

ANNE-LOUISE SHAPIRO — *Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850-1902*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. Pp. xx, 224.

Anne-Louise Shapiro is not, as she acknowledges in her book, the first historian to have analyzed bourgeois reform proposals for housing the poor in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nor is she the first to have studied Parisian political, social, economic, demographic or public health developments after 1850. But she is the first to have brought this material together in an effort to understand better the activities of *les classes dirigeantes*. Thus, she has performed a very useful service for us. Her book will stand as a logical sequel to two other widely read books on nineteenth-century Paris: Louis Chevalier's *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX^e siècle* and David Pinkney's *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris*.

In her own research in primary sources (and this book is basically her dissertation), Shapiro examined not only the writings of bourgeois reformers but also the administrative records they prepared when they held official government or municipal posts. From these materials, she discovered that the bourgeoisie became concerned about the poor primarily when the poor represented an immediate political, social, medical or military threat (p. 23 *et passim*). Reformers were thus most active in three periods: from 1848 until roughly the early 1850s when the spectre of social upheaval and the cholera epidemic alarmed them; the early 1880s when ex-Communards and in particular revolutionary socialists became active, rents began to rise precipitously, and migration to Paris reached its all-time high (the effect being to add the equivalent of a city the size of Orleans [60,000] to Paris each year, as one contemporary observed [p. 55]); and finally, in the late 1890s when the falling birthrate and the apparent inability of the French to control disease among army recruits brought interest in the poor to another high point (pp. 144, 154).

Shapiro does not explain why she was attracted to her topic, but her book suggests that at some point she looked closely at the reform movement that came out of the Enlightenment, observed the flowering of attention to social problems in the early nineteenth century, and then noticed, as she points out explicitly, that around mid-century, a consensus was developing among social reformers that housing was the key issue for the poor in Paris. This development was reflected in the Melun Law of 1850 which not only identified working-class housing as the central problem for the poor but also "...opened the interiors of private lodgings to public surveillance for the first time" (pp. xiv and 17). The Melun Law was thus a landmark. But Shapiro found that housing continued to be "...at the center of social debate" (p. xv) for the remainder of the century, until hygienists, more professionalized and respected because of the dissemination of the germ-theory of disease, managed to refocus the debate away "...from stalemated questions of insufficient supply [of housing] and exorbitant rents to more accessible issues involving the regulation, inspection, and disinfection of unsanitary dwellings." Thus, "...the problem of inadequate working-class housing was redefined rather than resolved" (p. xviii).

Shapiro has organized her book into six main chapters. The first three provide most of the political, social, economic, and medical background, in a chronological fashion. Chapter III is especially valuable because it illustrates, with rich quantitative material, how the problems of the poor were exacerbated by the rebuilding of the city and the annexation of the suburbs. The last three chapters follow a more topical plan that stresses the diversity of housing solutions proposed by the reformers, the arguments reformers gave (although rarely do we see these reformers speaking directly to political, social, economic and medical changes), and the problems the reformers encountered in attempting to bring their proposals into reality. Two of the main housing solutions embraced by reformers were the concept of *cités ouvrières* ("complexes of workers' housing") and the concept of worker-proprietors, advocated by Frédéric Le Play and his followers and which was supposed to solve all problems by helping workers become homeowners. The one major piece of housing legislation to follow the Melun Law in the nineteenth century was the Siegfried Law of 1894. This law, representing the culmination of efforts to create thousands of worker-proprietors, established *comités des habitations à bon marché* [H.B.M.s] to promote the construction of low-cost housing (p. 160).

Shapiro argues that if we can understand bourgeois reform proposals better by understanding the context in which they were formulated and evolved, we can also reverse this approach and use housing strategies as a tool for understanding political, social, economic and cultural developments. And she offers some good material to illustrate this. I liked her analysis of the reactions of workers and revolutionary socialists to housing problems and proposals. And I especially found helpful her discussion on how the housing problem prompted conservative bourgeoisie in the Radical-Socialist camp to embrace Solidarism.

The documentation of the text is good although I found a number of undocumented statements for which I would have liked some proof. A more serious flaw, however, is Shapiro's failure to substantiate that 1902 is the cut-off point for the story. I do not dispute Shapiro's contention, but I would argue that since the campaign for low-cost housing does not end in 1902, a brief epilogue on accomplishments in housing and sanitation regulation up to World War I would have been in order. The book should not end abruptly, as it does, with the law of 1902.

The other main problem with this book is that scholars will not be able to rely on it fully, particularly for ease of access to material. In many endnotes Shapiro fails to give specific page references for books or articles she cites. More regrettable, however, is the fact that there are more than the usual number of inaccuracies in her citations and references. I have perused only those sources available to me locally, but I uncovered enough of these inaccuracies to cause me to fear that the problem pervades the book. To give some idea of these inaccuracies, I found incorrect page numbers in endnotes, a few direct quotes which contain some interpolation, a paraphrased statement that was not documented, and a couple of sources that were cited incorrectly. I would like to emphasize, however, that I found absolutely no evidence of major inaccuracies or misinterpretations. Therefore I am persuaded that Shapiro's findings are basically reliable.

My final comments: The titles of the first three chapters of the book are not truly reflective of their content; nor is there a faithful match between the descriptions of those chapters in the preface and what they actually offer. Also, in the preface, Shapiro tells us that "in addressing the question of working-class housing, the bourgeois society ... was forced, in effect, to engage in a complex process of self-examination and redefinition." She then claims that "it is the purpose of this book to explore this process..." (p. xvi). But what the monograph actually does illustrate is what Shapiro mentions at the beginning of that same paragraph in the preface, namely that "housing reform strategies... raised corollary issues which forced contemporaries to *reexamine accepted dogmas and cherished assumptions*" [emphasis added]. There are perhaps two more statements in the preface that are not supported in the body of the book. Shapiro does provide a useful selection of maps, charts, figures and pictures. Her index, however, is far too abbreviated to be of much help. And scholars will find that inconsistencies in identifying persons or commentators in the text itself only make matters worse. But the book is well-written and easy to read.

In sum then, Shapiro's book is a valuable one, but it will have to be used with some caution.

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ROLF PETER SIEFERLE — *Fortschritts-Feinde? Opposition Gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1984. Pp. 301.

This book is an uneven attempt by the West German economic historian, Rolf Peter Sieferle, to explain the cultural consequences of the coming of rapid technological change to the European scene. Tracing this development through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the author pays a minimal amount of attention to actual scientific and engineering innovations. Instead, his focus is