

The Books that Brought Me Back Home

Books about Geography, Urbanization, Race, and Space in Greater Los Angeles

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I think that it may have been fate. Because I have no clue what my life would look like if I had never picked up that copy of *Latino Metropolis* from the used bookstore in my hometown. I suppose the book, which had a couple of translucent sticky notes still attached to some of the pages and a handful of passages underlined in blue pen, seemed interesting enough to a high schooler with a budding interest in sociology. It had been written by two ethnic studies scholars about the ways Latinos were transforming Greater Los Angeles' urban landscape at the turn of the century. Plus, the copy was selling for just two dollars.

I read it the summer after high school, a time that I do not remember very fondly. After a final year of high school that was overshadowed by the ongoing pandemic, some difficult “friendship breakups”, and the very sudden and tragic passing of a good friend, I wanted nothing more that summer than to leave home in Southern California for as long as I could. The landscape that I had grown up in and loved so dearly now held too many unpleasant memories. I impatiently waited for the end of the summer when I would get on a flight to Philadelphia and start college far, far away.

But as much as I wanted to get away from California, *Latino Metropolis* made it impossible for me to stop thinking about California. The book was really the first I ever read about home and told stories about Greater Los Angeles which were fascinating and also entirely new to me. And it talked about home from a perspective rooted in human geography and urban studies, subjects which I would soon enough develop a keen interest in.

These are the books that brought me back home. Not in a physical sense, but in an intellectual and emotional one. These are the books that have kept me curious and wanting to learn more about home during my time at Swarthmore. More literally, I might say it is a collection of books about Greater Los Angeles, that take place in Greater Los Angeles, or that otherwise have helped me to think more critically about Greater Los Angeles. When I say “Greater” Los Angeles, I use it to refer not only to the city or the well-known LA and Orange Counties, but additionally to the “Inland Empire” of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Greater Los Angeles encompasses the entire vast metropolitan region.

Four of the books are novels, which are all set at least in part in Southern California and engage with social and political themes that are relevant to the region. Another three are nonfiction books that are not specifically about Los Angeles, but that are broadly about geographic theory and which have influenced other books in the collection. But the majority are nonfiction books written about Greater Los Angeles by an interdisciplinary group of scholars. These books draw from geography, political economy, history, and ethnic studies to study issues of urbanization, race, and spatialized inequalities in Los Angeles. Some are very specific, focusing on just a single part of the region or period in its history. Others tackle the entire metropolis as their area of study. But all of them are linked by their attention to urban space as something that is not static but that people actively shape and produce. What emerges is a portrait of regional inequality Greater Los Angeles, but also the many ways the region’s marginalized residents have resisted the uneven production of space.

A Note on the Bibliography

This bibliography is best read in alphabetical order, the same way that I wrote it, to help the reader keep track of the many personal interconnections between the authors. In many ways, the authors in this collection are a community of scholars who have crossed paths as colleagues at the same institutions, as professors and students, and as collaborators who have contributed citations and even written reviews and prefaces for each others’ works. I also like to look at this bibliography as a sort of chronicle of my academic journey at Swarthmore. The more that I read about Southern California, the more I realized that I wanted to write about it too. I am currently writing a senior thesis in Sociology & Anthropology that examines the racialized politics of industrial land uses in the Inland Empire, where swaths of agricultural and residential land have been rezoned to build massive and environmentally destructive distribution warehouses. Many of the books in this collection I found and read explicitly for

my thesis, including two “wish list” books. Lastly, if readers are to take anything from this bibliography, I hope at the very least it is a list of some great bookstore recommendations. I got many of these books at some fantastic used, independent, and notable bookstores in cities on both coasts and two continents. I hope I did a good job giving them shout outs!

Bibliography

Avila, Eric. *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*. University of California Press, 2004.

