

# Digging Deeper into the Dodgers

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John H. M. Laslett (2015). *Shameful Victory: The Los Angeles Dodgers, the Red Scare, and the Hidden History of Chavez Ravine*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. xi + 218 pp., illustrations, notes, index, \$25.95 (paper).

Benjamin D. Lisle (2017). *Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 321 pp., illustrations, notes, index, \$34.95 (cloth).

Andy McCue (2014). *Mover & Shaker: Walter O'Malley, the Dodgers, and Baseball's Westward Expansion*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. xv + 468 pp., illustrations, charts, notes, index, \$34.95 (cloth), \$25.95 (paper).

Jerald Podair (2017). *City of Dreams: Dodger Stadium and the Birth of Modern Los Angeles*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. xviii + 366 pp., illustrations, notes, index, \$19.95 (paper).

**Reviewed by:** Sean Dinces, *Long Beach City College, Long Beach, CA, USA*

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More than any other relocation of a major-league sports franchise, the move of the Dodgers from Brooklyn to Los Angeles in 1957 has captivated fans, journalists, and historians alike. This stems in large part from the deep-seated sense of betrayal loudly proclaimed by many Brooklynites and their sympathizers in response to the move. For decades, the Brooklyn faithful pilloried Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley for uprooting the team, ultimately for a new stadium in Chavez Ravine, despite posting impressive profits in the years prior to departing New York. At the end of the 1980s, Neil Sullivan published *The Dodgers Move West*, long the definitive scholarly treatment of the relocation and the urban development of Dodger Stadium. Sullivan swam against the popular current in arguing that the available evidence failed to corroborate popular condemnations of O'Malley as a greedy capitalist who tried “to wring [every] last nickel out of the Brooklyn fans” and then callously abandoned them for a better deal in Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup>

According to Sullivan, New York officials effectively forced O'Malley to leave. Local power-brokers like Robert Moses rejected the notion that infrastructure used primarily by the sports business constituted a legitimate “public purpose.” They thus gave O'Malley no other option but to flee to the west coast by ignoring his pleas for help in assembling land for a new, expanded stadium. In Sullivan's analysis, O'Malley emerges as a sort of Schumpeterian idol, a businessman who took “bold” chances amidst short-term uncertainty with a view toward long-term growth and profitability. Sullivan goes so far as to describe O'Malley's decision to pack up his franchise for Southern California as a “reckless gamble.” He bases this characterization on the Dodger owner's failure to anticipate the deep divisions among Los Angeles politicians that

threatened—but ultimately failed—to derail the team's push to receive, effectively at no cost to O'Malley, 300 acres of public land at Chavez Ravine for a new, privately owned stadium.<sup>2</sup>

During the past half decade, a quartet of scholars has reinterpreted the history O'Malley's decision, as well as its implications for the postwar development of Los Angeles and for the evolution of the sports business writ large. Reconsidering the archives unearthed originally by Sullivan and exploring new sources heretofore ignored, these scholars have, in some cases, added nuance to his conclusions, in others called them into question, and at times presented entirely new explanations for why the Dodgers moved west. The historians discussed below suggest that an appreciation of O'Malley-the-risktaker is not mutually exclusive with an appreciation of O'Malley-the-rapacious-capitalist. They also indicate that the structural forces driving the team's relocation and the subsequent construction of Dodger Stadium, namely the escalation of the Cold War and Red Scare, proved far more consequential than the vicissitudes of O'Malley's character. Even more, this fresh trove of books points to the conclusion that O'Malley and the Dodgers established a new agenda for urban development in the City of Angels in ways that few, if any, have appreciated until now. The studies also challenge the widely held assumption that Dodger Stadium and other major-league venues built around the same time were exceptionally inclusive spaces with respect to class. Instead, they show that professional sports facilities built in the years after World War II began the trend toward stadium gentrification that has assumed such acute forms today.

