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Border City: Race and Social Distance in Los Angeles

Greg Hise

The modern resident in the City of the Angels has seen in the past fifteen years the many and sweeping changes wrought by industry and capital and brains, which have transformed a sleepy little Spanish-Mexican pueblo into our modern, bustling and up-to-date metropolis. If a *Fundador* were to rise from his tomb, under the floor of the Mission . . . and take a *pasear* over [sic] the city, there would be few localities he would recognize. The church and the Plaza, and a part of what is now Chinatown, and old Sonoratown, and an occasional ruined adobe—these would be all.

Mary E. Mooney, 1900¹

It is fitting for the *American Quarterly* to inaugurate its move to USC with a special issue devoted to Los Angeles and the *future* of urban culture. Before the ink dried on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in truth before the United States expanded its national boundary through a land grab of Alta California and Mexico's northern territory, Yankee boosters and place promoters had begun sketching the outlines for a city of the future, a great modern metropolis rising on the site of a Spanish-Mexican pueblo. The future focus of those putative pioneers has informed subsequent analysis; scholarship on Los Angeles is steeped in place promotion; few consider an actual place.²

Whether looking north from New Spain, later Mexico, or west from Europe's North Atlantic colonies or Europe itself, the pueblo of Los Angeles and Alta California appeared to be on the edge of the world geographically and on the margins of world trade and of world history, the latter understood as the role those in California played in shaping global events. The received history of California is of a provincial backwater thrust onto the world stage with the discovery of gold in 1848, the territory then brought into the Union, the modern nation-state, solely for its mineral wealth. A second gold rush occurred during World War II when federal defense dollars jump-started the economy in a region that had remained an extractive colony for corporations and financiers based in Europe and on the East Coast. Most accounts of the post-WWII era focus on the suburb (presented as a qualitatively and func-

tionally distinct component of urban growth), on metropolitan and regional expansion (often characterized simply as sprawl), and on Californians' propensity for innovations in popular culture and all forms of social experiments. In other words, Los Angeles and California remain a place apart. More recently Southern California has been cast as the prototype for a new epoch, postmodernity, a product of new regimes of capital, of economic restructuring, of the primacy of space over time, of an epistemological break.³

Although rarely, if ever, framed that succinctly, this abridged account captures the narrative arc of Los Angeles and California studies. Note, for example, the titles Carey McWilliams coined for his influential and popular histories: *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (1946) and *California: The Great Exception* (1949).⁴ All such accounts of a preindustrial state, of its late and seemingly instantaneous entry into a modern era, of its role as an indicator and bellwether for the twenty-first century flatten complexity, downplay continuity, override the local, and ignore the drag history exerts on the present. Stated this way, we can begin to appreciate the degree to which first Europeans' and then Anglo-Americans' ideas about California, particularly the "southland," were in effect tropes of modernity. European myths of Queen Calafia, the accounts of Spanish explorers and settlers, late-nineteenth-century booster rhetoric, chamber of commerce pronouncements from the 1920s and 1930s, each evoke a place apart, the site for a new, improved race, a paradise waiting only for the shaping hand of white men. Current pronouncements that "one can see urban trends more clearly in Los Angeles since they are less complicated by a longer history of urbanization" echo earlier discourse. As contrary as such claims are to our common sense, a perception that this city exists in an eternal present, a present that prefigures other cities' futures, is more commonly shared than historians and other scholars would care to believe.⁵

If the future has held an undue grip on our analysis, what might a contingent history, a history of place, as opposed to a history of place promotion, reveal? How might such a history be framed? Resurrecting the pueblo and the nineteenth-century American city, a provincial settlement contemporaries viewed as little more than a "cow town," reveals it to have been a borderland, a site, a locale where people, resources, and ideas originating in different societies and cultures across the globe came together. In coming together, Tongva, Spaniards, Mexicans, Yankees, Chinese, and others created a hybrid or metis city and culture, what Mechal Sobel, in a different context aptly described as a "world made together."⁶ Los Angeles was then and remains a crossroads. That border city—with its specific location in and relation to

the nation-state, with the particular nature and timing of its economic development, with its precise patterns of immigration and the particular constitution of its demographic diversity—fixed an imprint that we need to understand if we are to come to terms with the contemporary world city and plan adequately for the challenge of tomorrow's transnational megaregion. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century visitors and residents, workers and capitalists, immigrants and elected officials left records, and these sources speak in singular yet related ways about place-making, identity formation, and the conflicts and partial resolutions resulting from the overlay of American systems of property, law, and the like over the Mexican-era *ciudad* and the Spanish *pueblo*.