My older brother moved to the San Francisco Bay Area when I was in high school. I love the Bay, and one of my favorite things to do when I visit him is explore the many bookstores the area has to offer. I bought this book at Half Price Books in Downtown Berkeley. I think it’s fair to say that I “judged this book by its cover”, because the artwork on the cover was really what captured my attention and encouraged me to buy it. The artwork is a panel from Judith Baca’s mural, *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, called the “Division of the Barrios and Chávez Ravine.” The panel uses fantastical sci-fi imagery to depict the displacement and violent evictions of Chicano families from Chavez Ravine by the City of Los Angeles, where Dodger Stadium was eventually built. The use of the panel for the book’s cover is apt. Eric Avila, a professor of History and Chicana/o Studies at UCLA, explores postwar white flight to the suburbs and the formation of a suburban white identity from the perspective of mass popular culture. Each chapter explores connections between popular culture and the built environment of Greater Los Angeles, from the construction of Disneyland in Republican Orange County to the building of Dodger Stadium at Chavez Ravine. “In the tradition of Carey McWilliams and Mike Davis,” Avila writes (two important authors whose works appear later in this bibliography), the chapters allow the reader to unpack the relationship between mass culture and the spatialized reconfiguration of racial segregation and racial identity in postwar Los Angeles.

Blackwell, Maylei. *Chicana Power: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*. University of Texas Press, 2011.

I got this book at The Claremont Forum, the used bookstore in my hometown where I also bought *Latino Metropolis*. There’s a chance I actually bought the two books at the same time, though I can’t recall anymore. The bookstore’s prices are quite cheap and they help to support the Prison Library Project, a volunteer initiative that buys and delivers new books to incarcerated individuals. So I frequent the store whenever I’m back at home. I got around to reading this book the summer of my

freshman year, when I referenced it for a video essay I made for the Peace & Conflict Department. Like Eric Avila, Maylei Blackwell is a historian and professor of Chicana/o Studies at UCLA, as well as Women's Studies. Blackwell draws on oral histories to tell the story of the Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, one of the first Latina feminist organizations and newspapers, which was founded by students at Cal State Long Beach and played a crucial part in the spread of Chicana feminism in Southern California and the Southwest. Blackwell thus highlights the ways feminist women of color transformed liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s, resisting the patriarchal organizational structures and suppression of women's leadership that had emerged in many liberation organizations.

Butler, Octavia. *Clay's Ark*. Grand Central Publishing, 1984.

———. ***Mind of My Mind*. Grand Central Publishing, 1977.**

Mind of My Mind and *Clay's Ark* are the second and third books chronologically in Octavia Butler's *Patternist* series. I got them at McNally Jackson Books, an independent bookstore in New York City. I have particularly fond memories of reading *Clay's Ark* during a road trip up the California coast with my family. The *Patternist* novels tell the centuries-long story of the selective breeding of a subrace of telepathic humans, the "Patternists", who in the future come to dominate the earth and enslave "mutes" (regular humans) while fighting a war against the "Clayarks", another subrace of humans who have mutated into sphinx-like creatures. The series deals with themes of eugenics and racial hierarchy and supremacism. *Mind of My Mind* and *Clay's Ark* ground these themes in the landscape of Southern California. *Mind of My Mind* takes place in the 1970s. It follows the growth of a colony of Patternists in the fictional Los Angeles suburb of Forsyth as the protagonist Mary, a young Black woman raised in the city's poor inner ring suburbs, becomes their leader. *Clay's Ark* takes place in our present day in the 21st century, where inequality and class warfare has produced a hyper-segregated urban landscape, with some joining gated communities and others being pushed into the violence ridden "sewers" outside the gates. The novel follows a widower on a car trip through the Southern California desert with his two daughters as they are captured by a colony of people who have been infected by the alien Clayark disease, which compels those infected to infect others. The disease will cause the genetic mutations that create the Clayark species.

