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Review of the Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present, by M.V. Melosi

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several distinct sections, he develops each theme in greater detail. My environmental history students appreciated this organizational strategy, noting that it helped keep the book's arguments fresh in their minds. The book works well as a teaching tool: it reveals complex causation while maintaining clarity and readability.

As environmental history, the book is extremely satisfying. As Native American history, however, it gives rise to a couple of concerns. First, Isenberg refers to the bison-hunting peoples of the Plains as "nomads." In the introduction, he acknowledges that "nomad" carries negative connotations, but he tries to rehabilitate the term by correcting the misperception that nomadic equals primitive (9). Nevertheless, he might have been wiser to choose a more neutral (even if more cumbersome) phrase. Second, Isenberg generalizes about cultural and economic patterns on the Plains, flattening the experiences of diverse bison-hunting communities. In Chapter 2, the reader is left with the impression that Indians responded in unitary fashion to the opportunities provided by horses, the fur trade, and disease. However, Isenberg appreciates the dynamism of culture, economy, and environment on the Plains. His treatment of Indian experiences, though overgeneralized, is still subtle and complex.

Is there a moral to the bison story? According to Isenberg, pursuit of wealth through bison was an exercise in futility (122, 163). Both Indians and Euroamericans ignored the unsustainability of bison hunting in an unpredictable environment. In the end, they undercut their own livelihoods rather than increasing their prosperity.

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The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present. By Martin V. Melosi (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 578 pp. \$59.95

In *The Sanitary City*, Melosi offers a fascinating historical tour of the odiferous underground architecture of American cities from the eighteenth century to the present. Readers will take something new from this work, whether in the form of information, a framework for analysis, or a renewed appreciation of cities. Theoretically, Melosi draws upon research at the borders of history, economics, and the study of technology. He introduces several theories—ecological theory, path dependence, and system theory—that make this book more than a story of networked pipes. Moreover, at a time of narrowly construed case studies, *The Sanitary City* presents a sweeping panorama of how both ideas of public health and professional expertise in sanitation intersected with urban politics to shape the development of the broad "technologies of san-

itation" in North America—especially water supply, wastewater removal, and solid-waste disposal.

Drawing on historical evidence from an exhaustive assortment of sources, Melosi provides a forceful chronological narrative that begins with the English "sanitary idea," exploring how it shaped early sanitation "protosystems" in North America. By the late nineteenth century, Melosi argues, the "bacteriological revolution" in public health transformed the sanitation infrastructure. Early in the twentieth century, buoyed by Progressive-era reforms and a rapidly maturing engineering profession, engineers and urban leaders designed seemingly permanent solutions to the problems of water and waste. However, following World War II, the durability of the sanitary city began to unravel. Migration to the suburbs and urban decay placed the sanitation infrastructure in crisis.

Melosi skillfully weaves theory, narrative, and historical detail, often reinterpreting familiar stories in new and convincing fashion. For instance, when discussing declining urban disease rates early in the twentieth century, he transforms our understanding of the relation between sanitation technologies and the work of public health professionals. After enumerating the usual reasons for such a decline, he argues that such reductions were most dramatic after cities began to use disinfectants—an innovation caused by the "bacteriological revolution" in public health. Sanitation technologies alone did not cause change; rather, it was interconnected with broader public-health initiatives. Melosi repeatedly demonstrates how changing paradigms of public health transformed sanitation across domains, as when the bacteriological revolution helped to make another technology of sanitation—refuse disposal and collection—into the "third pillar of modern sanitary services" (204).

Likewise, Melosi melds exhaustive historical detail with a theoretical appreciation of the connections between technology and society when exploring the problems facing the contemporary sanitation infrastructure. Melosi argues that the rise of "a new ecology" following World War II transformed the terrain of sanitation. The rise of suburban living and of new pollutants changed the volume, location, and type of waste, causing a crisis for the sanitary city. In exploring this crisis, Melosi both covers new ground chronologically and offers a palimpsest for future research. Yet, he misses an opportunity to elaborate the broader ecological implications of America's shift from a "producer to a consumer society" (176). Indeed, as Melosi suggests but does not pursue, the "new ecology" of the late twentieth century is more than a by-product of the move to the suburbs; it is connected to the changing habits of everyday life.

It is worth noting that Melosi only briefly considers questions of gender, race, and class. He acknowledges that such factors mattered in the provision of sanitation, but he does not examine them in a systematic fashion over the course of the study (365–369). Though it may be

unnecessary to ask more of Melosi in the context of such a comprehensive study, especially because other scholars already have begun to follow this important line of research, the question remains nonetheless, What are the connections between the development of the infrastructure and gender, class, and race?¹

Using a wide variety of sources and sophisticated methods, *The Sanitary City* offers a compelling view of the technical and social process of creating sanitation in American cities over a long period of time. It deserves a wide audience of historians and urban professionals, for whom it should stimulate an active, informed, and historically based discussion of the contemporary crisis of sanitation.

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A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia before the Civil War. By John Majewski (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000) 240 pp. \$49.95

Majewski's comparison of internal improvements in Pennsylvania and Virginia addresses a long-standing question, Why did economic development in the northern United States outpace that of the southern United States in the first half of the nineteenth century? In Pennsylvania, Majewski argues, the massing of people in cities generated markets that sustained a systematic network of railroads and canals. Beginning in the 1830s, urban capitalists provided crucial political and financial support for railroad construction. In Virginia, however, slavery inhibited the development of major cities, and, thus, stunted the progress of canal and railroad construction. The basic argument will be familiar to readers of Eugene Genovese's *Political Economy of Slavery* (New York, 1965), but Majewski's well-designed study offers fresh evidence and new insights. He weaves together documentary and statistical analysis and only rarely succumbs to economists' jargon.

Majewski compares local patterns of internal improvement in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, and Albemarle County, Virginia. The counties are similar enough to make meaningful comparisons, and Majewski's meticulous techniques for determining the patterns of investment and identities of investors prove useful. Before the 1830s, local elites in each county worked in similar ways to sustain projects for internal improvement. They mobilized networks of kinship, friendship, and political patronage to get roads and canals built. Though the direct re-

1 See, for instance, Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill, 1995); Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York, 1995); Maureen Flanagan, "The City Profitable, the City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History*, XXII (1996), 163-190.