Symbols and Structures

During a 1929 meeting of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, its president, William Lacy, addressed the board of directors regarding their interest in promoting preservation of the region's "romantic history, and of all things that will keep California, California." The latter included monuments like the "old Fremont headquarters at the Plaza." Lacy viewed "these old landmarks" as signs and symbols of a past that impeded, rather than enhanced, the future. The city he knew in 1875 "was just awakening then from its slumber of one hundred years" (so much for Yankee enterprise)

and those old landmarks were here then and they haven't changed since except to get more dilapidated. Now all this talk about bringing back the Plaza to its early condition has never appealed to me because when I came here the Plaza was a little square open place as it is today and the streets surrounding it were about two or three feet deep in dust and dogs ran around in there and Mexicans and that sort of thing. Surrounding it were a few typical Mexican stores with sacks of beans sitting in the front and strings of chiles and garlic and Mexican sausage covered with flies. That is the condition in Los Angeles. I don't want those conditions brought back.⁷

Lacy imagined himself a realist. In fact, he was rehearsing a trope essential for the creation of a modern Los Angeles: Mexicans quiescently fading away, like the "old dilapidated landmarks," the adobe structures of Sonoratown. It is a trope both cultural and spatial. Lacy equated Mexicans with slumber, dust and dirt, flies and dogs, a crumbling past, and with a Plaza surrounded by shops and businesses catering to those other than Anglo. Anglos such as Lacy defined space so that Mexicans (and other "foreigners") who, of course, never did fade away, might be segregated into specific districts. Analyzing the

means and methods they employed in defining, securing, and maintaining boundaries and zones within the city, their use of policy and regulation, of social reform initiatives, of myth and popular culture reveals how some Angelenos thought about space, territory, and place and the ways spatiality informed their understanding and their very conception of the city.

Lacy's contempt for the Mexican (a catch-all term Yankees who arrived after 1847 used for Mexican nationals, Mexican-origin citizens, and Californios) does not surprise us. We have now a deep literature exploring the ways race-based thinking has and continues to structure social relations and to define differing opportunities and life chances in American society. For California and Los Angeles, one thinks immediately of work by Alexander Saxton, Leonard Pitt, and Douglas Monroy.⁸ The latter two have shown the significance of Los Angeles's founding as a colonial city for a later history of racism. Whether it was Spaniards striving to secure the border, convert the indigenous peoples, and impose their customs and beliefs or Americans striving toward the same ends after 1847, one aspect of the city's borderland status has been its role as an outpost of empire. In each case we find uncertainty, fear, and contempt for those who came before. Yankees arriving after 1847 chose either to convert Californios and Mexican nationals (Americanization), to ignore them, or to isolate them as a distinct group, a colony with its own space (Sonoratown) which Americans, whether resident or visitor, associated with a past that was static, hidebound, traditional, outside the course of history. In one sense, Anglos understood Sonoratown and its people (the "Mexican") to be a counter-space, everything their city was not. They also imagined it a counterweight against which they must hew and struggle to elevate Los Angeles into the future. In that sense, Sonoratown served as a marker against which Anglos could measure their progress.

But how did Angelenos define, secure, and maintain boundaries and zones within the city? What means and methods did they employ when assigning space to Mexicans, for example? Answering such questions requires study of the local state (policy and regulation) and the "soft" state (social reform initiatives), as well as popular culture and myth (cognitive space and mental maps). Folders in the USC Regional History Center labeled "Sonoratown" provide clues. Despite a seeming incongruity of designating the core section of the nascent American city as a place apart, a "little bit of Mexico," it is impressive to discover the speed at which adobe and the bricks made by mixing this clay soil with straw, assumed significance in the Anglo imaginary. Over time and through repeated use, Anglos endowed adobe (both the thing and the word) with considerable meaning. It served as a sign of the old and

the antiquated and as shorthand for those who had formed the brick, built the walls, and lived and worked in adobe structures. When Anglos saw these structures “melting,” they were looking at a natural event rather than an unfortunate and utterly preventable product of neglect (and perhaps despair). In that act Anglos read the passing of an earlier age. Yankees arriving in the second half of the nineteenth century found a culture whose most visible, most significant, most imposing artifacts were seemingly impermanent, were literally made of clay. The disappearing adobe, whether a dissipating ruin or lost to demolition, and the association of adobe with Sonoratown in the Anglo imagination, signaled a past giving way inextricably to the present and the prospect of a future built on a blank slate rather than on the foundation of a Spanish-Mexican past; for many Yankees history began today, or so it seemed.⁹

