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Jackie Clarke, *France in the Age of Organization: Factory, Home and Nation from the 1920s to Vichy*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011. x + 218 pp. Notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$80.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-85745-080-7.

Review by Daniella Sarnoff, Social Science Research Council.

Jackie Clarke begins her book with the story of a cocktail party. Evoking a Paris soirée at the Auguste Perret-designed modernist home of the engineer, Jean Coutrot, Clarke uses the party to introduce the characters and concepts that will be the focus of her book. Many of the party's lucky attendees are connected in the worlds of interwar social science, art and architecture, technology and engineering. On occasion, the reader may feel a bit like the guest with a poor memory who can't quite keep everyone's names and connections straight. But Clarke is a good guide, reminding the reader of the interconnectedness of the "organization" world and even providing a primer sheet of biographies in the appendix.

Paulette Bernège, Jean Coutrot, Hyacinthe Dubreuil, Henri Fayol, and Alfred Sauvy, and the ideas they championed (as well as others), guide the story of the ascendance of organization and management in France from the years just following World War One through Occupation and Vichy. And it seems appropriate that Coutrot, the host of the Paris party, is a key figure in that story as he embodied the engineer-industrialist-manager who brought together ideas of mechanization, systems, management consulting and a new interdisciplinarity to economics in the interwar years. In discussing Coutrot and others, Clarke makes a compelling case for striking down the historiographically-entrenched notion of France as suffering from an economic traditionalism (through to the post-1945 years) which kept it from appropriate modernization and economic vitality. In exploring the many people (engineers, social scientists, architects, planners, educators) who tried to bring greater economic efficiency to France and solve "human problems" apparent in early twentieth-century Europe, Jackie Clarke sheds new light on the history of social science, the naissance of "management," and the continuities of the Third Republic, Vichy and parts of the Fourth and Fifth Republics.

On the one hand, Clarke's book is arranged thematically covering topics in chapters ranging from the origins of the mechanistic rationalization of the body to ideas about home management, education, class conflict and the new man. On the other hand, the work of the individual men (and it is mostly men) also structures the trajectory of Clarke's work as the subjects move from industry and engineering to have an impact on politics, policy and economic planning.

The beginning of the book notes the fundamental work of Frederick Taylor on industrial rationalization and mechanization and Clarke discusses his work and the work of Henri Fayol as a way to introduce an overview of organization in the early years of the twentieth century. These two engineers would set some of the initial terms by which the French would understand the key concepts that Clarke focuses on: industrial management and administration; the relationship of the part to the whole (in many different ways); and attempts to use efficiency and rationalization to improve industrial and economic endeavors, as well as to alleviate social discord. The role of engineers in this process is noted throughout the book and Clarke explains that due to the "engineer's preoccupation with systems and

efficiency,” (p. 14) they were the logical group to break out of their disciplinary mold and use the rationalism of science and systems to address the less rule-bound world of class relations and social conflict (whether in labor relations or a larger social system).

The greater political context of the period comes in and out of the story told here and at times it is not entirely clear in what ways politics truly functioned within the organization world. Certainly the ideas of the individual and groups are contextualized within the political events of the period, whether it is the Depression, the Popular Front, or, of course, Nazi occupation and Liberation. However, there are moments when the political affiliation of a particular thinker is mentioned and one is left to wonder what the assumed connection or lesson should be. For example, early on Clarke discusses the impact of engineers and Taylorists in bringing efficiency to munitions manufacturing during the Great War. Success in this area is credited to the “wartime partnership between business, labour and the state, embodied by the socialist Minister of Armaments, Albert Thomas” (p. 15). Similarly, “Etienne Clémentel, the Radical Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Louis Loucheur, a centre-Right engineer and industrialist...also made significant contributions” (p. 16). I am convinced that the engineer-economist could exist across the political spectrum, as Clarke argues (with her noted exception of Communists), but it is unclear at times what the weight of a noted party affiliation should be in this analysis.

