends to get them together, Schoenberg and Stravinsky lived in Los Angeles for thirteen years (sitting 'on opposite sides of the Wilshire Ebell Theater at the premiere of the *Genesis Suite*') before finally agreeing to speak to each other. (See Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues*, Berkeley 1982, p. 106.)
68. See Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America*, Boston 1983, p. 161.
69. Noir had its own, separate sphere of influence upon postwar European (especially French and Italian) culture. Cain – more than anyone – helped precipitate a new kind of fiction and cinema: *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was the model for Camus's *The Outsider* as well as being 'stolen' by Visconti as *Ossessione*, which Godard later remade. (Cf. David Madden, 'Introduction', *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, Carbondale, Ill. 1968, p. xvii; and Otto Friedrich, *City of Neats: Hollywood in the 1940s*, New York 1986, p. 235.)
70. See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, Berkeley 1985, p. 123.
71. See Gross, p. 344.
72. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt 1972: pp. 120–21 (our translation).
73. *Paradies Amerika*, Berlin 1948, p. 134.
74. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, London 1971, pp. 236, 247. Wagner has never been translated and *Los Angeles ... Zweimillionenstadt in Sudkalifornien* is now a rare item in library special collections.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 156ff (our translation).
76. Quoted in Hans Wagener, 'Erich Maria Remarque', Spalek and Strelka, eds, p. 595.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Hanns Eisler, *Fragen Sie mehr ueber Brecht: Gespraech mit Hans Bunge*, Darmstadt 1986, p. 44 (our translation).
79. See his famous essay 'Ozymandias, the Utopia That Failed', a cautionary tale of communal living, in *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, New York 1956.
80. See David King Dunaway's fascinating *Huxley in Hollywood*, New York 1990. Most devotees, as well as critics, of California's 'New Age' seem to believe that it emerged fully-formed out of the 1960s 'age of Aquarius'. In fact it has a complex subcultural genealogy, being related, via Huxley and Heard, to Bloomsbury and an earlier Pre-Raphaelite bohemia, as well as deriving, more locally, from a concatenation of Arroyo-ite Aryanism (especially the emphasis on racial physical perfectionism) and Hollywood cult tradition (including a Satanic chromosome or two from the influential Crowleyites).
81. Brecht, 'On Thinking About Hell', *Poems: 1913–1956*, Part Three, London 1976, p. 367.
82. *Ibid.*, 1976, p. 280.
83. Dunaway, pp. 285–303.
84. See discussion in Patry Lee Parmalee, *Brecht's America*, Miami 1981.
85. Quoted in Bruce Cook, *Brecht in Exile*, New York 1982, p. 58. Mann, of course, wrote *Doctor Faustus* in Los Angeles.
86. Cf. Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg*, London 1978, p. 46; Julian Brand, *The Berg–Schoenberg Correspondence*, New York 1987, p. 458. MacDonald points out that Schoenberg was a popular figure at UCLA, and that 'he also taught John Cage privately, asking no fee "as long as he would devote his life to music"': (p. 45)
87. Quoted Nash, p. 197. Indeed having the Gods of European Culture in Los Angeles during the 1930s and 1940s did stimulate many young writers and musicians. For the impact of meeting Thomas Mann in 1947 on one North Hollywood teenager, see Susan Sonntag's memoir, 'Pilgrimage', *New Yorker*, 21 December 1987.

88. Erna Moore, 'Exil in Hollywood: Leben und Haltung deutscher Exilautoren nach ihren autobiographischen Berichten', in Spalek and Strelka, p. 25ff.
89. Nash, *ibid.*
90. Kevin MacMahon, private communication.
91. Of course, the studio writing departments were real factories. 'You had to punch the Clock', Milton Spertling recalled. 'They would walk around and see if everybody was typing. There'd be a lookout in the writers' building. When Warner or Cohn would be seen coming toward the building, somebody would say 'He's coming' and all the typewriters would start. . . . He [Jack Warner] couldn't understand why people weren't always typing.' (In Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, New York 1988, p. 324.)
92. 'Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen in Amerika', in *Stichworte. Kritische Modelle II*, Frankfurt 1969, p. 147 (our translation).
93. See Barry Katz, *Herbert Marcuse*, London 1985.
94. Leddy, *L.A. Weekly*, 1989, p. 11.
95. *The Autobiography of Robert A. Millikan*, New York 1950, p. 242.