Carpio, Genevieve. *Collisions at the Crossroads: How Place and Mobility Make Race*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2019. [WISH LIST]

Genevieve Carpio, who interestingly like two other authors already listed in this bibliography is a professor of Chicana/o Studies at UCLA, has given us one of the most important books about the

history of the Inland Empire. She focuses on the formation, evolution, and renegotiation of racial hierarchies in the Inland Empire but with an emphasis on movement and mobility. The Inland Empire sits physically at a “crossroads”, where many rail lines and freeways converge to enter the Los Angeles region. Carpio’s work highlights how controlling the mobility of racially marginalized people at this crossroads has always been an integral part of a white settler power structure in the region. While various practices, from traffic stops to incarceration and immigration policy, have criminalized or limited the mobility of some, others have profited off of the freely mobile flow of material goods and capital through the crossroads. Mobility has thus been “a key modality through which people live and contest race” in the Inland Empire. Carpio’s book has been crucial for me as I have worked on my senior thesis, and I hope to get a physical copy of it some day.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. Verso, 1990.

City of Quartz is probably the most important book in this collection. Among the other nonfiction books about Greater Los Angeles in this collection, I don’t believe that there is a single one (save those published before it) that doesn’t reference it or other works by Mike Davis. At least two authors in this collection, Matt Garcia and Juan De Lara, were students of Davis. *City of Quartz* peeled back the city’s glittering facade to reveal the spatialized class inequalities that undergirded Los Angeles’ development and growth. The Los Angeles of *City of Quartz* is not that of Hollywood or Disneyland or Santa Monica Pier, but that of unscrupulous white settlers who sought to make speculative fortunes out of place and, in the process, inscribed inequality into its built environment. I likely got *City of Quartz* at Vroman’s Bookstore, a beloved independent bookstore in Pasadena, California. Throughout the book’s seven chapters, Mike Davis details various spatial tactics used by the region’s economic elites as tools for control and dispossession. These chapters are not told chronologically, but are better read, I think, as a sort of “map” of Los Angeles. Mike Davis tells the stories of the exclusionary postwar incorporations of Los Angeles’ white suburbs; the rise of securitized architecture and surveillance that have converted the city into a “Fortress L.A.”; and the racialized power structure of the local Catholic Church whose members were increasingly Latino.

Quite important for me is the book’s final chapter, “Junkyard of Dreams”, which is about the City of Fontana in San Bernardino County, where Mike Davis was from. It’s significant to me that one of the most renowned books about Los Angeles ever written would actually end 50 miles inland, in the city’s oft-forgotten hinterland. During a later interview, Mike Davis himself would call the chapter “the most important chapter in the book, probably the most important thing I’ve ever written.” Its opening line is

one of my favorites from the entire book: Mental geographies betray class prejudices. “Junkyard of Dreams” tells the story of the construction of the Kaiser Steel Mill in Fontana, which supplied steel for the construction of Pacific naval vessels during WWII. The mill’s closure in the 1980s would leave behind joblessness and malaise in its wake, and an uncertain future for Fontana.

Davis, Mike. Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster. Verso, 1999.

Ecology of Fear tackles Los Angeles’ precarious relationship with natural disasters. I believe I bought this used copy at Dog Eared Books in San Francisco. The book’s main arguments echo the warning of geographer Neil Smith that “there is no such thing as a natural disaster [...] the contours of disaster and the difference between who lives and who dies is to a greater or lesser extent a social calculus.” The growth of the country’s second largest metropolis in a basin prone to flooding, wildfires, and earthquakes in many ways defies logic and environmental common sense. Davis thus shows how Los Angeles’ rapid urban growth and sprawl has made the city ever more vulnerable to ecological disasters whose consequences will be distributed along class and racial lines. Ecology of Fear contains the first Mike Davis essay that I ever read, “The Case for Letting Malibu Burn.” Davis compares the amount of resources poured into the Malibu wildfires to the comparatively weaker response to far deadlier tenement fires in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Westlake. The tenement fires were likely preventable, had Westlake’s “slumlords been held to even minimal standards of building safety.” In contrast, Malibu has and will continue to be prone to the seasonal wildfires that every decade or so threaten the canyon’s ostentatious mansions. “As in so many things,” writes Mike Davis at the end of the chapter, “we tolerate two systems of hazard prevention, separate and unequal.”

