

tains that bodies are politically constituted and manifest permutations of body extending beyond the normative binary framework. The ‘body’, then, is made and, as such, is the fulcrum on which the binary is constituted and is the material on which the symbolic order acts. Although any mention of this burgeoning theoretical literature is conspicuous by its silence, Myers is seemingly attune to this feminist epistemological project. For example, she maintains that ‘girls’ bodies were barometers of the future’ and that “parents and juvenile justice officials saw bodies that could not be constrained or constrained, that left home for paid works that swayed suggestively to modern music, and that were seemingly available for exploitation by men” (7). Contrasting this ‘deflowered’ and ‘unclean’ body was the respectable non-sexed corporeal.

I cannot but conclude that this is a significant work; one whose focus and sophisticated analysis will no doubt resonate with a diversity of scholars engaged in both traditional and interdisciplinary research focused on contemporary and historical contexts.

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Robert Gagnon, *Questions d'égouts: Santé publique, infrastructures et urbanisation à Montréal au XIX^{ème} siècle* (Montréal: Boréal, 2006).

Much has been made of the poor sanitary condition of nineteenth century Montreal. With its rapid industrial growth at mid-century and its frequently flooded working-class slums, mortality rates in what was then Canada's largest city dwarfed those in the rest of British North America. Outbreaks of cholera, smallpox, and tuberculosis left staggering death tolls that often ignited social tensions. Meanwhile, the stench of waste, human and otherwise, plagued daily life in the city, and struck a dissonant chord against the marvel of the city's industrial and commercial development. Sanitary reformers like Philip Carpenter and, later, Herbert Brown Ames, stirred public attention by emphasizing the links between poor sanitary conditions, poverty, and disease. That this state of affairs existed in the shadows of Canada's most visible opulence was particularly galling to many urban reformers.

Questions d'égouts, by Université du Québec à Montréal historian Robert Gagnon, explores how the transformation of scientific and political discourses surrounding drainage and sanitation played out in Montreal during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The study is contextualized in two ways. First, Gagnon shows how the emergence of sanitary reform movement coincided with the rising authority of professionally trained experts. Secondly, he explores the way projects undertaken to improve drainage in the city played into the development of its urban

infrastructure and, more broadly speaking, in the emergence of Montreal as a modern metropolis.

Given the poor sanitary condition of Montreal throughout the nineteenth century and the outbreaks of epidemic disease that periodically struck the city, local philanthropists were eager to tap into the evolving international discourse on the subject. Writers like English lawyer Edwin Chadwick were particularly influential in this regard. Chadwick's 1839 report, hailed as the first to draw explicit links between poverty and mortality, was eagerly read across the Atlantic World, thus leading to the creation of Boards of Health in numerous cities. Members of Montreal's social elite, made anxious by the negative aspects of industrialization they were witnessing in their own city, snapped up copies Chadwick's tract, and began to focus their attention on the dangers of stagnant water and backed-up drains. Gagnon's study is effective in connecting the actions of sanitary experts and politicians in Montreal with a broad international network of ideas regarding urban reform. This movement was driven by advances in scientific knowledge and a growing acceptance of state intervention. The actions of its adherents, Gagnon argues, were instrumental in catapulting Montreal into the modern age.

Gagnon has previously written on the history of the *École Polytechnique* and Montreal's Catholic school board. *Questions d'égouts* furthers this exploration into the development of the city's professional class. This study, though, does not entirely restrict itself to the elite political and scientific actors of the era. Gagnon's research unearths a trove of letters written by the city's residents to the municipal government demanding to be compensated for improvements they had undertaken to drains on their property. By the 1850s many of these letters explicitly mentioned the health threats posed by poor drainage, which suggests that urban reformers were successful in pushing the idea of sanitary improvement to the forefront of the public consciousness.

Gagnon successfully avoids making this a whiggish story of urban improvement. Instead, he shows that there was perpetual resistance to calls for the sort of comprehensive drainage infrastructure that the city so direly needed. More often than not, of course, this resistance was leveled on financial grounds. The construction of the aqueduct system in the 1850s had left little in the municipal coffers to satisfy the demands of drainage advocates like the members of the Montreal Sanitary Association. Furthermore, public outcry for these infrastructural improvements stalled in between outbreaks of epidemic disease. Gagnon suggests that it was only when investors in urban real estate joined the chorus of voices decrying the effects of poor drainage that the government saw little choice but to tackle the issue. Furthermore, the success of this concerted effort of political lobbying was not immediately transformative. Even when a comprehensive drainage system was finally completed in 1867, it would continue to coexist with the hodgepodge system of private unregulated drains for some time. Foremost among the old system's frailties was its reliance on flushing the city's waste a stone's throw away from

densely populated communities, a product of the persistent belief that the current of the St. Lawrence River was capable of purifying itself.

A comprehensive understanding of the extent to which poor sanitary practices threatened health and commerce in Montreal only emerged in the decades after Confederation. Gagnon links this development to the expansion of the city's professional middle class, which included in its ranks sanitary experts and bacteriologists. The emergence of such experts and their body of knowledge is another example of how international discourses were being put into practice at a local level, where they were adapted to fit Montreal's unique circumstances. Gagnon argues that the high costs of improving the city's infrastructure were brought about by the need to conceptualize the city as a comprehensive network, one whose growth would have to be carefully planned by a phalanx of trained professionals. Among other things, the transformation of drainage from a private undertaking to a public concern led to a remarkable expansion of the City of Montreal. The costly projects that local governments were urged to finance by the 1880s sounded the death knell for a number of small municipalities on the urban periphery, thereby leading to a flurry of municipal mergers in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Gagnon has crafted a useful contribution to the historiography of nineteenth-century Montreal, and will no doubt be of interest to those concerned with the emergence of the professional middle class, both in Quebec and elsewhere. *Questions d'égouts* demonstrates how Montrealers engaged with transnational discourses regarding living conditions in the industrial city. Readers, however, will be struck by the relative absence of the voices of those who suffered most from the abysmal condition of Montreal's sanitary infrastructure: its poor families and other marginalized residents. Gagnon's portrayal of the concerted resistance in the name of fiscal austerity faced by those who laboured to tackle the root causes of the city's notoriously unhealthy urban environment will prove to be particularly resonant to the twenty first century reader.

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Celia Haig-Brown and David Nock, eds., *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

As historians and scholars continue to delve into the complexities of Canada's colonial existence, new and perhaps yet-to-be categorized pieces of this imperial puzzle reveal themselves. Editors Celia Haig-Brown and David Nock deal with one such piece, that of Canadians of European ancestry who displayed sensitivities towards Aborigines while being fully implicated in the colonization process