96. Farnsworth Crowder, 'Los Angeles: The Heaven of Bunk-Shooters', in *How 'Wicked' Is Hollywood?*, 'Little Blue Book No. 1591' (Haldeman-Julius), Girard (Kansas) n.d., p. 18.
97. By the mid 1920s, just a few years after its refounding, Cal Tech was surpassing all other American universities in the both the number of major physics publications by its faculty, and the number of national and international research fellows attracted to its laboratories. See Robert Kargon, *The Rise of Robert Millikan*, Ithaca 1982, p. 117.
98. On the attraction of Orange Grove Avenue's 'millionaires' row', see Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception*, New York 1949, pp. 260-62. On the Observatory as region-builder, see Millikan, pp. 230-31.
99. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-101.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
101. See Guy Finney, *The Great Los Angeles Bubble (A Present-Day Story of Colossal Financial Jugglery and of Penalties Paid)*, Los Angeles 1929.
102. 'Some Exceptional Opportunities in Southern California', Robert A. Millikan Archives, Cal Tech, Pasadena, box 27.9 (two drafts), n.d.
103. Kargon, pp. 162-3.
104. Morrow Mayo, *Los Angeles*, New York 1933, pp. 313-15.
105. Crowder, pp. 45-7.
106. One cannot be entirely unsympathetic towards Crowley, however. During the Russian Revolution he did write to Trotsky expressing his agreement with the elimination of capitalism and proposing to be put in charge of the 'expropriation of Christianity on earth'. Trotsky did not reply. See Wilson, p. 137.
107. Cf. Colin Wilson, *Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast*, Wellingborough 1987, p. 147; Russell Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard*, New York 1987, p. 113 *passim*; Frank Malina, 'The Jet Propulsion Laboratory', in Arthur Clarke, ed., *The Coming of the Space Age*, London 1967, p. 67 *passim*.
108. Miller, pp. 116-30.
109. Miller, p. 165.
110. 'Los Angeles: The Ecology of Evil', *Artforum*, Vol 11, December 1972, pp. 67-76; and *Sunshine Muse*, New York 1974, p. 139.
111. Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious As Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz*, London 1977, p. 70; and Barry McRae, *Ornette Coleman*, London 1988, p. 16.
112. The Big Apple-biased perspective of jazz criticism often overlooks the seminal role of this Los Angeles underground in launching the New Wave dominated by Coleman, Coltrane, Taylor and Dolphy. A similar argument could be made about the neglect of the Los Angeles origins (from Martha Graham to Alvin Alley) of much of modern 'New York' dance.

113. See Robert Gordon, *Jazz West Coast*, London 1986, p. 183 *passim*.
114. Peter Plagens, *Sunshine Muse*, p. 23.
115. The Case-Study House program sponsored by John Entenza's *California Arts and Architecture* magazine between 1945 and 1960 allowed the younger modernists to conduct exhaustive experimentation on Los Angeles's social and cultural ideal-type: the detached, single-family home. The exhibition of the first six homes (by Soriano, Ain, and others), which attracted nearly 370,000 viewers, has been sometimes compared to New York's Armory Show (1913) as a local premiere of Modernism. The Case Study experience was the subject of a major, uncritical retrospective by the 'Temporary Contemporary' (the satellite facility of the Museum of Contemporary Art) in 1989 which once again attracted tens of thousands of viewers.
116. Ironically, many of the white 'cool' jazzmen had first apprenticed themselves in the 1940s to Central Avenue's integrated music culture and continued, through the 1950s, to personally prefer the 'harder' and 'freer' sound in the ghetto.
117. See John Litweiler, *The Freedom Principle: Jazz After 1958*, New York 1984, pp. 296-7.
118. Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing is Forgetting: The Name of the Thing One Sees*, Berkeley 1982, p. 42.
119. 'Pop Art in California', in Lucy Lippard, ed., *Pop Art*, New York 1966, p. 140.
120. Plagens, *Sunshine Muse*, p. 120.
121. 'Berman and Kienholz: Progenitors of L.A. Assemblage', in Maurice Tuchman, ed., *Art in Los Angeles: Seventeen Artists in the 1960s*, Los Angeles 1982, p. 12.
122. Quoted in P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-1978*, Oxford 1974, p. 125.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 93 *passim*.
124. Clarke, p. 142.
125. Cf. Thomas Pynchon, 'A Journey Into the Mind of Watts', *New York Times Magazine*, 12 June 1966; and Budd Schulberg, ed., *From the Ashes: Voices of Watts*, New York 1967.
