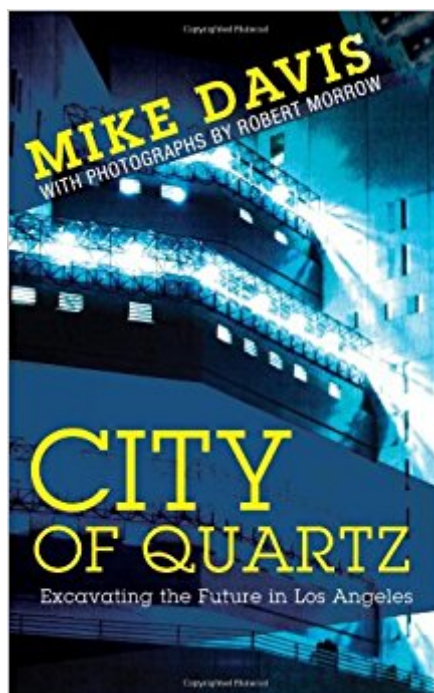


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City Of Quartz: Excavating The Future In Los Angeles



Synopsis

No metropolis has been more loved or more hated. To its official boosters, "Los Angeles brings it all together." To detractors, LA is a sunlit mortuary where "you can rot without feeling it." To Mike Davis, the author of this fiercely elegant and wide-ranging work of social history, Los Angeles is both utopia and dystopia, a place where the last Joshua trees are being plowed under to make room for model communities in the desert, where the rich have hired their own police to fend off street gangs, as well as armed Beirut militias. In *City of Quartz*, Davis reconstructs LA's shadow history and dissects its ethereal economy. He tells us who has the power and how they hold on to it. He gives us a city of Dickensian extremes, Pynchonesque conspiracies, and a desperation straight out of Nathaniel West's city in which we may glimpse our own future mirrored with terrifying clarity. In this new edition, Davis provides a dazzling update on the city's current status.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A celebrated work, one of the essential readings for anyone interested in the social and political fabric of this most intriguing, beguiling monstrous of urban spaces. The book is certainly scholarly (the footnotes themselves make great reading), and it takes some effort to read. This is no booster-like 'fable' about LA. Interestingly, Davis is a Marxist, and I have not often come across mainstream works by Americans in that political tradition, and that in itself would, for some, make it worth reading. However, ultimately I was a little disappointed in the book in light of first having read

Norman Klein's 'The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory' (see review under that title). In the end I find Davis's view unrelentingly bleak. He has no time for urban renewal projects, dismissing them as furthering the interests merely of the middle class and the powerful. Klein by contrast lives in a mixed suburb close to downtown (Angelino Heights) and is enthusiastic about the possibilities thrown up by his experiences there. Davis, I have read, lives in the uppermiddle class enclave of Pasadena. I agree with Davis's thesis that empowerment and placing decision-making directly in the hands of the dispossessed will ultimately provide the way out, but I felt he was just a bit too dismissive (sneering? Perhaps too strong a word...) of the emergent black middle class, and the desire to escape the 'flatlands' - the neighbourhoods in southern LA created through blatant racism and apartheid-like policies. As for the new barrios of the San Fernando Valley, surely the whole community is ultimately going to have to be involved in finding solutions if the apocalypse is to be avoided. Occasionally I get the feeling Davis would prefer the 'scorched earth' solution.

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