In the extremely well-researched *Mover & Shaker*, Andy McCue, former president of the Society for American Baseball Research, verifies much of Sullivan's analysis. After scouring an even wider swath of sources than Sullivan—personal papers, balance sheets, congressional and court documents, as well as local press reports—McCue confirms that caricatures of O'Malley as “a greedy . . . cigar-twirling Scrooge McDuck” erase the key role that contrasting political priorities in New York and Los Angeles played in the Dodgers' 1957 move (p. xv). In the Big Apple, local decision-makers, namely Robert Moses, rejected the notion that a stadium for a private sports franchise merited the “public purpose” designation that permitted the government to exercise eminent domain powers required to assemble land necessary for such a project. Moses and fellow policymakers in New York City felt they had bigger fish to fry when it came to infrastructural development after the war. They “demonstrated again and again that [they] really [were] not all that interested” in O'Malley's professed need for a new, expanded facility with better access to transportation networks (p. 155). In Los Angeles, the new slavishly pro-corporate mayoral administration of Norris Poulson proved more accommodating to the Dodgers. Poulson cultivated alliances with local elites, some of them professed progressives, who harbored deep insecurities about Los Angeles's lack of “big league” status in order to condemn, clear, and ultimately secure the property at Chavez Ravine for exclusive use by the Dodgers. As McCue puts it, “in contrast to New York's lack of concern, Los Angeles believed and moved. It was a striver” (p. 159).

*Mover & Shaker* also corroborates Sullivan's claim that, contrary to the assertions of jilted fans and journalists in Brooklyn, O'Malley's move west entailed serious risk. Indeed, as McCue rehashes, local political fragmentation within the City of Angels, which the Dodgers owner clearly failed to appreciate, repeatedly threatened to derail the development of a new stadium at Chavez Ravine. Mexican Americans menaced by displacement from the Ravine joined fiscal conservatives in Los Angeles's outlying neighborhoods in their opposition to giving away the land to the Dodgers. This opposition manifested in citizen lawsuits and a local referendum that nearly nixed the project.

McCue breaks new ground in his penetrating focus on how O'Malley's family history and business exploits prior to acquiring an ownership stake in the Dodgers in the mid-1940s shaped his approach to running, and ultimately moving, the team. A prime example is McCue's discussion of the “new emphasis on marketing” that O'Malley brought to the Dodgers, and Major League baseball more generally. This began small in Brooklyn with new promotions like “Ladies Night” and culminated with securing access to millions of new fans in Los Angeles in 1957

(pp. 90-91). O'Malley was no robber baron who could treat team ownership as a leisurely hobby. Prior to buying into the Dodgers, he had made a respectable name for himself in New York's legal scene after working nights to help put himself through law school. His relatively middling financial stature, at least when compared to other major-league owners, meant that he viewed his investment in the Dodgers first and foremost as an "opportunity for profits" (p. 44). Despite consistently operating in the black in Brooklyn during the late 1940s and 1950s, O'Malley saw a hard ceiling on those earnings at the low-capacity Ebbets Field, which also sat in a neighborhood with poor connectivity to the city's public transportation networks. In short, O'Malley faced economic pressures that many of his owner-peers could ignore. He never enjoyed the luxury of waiting around indefinitely for people like Moses to accede to his pleas for public help in his efforts to expand.

While McCue is sympathetic to the economic pressures faced by O'Malley, many of the details he offers up of the owner's personal history demonstrate that two things were true at the same time: O'Malley was *both* a victim of circumstances beyond his control *and* a genuine embodiment of corporate entitlement and greed. For instance, McCue's account of the Dodger chief's overtures to Moses betray a team owner convinced that businessmen could enlist the help of the government through chummy glad-handing in smoked-filled rooms—or in the Coal Hole, a "Brooklyn club" and "hive for the borough politicians and business leaders" where O'Malley first asked to meet with Moses (p. 132). And why wouldn't O'Malley operate under this assumption? He grew up squarely within the orbit of Tammany Hall corruption. His father benefited directly from patronage employment at the post office, rose through the ranks of the machine, and ultimately received an appointment as Commissioner of Public Markets under Mayor John Hylan. McCue astutely points out that Moses almost certainly remembered the role of O'Malley's father in the Hylan administration, which stymied the civil service reform Moses championed. With such details in mind, the latter's aloofness toward the Dodgers makes quite a bit of sense.