126. See Christopher Knight, 'The Resurrection of John Baldessari', *Times*, 18 March 1990.
127. Weschler, p. 123.
128. Maurice Tuchman, *A Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967-1971*, LACMA, Los Angeles 1971; pp. 9-10 (on 'Missy' Chandler's role). In 1975 the *Los Angeles Free Press* exposed an unethical cash nexus between Tuchman and a gallery which sold work to the County Museum. See William Hackman, 'Seven Artists in Search of a Place to Hang', *California Magazine*, November 1986, p. 95, 108.
129. Plagens, p. 165.
130. *Ibid.*, p. 145. On the art front, Plagens has evaluated the potential of the 1960s avant garde as follows: 'In the heyday of Los Angeles art, in 1966-9, there was a myth operative in the land, even in certain renegade minds east of the Hudson, that Los Angeles was the art center of the twenty-first century. . . . Not so, for a couple of reasons. . . . If art stayed with hard, opaque, permanent, hand-wrought painting and sculpture, Los Angeles would never have the density, the cultural surplus, to pull it off; the honor would probably go to Houston, the South Bronx of 2001. If there were to be a Warhol *doppelgänger*, he wouldn't live in the bowels of lower Hollywood; if he kept a modest studio for fifteen years in the Thai-restaurant-adult-movie stretch of North Western Avenue, he wouldn't be another Warhol.' (See 'Ed Ruscha, Serious' in *The Works of Ed Ruscha*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 1982, p. 39.)
131. See Knight, who praises the Santa Monica-based Baldessari, a major figure in the rise of Conceptual Art in the 1980s, precisely for his 'cosmopolitan worldliness' and rejection of L.A.'s 'provincial regionalism'.
132. Harold Rosenberg, quoted in Peter Plagens, *Ruscha*, p. 40. Plagens struggles heroically in this essay to defend Ruscha as a wary moralist who 'aspires to innocence. . . to cleanse the view from the beach' (p. 39). But is sixties' innocence, twenty-five years later, still 'innocent'?
133. *American Art Now*, New York 1985, p. 52.

134. *Ibid.*
135. See Vladimir Simosko and Barry Tepperman, *Eric Dolphy: A Musical Biography and Discography*, Washington, D.C. 1974.
136. 'Art in Limbo', *L.A. Weekly*, 18-24 March 1988.
137. Jackson was speaking to a 1988 conference on the state of the Black theater at Stanford University. See Lawrence Christon, 'Black Theater: Its Decline Since 1960', *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, 31 January 1988.
138. An almost random list of new arrivals would include the editor and publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, the president of the California Institute of the Arts, the director of the Los Angeles Festival, and the dean of UCLA's architecture and planning school.
139. *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times*, New York 1977, pp. 306-20.
140. Los Angeles was never meant to forget Buffy's crowning moment. As Kevin McMahon notes: 'The white silk Yves Saint-Laurent gown Dorothy wore to the gala opening of her music center is still in a display next to the men's room in the downstairs lounge. The historic object is draped over a dark velvet mannequin and dramatically spot-lit. It has yellowed and looks pretty awful.' (private communication).
141. Quoted in Dick Hebdige, 'In Poor Taste: Notes on Pop', in *The Institute for Contemporary Art, Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Pop*, New York 1988, p. 77.
142. As Plagens once put it, 'the question, at least for Southern California, is not so much whether the area was/is ripe for Pop, but whether the whole ambience - from showbusiness to aircraft industry to the Gobi of suburbia - is not preemptively Pop in itself.' (*Sunshine Muse*, p. 139).
143. Banham's early essay on the libidinalized automobile, 'Vehicles of Desire' (*Art*, September 1955), signaled that he was prophetically, or telepathically, on the same wavelength as the Ferris artists and Kenneth Anger.
144. 'Los Angeles: The Ecology of Evil', *Artforum*, vol. II, December 1972, pp. 67-76.
145. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, London 1972, p. 201 *passim*.
146. For a provocative discussion of Downtown culture politics, see Jo-Anne Berelowitz, 'The Jewel in the Crown: Bunker Hill, MOCA, and the Ideology of Urban Redevelopment', discussion paper, Dept. of Art History, UCLA 1988.
