

JAMES G. HANLEY. *Healthy Boundaries: Property, Law, and Public Health in England and Wales, 1815–1872*. Rochester Studies in Medical History. Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2016. Pp. 257. \$125.00 (cloth).

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The emergence and progress of public health as an administrative preoccupation in nineteenth-century England and Wales is, in many respects, a path well traveled by historians over the past four decades. Housing, sewers and water supplies, disease, poverty, and provision for their management have all attracted scholarly attention. In *Healthy Boundaries*, James Hanley looks further, to the often invisible boundaries that underpinned the management of urban spaces. The basic element common to all these public health concerns was house property and the quality of its human occupation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most house property was, one way or another, privately owned, and under the law of the land, owners of private property were entitled to certain rights regarding that property. This is an area that has already been investigated as it relates to legal tussles between rural economies and urban development in Leslie Rosenthal's *The Rivers Pollution Dilemma in Victorian England: Nuisance Law versus Economic Efficiency* (2014), but Hanley's study takes an urban and domestic perspective, moving this emergent area of scholarship on public health and the law into an entirely new domain.

Hanley's focus is on the earliest period of public health concern, before the Public Health Act 1872, when the traditional local government structure of England and Wales was reorganized into municipal and county councils. Well before this, growing populations were causing environmental concern to local sewer commissioners responsible for town drainage. Their ambitions for improvement were, however, hampered by the Tudor convention that tax to finance sewer construction could only be levied on those whose property benefited from, or avoided damage by, the sewers in question. Confronted by this impediment, the commissioners began during the typhus epidemic of 1817–1822 to argue that sewers benefited people specifically, rather than property, and in developing this concept to justify taxation for the purpose of sewerage, they achieved the concept of redistributive taxation. The cholera epidemic of 1831–32 marked a critical juncture: it provoked central government to define nuisances dangerous to health for the first time, and to require that they be medically certified. Yet this was not a medically driven development, as earlier writers often assumed. Dorothy Porter has pointed out that public-health expertise consisted in more than medical knowledge, and Hanley argues rather that disease forced local authorities to think about how they could and should act. Beginning in small rural towns, and hard fought all the way, local authorities began to develop powers to control nuisance. By the later 1830s, certain sets of bylaws, such as those of Liverpool and Worcester, were being used as models by other authorities, often modified to local circumstance.

The progress of sanitary administration in England and Wales is not, however, the main focus of Hanley's attention. At the core of this book lie the processes of the law, and the legal struggles and strategies by which local councils sought to achieve the powers they needed to transform the legal status of property in regard to its liability to taxation. If communities as a whole were to benefit from effective drainage and sewers, the Tudor tradition had to be overturned so that wealthier property owners could be required to foot community bills. In the course of this process, Hanley suggests, what he calls local communities of health were created, which may have played a part in shaping local and national opinion, and further influenced developments after 1872. This is not one story but many, since the needs and desires of the country's many different urban communities were various in these early decades of national clean-up. Beginning in the provinces, Hanley moves the analysis on to the complexities of London (chapter 4), where the existence of numerous, often geographically small, administrative authorities within the city posed special problems. A titanic struggle ensued after 1855 when the Metropolitan Board of

Works, the first administrative authority for the county as a whole, began to seek legal powers to levy rates for metropolitan purposes. The battle involved a positively Dickensian cast of characters—“mass civil disobedience, powerful corporate adversaries, hostile metropolitan and parliamentary opinion, and sceptical judges” (89). Should the city be divided into two sanitary districts, north and south of the river? The poverty of the southern districts precluded this: financial input from the much wealthier north would be needed to resolve the sanitary ills of the south bank. Despite the opposition, the Metropolitan Board of Works won a signal victory, achieving a “total revolution in metropolitan taxation” (91).

Much of Hanley’s text is given to discussion of the detail of legal cases and strategies, yet his text is never dry. Lucidly written and beautifully organized, this is a major work of scholarship. The thoughtful reading of existing literature and scrupulous labor among previously unexplored legal documents is clear on every page, and even more so in the scholarly apparatus, which covers nearly as many pages as the main text of the book. Hanley’s control over his material is masterly, and thoughtful signposting means that the reader never loses the path of the story. His emphasis on the external boundaries to private property in the first four chapters, does, however, sit a little oddly with the shift to domesticity in the final chapter. Here, Hanley focuses on municipal intervention in internal house features—on the provision of drainage for water closets and the abolition of privies, and on the struggle to regulate and control moral and physical conditions in houses let in lodgings. Regulation here, he notes, “was crucially informed” by “heteronormative middle-class domesticity,” although this ideology did not succeed in determining the scope of the legislation. While this transition to the regulation of internal boundary space is perhaps an inevitable and logical progression, and though it forms a critical part of Hanley’s argument for the creation of local communities of health, it does feel more like the beginning of a different book, one devoted to the legal undermining of the concept—at least in poor class housing—of the idea that the Englishman’s home was his castle.

Anne Hardy  
*London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine*  
[anne.hardy@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:anne.hardy@lshtm.ac.uk)

KATE HILL. *Women and Museums, 1850–1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge*. Gender in History Series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. Pp. 255. \$105.00 (cloth).  
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The jacket description for Kate Hill’s *Women and Museums, 1850–1914* identifies it as “the first attempt to recover the entirety of women’s contribution to British museums in the period 1850–1914.” This claim about “entirety” captures well the reader’s encyclopedic experience here. In clearly organized chapters, Hill’s study moves through the various roles women played in the burgeoning world of Victorian and Edwardian museology: women were assistants, volunteers, curators, housekeepers, popularizers and educators, donors and vendors, visitors, and patrons. Hill’s interest concerns how women changed the material practices of museums, a story of influence and impact that has—she argues—gone largely untold in scholarship on museums and culture. Crucial to Hill’s argument is the conception of the museum as a “distributed institution.” Scholars writing on the museum typically begin by defining their target institution: was it a temple, people’s university, fun house, world’s fair, or mausoleum? For Hill, the distributed museum accomplishes its cultural work by means of networked operations involving objects and people going in and out of its walls—demarcations that are