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Fabienne Chevallier. *Le Paris moderne: Histoire des politiques d'hygiène, 1855-1898.* Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010. Illustrations. 410 pp. EUR 22.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-2-7535-1023-4.

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Hygiene and the Modernization of Paris

What do urban rebuilding, hospital architecture, school hygiene, housing reform, bath fittings, waste removal, public health, and medical theory have in common? According to Fabienne Chevallier's new book, it is *hygiene*. Her book's strength and originality come from taking on this difficult object of study, both hard to define and crucial for understanding nineteenth-century Paris. Her central argument is that in the second half of the nineteenth century, hygiene was a leading force in steering Paris's urban modernization, and a point of origin for the modern (welfare) state and modern city planning. While scholars already esteem hygiene as a key topic in nineteenth-century French urban, social, political, intellectual, and medical histories, Chevallier innovates by putting her training in architectural history to work tracing the material, spatial, and design consequences of hygienic ideas.

"Hygiene" is a notoriously slippery term. In *The Pasteurization of France*, Bruno Latour described France's late nineteenth-century hygiene movement as a "program of reforms" for "the reconstitution, the reorganization of human life." For him, hygiene was best understood as a "gigantic" or "enormous" social movement that "ran through the social body" and was "ready to take charge of everything." Unlike common definitions that equate hygiene with the mere prevention of disease, Latour stressed hygiene's ambitions for reorganizing society itself through its peculiar "mixture of urbanism, consumer protection,… defense of the environment, and moralization." Hence hygiene's boundaries were always "vague," lacking a "central argument." Latour likened it to an "attic" where all manner of things were hoarded because they might later become useful: "advice, precautions, recipes, opinions, statistics, remedies, regulations, anecdotes, case studies." Because hygienists believed that disease could be caused by almost anything, nothing could be ignored or dismissed: "it was necessary to act upon everything at once."[1]

It is thus with some courage and some risk that Chevallier puts hygiene at the center of her study. Like Latour, she stresses that hygiene was always a complex and historically shifting constellation, an interdisciplinary field with a "diversity of fundamental anchorings" and a "diversity of agents" (pp. 16-17). Chevallier describes her object of study as "the politics of hygiene," which she defines as "the ensemble of knowledges, doctrines and practices" that sought to encourage healthy urban living (p. 13). In his preface, Guy Cogeval fittingly describes this as the intersection of science, municipal government, and construction. To study this, Chevallier works to blend political history with the social history of medicine and technology. Unlike other recent interdisciplinary studies of Paris's nineteenth-century urban modernity (such as H. Hazel Hahn's *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth Century* [2009] and Miriam Levin, Sophie Forgan, Martina Hessler, Robert Kargon, and Morris Low's *Urban Modernity: Cultural Innovation in the Second Industrial Revolution* [2010]), which operate mostly on the terrain of cultural history, Chevallier's ground is social and political history. Chevallier's argument is most original and persuasive for stressing hygiene's consistently *urban* focus (something Latour, for one, recognized but did little to analyze), as well as its practical and material interventions into daily practice, spatial organization, and architectural design. Unlike recent studies of hygiene in the

French context, which tend to focus on ideas and policies, she treats hygiene as an applied science, and traces its concrete application in Paris.