This figurative clearing away was a form of appropriation. It was also part of a process to superimpose one set of cultural markers with another. Anglos strove to overlay alternative boundary and property lines on an existing pattern of land held in common, under rights of use (*usufruct*), or outright grants. The wood or brick building, the orthogonal grid of uniformly dimensioned streets, the fifty-foot parcel or thirty-five-acre donation lot with a surveyor’s monument and property lines fixed according to township coordinates are all markers. Each served to focus economic, social, and cultural practices, to establish political legitimacy, and to create conditions of hegemony. They are symbols, in other words, but they are also structures.¹⁰

Social segregation—the parsing of individuals and groups in space along lines defined by race-ethnicity; by income, status, and class; by gender—whether elective or imposed, formal or informal, legal or extralegal is a signature aspect of the modern city under industrial capitalism. Functional segregation, zoning space in cities according to activities and assigning these to discrete districts, is an equally powerful sign and structure for the modern city. Historians tend to consider social space (nearness and remoteness, us and them) independent of the space of practice (territory, land use, locality). They equate social relations with social segregation and nuisance with zoning. These equations imply a causal relationship, and causality is conceived to be directional (a concern with nuisance activities leads to zoning, for example). However, we know through experience and acknowledge in the abstract that causality is not unidirectional. Social segregation affects social relations; zoning regulations confer both monetary and symbolic value on land; the social and the spatial are intertwined. It will surprise no one to hear that race is a factor in land use decisions or that there are reasons why a zoning map registers so closely with a census map when one is overlaid on the other.¹¹

We could examine this set of relations in any city. Indeed, the similarities between policy formulation, everyday practices, and perceptions of race and space in Los Angeles with that in, say, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, or Miami ought to be apparent in the empirical sketches that follow. Though select and abbreviated, these cases are nevertheless illustrative of the ways and means nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century residents of and visitors to Los Angeles engaged in place-making and identity formation and of how they defined and enacted space in the city.

A Topography of Race

A perceived social distance and the actual designation of districts with people and activities were fundamental coordinates for Anglos' mental maps of turn-of-the-century Los Angeles. We find traces of individual and collective maps in citizen petitions to the city council, memoirs, institutional records and reports, and surveys of land and property. What emerges from the archival sources is a record of space defined through experience (a journey to work, sites of leisure, religion, or service) and through words and texts (stories, newspaper accounts, official reports and social surveys). As we might expect, it is a landscape composed of parts, the parts pieced together to create both an individual's city and a sense of a city shared with others. These sources also reveal what we might call a topography of place, a literal and figural annotation of the material city in three dimensions. On closer inspection, this appears to have been a topography of race.

A primary coordinate for Angelenos' topography of place was the customary vertical axis of up and down, a scale of relative position in space of the type people then and now associate with a social hierarchy of high and low (think of cultural anthropology or, more concretely, the almost universal social gradient of flatlanders and hill dwellers in contemporary Los Angeles). A related coordinate can be observed in the common use of "east" as a referent for the low. *Alcaldes* elected to the Spanish, then Mexican, *ayuntamiento* (civic council) drew distinctions between the west and east sides of the river (banishing both the Indian village and the dog pound to the east), and this dichotomy has been foundational for thinking about space, for the experience of place, for identity and meaning from that time forward. In Los Angeles, west and east have been markers of race-ethnicity, class, status, and prospect. West and east served then and serve now as a putative divide separating landscapes of leisure from landscapes of production and labor, separating those whose privilege flows from affluence and influence and those who aspire to attain the rights others assume are a birthright.