The same might be said for the noted Catholicism of some of the individuals featured. While there were Catholic engineers (that is, engineers who were part of a formal professional organization that meant self-identification as such—and Clarke notes those professional associations), it is similarly unclear what is really meant by “Catholic” when used this way and what we are to deduce about the person’s ideas about organization based on their faith.

Clarke does a nice job of weaving together the story of individuals involved in organization work with the more thematic structure of her book. There are some themes that are introduced but, as must be the reality in any book, get less attention than others. I confess that I was craving more details on the recommended domestic rationalization espoused by the organization crowd. Perhaps it is my own hopes for the mythically organized home (a fantasy that clearly has some origins in the period Clarke is discussing and is simply being further mythologized in today’s reality TV shows) but I was searching the page for more details from Paulette Bernège. In the post-World War One period, marked by middle-class homes without servants and the continuing (if fraught) reality of women in the workforce, the belief that the domestic world could be rationalized along the same lines as the factory (bringing together productive and reproductive dreams of a renewed France) is telling of the gender order and larger anxieties of the time.

The belief that peace could reign in the factory and the household with just a bit more guidance from engineer-managers and *chronometrage* is an indicator of the great faith placed in the transformative power of organizing and a symptom of France’s greatest fears at the time. The concerns over economic efficiency, the hygienic vitality of the nation, and a well-ordered home were all part and parcel of the same longing for national vigor. The housewife-manager could be the embodiment of that national aspiration. And the housewife as “rational consumer” could help France with her social and economic concerns—by putting her own house in order, and the larger nation as well (p. 77).

I agree with Clarke’s critique, or warning, not to simplify the gender dynamics of the domestic organization movement. It is too easy to argue that this was all geared towards putting women back in their sphere after the upheaval of the First World War (or a similar argument). If the organization movement was intent on overcoming—or compensating for—the non-rational aspects of human existence with technology, efficiency and science, then no area of life, certainly not familial life, would be immune from the reach of this movement.

Just as the language and approaches of engineering would produce references of systems and machines for the organization of France, biologists would also influence the language of that organization with organicist references. Such was the case of the *organigramme*: a visual representation—originated by Fayol—of lines of communication within an organization that took on biological form. Whatever the discipline that was called upon, the belief was that science could be used to better both the structure of organizations and the mechanisms of work, and, by extension, that it could help bring peace to the class conflict of the interwar years.

For organizers of interwar France, all areas of life ultimately posed social questions that could be answered by some form of science. As Clarke argues, “the social question”—the problem of how to achieve social peace in an industrial society in which conflict appeared to be endemic” (p. 42) was the paramount concern. Architects, engineers, urban planners, managers, educators and those in the academy were eager to resolve the struggles between individuals and groups in order to produce social peace and economic prosperity. Groups and thinktanks (from *redressement français* to X-Crise, from New Education to DGEN) all focused on the possibility of bringing their disciplines to bear on this overarching concern of the period.

I have only scratched the surface of the topic, thinkers and ideas that Jackie Clarke addresses in her book. One should at least add to the list the following: an interest in crowd psychology and the legacy of Gustave Le Bon’s writing, which is a shadow over all group psychology of the twentieth century; discussions of action-oriented muscular male heroism that is an ideal of many addressed (perhaps especially those combat veterans of WWI who moved from the trenches to managerial positions); the New Education Movement; Rainbow subscription (a fascinating experiment to test and combat individuals’ propensity to read journals that legitimate their already-held opinions in a constant loop of reinforcement); neo-Lamarckian ideas. As Clarke argues, the organization movement touched so many parts of French life that the book presents the reader with an overwhelming number of actors, groups, concepts and interactions. While it may mean that on occasion the reader has to remind herself of some of the connections, the outcome is a rich story of social science and interdisciplinarity in the service of addressing the pressing concerns of interwar France.

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