De Lara, Juan. Inland Shift: Race, Space, and Capital in Southern California. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2018. [WISH LIST]

The Inland Empire has one of the largest concentrations of distribution warehouses of any region in the entire world. Over 4,000 warehouses now occupy over 1 billion square feet of land in the region. To quote one journalist and filmmaker, the land once known as “The Orange Empire” has now become “The Warehouse Empire.” Inland Shift is perhaps the most important book written to date about this issue, and has been vital to my thesis project. I’d love to have a physical copy. Inland Shift begins where City of Quartz ends: the closure and dismantling of the Kaiser Steel Mill in Fontana. Juan De Lara connects the closure and more general decline of defense-based manufacturing employment in the Inland Empire to the rise of warehousing. As manufacturing declined from the 1980s onward, local

politicians and regional capital interests feverishly promoted logistics (goods movement) as a “fix” to the region’s economic woes. Port boosters successfully siphoned capital from public coffers into port-related projects, and the I.E. became a dumping ground for land intensive distribution warehouses. Retail commodities flow with great speed and same-day shipping into wealthier core spaces in LA and Orange Counties and beyond, while the communities living along the supply chain are saddled with its consequences: low-paying jobs, displacement, and deadly truck-generated smog.

Fulton, William. *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

This is one of two books in this collection that I unfortunately have not yet had the chance to read. Although I have seen it referenced in at least two papers that I have read for my thesis, so I would like to read it sometime soon. I bought this used copy at The Last Bookstore, Downtown Los Angeles’ staple independent bookstore. What I can say is that the book’s title, *The Reluctant Metropolis*, stood out to me as an apt way to describe Los Angeles. And that I bought the book at a time when I was increasingly becoming interested in urban planning. “In twelve engaging essays,” the book’s blurb begins, “William Fulton chronicles the history of urban planning in the development of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, tracing the legacy of short-sited political and financial gains that has resulted in a vast urban region on the brink of disaster.” I am excited to dig into the text (whenever that may be).

Garcia, Matt. *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

I remember distinctly when I came across this book. It was the spring semester of my freshman year, when I was beginning to get into the works of Mike Davis. Davis had recently passed, and online I found an obituary honoring him written by Matt Garcia. I looked into Garcia’s own works, and when I read the description of *A World of Its Own* I immediately found and ordered a used copy. Out of all the books in this collection, *A World of Its Own* is the one that I can personally say is most about “home”. The book’s subject matter spans the entire “Citrus Belt” region of Greater Los Angeles, which extends 60 eastward from the city proper and includes the San Gabriel, Pomona, and San Bernardino Valleys. But Garcia, like myself, is specifically from the Pomona Valley, where much of the book’s analysis is actually grounded. When I read the book the following summer, the names of streets, places, and people were all recognizable to me. Reading *A World of Its Own* pushed me to keep reading and

learning more about Greater Los Angeles, and it is an incredibly important book in this collection for me.

Garcia narrates the history of the Citrus Belt, but principally from the perspectives of the Indigenous, South and East Asian, and later Mexican American workers who picked and packed citrus produce in what was the biggest citrus-producing region in the entire world in the early 20th century. The white settlers who owned the groves enriched themselves off of their labor, as citrus wealth helped to drive the growth of the entire Los Angeles area. Garcia builds off the work of another author in this collection, Carey McWilliams, who centuries earlier had noted the peculiar urban form taking shape in the Citrus Belt: not quite urban, not quite suburban, and not quite rural either, but a mix of all three that made the belt “A World of Its Own”. Garcia’s historical research, based largely on oral histories, engages deeply with one crucial part of this unique landscape, the *colonia* complexes where citrus pickers lived and built lives in the Citrus Belt. Analyzing life in the *colonias*, Garcia highlights early racial segregation in the Los Angeles’ citrus suburbs while simultaneously showing how the Citrus Belt became an important site for intercultural exchange, arts, and activism over the course of the 20th century.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*. Verso, 2022.

