

legal foundation that transformed the city and its economy. As a consequence, the overlapping levels of the American state helped to shape the economic world within which La Crosse and other small Midwestern cities took root. Morser is able to demonstrate convincingly how the cities' builders helped define the region's commercial history before 1900 and the lasting legacy that can still be noted today.

Hinterland Dreams is split into three main parts. Each chapter begins with the story of an influential La Crosse pioneer who was supported by the overlapping roles of federal, state and municipal government, allowing each of these individuals to flourish and enabling the economic transformation of these sleepy Midwestern towns. Part one looks at the drivers that led to the conurbation of the Midwest. Part two illustrates how municipal power was boosted through the rise of railroads and political reforms that helped to define the region's commercial history before 1900. Part three speaks to the rise of local entrepreneurs and their role in the regional economic transformation. The book concludes with a chapter entitled 'A city of bustling trade'. Using well-researched and vibrant historical description, Morser weaves an intricate tale of federal, state and local officials forging the Midwestern cities together into a 'whirring engine of commercial energy before 1900' (p. xii). Morser's characters are vivid and well developed and his writing style embraces the adventurous spirit of the era without being showy.

By exploring the historical biographies of La Crosse's founding mothers and fathers, *Hinterland Dreams* suggests a new way to understand the rise of American industrialism. Small towns like La Crosse illustrate how the American state provided its early citizens with powerful tools to build cities and help define their region's history in profound and previously underemphasized ways. Not only was the Midwest region drawn together as a conurbation that connected the frontier to the world, but these hinterland towns and their innovative citizens were essential in providing large cities like Chicago with the resources that made industrialization possible. In this way, the underlying political economy of these small Midwestern towns can be understood as important engines of American industrialization.

T.M. Benney

University of California, Santa Barbara

Jeremiah B.C. Axelrod, *Inventing Autopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. xii + 401pp. 55 illustrations. Bibliography. £44.95/\$65.00 hbk; £16.95/\$24.95 pbk.

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How can we explain Los Angeles? Other US cities that expanded rapidly in the twentieth century did so vertically, at least at their core. Yet for most of that century, Los Angeles lacked a skyscraper centre, and for some it has seemed to lack a centre of any kind. Its expansion was horizontal, an apparently unplanned sprawl. Yet for Jeremiah Axelrod, 'contrary to conventional wisdom, Greater Los Angeles's urban form was planned; in fact, it was overdetermined by plans' (p. 312). In rejecting the model of New York and Chicago, in the 1920s some Angelenos planners looked instead to Ebenezer Howard's ideal of the 'Garden City', while Los Angeles planning director Gordon Whitnall set out another dream, located between

'garden city autarky and anarchic sprawl' (p. 321). The development away from downtown was not a consequence of a lack of planning but of a clash between competing plans and visions, and often a failure to articulate particular ideals and to adapt to the changing urban, suburban and post-suburban environment.

In making this case, Axelrod unearths some fascinating material on the battles fought over the city's development and the means of passing through it, from Hollywood star Clara Kimball Young's campaign against the downtown parking ban of 1920 to the 1926 ballot on proposals to develop Union Station, lift zoning restrictions on portions of Wilshire Boulevard and waive the city's height limit for the new city hall. He illustrates how Los Angeles might have developed differently, while remaining sceptical of the claims that have been made for the radical nature of the unrealized Olmsted Brothers proposal of 1930: *Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region*. His ambitions extend beyond detailing planning debates and decisions taken and avoided within the Los Angeles region in the 1920s. In examining 'the relationships between imagination and place' (p. 1), he draws on urban theory but also on wider debates concerning modernity and visual culture, and his discussion ranges from *Los Angeles Times* headlines to Ralph Ellison's account of New York in *Invisible Man*.

