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Corrections: In volume 3, number 3, Frederick Law Olmsted was misidentified as the designer of a proposed LA park system designed by his son Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. In volume 3, number 4, our title "What is is. What is not is possible." was inspired by Einstürzende Neubauten's "Was ist ist", and Kim Stanley Robinson is the author of not two but three trilogies.

Cover image: "A Map of NORTH AMERICA With the European Settlements & whatever else is remarkable in ye WEST INDIES, from the latest and best Observations" by Richard William Seale, 1745. Image from the Glen McLaughlin Map Collection, courtesy Stanford University Libraries.

Special thanks to the Department of English, the Department of History, and the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA.



The Hotel California, London
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LOZ PYCOCK.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESKTOP

In this issue of *Boom*, we explore California in the world and the world in California.

When Richard Rodriguez and I first began talking about this issue, for which he generously sat down with me for a leisurely interview, he sent us this observation of California by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:

“A coastal stretch of 30 degrees latitude, one of the most beautiful and fertile areas in the world, and practically unpopulated up to the present, is now turning before our eyes into a rich and civilized country thickly populated with men of all races, from the Yankee to the Chinese, the Negro to the Indian and the Malayan, the Creole and Mestizo to the European. Californian gold is pouring in streams over America and over the Asiatic coasts of the Pacific, sweeping the unwilling barbarian peoples into the orbit of world trade, into the province of civilization. For the second time world trade is receiving a new alignment . . . Thanks to the gold of California and to the tireless energy of the Yankees, both coasts of the Pacific will soon be as thickly populated, as highly industrialized and as open for trade as the coast from Boston to New Orleans is now. The Pacific Ocean will then play the role the Atlantic Ocean is playing now and the role that the Mediterranean played in the days of classical antiquity and in the middle ages—the role of the great water highway of world communications—and the Atlantic Ocean will sink to the level of a great lake such as the Mediterranean is to-day.”

Marx and Engels never made it to California, but they saw what was coming and called it in 1850 with some of the exuberant hyperbole that we expect whenever the subject turns to the Golden State. Another reader sent us a link to world-traveling journalist and suffragist Inez Haynes Irwin's *The Californiacs*, published in 1916, which sends up the hype:

“California, which produces the maximum of scenery and the minimum of weather; California, which grows the biggest men, trees, vegetables and fleas in the world, and the most beautiful women, babies, flowers and fruits; California, which, on the side, delivers a yearly crop of athletes, boxers, tennis players, swimmers, runners and a yearly crop of geniuses, painters, sculptors, architects, authors, musicians,

actors, producers and photographers; California, where every business man writes novels, or plays, or poetry, or all three; California, which has spawned the Coppa, Carmel and San Quentin schools of literature; California, where all the ex-pugs become statesmen and all the ex-cons become literateurs; California, the home of the movie, the Spanish mission, the golden poppy, the militant labor leader, the turkey-trot, the grizzly-bear, the bunny-hug, progressive politics and most American slang; California, which can at a moment's notice produce an earthquake, a volcano, a geyser; California, where the spring comes in the fall and the fall comes in the summer and the summer comes in the winter and the winter never comes at all; California, where everybody is born beautiful and nobody grows old—that California is populated mainly with Californiacs.

“California, I repeat, is populated mainly with Californiacs; but the Californiacs are by no means confined to California. They have, indeed, wandered far afield. New York, for instance, has a colony so large that the average New Yorker is well acquainted with the symptoms of California. The Californiac is unable to talk about anything but California, except when he interrupts himself to knock every other place on the face of the earth. He looks with pity on anybody born outside of California and he believes that no one who has ever seen California willingly lives elsewhere. He himself often lives elsewhere, but he never admits that it is from choice. He refers to California always as ‘God’s country,’ and if you permit him to start his God’s country line of talk, it is all up with intelligent conversation for the rest of the day. He will discourse on California scenery, climate, crops, athletes, women, art-sense, etc., ad libitum, ad infinitum, and ad nauseum. He is a walking compendium of those Who’s Whosers who were born in California. He can reel off statistics which flatter California, not by the yard, but by the mile. And although he is proud enough of the ease and abundance with which things grow in California, he is even more proud of the size to which they attain. Gibes do not stop the Californiac, nor jeers give him pause. He believes that he was appointed to talk about California. And Heaven knows, he does. He has plenty of sense of humor otherwise, but mention California and it is as though he were conducting a revival meeting.”

Yes, Californiacs can be found far and wide around the world and close to home. Just travel anywhere in the world and watch people’s eyes light up when you say you’re from California, and cock their ears when “Hotel California” comes on, and the darkness edges in.

*Yours truly,
Jon Christensen, Editor*