I got this copy of *Abolition Geography* in the spring of my junior year, when I was studying abroad in Barcelona and visited the UK for my spring break. I had been told that book prices in the UK were quite cheap, so I tried to leave room in my suitcase to take as many books back with me as I could. I actually read most of the essay collection from renowned geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore first as an ebook from TriPod. But when I saw the physical copy at Lighthouse Bookshop in Edinburgh, selling for nearly half the price it would cost in the US, I immediately decided to get it. A collection spanning three decades of Gilmore’s work, *Abolition Geographies* highlights her contributions as scholar-activist to areas of racial geographies, carceral geographies, and prison abolition. The essay collection was the first time I read Gilmore’s oft-quoted definition of racism as “the state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death, in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies.” Gilmore’s definition highlights not only the extreme violence of racism, but racism’s inseparability from place and geography. While not exclusively about California, *Abolition Geography* does draw

heavily from Gilmore's work as a scholar of the state's prison boom, and her geographic thought has greatly influenced my approach to studying urban space in Greater Los Angeles.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2007.

A sociology professor my freshman year recommended that I read *Golden Gulag*, after I first began to express interest in learning more about critical geography. I soon began to see the book's name appear elsewhere in my coursework or in other books and articles that I was reading on my own time. I eventually decided to order a used copy online. Sophomore Spring, I finally had the chance to read that copy when I was assigned the first half of the book for a Tri-Co Philly course. I have a distinct memory of finishing most of the rest of the book later in the year at the Philadelphia Airport while waiting for a flight home.

Golden Gulag is certainly one of the most influential books in this collection, one that significantly advanced geographic and political economic thought when it came out. Gilmore extends geographer David Harvey's concept of the "spatial fix" (which describes how surpluses are absorbed during moments of economic crisis through state-coordinated investments in fixed long-term projects like physical infrastructure) to analyze the explosion in prison construction in California in the 1980s. California's prison boom was more than just a policy response or outcome of the "war on drugs" and tough-on-crime ideologies. Though those were undeniably important factors, they alone cannot explain how so many resources could be poured in such a short amount of time into prison construction with broad bipartisan political support. In a globalizing California still recovering from the economic crises of the 1970s, Gilmore shows how the prison boom emerged as a kind of "prison fix" that allowed the state to put to use idled surpluses of finance capital, labor, land, and state capacity. Amid crises, the internal logics of racial capitalism directed these surpluses not towards investments in true public goods but towards a vast, expensive, and racist prison system.

Lefebvre, Henri. *El Derecho a La Ciudad*. 1968. Translated by Ion Martínez Lorea and J. González-Pueyo, Alianza Editorial, 2024.

I got this Spanish translation of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville* ("The Right to the City") from ALIBRI Llibreria in Barcelona. Though the book is not about Los Angeles, Lefebvre's thoughts and contributions urban studies permeate this entire collection. Lefebvre was concerned with understanding the evolution and survival of capitalism. He argued that capitalism has been able to resolve its internal contradictions and achieve "growth" principally "by occupying

space, by producing a space.” Lefebvre understood urbanization as a process of socially producing and organizing space for the reproduction of capitalist social relations. Thus, as Lefebvre’s student Edward Soja would later summarize in another book in this collect, *Postmodern Geographies*, “class struggle must encompass and focus upon the vulnerable point: the production of space [...] the spatially controlled reproduction of the system as a whole.” *Le Droit à la ville* takes up the issue of what this struggle will look like in urban spaces, a struggle for “the right to the city”, the right of the working class to collectively shape and control the process of urbanization. *The Right to the City*, in essence, as David Harvey would put it, “is a right to change ourselves by changing the city.”

McWilliams, Carey. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. 1946. Gibbs Smith, 2010.

The 20th Century journalist Carey McWilliams’ book has already come up in this collection. A McWilliams quote is the namesake for Matt Garcia’s *A World of Its Own*, and both Garcia and Eric Avila reference themselves as writing in the traditions of McWilliams. Indeed, prior to the publication of *City of Quartz*, I think it’s fair to say that *Southern California: An Island on the Land* was the most important book that had been written about Greater Los Angeles. With attention to the region’s racial injustices, including the exploitation of migrant citrus workers and wartime internment of Japanese Americans, McWilliams’ presented the most comprehensive account of the curious growth and urbanization that was occurring around Los Angeles. Early on, he identified Greater Los Angeles as “perhaps the most thoroughly urbanized region in America” made up of a vast polynuclear network of suburbs. Throughout the book’s chapters, McWilliams writes in detail about the urban forms and cultural productions taking shape in each part of this emerging metropolis, from the rise of the Citrus Belt, to Hollywood and Southern Californian architecture.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *The Sympathizer*. Grove Press, 2015.

Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer* is my favorite book of all time. I picked the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel from my dad’s bookshelf in March 2020, the week after nationwide pandemic quarantines began. It had been a while since I had read the entirety of a novel. But with in-person school canceled, I finished *The Sympathizer* in just three days. Not only did Nguyen’s book reinvigorate my love for books and reading, but the novel’s commentary formed a sort of foundation that helped to shape my worldview and political beliefs in the years to come. Senior year of high school, I was fortunate to bring my copy (my dad never actually read the book, so it became my copy)

of the novel to a talk and book-signing event with Nguyen at the Santa Ana Library. By that time, I had gotten and read three other books of his, and he very graciously signed all of them.

The Sympathizer is a thrilling blend of genres, a spy and war novel that is equal parts historical and political fiction and dark comedy. The plot follows an unnamed North Vietnamese spy working as a mole in the South Vietnamese army during the Fall of Saigon. He is ordered by his commanding officers to remain under cover as the aide-de-camp to a high-ranking South Vietnamese general as that general flees to the United States and settles in Orange County. The middle third of the novel thus follows the protagonist as he navigates life as a Vietnamese refugee in Southern California while doing his best to not be found out.

Although only part of this novel is set in California, I would be remiss not to include it in this collection. The setting is important for the action that ensues, as the protagonist brushes shoulders with Orange County Republicans and racist Hollywood directors. Through the voice of this unnamed spy, Nguyen weaves the story's action with beautifully written commentary on US imperialism, war, migration, race and ethnicity, diasporas, and identity. I implore any and everyone to read it.

Podair, Jerald. City of Dreams: Dodgers Stadium and the Birth of Modern Los Angeles. Princeton University Press, 2017.

My family are all big Dodger fans. It actually began with my older brother, who started watching baseball when I was about 7 or 8 years old. Obviously, I chose to root against him and decided I would be a fan of the Angels. That was a poor choice. The Angels' abysmal record since then has sort of soured my enjoyment of baseball, though I still like going to games and watching occasionally. I'm not the biggest "sports person" anyways. I got Jerald Podair's book about the history of Dodger Stadium's controversial construction from the Last Bookstore in Downtown Los Angeles. This is a book for fans of baseball and urban history alike. Parts of the book tell the story of urban renewal in Los Angeles, the displacement and evictions of Mexican American families from Chavez Ravines, and the contests over the power to shape the future of the city that the building of Dodger Stadium ignited. Other parts detail the internal politics of the MLB and what factors were behind Dodgers' owner Walter O'Malley's decision to move the Brooklyn Dodgers to the West Coast. It is a simultaneously fun and thorough book that I would highly recommend.

Sassen, Saskia. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. The New Press, 1998.

Like *Chicana Power* and *Latino Metropolis*, I got this copy of *Globalization and Its Discontents* from The Claremont Forum. Saskia Sassen is well known for coining the term “global city”, which is how I was introduced to her work freshman year. Global cities are cities that serve important “command functions” in the globalized economy. They are the global financial centers and nodes of economic power. At the time Sassen introduced the concept, only a few cities like New York and London could be said to meet these criteria. But as major cities in the age of neoliberalism increasingly competed to attract command functions, all cities, including Los Angeles, to varying degrees began to resemble “global cities”. In the collection of essays that make up *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Sassen expands on the characteristics of global cities, and particularly their relationship to migration. Global cities embed a linked-labor regime, where white collar financial jobs are propped up by migrants working low-wage and informal service jobs. Sassen’s work has influenced my thinking on the relationship between globalization and urbanization, and has likewise shaped other works in this collection like *Latino Metropolis*

Soja, Edward. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. Verso, 1989.