In the Spanish-Mexican era and well into the twentieth century (in some aspects up to the present day) land east of the Plaza, below the bluff, on the bottomland along the river, has been associated with base needs and uses. The river, like the *zanjas* that it fed and that distributed its water to fields and families throughout the pueblo and the city, provided residents a basic necessity. At the same time, the river and the *zanjas* served a second basic need; both carried off refuse and waste. *Ayuntamiento*, common council, and city council records are littered with proclamations, petitions, and ordinances intended to regulate residents' use of the watercourses for everything from bathing and washing to discarding carcasses and increasingly to control the discharge of chemicals, offal, and other by-products of manufacturing. Municipal agencies were, in fact, one of the leading offenders; the city leased land to industrialists, spread its sewerage across the bottomlands (as fertilizer), and maintained its dump along the banks of the river into the 1930s.¹²

The Plaza site is on a bluff above the river bottomlands. The area immediately north of the Plaza, the zone Angelenos designated Sonoratown in the 1850s and knew by that name and all it connoted for at least a century, is on an upward slope that runs to Elysian Park. Yet when the *Los Angeles Times* interviewed a resident of the district in 1885, it identified this "octogenarian" as someone residing "down in Sonoratown."¹³ When a sociologist studied the "causes of delinquency among fifty negro boys" in 1923, he described Central Avenue, from Ninth to Eighteenth streets, then the residential and commercial center of African American life in Los Angeles, as "Black Broadway" a term he found in common use among the "colored folks of the East Side."¹⁴ (Central Avenue is more than a mile *west* of the Los Angeles River.)

Angelenos held an ambiguous, perhaps conflicted, perception of the river and the low-lying land east of Alameda Street. Given this, there is little surprise that when decisions were made regarding where slaughterhouses ought to be located, where gasworks might best be sited, or where the plague was centered, elected officials, sanitarians, business leaders, and a majority of voters looked east, to the low-lying land along both sides of the river and toward East Los Angeles, the Heights, and Belvedere.

Defining Social Distance

Beginning in the first years of the twentieth century and extending into the 1930s, a cadre of settlement house workers, municipal officials, and students and faculty from USC's School of Social Work repeatedly surveyed and studied the house courts, remnant adobes, and box-car housing in the so-called

congested districts between the Plaza and the river. Despite the fact that the number of Mexican nationals and Mexicans with citizenship constituted a simple majority in only a handful of blocks and districts, social reformers of all stripes saw this area as a Mexican village in the heart of an American city and viewed its putative problems as the “Mexican problem.” Like their counterparts in New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Boston, these reformers defined the problem as environmental. They sought progress, uplift, and improvement through better housing.¹⁵

These disparate reports share a thinly veiled subtext concerning the nature of the putative boundary separating those studied from those doing the research. Nora Sterry, a sociology student at USC, structured her study of the Macy Street district as an ecosystem made up of diverse, independent yet interrelated ecologies scaled from the individual (child, student, worker, Syrian, and so on) to the family, a race-ethnic group, a school district, a neighborhood, increasing in geographic reach and number to the city. The Macy Street School constituted one such unit. Sterry’s description of the district and its “conditions” was Dickensian. It was a world unto itself. The streets were a “veritable maze,” “littered with rubbish and filth,” in some cases never seen by the street department. The district lay “along the old river bed,” three feet below the Alameda Street grade along the base of a ten-foot rise to the Plaza (hence to the “east” and low).¹⁶ There is a fear, vaguely articulated, that the line dividing this district from other districts might be porous (or perhaps not an actual boundary). Even if contained, mere proximity to Mexicans, Chinese, Russians, and the like might threaten social order and economic boundaries, as might the actual proximity of the immigrant districts to the city center. These lines convey fear: of borders drawn and breached, of districts invaded, of possible, even likely, social contagion.

In marking Sonoratown, Chinatown, the Macy Street district, and the like, social surveyors, public health officials, school administrators, and other quantifiers and definers of urban space worked to articulate social distance. Their metric appears to have been a measure near enough to allow a useful, manageable oversight of Mexicans (for example) yet sufficiently removed to isolate those other than the cipher group from the immediate presence of a Mexican as an individual, a person one might encounter as a subject rather than a member of an objective group. Stated differently, the unexpressed, perhaps unexamined, rationale for these projects was to locate a point, an ideal distance, from which Anglos might lose sight of an individual and that person would recede in space until they became a figure in a landscape, an unknown among the unknowable many who inhabited the city’s “foreign

districts.” Whether intended or not, these surveys made visible the distance Angelenos maintained individually and as members of social groups.¹⁷