Moreover, McCue's deep research into O'Malley's personal biography makes it clear that the Dodger-owner chronically misrepresented himself and his business dealings to the public, often in ways that stood to benefit him economically. He repeatedly fabricated and embellished aspects of his educational background and professional experience. He also regularly, and sometimes dramatically, understated his profits with the Dodgers. Perhaps most telling in this regard is McCue's excellent analysis of how O'Malley systematically manipulated data on his ticket revenue to "plead poverty" to the commissioners in charge of running the Los Angeles Coliseum. (The Dodgers played temporarily at the Coliseum before completion of their new stadium.) O'Malley, who "could make numbers fox-trot" according to McCue, cooked the books to understate his operating profits with an eye to securing more favorable lease terms from the commissioners (pp. 176-177). If this does not qualify as outright "greed," readers will wonder, what does?

The biographical detail that sets *Mover & Shaker* apart thus offers a much more nuanced understanding of O'Malley's leadership of the Dodgers. Were O'Malley's actions constrained by factors outside of his control? Of course. But the Dodgers owner also betrayed a chronic willingness to deceive for his own financial gain. McCue's exemplary study thus serves as a reminder to walk and chew gum at the same time. That is, historians can attend to the ways in which urban political structures shaped team owners' decision-making at the same time that they acknowledge how the profit motive at the core of major-league sports created incentives for these owners to hoodwink the public.

Measuring the cost of bringing the Dodgers to Los Angeles in terms of public subsidies like land grants and sweetheart lease deals is important. But as historian John H. M. Laslett makes clear in *Shameful Victory*, such tallies are far from the whole story. Laslett's study shifts the focus to how the process that cleared the land eventually occupied by Dodger Stadium took a grave toll on the Mexican American community that once thrived there. To be sure, scholars like Sullivan and McCue discuss the notorious 1959 evictions from Chavez Ravine, in which Los Angeles

County Sheriff's deputies literally dragged members of the Arechiga family, who refused to vacate to make way for the stadium, out of their home as bulldozers stood by ready to carry out demolition orders. But unlike previous scholarship on the Dodgers' westward migration, *Shameful Victory* focuses squarely on the social and political history of the people and property in Chavez Ravine in the years and months leading up to their displacement by the team's new stadium. In doing so, Laslett demonstrates that the Dodgers' arrival in Los Angeles represented only one episode in a much larger history of material and cultural dispossession experienced by Mexican Americans in the twentieth-century city. Laslett also reveals that characterizations of O'Malley's decision to relocate the team as a "reckless gamble" ignore how powerful political trends in Southern California and the nation at large, namely anti-communist hysteria, helped guarantee the Dodger owner's success in busting in to the Los Angeles market.

By 1950, as Laslett explains, Chavez Ravine, situated just north of downtown Los Angeles, contained a trio of Mexican American "subbarrios." They consisted of scattered but socially cohesive settlement, where surrounding hills provided some measure of insulation from white nativism for immigrants from south of the border, who largely recount their lives in the area as "quaint" and "safe" (pp. 16, 20). By the end of the decade, the subbarrios were gone, and Dodger Stadium stood in their place. Laslett makes it abundantly clear, however, that the Dodgers were only one among a confluence of factors, many of which long predated the team's relocation, that led to the demise of the community that sprouted up in Chavez Ravine in the first half of the twentieth century.

Among these factors was pressure from both corporate elites and planning professionals in Los Angeles to "modernize" the city's housing stock. By 1951, while O'Malley was still dreaming of a new stadium in New York, this pressure had already led local government to begin evicting residents from the neighborhood. The elites wanted what they viewed as Mexican American "slums" adjacent to downtown removed to bolster their efforts to turn Los Angeles into a "modern metropolis" (p. 55). The planners, for their part, believed that wholesale demolition, followed by new unit construction, would yield a "balanced residential neighborhood that would cater to citizens from a wide range of social classes" (p. 56). In 1949, the Los Angeles City Council lost no time in designating Chavez Ravine the site of one of several new public housing developments planned for the city—developments bankrolled by new federal funding authorized in the Housing Act of 1949. City officials made haste in using eminent domain to clear out residents and their homes, and promised those displaced from Chavez Ravine spots in the new public housing project. However, as Laslett points out, the promise did not apply to the many Mexican American residents who already owned their homes or who were not citizens. Many, if not most, Chavez Ravine inhabitants preferred an "alternative course of action" such as a rehabilitation of existing structures alongside new public housing units, but Los Angeles authorities made "no attempt to ascertain [their] wishes" for the future (p. 144). In short, the trajectory of national and local housing policy undermined the social and economic fabric of Chavez Ravine long before O'Malley hatched plans to build a stadium there.