147. *Los Angeles Times*, 19 May 1989. Meier reportedly 'has brooded about whether the Getty Center should have been located in a less affluent area and has concluded that "by being where it is, the way you see Los Angeles . . . it belongs to the whole city"'. (*Ibid.*)
148. CRA brochure. Photographer and design critic Alan Sekula describes this 'Pop reification of real-estate' as the master cultural trend of Los Angeles in the 1980s (interview, December 1989).
149. Frye, *ibid.* She also reveals that Los Angeles spends \$1.53 per capita on the arts in contrast to New York's \$8.87 or even Miami's \$5.20.
150. A parallel problem is the lack of effective Black or Chicano/Mexican controlled television, comparable to the outlets operated by the Asian or evangelical communities. The major Spanish-language station is controlled by Cuban exiles, while the only Black-owned station - long inactive - is being purchased by evangelicals. The net result is a brutally twin-tiered metropolitan 'information order'.
151. For example, Chicano artists in Southern California have become increasingly reliant upon corporate sponsors, especially beverage companies and breweries, to show their work around the country. As journalist Reuben Martinez discovered, this usually entails a large dose of censorship. 'One thing we want to stay away from is upsetting people', says Michele Bernhardt, a Canadian Club representative [sponsor of the 'Mira!' show]. 'There are strong right-wing sentiments in this country now, and we don't want to put out anything controversial.' (See 'Toward a Rainbow Culture', *L.A. Weekly*, 18-24 March 1988)
152. Berelowitz.

153. Interviewed by Lizanne Fleming ('New Kid in Town'), *Pasadena Weekly*, 2 February 1990. Consider also this description of Sellars's Frank Lloyd Wright living room: 'At least half of the room's walls are covered with volumes ranging in subject matter from Russian and Soviet theater and Islamic art to shamanism and Jungian psychology. One shelf mixes theatrical classics with an eclectic stack of worn paperbacks by Jackie Gleason, Sid Caesar and Rudy Vallee.' (*Ibid.*)
154. *Los Angeles Times*, 24 February 1990. Festival Director Sellars, to be fair, has since promised to address community concerns. 'This is the most segregated city I've ever lived in. But as you set foot on this stage, you are created equal.' (*Ibid.*) He has not explained, however, where the Black community is expected to find financial support that would give its arts activities equal footing with wealthier ethnic segments of the corporate-dependent Festival.
155. Interviewed by Ross Miller, 'The Master of Mudpies'. Referring to Gehry, Isozaki, Graves and other current Disney 'starchitects', critic Suzanne Stephens observes, 'Yesterday, every architect in America dreamed of building office towers for enlightened developers. Today, they want to work for Michael Eisner.' (Quoted in Leon Whiteson, 'Disney Design', *Los Angeles Times*, 25 January 1990.)
156. Formulated under the leadership of a vice-president of Bankamerica, L.A. 2000 is now being implemented by the '2000 Partnership' - a public-private organization headed by the former CEO of Lockheed.
157. *L.A. 2000*, p. 86.
158. *Ibid.*
159. Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams*, Oxford 1990. This is the third volume in Starr's ambitious *Americans and the California Dream*. A latter-day Bancroft who enjoys celebrity in elite circles in both San Francisco (where he was City Librarian) and Los Angeles (where, as we have seen, he 'contextualized' L.A. 2000), Starr may be the only official 'California intellectual' in the culturally polarized state.
160. 'The Great Wrong Place?: L.A. as Urban Milieu', in Clarke, ed., *The American City*, London 1988, p. 142.
161. Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London 1989, p. 193.
162. Los Angeles's monopoly on 'future vision', however, is now being challenged by other 'advanced points of observation', especially the city's largest suburb. A parallel 'Orange County School' of researchers, based at the University of California at Irvine, and patronized by a large Rockefeller Foundation grant, are exploring that area's claim to be the ideal-typical postindustrial society.
163. The original version of this essay appeared in *New Left Review* 146 (July-August 1984) as 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. For a critique of Jameson's specific Los Angeles coordinates, see Mike Davis, 'Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism', in E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Postmodernism and its Discontents*, London 1988, pp. 79-87.
164. In *Cultural Critique*, Winter 1986/7, pp. 157-77.
165. Robert Hilburn, 'Rap', *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, 2 April 1989.
166. Berelowitz *op. cit.*
167. Cf. description of NWA interview in Hunt.
168. See his 'Poetry/Punk/Production: Some Recent Writing in L.A.', in Kaplan, pp. 163-86.