If we were to continue this account chronologically, our cases might include a 1924 epidemic when city officials mapped foreign bodies and assigned space to Mexicans, Italians, Chinese, and other race-ethnic groups following reports of a critically ill woman, referred to simply as a “Mexican patient,” diagnosed with pneumonia (later confirmed as pneumonic plague). Fear spread as quickly as disease and faced fewer barriers in transmission. In response, physicians and officials from the California State Board of Health and the Health Department of the City of Los Angeles strove to define disease spatially, articulate its boundaries, and police the border.¹⁸

Or we might consider the 1931 La Fiesta, a commemoration marking the 150th anniversary of the pueblo founding, a weeklong celebration when Angelenos, visitors, and invited guests put history on parade. Opening day (September 4) began at city hall. Following a salute of “guns, church bells, and factory whistles,” Governor Rolph paid homage to Felipe de Neve, the “George Washington of California.” Revelers then left this site of political power and walked three-tenths of a mile to the Plaza. There a choir sang “ancient hymns” and four acolytes led a procession of soldiers, monks, and an actor playing de Neve in a reenactment of the pueblo founding.¹⁹ From city hall to the Plaza, in the space of three blocks, one could contrast the old city with the new, the “curious customs” of those former residents in the “Adobe Age” with the infrastructure, governance, and culture of the modern city. Simply by walking from one site to the other, celebrants could in their minds’ eyes experience a passage from the present (a present intimately connected to ideas of the future, a present that was all about a possible future) to a past that was known, final, in essence, dead. In memory, time had become place.

For the 1940s we could consult a study funded by the Haynes Foundation analyzing 185 places in the county. The authors ranked each place according to a metric of relative social standing. We find Belvedere, Vernon, Bandini, Chavez Ravine, and Bell Gardens in the bottom six slots trailed only by Terminal Island, a working-class district dominated by canneries, a district whose primarily Japanese-origin population would soon be interned under Executive Order 9102. Or we might consider an “ecological analysis” of a “natural area,” Hollenbeck, a district east of the river spanning the flats and Boyle Heights. The author, Cloyd Gustafson, had served as pastor of the Euclid Heights Methodist Church. His table of contents reflects his training in sociology at USC with Emory Bogardus. Gustafson devoted chapters to deterioration, invasion, assimilation, racial attitudes, disorganization, disin-

regation, and the like. In essence, it is a study of groups defined by nationality and language and the degree to which members of each group have (or have not) assimilated. Of note for this account of how boundaries have been drawn is the author's correlation between distribution and assimilation (the greater the degree of distribution the more "advanced" the degree of assimilation) and between topography and a group's relative rank in the grid of organization or disorganization.²⁰

Gustafson's overall assessment of Hollenbeck as a "pre-slum area," the product of past isolation, of an absence of restrictions (that is, zoning) and community planning, and of rapid growth and change is most damning. His conclusions correlate point by point with those we find in reports from the Los Angeles Housing Authority's surveys of "blighted" districts conducted during the 1930s in consultation with the Works Progress Administration, as well as the appraisals of surveyors who inventoried Boyle Heights and other "blighted districts" during the Depression under the auspices of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC). The HOLC appraisers' field observations and color-coded maps directed the flow of investment capital *into* districts with strict zoning controls, high relative rates of owner occupants, and high percentages of white residents and *away from* districts characterized as heterogeneous in terms of land use and demographics. In the immediate pre- and post-World War II years, engineers and transportation planners engaged in the design of restricted access roadways consulted the appraisers' maps and plotted lines that followed contours defined by the surveyors' social gradients.²¹

We might then turn our focus to another type of urban renewal, the razing and eventual rebuilding of entire districts. Bunker Hill, the State of California's first redevelopment project (CAL-1), initiated a fifty-year effort to bring affluent Angelenos "downtown." (Although the Community Redevelopment Agency's [CRA] "downtown" sits atop Bunker Hill, newspapers, magazines, and other popular media routinely refer to downtown as part of the city's "Eastside.") Next the CRA removed long-term, primarily Latino residents from Chavez Ravine. The ensuing battle over public subsidies for housing was a critical factor in the recall of Mayor Bowron and eviscerated support for municipal, state, and federal programs designed to house low-income residents in decent dwellings within existing communities. More recently faith-based organizations have taken up this struggle within a framework of neighborhood councils, the product of recent reform to the city's charter.²²

The implications of these and similar events have been partially obscured through attention to space as either physical or social when it is both. Ideas

and actions reformers, planners, and other agents of the local state imagined as a helpful strategy, or at the very least an innocuous divvying up of land and assigning property, have led to concentrations of like people and, more invidious, a concentration of inequities in wealth; in housing; in access to capital, education, health care, and other services; in prospects and aspirations. All manner of metrics underscore the simple fact that space matters; where you live, which school district, which council district you call home, which hospital an ambulance takes you to, all these lines on the map structure the odds you will graduate high school (much less attend a university) or whether you will survive a heart attack.