The burgeoning Red Scare made the situation even more precarious for Chavez Ravine residents. Between 1949 and 1953, a coalition made up of the real estate industry, reactionary media led by the *Los Angeles Times*, conservative city councilmen, and a new, virulently anti-communist mayor (the aforementioned Poulson) did everything in their power to "taint" public housing "with the brush of socialism" (p. 83). This effort succeeded at blocking construction of more than half of the new public housing units planned in 1949, including all the units slated for Chavez Ravine. Moreover, Los Angeles officials convinced the federal government, which had already spent \$5.3 million acquiring and prepping Chavez Ravine land for the planned housing, to sell the land back to the city for a mere \$1.3 million, provided it was ultimately used for a "public purpose" (vaguely defined). The rising tide of anti-communism meant that even those longtime Ravine residents who received the city's word that they could move into new public units would be permanently displaced.

The Dodgers eventually stepped into the void left in Chavez Ravine by the canceled public housing project. O'Malley's desire for a bigger stadium and a more dependable market jived perfectly with the desperation of many Los Angeles elites to, in Laslett's words, "enhance the city's reputation as a major cultural center" and bolster the image of downtown (p. 97). While the proposed transfer of 300 acres of publicly owned land faced stiff resistance from fiscal conservatives and the last remaining residents in the Ravine, Poulson and his allies on the City Council ultimately managed to convince the courts that handing over the tracts to a private sports franchise at negligible cost somehow qualified as a "public purpose." Subsequently, the final hold-outs in Chavez Ravine had to face the cops and bulldozers. Socialism in the form of corporate welfare met with more civic approval in postwar Los Angeles than socialism in the form of subsidized housing.

In centering the experience of Chavez Ravine's former residents, *Shameful Victory* makes two key contributions to the urban historiography of the Dodgers. First, it situates the displacement of Ravine residents during the 1950s within a "long and continuous narrative of Latino displacement" in twentieth-century Los Angeles (p. 133). Laslett highlights the eerie similarity between the clearance of Chavez Ravine and episodes such as the dismemberment of several East Los Angeles neighborhoods, namely Boyle Heights, by one of the most aggressive postwar freeway construction sprees in the United States. The common denominator: the shunting aside of low-income and working-class Latinos in the name of flashy development projects identified as conducive to growth and/or civic reputation by a coalition of business elites and local officials. As Laslett freely admits, he is far from the first to make such connections. Chicano artists have long done so, and *Shameful Victory* concludes with a thoughtful discussion of examples like Judy Baca's mural *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*. This work of art explicitly groups the plight of the Chavez Ravine residents together with that of Mexican Americans displaced by other large urban development projects in Southern California.

Laslett's second important historiographic contribution is to further call into question Sullivan's characterization of O'Malley as a somewhat hapless risktaker whose success in Los Angeles owed as much to luck as it did to cool calculation. *Shameful Victory* clarifies that O'Malley's efforts to secure the land for a stadium in Los Angeles were lubricated in important ways by big-picture political developments like the Red Scare. The anti-communist hysteria around subsidized housing cultivated nationally by the likes of Joseph McCarthy, and within California by the likes of State Senator Jack Tenney, proved instrumental in undermining efforts by the public sector to lay long-term claim to Chavez Ravine. This effectively cleared the way for O'Malley and the Dodgers. In other words, Laslett demonstrates that however naïve O'Malley may have been, he enjoyed the implicit support of the redbaiting political and media establishments. This was *in addition to* other structural advantages enjoyed by the Dodgers owner. As both Sullivan and McCue document, for example, National League president Warren Giles made veiled public threats to leaders in Los Angeles suggesting that he would support the Dodgers renegeing on their commitment to the city if a deal on the Chavez Ravine land fell through. In view of these systemic edges over the competition, O'Malley's failure in Los Angeles would have been considerably more shocking than his success.

