


posters, and parade banners provided information on a range of activities/events, and enabled participation in popular culture and mass politics. Newspapers had a distinct relationship to the city: the gridded newspaper columns, for example, were homologous with the physical layouts of city streets. Moreover, cities were not only the subject of news reports, but also the site of news production and dissemination. But again, what concerns Henkin most are the different audiences produced and reproduced by the newspapers, as readers were always constituted as subjects: as consumers, spectators and readers. Yet there was an instability around the print medium and its impersonal authority, an instability that was particularly apparent with respect to paper money. The paper bills that were overtaking specie as the dominant means of exchange depended, as did newspapers in another sense, upon their circulation for their efficacy. Paper money, however, faced a particular paradox, caught as it was in the interplay between singularity and replication. Yet, above all, the ability of paper money to mediate personal relationships was fraught with anxiety due to rampant counterfeiting. Henkin's nuanced analysis thus illustrates how urban texts acted as signposts that guided strangers through the city, but also how they were ambivalent mediators of personal relationships.

Yet this tension which lies at the heart of the book between anonymous and impersonal urban texts on the one hand and an idea of the public or a sense of community that is constituted through them, prompts several questions. Ostensibly, the urban texts that Henkin describes—street signs are a good example here—make it possible to navigate the city without interacting with or depending upon others, as he argues. But what the examples that Henkin provides also suggest is that time and time again these urban texts prompted connections among the public in other ways; personal advertisements in newspapers, for example, could be used to arrange meetings with people to whom one had not yet been formally introduced. This casts doubt on his contention that urban texts replaced earlier forms of face-to-face contact, a claim that frames his analysis. Furthermore, while these urban signs were to a certain degree inclusive in that they were anonymously authored and available for anyone to read, this does not make them democratic. Women, for example, may have been able to read the same signs confronted by men, but does this really mean that through such urban texts they “gained a foothold in public life” especially when, as Henkin himself acknowledges, this foothold was “denied to them on election day”? But while the heterogeneity of reading practices might have been better developed, and the claims of historical break de-emphasized, *City Reading* offers an informative local study of the rise of urban texts in antebellum New York.

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NANCY TOMES, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998. Pp. xv + 351. £19.95 hardback)

Wash your hands before dinner. Cover your mouth when you cough. Store refrigerated leftovers in air-tight containers. Disinfect the bathroom following a sickness in the house. Avoid touching hotel bedspreads. Change the kitchen dishcloth daily and always run the dishwasher on the hottest possible setting. Never give a baby an unsterilized bottle. Open the bedroom window at night, even during the winter. These are among

the hundreds of sanitary lessons I learned from my mother during the 1960s. But it was only in reading Nancy Tomes's *The Gospel of Germs*, that the origins of this vast maternal wisdom, and the unquestioning manner in which it has been embraced by members of my generation, began to make sense.

Tomes's book is a much-needed social and cultural history of the germ theory. While most historians of medicine have focused on the 'great' men (Pasteur, Koch, Tyndall, Lister, and others) who uncovered the existence of deadly microbes in the 1870s, Tomes, a public-health historian, looks at the impact of their discoveries on ordinary people, including women. In addition to the author's attention to the gendered aspects of sanitary knowledge, the book is highly innovative in at least three other ways. Firstly, unlike many historians of medicine, Tomes does not believe that the germ theory changed the world overnight, but rather explains the theory's acceptance in a series of distinctive stages. When and how did Americans accept the existence of germs? How did this new belief change their everyday lives? During the 1880s and 1890s, according to Tomes, the germ theory was closely allied to sanitary science. Americans became obsessed with 'house diseases' which they believed were caused by bad plumbing, poor ventilation, and lousy housekeeping. The period 1885–90 saw a new interconnectedness between people, objects, and events, making Americans fearful of a whole array of mass-produced goods, public transportation, and commercial services. Between 1890 and 1920, many wealthy Americans changed their behaviour rather radically in order to avoid germs. They shaved their beards, wore short skirts, modernized their homes, insisted on separate communion cups, invested in expensive appliances, and even avoided handshaking and baby kissing. Secondly, Tomes has an extremely sophisticated understanding of the cultural context in which the germ theory emerged. In addition to her study of the revolutionary aspects of behavioural change caused by the theory, Tomes explains how it was actually overlaid on a set of practices already in place. The "very untidy set of ideas" (p. 19) which comprised the germ theory, as explained in the book's introduction, has been here rearranged into impeccable order by one of the field's most erudite custodians. Thirdly, her religious analogies also serve Tomes well. The "gospel of germs", as she explains in the book's introduction, is the idea that microbes cause disease and can be avoided by certain protective behaviours. Throughout the book she refers to various groups as apostles and disciples. Two of the most powerful conduits for germ consciousness, the anti-tuberculosis crusade and the domestic science movement, were staged with near-religious fervour. Perhaps the clear outline of the book best illustrates the usefulness of the gospel metaphor. Tomes's 10 beautifully written chapters are grouped into four parallel sections: the Gospel Emergent, the Gospel Triumphant, the Gospel in Practice, and the Gospel in Retreat.