Globalism on the Ground

Los Angeles has been a border city since its founding. It has been and remains a site where people, artifacts, and ideas from around the globe converge, a place where residents and newcomers, Californios and Yankees, Chinese and Molokans, African Americans and Filipinos created a hybrid or *metis* culture and city. We can trace the arc, pattern, and implications of this process over time through attention to the creation and re-creation of particular landscapes. Attention to site, locality, and place allows us to see globalism on the ground. The Laws of the Indies, the precept for laying out Spanish pueblos, codified a hybrid of Spanish-European ideals with indigenous New World settlements. We find a similar *metis* architecture or *metis* landscape in the sequent occupation of the Plaza area, the subsequent reuse and repurposing of nineteenth-century structures like the Lugo adobe, which *émigré* merchants from China adapted for commerce as they and other immigrants carved out a place of least resistance on the east side of the Plaza.

More recently, journalists, design professionals, and scholars have called attention to the ways first- and second-generation immigrants have transformed areas such as Boyle Heights, Huntington Park, and Montebello. Residents and businesses in these districts have adopted and adapted the relatively dense, small lot, cottage housing, and boulevard commercial strips put in place by prior *émigrés* (from Russia, eastern Europe, Mexico, and Japan), a built landscape that Jews who moved west from Boyle Heights, working-class whites moving east from Huntington Park and South Gate to Downey, and upwardly mobile Mexican Americans moving to Pico Rivera and Whittier left behind. The presence of street vendors, murals, and shrines, the use of fences, front yards, and front porches as semipublic spaces (what James Rojas calls an “enacted environment”)—these alterations and activities have been

read as signs of cultural retention, as everyday acts of resistance against a putatively hegemonic national culture and a global, corporate, consumer culture.²³

Districts like Boyle Heights have been transformed as macrolevel factors such as economic restructuring, demographic dynamism, and national policy inflect with local or microlevel factors such as investment and disinvestment, access to housing, and codes and regulations. Interpreting these events requires theory that accounts for the local in a world where capital is global, culture is recombinant, and citizenship is increasingly flexible and transnational. This is not a call for new theory, rather for theory informed by history. The world has been in Southern California for more than 150 years. Urban historians and cultural geographers who study the region have much to learn from social historians such as George Sanchez and sociologists such as Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, scholars who follow people back and forth across national borders and who analyze the ways this circulation of people and ideas continually shape and reshape society and culture on both sides of a border.²⁴ Comparative studies of urbanization and of race and place in Los Angeles and Mexico City or Santa Ana (Orange County) and Guadalajara would undoubtedly reveal these networks and flows of people and an international trade in ideas, capital, and culture. A more challenging and, I suspect, ultimately more indicative type of study might begin with the premise of transnational citizenship and consider how these processes are transforming the use and meaning of urban space in cities on both sides of national borders.

In Los Angeles, the repeated surveys and the habitual surveillance of Mexicans and foreigners, the marking of the Plaza and its surrounding areas as Sonoratown (with subunits of Chinatown, Macy Street, and the like), the very use of the term *Sonora* remind us that the construction of race and identity in and through space is a process and that this process takes place at multiple scales, from an individual body (with its psychological and sensory perception of internal and external and of bodily boundaries), to an urban district, to the nation-state and its boundaries with other nations. Certainly Los Angeles's proximity to the international border, as well as the history of border crossing by Mexicans and Central Americans, has been critical in the creation of a border city and in the formation of individual and collective racial identity in California.