In *City of Dreams*, historian Gerald Podair also tells of the Chavez Ravine evictions, the role of the Red Scare in the Dodger's takeover of the land, and Giles' efforts to place his finger on the scales in favor of O'Malley. But while he covers much of the same ground as Sullivan, McCue, and Laslett, Podair's book is by no means redundant and adds to the existing scholarship in several ways. In the first place, *City of Dreams* documents in more depth the political conditions in New York and Los Angeles that pushed and pulled, respectively, the Dodgers west. Whereas Sullivan and McCue focus most of their discussion of the resistance that O'Malley met in his quest for new stadium land in New York on the powerful Robert Moses, Podair makes it clear that there were bigger forces at play. He points to the important role of

“a class-conscious labor culture . . . deeply suspicious of business and its motives” that entrenched itself more deeply in the Big Apple than in any other American city before, during, and immediately after World War II. The staunchly pro-New Deal mayoral administration of Fiorello La Guardia, in power from 1934 to 1945, nurtured this left-wing populist ethos in New York. Even as the Cold War began to ramp up, the city’s residents tended to view big business with suspicion more than their counterparts in places like Los Angeles. This larger culture no doubt made it relatively easy for Moses to “caricature O’Malley as a self-interested ‘boss’” and dismiss the Dodger owner’s overtures without a public backlash (pp. 34-35).

Podair’s most important scholarly contribution in *City of Dreams* is his meticulous analysis of the unexpected political coalitions that coalesced in Los Angeles in response to the Dodgers controversy in the second half of the 1950s. By the end of the first half of the decade, an alliance in the City of Angels between downtown elites, middle-class homeowners, and a virulently anti-communist press had stymied the emergence of anything resembling the left-populist bloc in New York. But rather than precluding an energetic opposition to the transfer of the public land at Chavez Ravine into O’Malley’s hands, this void allowed for the formation of a seemingly unlikely alliance against the land deal: one made up of white, middle-class Angelenos, and the city’s Mexican American community.

The former constituency, consisting primarily of homeowners who had migrated from the Midwest and represented by conservatives on the City Council like John Holland, embodied what Podair describes as “taxpayer Republicanism.” The “Folks,” as these white homeowners were called, supported efficient use of government resources to provide “basic services” like schools and sanitation but balked at “wasteful allocations of tax resources” (pp. 118, 124-125). For them, the giveaway of publicly owned land to a private sports franchise most certainly qualified as such, and ultimately exemplified a model of urban growth that prioritized the aspirations of downtown elites over the day-to-day concerns of modest single-family homeowners.

While the Folks had little to no expressed interest in issues of racial justice, they found common cause with Mexican American Angelenos who, for a mix of reasons, viewed O’Malley’s gambit for the Chavez Ravine property as a clear and present danger. Some of the latter identified as liberal Democrats and still resented the city’s cancelation of the public housing project in the Ravine amidst an ongoing shortage of affordable housing. Others were primarily concerned with defending the property rights of the holdout homeowners like the Arechigas, who literally stood in the way of the Dodgers finally taking possession of the land. Both elements found a voice on the City Council in the form of the trailblazing Mexican American progressive Edward Roybal. While this alliance between the Folks and people like the Arechigas ultimately failed to stop the erection of Dodger Stadium, it demonstrated, according to Podair, that the “neighborhood-centered” vision of “modern” Los Angeles “could transcend racial and class lines” (pp. 162, 186).

The pro-Dodger Stadium coalition, which touted a “growth-focused” model of urban development and envisioned a Los Angeles “with a vibrant central core featuring civic institutions that announced themselves to the nation and world,” also brought together seemingly disparate elements of the city’s populace (p. xiii, 162). Specifically, Westside “labor Democrats” like city councilperson Rosalind Wyman joined forces with “business Republicans” like Mayor Norris Poulson (p. 17). The involvement of the latter group made intuitive sense, as the likes of Poulson had long advocated for the socialization of risk for big business while railing against spending on social welfare programs like public housing. As Podair shows, what allowed progressive Angelenos like Wyman to hitch their wagons to the Poulson crowd was a shared insecurity over Los Angeles’s lack of the “major league status” already enjoyed by places like New York (p. 163). The civic envy and vanity that powered this coalition was exemplified by UCLA Chancellor Franklin Murphy when he argued that Dodger Stadium, more than any other project, transformed Los Angeles from “a big city to a great city” (p. 297).