I got this copy of *Postmodern Geographies* at Foyles bookshop in London. The massive and iconic bookstore had a solid human geography collection, which I gladly spent some time browsing. I was already familiar with Edward Soja as an important geographer and planner from UCLA who had written extensively about urbanization and space in Southern California. But I didn’t yet have a physical copy of any of his work. So I happily plucked his book from the shelf. *Postmodern Geographies* placed Edward Soja at the forefront of the “spatial turn” in the critical social sciences. As a student of Henri Lefebvre and contemporary and friend of David Harvey, Soja uses the book’s chapters to chronicle the “reinsertion” of geographic and spatial thinking into theories of capitalism and global development that they and similar scholars had begun. Soja argues for a new “historical-spatial dialectic” in critical social theory that considers matters of history/time and geography/space together rather than privileging one approach over the other. In the final two chapters, “It All Comes Together in Los Angeles” and “Taking Los Angeles Apart”, Soja applies this historical-spatial dialectic to the restructuring of Greater Los Angeles’ political economy at the end of the 20th century, showing how the rise of “flexible” modern industry and production systems were reshaping space in the region in new, curious, and uneven ways.

Valle, Victor M., and Rodolfo D. Torres. *Latino Metropolis*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

As I mentioned in the introduction, *Latino Metropolis* is really the book that started this collection. It is not the first book in the collection that I ever read, that would be *The Sympathizer*. But it is the book that encouraged me to start collecting more texts about Greater Los Angeles. When I began working on my thesis a year and a half ago, I picked up the book again for the first time, and only then did I realize how connected it is to other books in this collection. Saskia Sassen wrote the forward. And on its cover reads a short review by Mike Davis which I think aptly summarizes the text's importance: "A truly pathbreak work that puts Latinos where they belong: in the center of debate about the future of the U.S. big city." Valle and Torres examine the transformations of urban space in Los Angeles that were occurring with the region's demographic transition to majority Latino at the end of the last century. Each chapter takes up a case study of how Latino communities were being shaped and themselves were shaping the region's increasing urbanization. From the tactical incorporations of exclusively industrial suburbs in the San Gabriel Valley, to the resistance to the construction of Staples Center in Downtown LA and the political economy of Mexican restaurants, Valle and Torres give the reader several fascinating histories to learn about.

Villa, Raul Homero. *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture*. University of Texas Press, 2000.

I got this used copy of *Barrio Logos* at House of Our Own Books in West Philly. Raul Villa places the history of urban renewal in Los Angeles in conversation with Chicano cultural productions, including novels, shorts stories, poetry, visual art, and music. Villa contrasts the spatial repression of Chicano residents in the city from tactics like hostile urban planning and policing (what he calls "barrioization") with their cultural and socio-spatial tactics of resistance (or "barriology"). Barriology involved the production of new literary and artistic forms that allowed barrio residents to defend and reimagine urban space. In the last three chapters, Villa's writing transitions from that of an urban historian to a literary scholar and critic, as he takes up analyzing Chicano texts and poems of critical significance from the era of urban renewal. His analysis actually extends beyond Los Angeles, showing connections between the displacement wrought by urban renewal from projects in Sacramento, San Jose, and San Diego as well. Through his textual analysis, Villa shows how "Chicanos in the central-city barrios repeatedly defended their use-value orientations to place against the exchange-driven imperatives of the urban-growth machine."

Yamashita, Karen Tei. *Tropic of Orange*. Coffee House Press, 1997.

Unfortunately, the final book in this bibliography is also the second that I have not yet had a chance to read. *Tropic of Orange* was gifted to me by a friend, who had bought it from the Swarthmore bookstore with TAP points for a class that they had ended up dropping. Knowing my interest in books about Southern California, they very graciously gave it to me. But as the semester progressed, I never found the time to start reading it, and it has been sitting on my bookshelf ever since. To my understanding, *Tropic of Orange* is a satirical blend of many genres and elements, including magical realism, science fiction, film noir, Chicanismo, and apocalyptic fiction. It is, to cite its blurb, “An apocalypse of race, class, and culture fanned by the media and the harsh L.A. sun”, featuring a cast of Latino and Asian American characters whose lives meet the forces of capitalism, globalization, and climate change in Southern California.