This is a substantial work, clearly based on wide-ranging research, that itself extends far beyond its centre. The chapter on 'Imagining the metropolis in a modern age' examines futuristic images of Chicago and New York, which is useful as a comparison but leaves a curious imbalance: this is a book on Los Angeles which includes a discussion of a number of books, films and artworks that imagine the city, but mostly not Los Angeles. It draws upon film studies, but that variety in which actual films seem less important than references to 'suture' and Laura Mulvey on 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (credited in the notes to an anthology apparently published two years before the original first appeared). The link between the view through the car windscreen and the cinema spectator's gaze at least provides a variation of the more common connection between watching films and the train journey or fairground ride; whether it works beyond the General Motors World's Fair Futurama exhibit is another question. Axelrod is clearly justified in giving a central role to the car in the jazz age development of Los Angeles. However, for a book titled *Inventing Autopia* there is surprisingly little on the appeal of the automobile beyond the fact that it meant avoiding streetcar travel. There is one mention of Rayner Banham, but no more direct reference to the autopia of *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* than to Disneyland's Autopia. The significance of 'jazz age Los Angeles' is similarly under-developed; it remains unclear whether this is simply a way of saying '1920s Los Angeles' or whether a case is being made for a link between urban planning policy and the city's cultural innovation and energy.

The book's cover shows a photograph of the 1940 opening of the Arroyo Seco Parkway, a curious choice for a study of 'efforts to read greater Los Angeles in the 1920s' (p. 2); when Axelrod discusses the photograph in his Epilogue he notes that the Parkway was 'quietly redesigned as a freeway' (p. 302), and, in emphasizing speed rather than the surrounding landscape, turned its back on the Garden City ideals of 1920s planners. The value of *Inventing Autopia* lies in its examination of the debates and plans that preceded the Los Angeles freeway. It details the clash between differing urban ideals in a key decade in the city's history, and as such provides an important account of planners' ideals, achievements and failures. A

book-length study of the 1920s invention of autopia, or autogeddon, remains to be written.

Guy Barefoot

University of Leicester

Leif Jerram, *Streetlife: The Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. x + 477pp. 30 figures. Bibliography. £18.99.
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In *Streetlife*, Leif Jerram has produced a fascinating narration of urban history in twentieth-century Europe. It sets out one clear aim which it achieves with both elegance and nuance: to explore twentieth-century urban history from the bottom up and to take seriously the import and impact of everyday spaces. History he says, happens in the spaces in which we sleep, eat, work and play as much as if not more than parliamentary chambers, ministry corridors and boardrooms. In short, history takes place at ground level in workshops, factories, beer halls, dance halls, front rooms, squares, street corners and so on. In the five substantive chapters of *Streetlife* Jerram works through the ways in which twentieth-century Europe was transformed from the point of view of these spaces. His argument is that power resides in and emerges from them; power that is harnessed to form the engine of change. *Streetlife* shows very effectively that new ideologies and new practices associated with key transformative moments can trace their roots to such spaces. These spaces were fundamentally urban and Jerram suggests that it was only in the cities, which witnessed profound and rapid growth through the twentieth century, that these spaces became more significant than at any time before.

The first substantive chapter 'Revolution in the streets', is, for me, the most satisfying perhaps because it sets out the foundational theme of the book. There are fascinating accounts of the spaces of National Socialism and its opposition which suggests that the economic depression removed access to the everyday spaces of work in which counter-ideologies to Nazism could thrive and thrust people into the leisure spaces of the bars, beer halls and canteens that were well infiltrated and well understood by the Nazis – the German Social Democratic Party therefore literally lost its geography in the depression. In another well-worked example Jerram discusses the intimate physical proximity of the No. 6 workshop of the Trubochnyi Factory and how it enabled Bolshevism to emerge as the most powerful amongst many competing revolutionary movements in early twentieth-century Russia. The second chapter focuses on the cultural politics of gender, specifically women, and their changing relation to urban space, focusing not as perhaps expected on the spaces made by women but on the use made by women of space. There are some especially interesting sections on domestic space and the dual role of the home as both liberator (in terms of a space of one's own) and oppressor (in terms of received gender roles) and fascinating material on the modest revolutionary role that suddenly visible and violent women played in the urban riots over food shortages in the aftermath of World War I.

The following chapter then explores the role of urban spaces in driving changes in popular culture including football and football violence, music hall, dance halls, cinemas and so on. A chapter on the role of the urban in the identity