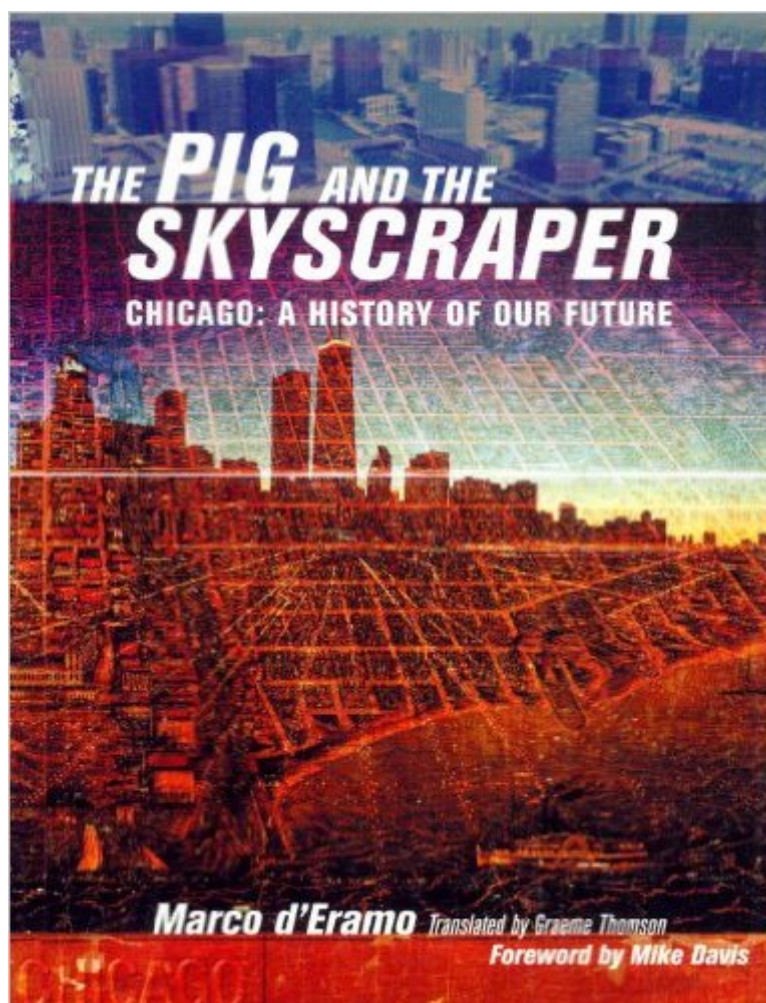


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The Pig And The Skyscraper: Chicago: A History Of Our Future



Synopsis

Like a cross between Philip Marlowe and Walter Benjamin, Marco d'Éramo stalks the streets of Chicago, leaving no myth unturned. Maintaining a European's detached gaze, he slowly comes to recognize the familiar stink of modernity that blows across the Windy City, the origins of whose greatness (the slaughterhouses, the railroads, the lumber and cereal-crop trades) are by now ancient history, and where what rears its head today is already scheduled for tomorrow's chopping block. Chicago has been the stage for some of modernity's key episodes: the birth of the skyscraper, the rise of urban sociology, the world's first atomic reactor, the hard-nosed monetarism of the Chicago School. Here in this postmodern Babel, where the contradictions of American society are writ large, d'Éramo bears witness to the revolutionary, subversive power of capitalism at its purest.

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Customer Reviews

The Italian sociologist Marco d'Éramo's wide-focused "The Pig and the Skyscraper" is a particular kind of history book. If you're looking for a history book about Chicago's culture, the details of its political history, or its artistic influence, this book is definitely not what you're looking for. D'Éramo's subject is not Chicago itself, but the socio-economic transformation that unraveled within Chicago between its explosive growth from a French fur trader's outpost to the most industrialized city on the planet. The author's primary focus is on the history of economic development in Chicago, the economic interplay between town and country, and the ways in which these had concrete effects on

both the lives of Chicago's citizens, and the lives of the countless global cities who developed according to the American-industrial model first carried out in 19th-20th century Chicago. D'Eramo, as he himself often points out, is an outsider to Chicago. Although he lived in Chicago for several years in the 1990s (this book was originally published in 1995), the city clearly fascinates him, and he obviously tries to make up for his lack of personal experience through the sheer breadth of historical material he draws from. Ultimately, this leads to some weaknesses in various sections of the book, but I'll touch on that later. "The Pig and the Skyscraper" has one loose thesis: That Chicago, more than any other city in the Western world, influenced the development of the capitalist city. His method is mainly dialectical-materialist, meaning that he interprets Chicago's history within a framework that examines the interplay between economic development, politics, and culture, with a broad examination of demographics, city government, and the class tension.

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