Venice: A Contested Bohemia in Los Angeles. By Andrew Deener. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. xx+306. $29.00.

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Venice is highly readable combination of social history, interviews, and ethnography capturing the public culture of five adjacent economic and residential neighborhoods—Oakwood, Rose Avenue, the Canals, Venice Boardwalk, and Abbot Kinney Boulevard—in Venice, California. Waves of residents move in and move out, transforming their spaces in this detail-rich account. There are conflicts over neighborhood boundaries, housing, vending, and the use of public space. Andrew Deener's book is a response to the argument that "we are used to thinking that the majority of a neighborhood's residents develops the identity of a place" (p. 262) by examining competing, overlapping voices.

Within neighborhoods, social groups compete for control over public culture. Various white subgroups, African-Americans, and homeless residents interact. Deener's individual neighborhood accounts are thoughtful and filled with thick, ethnographic detail. He ultimately sees the five areas he describes as part of a mosaic, distinct but forming a larger picture. One point that is ever present, but that Deener should more strongly emphasize, is that neighborhoods change slowly over decades. Changes, such as gentrification, that seem apparent emerge through multiple, uneven steps. *Venice* illustrates how neighborhood homology—or cohesion between people, symbols, and the built environment—is an evolving set of processes, not a revolutionary one.

Oakwood is the African-American neighborhood in Venice. Its public culture, parks, businesses, and community center are black. And yet, the neighborhood never had a majority black population. This section could be an account of black neighborhood persistence and dominance despite declining numbers. Left underexplored is how the black community succeeded in creating a dispersed set of public housing units that anchored lower-income blacks but failed to sustain and grow a working-class and middle-class black community.

Rose Avenue is the homeless neighborhood, but one that is a fascinating contrast to East Coast and Rust Belt forms. The use of R.V.s as shelter shows a form of social mobility within the homeless population. Authorities use code enforcement to prevent the homeless from securing a place. Scholars on homelessness will have a much to work with as the unstable boundaries between living on the streets, living in RVs, and navigating an ever-changing police and regulatory regime present themselves.

Residential gentrification of the Canals includes the politics of neighborhood trash cleanup programs, beautification programs, and what Deener terms "the politics of quaintness" (p. 147). Throughout *Venice*, he refers to

beatniks and hippies, artists and bikers, hipsters and gentrifiers without fully distinguishing their characteristics. This book could be a history of nonsuburban white culture in California spanning from hobos to beatniks to hippies to hipsters. Eventually, white, middle-class migrants of the 1970s and 1980s become the new "old-timers."

Deener's analysis of the Venice Boardwalk and its free-speech zone captures the spectrum of vendors, performers, scavengers, stragglers, and thieves. This section could be read as the West Coast counterpart to Mitchell Dunier's *Sidewalk* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001). He works to decipher the differences, which are difficult for outsiders to make out. Residents, lawmakers, and the police intersect and clash over a place for bohemians to live versus a place to sell bohemian culture. Although detailing a kaleidoscope of examples, including beach vendors, performers, and artists, Deener never provides a hard definition of bohemia.

Deener's chapter on "fashionable bohemia" tracks the commercial gentrification along Abbot Kinney Boulevard, including the street's name change. He captures the choices and challenges between store owners (many of whom cannot afford to live in the neighborhood), wealthy tourists, and dismayed black residents. But there is slipperiness in the usage of the term "gentrification" and its interchangeably with white in-migration.

Deener chooses his neighborhoods to show how "diversity and exclusivity coexist in constant tension" (p. 2). But he provides an unusual map, his only, representing a "tour route" he walks his readers through. For an audience unfamiliar with Los Angeles, there is a lack of broader contextual clues. Also, this book needs an organizing timeline, as it inconsistently veers across the past century, making neighborhood comparisons hard to follow. There needs to be some guidance on Venice's position in Los Angeles. After its 1925 annexation to Los Angeles, readers have to wonder about the reification of Venice. Multiple interviewees have moved in and out and in again to parts of Venice. With the distinct demographics and built environment separating the microneighborhoods, it is not clear how there is actually a Venice.

Deener starts each chapter with a personal anecdote. As with his tour-guide map of Venice, there is a methodological uneasiness in his position. Even for an academic book geared toward a popular audience, a focused section on his field methods could have better framed his approach; either erase yourself from the account or embedded yourself.

This book fits comfortably in recent urban studies focusing on place-character and tradition. *Venice* is a welcome contribution to urban scholars looking for ethnographic research outside of the East Coast or Chicago. However, aside from brief allusions to a "prismatic metropolis," Deener never provides an account tying the neighborhoods together. The chapters on each smaller neighborhood are distinct and thoughtful. Two of them were already published as articles. These chapters could be easily parceled out to interested specialists studying homelessness, gentrification, urban housing policy, or race dynamics in the United States. *Venice* essentially consists of five case studies lacking a compelling theoretical narrative: "Urban

sociologists should privilege neither political-economic nor ecological processes" (p. 279). But, for scholars looking for a book that engages arguments on urban theorizing this book offers little. His microlevel, ecological approach will leave urban researchers interested in the niches of global cities and urban political economy cold with the lack of connections upward.

Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions. By Jason E. Shelton and Michael O. Emerson. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Pp. xii+279. $85.00 (cloth); $28.00 (paper).

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Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions set out to explore why substantial differences exist in how black and white Protestants practice their faith. The book is structured around a set of principles that Jason E. Shelton and Michael O. Emerson call "the five building blocks of black Protestant faith" and are designed to be reference points for "understanding the distinctive way that African-Americans think about and practice Christianity" (p. 3). The authors discuss these five central ideas in detail, then turn their attention to using an analysis of data collected from the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS), in-depth interviews with religious clergy, and focus groups of believers to find out if there is empirical support for them. The book is targeted at a nonscientific audience, yet it also includes 50 pages of appendices and chapter notes that contain the details of the analyses performed.

The central focus of the book is on the five "building blocks," which are as follows: "(a) *Experiential* —black Protestant faith is active and experiential and is less concerned with precise doctrinal contours than white mainline or evangelical Christianity; (b) *Survival* —black Protestant faith is critical to survival and helps individuals cope with suffering associated with everyday trials and tribulations; (c) *Mystery*—black Protestant faith is mystical and expresses and appreciation for the mystery in life, including folklore and cultural components deriving from the African diaspora, the consequences of racial inequality in America, and non-Christian religions; (d) *Miraculous*—black Protestant faith is confident and comprehensive and holds that the miraculous is ordinary, and the ordinary is miraculous; and (e) *Justice*—black Protestant faith is committed to social justice and equality for all individuals and groups in society" (pp. 8–9).

These "building blocks" are built clearly on the extensive research about black Protestants and conservative Protestants that has emerged in the sociology of religion over the past 20 years. What separates this book from previous research is the careful attention that the authors pay to questions of