Chevallier's book impresses for its synthetic effort, not for opening up new, unfamiliar historical narratives. There is little here on water and waste not already covered by Jean-Pierre Goubert (*The Conquest of Water: The Advent of Health in the Industrial Age* [1989]); David Barnes (*The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-Century Struggle against Filth and Germs* [2006]); Donald Reid (*Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* [1991]); and Sabine Barles (*L'invention des déchets urbains: France, 1790-1970* [2005]). It includes little on hygienic ideas and policies not already covered by Jack D. Ellis (*The Physician-Legislators of France: Medicine and Politics in the Early Third Republic, 1870-1914* [1990]); William Cohen and Ryan Johnson (edited collection *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life* [2005]); and Andrew Aisenberg (*Contagion: Disease, Government, and the "Social Question" in Nineteenth-Century France* [1999]). And there is little on housing inspections and low-cost housing not already covered by Nicholas Bullock and James Read (*The Movement for Housing Reform in Germany and France, 1840-1914* [1985]); Janet Horne (*A Social Laboratory for Modern France: The Musée Social and the Rise of the Welfare State* [2002]); and Ann Marie Shapiro (*Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850-1902* [1985]). Rather, Chevallier's book is unique and rewarding for bringing together all of these far-flung fields–water and waste, intellectual history, social housing, and so on–in order to accommodate that difficult object of study, hygiene. Her sources reflect this diversity: in addition to published sources, she consulted archives at the Institut de France; the Cour des Comptes; the national academies of medicine and science; the city archives of Paris; the city administrative library; and archives specializing in social welfare, hospitals, and police. The depth of her research and knowledge of Paris are clear.

Chevallier's extended introduction and first chapter establish the historical background for the rest of her story: the origins of urban hygiene in the Enlightenment, the birth of a prominent public health movement in Paris in the 1820s and 1830s, and the role of hygiene in the legendary Haussmannian transformations of Paris under the Second Empire (1852-70). She argues that while the Second Empire liked to pay lip service to the idea of hygiene, it rarely ranked among the most important motivations for so radically transforming Paris's built spaces. This sets up a long term (*long durée*) argument about hygiene's rises and falls: born in the mid-1700s, urban hygiene was pursued in earnest until the 1850s, when the Second Empire oversaw its "weakening" (p. 54). In the 1880s, spurred by the cholera outbreak of 1883-84, the Third Republic put hygiene back at the center of its city planning and social welfare initiatives, helping to spark a "renaissance" or "renewal" of many related fields: hygiene, architecture, and public administration (pp. 333, 58). By 1900, most of the wide-ranging visions and functions of hygiene would be "absorbed" by modern city planning (p. 54). This overarching chronology is essential to her argument, and very convincing, though it raises some questions about modernization and modernity, which I will return to below.

The real empirical focus of her work is hygiene's renaissance between 1880 and 1898, covered in the case studies of chapters 2 through 7. Chapter 2 deals with hospital hygiene, examining debates over hospital design among medical doctors, architects, and politicians in the 1860s and 1870s. Nostalgic traditionalists in Paris saw hospitals as social-service agencies, shelters for the poor and homeless, which should remain embedded in the urban core. But more modernist voices, inspired by contagionist ideas about disease transmission, recommended moving hospitals to less populated areas in the peripheral districts, where they could function effectively to isolate, study, and treat disease scientifically. Chevallier here inaugurates an argument that remains central throughout the book: that hygienic ideology (for example, contagionism) shaped design decisions in architecture and city planning. She also convincingly demonstrates how seemingly "technical" design choices were often motivated by political concerns or intended to have political effects. Chevallier's training in architectural history shines through in her deft ability to detect the social and political dramas behind architectural plans, and to set static plans in motion by narrating the contentious debates about them. This brings a welcome sense of contingency to the history of built spaces.

Chapter 3 concerns the Commission des logements insalubres, the local government organ for inspecting and disinfecting "unclean lodging." For Chevallier, this serves as an important example of how the state adopted hygiene as a logic of governance, and also an important topic for illustrating some of hygiene's main concerns–centrality of clean water, hygienic standards for construction, the study and stigmatization of problem neighborhoods, the infamous *garnis* (furnished rooms for rent), and health and safety standards for gas heating. The commission, which served largely in an advisory role from 1850 to 1880 and was manned by doctors, scientists,

and engineers, was thereafter folded into the much more powerful Casier sanitaire des maisons (1893), which used expanded powers of inspection to collect epidemiological and demographic data about the city, disinfected houses, and cleared slums. Over time, the city's organs of hygienic governance "mutated," as she puts it, taking on more powerful, hands-on, interventionist forms, which reduced the formerly independent, advisory role of professional experts as it sucked their tasks into the state apparatus. Paris moved slowly from a system in which doctors held medical power and could be contracted out by the state to a system in which the state itself held medical power.