I have just two minor criticisms of the book. While Tomes takes an impressive look at how bacteriology was applied to the dinner table, the parlour, and the bathroom, her omission of the hospital seems puzzling. How did the germ theory affect the interaction of physicians and patients? Did the layout of hospitals change in accordance with the new way of thinking? Apart from a brief discussion of aseptic and antiseptic surgical techniques, the hospital, which was presumably a major site of germ avoidance, is hardly mentioned in the book. My second criticism concerns the use of illustrations. While visual imagery, especially advertising, enriches the book tremendously, the eighteen illustrations are isolated from the text. Had these images been used as evidence, rather than passive illustrations, the book may have attracted more readers in the fields of historical geography, popular culture, architectural history, material culture, or even art history. Nonetheless, *The Gospel of Germs* is a good model for other studies in the discipline of cultural history, related or not to science and medicine. In the end, it is really about how a single idea was embraced by the American population, using ordinary behaviour as its evidence. And in addition to being a superb model of

scholarship and providing a whole new approach to an age-old topic, Tomes's book taught me another valuable lesson. Mom was right.

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SANFORD JACOBY, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Pp. 360. \$16.95 paperback)

There is a conventional account of welfare capitalism that suggests it disappeared after the great depression and the earthquake of the New Deal. This understanding has been exacerbated by a dearth of scholarship on firms that could be described as driven by a vision of welfare capitalism (with most attention being paid to firms that were organized by unions). Into the breach steps Sanford Jacoby with his *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism since the New Deal*. In this well written and historically rooted text, a fair case is made that a kind of welfare capitalism survived and even flourished after the New Deal, at least until downsizing and globalization undercut its possibilities. Jacoby briefly explicates the history of welfare capitalism before taking up three case studies that form the heart of the book. Eastman-Kodak, Sears-Roebuck, and Thompson Products (now TRW) are chosen as exemplars of welfare capitalism, each serving as a similar but distinct form. These case studies are exceptionally well researched and presented with exhaustive historical detail (the footnotes alone are a treasure trove for scholars interested in these firms or labour relations of the time period more generally). The picture of welfare capitalism that is revealed by Jacoby demonstrates two consistent themes with regard to labour. First, these firms consistently offered innovative forms of benefits, services, and company sponsored recreational opportunities to win the loyalty of workers and to instill a 'we're all in this together' team ethos. Second, these firms were committed to offering premium wages and real job security (obviously compelling to survivors of the great depression) in order to stave off possible organizing drives by labour unions and to retain a committed workforce.

The most fascinating element of Jacoby's research is the demonstration that these firms recognized that the key to peaceful labour relations was not just a traditional carrot-and-stick approach (though these are often at play) but through an ever-present and consistent strategy of winning workers' hearts and minds. This strategy led to revolutionary advances in the use of the precursors to the modern Human Resources departments that utilized increasingly sophisticated methods of manipulating employee attitudes. The burgeoning field of industrial psychology was tapped for scholars who were paid to survey employees about all manner of attitudes and grievances. The melding of behavioural and social science with management techniques yielded some unexpected benefits. While survey data was expected to help point out trouble spots where labour discontent might invite unionization and to provide management with data about myriad elements of employee life, surveys were also found to provide a kind of catharsis for employees who were allowed to give voice to their concerns. One is left with the impression that a kind of Taylorism of the mind is at work in such techniques. Jacoby concludes his book with chapters dedicated to politics and public opinion and a brief survey of welfare capitalism from the 1950s to the present. The discussion of politics and public opinion demonstrates the significant role played by management and owners of firms influenced or guided by a particular vision of welfare