

those whose nostalgia for the urban past made such improvements at best a bittersweet prospect, and at worst, a desecration. Her book focuses on resistance to the “purification” of the city, with all the emotionally and culturally loaded significance such a term implies.

The chapters address the sewerage of London, the controversy around the pollution of the Thames that resulted, slum clearance and housing reform. Allen draws on a varied store of documentary evidence ranging from the periodical press to parliamentary papers to private letters. The “literary” authors Allen reads in depth are Charles Dickens and George Gissing; the Afterword also touches on Bernard Shaw. Dickens, of course, is well-known as a promoter of sanitary reform, but Allen persuasively and usefully makes the case that he was also profoundly disturbed by the destruction of picturesque London and of communities that had thrived in such urban localities until these areas were laid waste by “improvements”. Some of Dickens’s negative response resulted from his pragmatic understanding of the problems created by slum clearance when it dealt (as it generally did) only with the destruction of overcrowded buildings and not with the relocation of the people who lived in them—who then immediately packed into impoverished areas nearby, creating much worse slums than before. But it was also motivated by a more inchoate sense of loss—loss of a familiar geography reflecting continuity of community and history. As polluted, dirty and smelly as the urban environment could be, it also had a certain grungy glamour that sometimes inspired a surprising affection. As Allen points out, citing the insights of social geography, people’s emotional experience of and attachment to place is as important an element in shaping urban space as any more tangible consideration.

In addition to nostalgia, there were more pragmatic reasons why many Victorians doubted the utility of sanitary reforms. Allen is more concerned with the emotions and perceptions surrounding urban sanitary improvement than with making judgements

about effectiveness. But the book still provides some fascinating material that may challenge assumptions about the self-evidence of the value of the purifying project. For example, although one generally thinks of the installation of modern sewerage in London as one of the great accomplishments of the age, Allen provides ample evidence that for quite a while the abolition of the cesspool system created more problems than it solved. Plans to recycle vast amounts of sewage proved impracticable, and the dumping of sewage into the Thames was less a planned outcome gone wrong than a path of least resistance that most people recognized at the time as an environmental disaster.

Of the literary readings, the Gissing material is particularly useful. In tracing Gissing’s detailed representations of urban space, Allen shows his awareness that “oppressive social forces exert themselves spatially . . . the interests of the powerful are expressed and reproduced through the environment, through physical space” (p. 161). Allen’s book helps us to understand some of the complexities of the Victorian experience of an important era in London’s modernization, and is clear enough to be of benefit to undergraduate students, in addition to offering something of value to more advanced scholars.

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Josep Lluís Barona and Josep Bernabeu-Mestre, *La salud y el estado: el movimiento sanitario internacional y la administración española (1851–1945)*, Universitat de València, 2008, pp. 366, illus., no price given (paperback 978-84-370-6974-6).

Once an almost neglected issue, the international dimension of health has become one of the most widely explored areas of historical research over the past fifteen years. Spanish scholars have fully participated in this general trend, to which the authors of this

book have made an important contribution. However, although attention has deservedly focused on the inter-war period and the links between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Spanish administration, we have lacked a general overview of the commitment of Spanish officials to international organizations, the roles they played in them, and the influence exerted by these agencies on the development of Spanish public health policies since the mid-nineteenth century. *La salud y el estado* responds to the need for a comprehensive picture of Spanish involvement in the international health domain. Josep Lluís Barona and Josep Bernabeu-Mestre have taken full advantage of their long research experience on the issue. They have also gained access to a rich variety of original sources that have been little explored to date, including material on Spanish collaboration from the Rockefeller Archive Centre and the League of Nations Archive, and reports on Spain issued by international health agencies and international conference proceedings, among other publications.

The book is divided into ten chapters plus a short prologue and an epilogue, and ends with two appendices and a useful name index. After a first chapter that gives a brief overview of the international health movement, chapters 2 to 5 cover international sanitary conferences (1851–1911), international congresses of charitable enterprises (1853–1880) and hygiene and demography (1852–1912) and the Office International d'Hygiène Publique. The authors contribute a rich stream of original data to fill the gaps in our knowledge of Spanish international engagement over this time, demonstrating the Spanish administration's uneven commitment beyond the country's frontiers.

Chapters 6 and 7 address the Rockefeller Foundation and the League of Nations Health Organization, followed by a chapter on the health reforms accomplished during the Second Republic (1931–39), which were largely inspired by League of Nations guidelines. They show that Spain benefited greatly in the inter-war period from the

inspiration and support of international health agencies in building up national health services, while local officials and public health experts were able to cite international standards for the legitimization and development of health reforms. The final two chapters describe the impact of the Civil War (1936–39) on the health conditions of the population and the role played by some outstanding Spanish exiles in international health organizations after the Second World War. Here, the authors provide a much more detailed and vivid description of the interplay between international and local health policies.

The valuable data and insights offered in this analysis might have benefited from a closer discussion of the existing historiography on the international health movement and Spanish public health. Most of this is cited, yet the authors appear to avoid becoming involved in current historiographical debates on international health. Their approach favours a positive view of professional ideology and public health expertise as powerful levers in the progress and modernization of inter-war health administration. It leaves little space for any questioning of corporatist leanings or of the expert and technocratic models promoted by international health organizations. With regard to Spanish public health, further analysis of studies besides their own would also have been welcome, reducing the reiteration of issues in direct quotations.

Overall, *La salud y el estado* offers a comprehensive and vivid picture of Spain's involvement with the international health movement. This book will undoubtedly be useful for public health historians and for scholars interested in the growing role played by health and health policies in contemporary societies. It should prove an inspiration to the research community to conduct further in-depth studies on the international dimension of public health interventions in Spain.

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