In documenting the partnerships that coalesced in favor of and in opposition to O'Malley's takeover of Chavez Ravine, Podair not only challenges simplistic stereotypes about the coalitional politics of postwar stadium development. He also reveals how the conflict over the Dodgers in Los Angeles set the stage for future battles over defining the modern political and economic identity of the city. Podair demonstrates that the same groups found themselves at odds over other controversial downtown development projects such as the demolition and revitalization of the Bunker Hill neighborhood. While the central core proponents typically triumphed when it came to decisions about how to direct scarce public resources, the multi-racial and cross-class coalition that initially formed in opposition to O'Malley also left its mark. The latter formed a crucial pillar of the successful 1961 mayoral campaign of Sam Yorty, which capitalized on "the pent-up resentments of those who felt excluded from the important decisions in Los Angeles, involving land, construction, taxes, and even refuse" (p. 268). In this way, Podair provides an instructive example of how stadium scholarship can serve as a jumping off point for understanding larger trends in urban history.

Another facet of *City of Dreams* that merits mention is Podair's attention to the myriad ways in which O'Malley designed Dodger Stadium as "a class-inclusive venue" and catered to "celebrities and elites, folks and families" (p. 246). In this context, "inclusivity" was less about making room for the working classes—they had long been a fixture in the stands—than it was about "embody[ing] an atmosphere" that appealed to the well-heeled (p. 133). Hence, O'Malley's insistence on "stadium club" sections and memberships, which came with access to high-end dining and other exclusive amenities. Dodger Stadium, in other words, pioneered in many ways what the sports business now takes for granted: that market expansion depends not only on larger stadiums and bigger populations, but also on designing "fan experience[s]" that "stand independent of the game itself" and in so doing attract those invested as much or more in conspicuous consumption as in the final score (p. 294).

The transformation of the class composition of the fans at Dodger Stadium, and at postwar stadiums more generally, is in large part the focus of historian Benjamin Lisle in *Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture*. While Lisle's sweeping study explores the cultural and economic dimensions of expanded markets at a panoply of stadium developments and cities from the 1940s to 1970s—from District of Columbia Stadium to San Francisco's Candlestick Park, and from County Stadium in Milwaukee to the Astrodome in Houston—the Dodgers, New York, and Los Angeles figure prominently in his analysis.

Lisle's larger argument is uncontroversial and goes something like this: The cavernous "concrete doughnut" stadiums that replaced their wooden forbears in the quarter century after World War II were architectural and economic manifestations of widely shared assumptions—widely shared among capitalists and flush consumers at least—about what it meant to be "modern" in urban America (p. 6). Chief among these assumptions was the superiority of the suburb and the automobile as modes of planning and mass transport, respectively, as well as the desirability of marketing to demographics previously absent from the ranks of attendees at mass spectacles. To be sure, urban elites planned and built these suppositions into their stadiums in locally specific ways. For example, St. Louis's Busch Memorial Stadium effectively "suburbanized the urban" by anchoring a downtown urban renewal scheme that drew "white suburbanites and their consumption dollars back into the decayed city" with the promise of easy freeway commutes and ample parking garages (p. 228). By contrast, Texas Stadium relocated the National Football League's Dallas Cowboys from the central city to the suburbs—Irving, to be precise—in an effort to facilitate easier access by car and avoid any spatial constraints on packing the venue with luxury suites and other "symbols of a distinctly Texan extravagance" (p. 247). These differences, however, were subsumed by the larger trends explored by Lisle. And while many historians have discussed the history of postwar stadium development in the context of suburbanization and mass marketing—McCue and Podair are cases in point—*Modern Coliseum* goes

much further than this. It plumbs archives previously ignored by stadium historians to challenge assumptions long held by scholars and the public about the economic and cultural organization of places like Dodger Stadium.

