



Los Angeles

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David Rieff spends a little time in Los Angeles (he never says exactly when or how long) trying to understand what is happening to the city, and thereby the American future. In order to get at the “truth” about LA, he lives with a friend on the Westside, drives her BMW around town, talks to an unspecified number of Angelenos from different ethnic communities, reads a few books and magazines, and then writes his LA story.

What does Rieff learn from his sojourn? He makes the shocking discovery tough-minded New Yorkers and other foreigners always make when they come to LA: All that glitters is not gold; the Southern California Dream is really a Nightmare. After the usual startling discoveries that the Westside is not all of LA, that the freeways are congested and the air is polluted, Rieff uncovers the really horrifying truth: LA is no longer rich and white but has become the capital of the Third World.

Rieff’s book does not offer serious social analysis that builds on recent social and historical scholarship about Los Angeles, such as can be found in Mike Davis’ *CITY OF QUARTZ* and Kevin Starr’s numerous works. Instead it consists of a series of superficial impressions which manage to include all the tired clichés about LA. Rieff presents no real analysis of the meaning of the demographic changes taking place in Los Angeles. All he does, as his sensationalistic title indicates, is express the growing white fear of a nonwhite future.

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