Chapter 4 deals with the origins of public housing in France, a story that is already quite well known in the work of Shapiro, Bullock and Read, Horne, and others. By contrast, the most surprising empirical work here occurs in chapter 5, which segues cleverly from school hygiene to the subject of public baths, showers, and pools. All these installations partook of a shared logic of what she calls "mass hygiene," a truly *public* health, which concentrated on cleansing individual bodies and shaping the spaces they inhabited (p. 188). Student bodies were carefully inspected, washed, and disciplined for proper posture, personal hygiene, and handwriting. School buildings, like public bathhouses and pools, were unusually well equipped with clean water infrastructure, symbolized by rows of identical washbasins and showers lining the walls of restrooms and locker rooms. Chapters 6 and 7 return again to already well-documented histories: chapter 6 deals with sanitation in the narrow sense (trash collection, water supply, and sewers), while chapter 7 offers a medico-intellectual history of prominent theories and theorists of hygiene. Chapter 6 provides another fine example of Chevallier's deft ability to dissect design controversies in rich detail and with sensitivity to politics.

Throughout the book, Chevallier pursues an important argument about Franco-Belgian dominance of the European and global hygiene movements. Chevallier argues that Paris was the "crucible" of hygienic ideas for all of Europe, and that it remained a "capital of reference" for the hygiene movement at large (pp. 13, 334). Ultimately, Paris was "a formidable laboratory for the institutions of urban hygiene" (p. 14). Some simple figures make this clear: of fifteen International Congresses of Hygiene and Demography held between 1852 and 1912, Paris and Brussels each hosted three; of fourteen International Sanitary Conferences between 1851 and 1938, Paris hosted seven. But Chevallier also recognizes that Paris borrowed hygienic ideas as well as broadcast them, demonstrating that Parisian doctors, engineers, and politicians often looked to foreign capitals like Brussels and London for inspiration. By hosting frequent conferences and congresses on hygiene, Paris not only passed out hygienic ideas *to* its neighbors, but also collected them *from* its neighbors. This is a topic that demands further comparative or transnational study, well beyond the scope of Chevallier's local study.

By setting up her narrative as an origin story for urbanism and the welfare state, Chevallier may attract some questions about teleology and modernization. Though there is always teleology implicit in tracing the origins of some later phenomenon, this particular teleology may trouble many readers because it invokes the thorny issue of whether modernization equals progress. Her concept of modernity claims to build on Paul Rabinow, but her approach seems less critical about the idea of "social progress" in the city. She ranks among those scholars (Marshall Berman, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, and Latour) who see modernity as a human project, rather than an objective process of social change that operates on human actors (as do many sociologists).[2]

This reader would have liked to see more direct and sustained engagement with a question suggested by her evocation of Foucault and Rabinow: did hygiene always encourage a kind of urban modernization that yielded tangible improvements in urban life, or did it sometimes play a more authoritarian, disciplinary, or otherwise insidious role? In other words, this book about the "politics" of hygiene stays rather safely within politics in a fairly narrow sense–what were the broader politics of hygiene? Chevallier misses an opportunity to reflect on these deeper implications of the term "politics" in her subtitle, and by consistently identifying urban hygiene with social progress, her book may become more politicized than she intended it to be. A broader consideration of politics, in turn, might help iron out some of the difficulties inherent in her approach to modernization and modernity.

The volume is richly illustrated with over one hundred images, twelve of them in full color, and includes a very useful appendix containing brief biographical notes on many of the key characters in her story. It contributes to Paris history, architectural and urban history, political and intellectual history, the history of science and medicine, and the study of modernity. Overall, the richness of its documentation and the broad, interdisciplinary construction of its object of study make this a fer-

tile and enjoyable book.

Notes

[1]. Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Allan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 16-17, 19-20, 23, 33.

[2]. Marshall Berman, *All That All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988); Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 32-50; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederic G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), esp. "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 1-22; Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique* 1, no. 22 (Winter 1981): 3-14; and Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

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