Chief among these assumptions is the one forwarded by Podair that Dodger Stadium and other postwar major-league sports venues were somehow more “inclusive” by marketing themselves to the well-heeled. Podair readily acknowledges in *City of Dreams* that the ballpark in Chavez Ravine contained new zones of conspicuous consumption that excluded ordinary folk. Access to the Diamond Room restaurant, for example, required a pricey “club membership.” However, he insists that these new forms of spectatorship diversified, rather than gentrified, Dodger Stadium since O’Malley kept most seats priced between \$1.50 and \$3.50—this at a venue considerably larger than Ebbets Field (pp. 257-258). In other words, Podair argues that O’Malley *added* the exclusive spaces onto traditional seating areas for the masses, rather than displacing the latter with the former. By contrast, Lisle shows convincingly that, instead of indicating expanded inclusivity in terms of class, these new offerings were the beginning of an ongoing redistribution of opportunities to attend sporting events *away* from working people and *toward* the affluent. Even though Dodger Stadium had more seats than Ebbets Field and ticket prices were seemingly within reach of the average workingman, evidence presented in *Modern Coliseum* suggests that these aspects of O’Malley’s new venue were deceiving. In the first place, the cheapest option at Ebbets and other “pre-modern” parks, the “plank bleachers and simple grandstands,” vanished (p. 51). As Lisle shows by documenting the communication between O’Malley and industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes while the former was still lobbying Moses for land in New York, getting rid of the most inexpensive seating options was long a priority for the Dodgers owner. In the second place, owning a car was a prerequisite to accessing Dodger Stadium and most comparable postwar stadia, which prioritized parking lots and proximity to freeways over integration within public transportation networks. And finally, many of the additional seats in Dodger Stadium and other postwar venues were dedicated to season ticket packages or opulent luxury suites that only a small sliver of the population could afford. These manifold “technologies of exclusion” meant that Dodger Stadium and its major-league cousins birthed in the decades after World War II were far from the democratic bastions romanticized by many who bemoan the gentrification of twenty-first-century venues (p. 234). As *Modern Coliseum* demonstrates, the new venue in Chavez Ravine began a trend toward limiting attendance more and more to the professional and moneyed classes that has only become more “amplified and normalized” today (p. 263).

The picture of postwar stadiums painted by Lisle is aided significantly by his use of sources largely ignored by other scholars—namely, photographs of venues and fans as well as promotional literature produced by franchises to tout their new venues. For example, he presents several telling photos from collections at the Brooklyn Public Library which shed light on those who attended games at Ebbets Field in the era of Jackie Robinson. They were a decidedly mixed lot in terms of race and gender—one of the most fascinating images is a 1952 shot of female Dodger partisan holding a sign reading “Let’s Murder Those Giants”—but seemingly homogeneous in terms of their working-class origins if the attire and decorum (or lack thereof) are any indication (pp. 25, 29). Juxtapose these photos with the cover of the 1962 *Los Angeles Dodgers Souvenir Yearbook*, which shows Chavez Ravine as the central node of Southern California’s expansive freeway system (p. 98). The implicit message of the image: this is the refuge of those who own cars and have money to spare for extra gasoline and parking. The explicit message conveyed by the municipalities and neighborhoods labeled on the map: this is a place where those from Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, Pasadena, and Huntington Beach are welcome, and where they can count on thorough insulation from the rabble outside the stadium walls.

Lisle also makes the important point that efforts by owners like O’Malley to aggressively market their new stadiums to women went hand in hand with gentrification of the stands. The “suburban spatiality” that characterized the new facilities offered middle- and upper-class women



the confidence they needed to avoid rubbing elbows with male fanatics prone to lurid catcalls (p. 147). The design and installation of a new generation of digital scoreboards and premium dining options including, as was the case at Candlestick Park, “brook trout ‘fresh from Springfield Rocky Mountain Waters,’” offered Disneyland-style distraction for lady consumers with limited interest in on-field events (p. 91). And promotional literature emphasized in-stadium opportunities, specific to women, to be seen in the act of conspicuous consumption. Perhaps the starkest example of this latter approach was a “full-page article” by a professional female “fashion consultant” titled “Fashion Under the Astrodome” that the Houston Astros included in their 1965 “stadium guide” (p. 181). Lisle’s deftness with visual sources again comes into play in making the point that reaching out more proactively to “the fairer sex” was as much about *excluding* the masses as it was about diversifying the fan base. In the absence of the caption, an image from the seats at the first Mets game at Shea Stadium in 1964 could easily be confused for the stands at the Kentucky Derby (p. 114).

