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Fishman, Robert. *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier*. New York: Basic Books, 1977. Pp. xiv, 332. Illustrated. $13.95

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and Mexico. It would have been more valuable if the holdings of Northridge and the Library of Congress could have been combined with the other institutions listed in Occasional Papers Nos. 2 and 3, but perhaps a more inclusive guide can be produced sometime, now that the National Map Collection's catalogue is available, and the Library of Congress' catalogue of fire insurance plans will be published in the near future.

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Fishman, Robert. _Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier._ New York: Basic Books, 1977. Pp. xiv, 332. Illustrated. $13.95.

This work offers intellectual biographies of the only three men of our century, as Fishman argues with some persuasiveness, who developed fully fledged conceptions of urban utopias. The aims of the book are three: to "recapture the historical context - the political movements and the climate of ideas - from which the three ideal cities first emerged; to connect the three planners' innovations in urban design with the revolutionary goals these innovations were intended to achieve; and . . . to understand the personalities and motivations of the three planners" (pp. x-xi). With the aid of tight organization and lucid writing, the author in large measure achieves each of his objectives.

Fishman's attempt to understand such origins of the utopian models as may be found in these men's personalities extends in the cases of Wright and LeCorbusier to childhood and adolescence. That Wright's association of stable family life with a rural setting originated partly in the contrast between the failing marriage of his parents in an urban setting, and the family solidarity of the rural Lloyd Jones family with whom he spent his boyhood summers, does appear plausible. However, as elsewhere in this book, Fishman here expresses likelihood as demonstrated fact. Howard's youth receives no analysis. Perhaps the material was not there; perhaps the personality of this mild-mannered and avuncular stenographer was deemed uninteresting beside those of the mercurial and unyielding Wright and LeCorbusier. In middle age, all three suffered from a sense of powerlessness which precipitated radicalization of their ideas: Howard's failure as an inventor; Wright's frustration by 1907 with his inability to shape the environment beyond the "asylum" of Oak Park and his suburban neighbours' opposition to his divorce; LeCorbusier's recognition in the late 'Twenties that large corporations would not effect massive urban renewal schemes. Oddly, while Fishman makes many illuminating comparisons among his subjects, this obvious parallel is ignored.

Fishman's achievement in showing the influence of contemporary movements and ideas on the urban utopians is impressive, and all the more

convincing because he does not minimize the fact that, once matured, these personalities resisted the climate of opinion in differing degrees. The reader experiences a sense of reliving the process by which each of these men imbibed and synthesized one set of ideas after another. The development is most straightforward in the case of Howard, who frankly described the Garden City as a "unique combination of Proposals." Fishman emphasizes that Wright was influenced by only a few specific thinkers, particularly Sullivan and Morris, and that his own psychological needs were unusually important in explaining the genesis of "Broadacre City." Wright, he argues, relied on massed cliches and stereotypes in his condemnation of the city as the headquarters of a parasitic elite. Surprisingly, he does not comment on the striking similarity between Wright's fulminations (like that quoted on p. 150) and those of Populism. Changes in political climate, too, had the least impact on the individualistic Wright. His decentralism did not bow to the generally felt need for centralization during and after World War II. LeCorbusier was somewhat less refractory, for after the discrediting of the Vichy regime he no longer sought a movement which would combine concentrated power with mass enthusiasm.

In Fishman's discussion of contemporary influences upon these thinkers, one must resist the author's presentation of the plausible as fact. We read on pp. 238-39, for example, that LeCorbusier's plan to manage the economy hierarchically, from local syndicats at the factory level to a national planning council, "is" (not "may be") a reflection of the French desire to have higher authority settle disputes among interest groups (due to the Frenchman's "horreur du face-à-face"). One also wonders why a book which presents not a single instance of LeCorbusier's awareness of Wright's work, should conclude (p. 265) that "urban theories of LeCorbusier were intended as a refutation of Frank Lloyd Wright."

The most flawless achievement of the book is to demonstrate how each thinker's innovations in urban design were meant to realize social and economic goals. In particular, one appreciates the empathy and subtlety with which Fishman evaluates LeCorbusier's attempts in the "Contemporary City" and the later "Radiant City" to resolve the contradictory tenets in the multi-rooted French syndicalist tradition of authority and participation, of toil for the collectivity and leisure for self-development. To say that this analysis is matched by the discussions on the utopias of Wright and Howard, is to pay a high compliment.

In sum, while the author's enthusiasm has encouraged some overstatements, this book constitutes a vibrant triumph of intellectual biography. It is strongly recommended.

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