

William Deverell. *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Pp. 249. Paper \$29.95.

William Deverell, Professor and History Department Chair at the University of Southern California, focuses on white attitudes toward Mexicans in Los Angeles from the 1850s through the onset of the Second World War. In *Whitewashed Adobe*, Deverell argues that Los Angeles developed and matured into a “City of the Future” by “whitewashing” its Mexican heritage. Those responsible for “whitewashing” this history were the Anglo men in seats of power who utilized various means to erase traces of Mexican or Spanish culture from the landscape.

A cultural, ethnic, and social history of early Los Angeles, as well as a great addition to the field of Chicano Studies, *Whitewashed Adobe* focuses on the power exerted by the Anglo men credited with transforming Los Angeles from a Spanish-speaking cultural landscape to a modern city. Deverell defines whitewashing as the process of removing and censoring non-white aspects of Los Angeles and its history. Previous studies on ethnic and cultural foundations of Los Angeles have focused on the Spanish-style architecture that is now synonymous with Los Angeles and its romanticized past. Others have focused on how immigration impacted cultural landscapes, community formation, population increase, and economic growth. Adding to this scholarship, Deverell explains that to understand the development of Los Angeles, one must understand “the complex and disturbing relationship between whites, especially those able to command various forms of power, and Mexican people, a Mexican past, and a Mexican landscape” (7). By focusing on shifts of ethnicity and race, the author shows how Los Angeles expanded while eliminating ties to the city’s rich, culturally Mexican, past. The author delves into these racial and ethnic changes in each of the chapters of his book by considering specific events and how they affected the growth of Los Angeles.

By structuring the book’s chapters chronologically and thematically, Deverell guides the reader to recognize the shift away from a Mexican culture deeply rooted in the soil of Los Angeles, toward an Anglo-centered one. The linear structure is necessary to fully understand how Los Angeles became the “City of the Future.” In six chapters, Deverell considers six separate developments. These include a culturally urban celebration called “La Fiesta de Los Angeles,” the cementing of the once natural Los Angeles River, an outbreak of the bubonic plague in the mid-1920s, and the development of America’s biggest brickyards in the same decade. By focusing on these events in separate chapters, the reader sees the long reach of those in seats of political power and the extent to which the landscape was altered. The diverse subjects of each chapter allow the reader to grasp different aspects of Los Angeles’ history, where “whitewashed” adobe houses are still scattered across the land.

This study is well-suited for those concerned with the ethnic, cultural, economic, and political past of Los Angeles and those who want to better understand how the city landscape morphed after the Great Depression. *Whitewashed Adobe* is important scholarship for anyone interested in Los Angeles’ Mexican past, as well as identity and community formation, dismantling of communities, and ethnic studies.

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