Lisle’s treatment of the development of Shea brings the story of the Dodgers’s move full circle. Ironically, the publicly funded facility that housed the new Mets franchise was the brainchild and pet project of Robert Moses, who had previously acted with such dismissiveness toward O’Malley’s overtures. It would appear the resounding success, at least measured in terms of publicity and profits, of the new Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles was enough to cultivate a critical mass of major-league insecurity within New York’s famed powerbroker. By 1964, Moses was talking about how Shea Stadium promised to rival the Roman Colosseum. Lisle quotes one of the “blovations” Moses used to honor the completion of the Mets’ new home: “When the Emperor Titus opened the Colosseum in 80 A.D. he could have felt no happier” (pp. 115, 118). It would seem, in view of this and the many other cringe-inducing odes to new stadiums quoted by Lisle, that the vanity of urban elites proved one of the most—if not *the* most—important motors behind postwar stadium development in the United States. Proof positive of Gore Vidal’s apt aphorism: “Envy is the central fact of American life.”<sup>3</sup>

In the end, McCue, Laslett, Podair, and Lisle each use the urban history of the sports business to teach these larger historical lessons for scholars and students, not to mention general-interest readers. This reviewer can muster up only one real quibble with their scholarship. On occasion, they betray a shallow understanding of stadium and franchise economics. *City of Dreams* is a case in point, as it uncritically cites figures on the local economic impact of the Dodgers from source material that is, to say the least, of questionable veracity. Take, for example, Podair’s claim that “the [1959] World Series [played in part at the L.A. Coliseum] attracted an estimated 25,000 visitors to the Los Angeles area and pumped some \$3 million into the city’s economy” (p. 219). These figures do not come from an independent, scholarly analysis, but rather from the official Walter O’Malley website (pp. 314, 333). Economic impact data reported by teams are notoriously unreliable because of the incentives to manipulate data for publicity purposes. Even though we cannot expect historians to always present the finest-grained analyses of public finance, readers deserve more attention to detail than this.<sup>4</sup> This nitpick aside, this is a collection of works that merits close consideration by urban historians, sports economists, public policy experts, and anyone else interested in how the sports business has shaped American cities. The books promise to ignite the imagination of those investigating the history of American stadiums for years to come.

## Notes

1. Neil Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 115.
2. Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*, ix-x, 48. The official assessment of the value of the 300 acres stood at \$2.29 million, a sum allegedly offset by O’Malley’s transfer to the city of Wrigley Field, a local minor league ballpark valued at \$2.25 million. This equivalence, however, ignores several hidden public subsidies for the project that went well beyond two and a quarter million dollars. The city and

county spent \$4.74 million on infrastructural development necessary for siting a stadium at Chavez Ravine. On top of this, the federal government had already spent \$5.56 million on a public housing project for the same site that was subsequently canceled. The feds eventually sold the land back to the city for \$1.28 million. O'Malley thus benefited from two distinct subsidy streams: first, local government payment of the \$4.74 million in infrastructural costs, and second, local and federal government absorption of the \$5.56 million in sunk costs for the scrapped housing project. If we adjust the sum of these subsidies (\$10.3 million) for inflation, using the first year of construction (1959) as the base year, the total comes to more than \$90 million in 2020 dollars. See Gerald Podair, *City of Dreams: Dodger Stadium and the Birth of Modern Los Angeles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 22, 129, 174. Moreover, this likely understates dramatically the net value of public assets transferred to O'Malley. As Benjamin Lisle notes, "an outside consultant hired by the city council in 1958 appraised the 'commercial value' of the land at up to eighteen million dollars, were it to be leveled." Benjamin Lisle, *Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 95.

3. Richard Peabody and Lucinda Ebersole, eds., *Conversations with Gore Vidal* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 43.
4. Stadium scholars would do well to emulate the skepticism and attention to detail demonstrated by McCue in *Mover & Shaker* in his analysis of quantitative data on the economics of the Dodgers.

### Author Biography

**Sean Dinces** is assistant professor of history at Long Beach City College. His first book, *Bulls Markets: Chicago's Basketball Business and the New Inequality*, was published in 2018 by University of Chicago Press. Readers can learn more about his teaching and scholarship at [www.seandinces.com](http://www.seandinces.com).