Notes

1. "Side-Lights on Old Los Angeles," *Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California*, vol. 5, 1900–02, 43.
2. Well known and representative studies are Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967/1993), and Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990), though a similar framework can be found on one hand in the antiquarian and analytic accounts the Historical Society published in its *Annals* and on the other in current publications associated with a Los Angeles "School," an introduction to which can be found in Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja, eds., *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
3. An introduction to this literature would include essays collected in Michael J. Dear, ed., *From Chicago to L.A.: Making Sense of Urban Theory* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2002); Scott and Soja, eds. *The City*; Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds., *Ethnic Los Angeles* (New York: Russell Sage, 1996); Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Verso, 1997); David Reid, ed., *Sex, Death, and God in L.A.* (New York: Pantheon, 1992). For a critical assessment of this scholarship, see the reviews of Soja and Scott, *The City*, collected as "Historicizing the City of Angels," in *American Historical Review* 105.5 (Dec. 2000): 1667–91, and Philip J. Ethington, "Waiting for the L.A. School," *Southern California Quarterly* 80.3 (fall 1998): 349–62.
4. Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1946/1990), and Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949/1999).
5. Quote from Renia Ehrenfeucht, "The New Regionalism: A Conversation with Edward Soja," *Critical Planning* 9 (summer 2002), 5–12.
6. Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Many cities are "hybrid" in this sense. Acknowledging Los Angeles's typicality might be a first step toward new interpretive insights.
7. Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, "Minutes," Jan. 17, 1929, 1–5, Regional History Collection, Specialized Libraries and Archival Collections, University of Southern California.
8. Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971); Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846–1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
9. See for example "Melting Away," *Los Angeles Times* (hereafter *LAT*), July 28, 1882, and Jackson Graves, *My Seventy Years in California* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1927), especially chapter 17: "The Passing of the Dominant Race." See William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), for an account of Anglos appropriating the Mexican-Spanish past to promote the future.
10. I have borrowed the formulation "symbols and structures" from Laura A. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.
11. On spatial types, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).
12. City Council records, Los Angeles City Archives.
13. *LAT*, July 18, 1885. In a similar vein, see Rev. Eugene Sugranes, "Early Days in Los Angeles," *The Tidings*, February 20, 1914, reprinted in Monsignor Francis J. Weber, *The Old Plaza Church: Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: s.n., 1980), 154–57.
14. Homer K. Watson, "A Study of the Causes of Delinquency Among Fifty Negro Boys Assigned to the Special Schools in Los Angeles" (master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, 1923), 10.
15. Sociologists at the University of Chicago developed "social distance" as a conceptual framework and theory, and a Chicago graduate, Emory S. Bogardus, further developed it as a method in his work on race and culture in Los Angeles. Emory Bogardus, *Introduction to Social Research: A Text and Reference Study* (Los Angeles: Suttonhouse Ltd., 1936). The California Commission of Immigration and Housing, "A Community Survey Made in Los Angeles City" (San Francisco: The Commission, 1919), records a Mexican plurality in four of eleven districts and an American plurality in five.

- Elizabeth Fuller, "The Mexican Housing Problem in Los Angeles," *Studies in Sociology* 17.1 (Nov. 1920): 1–11, quote: 2; Gladys Patric, *A Study of Housing and Social Conditions in the Ann Street District of Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Society for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, c. 1917).
16. Nora Sterry, "The Sociological Basis for the Re-Organization of the Macy Street School" (master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, 1924). District conditions are in chapter two: "Social and Educational Needs Revealed by a Community Survey," quotes: 37, 29, 12.
 17. See, for example, Dana W. Bartlett, *The Better City: A Sociological Study of a Modern City* (Los Angeles: Neuner Company Press, 1907); John E. Kienle, "Housing Conditions among the Mexican Population of Los Angeles" (master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, 1912); Emory Bogardus, "The House-Court Problem," *American Journal of Sociology* 22 (Nov. 1919): 391–99.
 18. Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, chap. 5. See California State Board of Health, "Report of Plague Eradicative Measures for Nov. 1924 through June 1925," Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
 19. "Story of City's Century and Half of Existence Unfolds in Glittering Four-Flag Pageant," *LAT*, September 5, 1931; "History Repeats Itself," *LAT*, September 8, 1931; "Los Angeles Opens Fiesta Marking 150th Year Since Founding," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 5, 1931; Historical Society of Southern California, *Annual Publications* 15 (1931), a special issue devoted to La Fiesta.
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 21. United States Works Progress Administration (Calif.), *Housing Survey Covering Portions of the City of Los Angeles, California. Conducted under the Supervision of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, California, WPA project no. 65-1-07-70* (Los Angeles, Housing Authority, 1940). HOLC property survey, University of Southern California digital archive <http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/LAS/history/historylab/HOLC/>.
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