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Paul-André Rosental, *A Human Garden. French Policy and the Transatlantic Legacies of Eugenic Experimentation*. Translated by Carolyn Avery. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2020. 248 pp. 15 Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$135.00 U.S (hb). ISBN 9781789205435; \$34.95 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9781789205442.

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In *A Human Garden: French Policy and the Transatlantic Legacies of Eugenic Experimentation*, Paul-André Rosental deploys an exceptional case study of applied eugenics, Ungemach garden city in Strasbourg, to discuss a range of issues in the history of French eugenics. This eugenic community was established in the early 1920s and existed until the 1980s. This was a neighborhood specially designed to host a small number of young couples and families—with specific characteristics in terms of age, health, and fertility—according to eugenic principles. The ultimate goal of Ungemach was to form an ideal community with healthy adults and children, a clean and safe environment, and qualitative and quantitative progress across generations.

Through the story of Ungemach, Rosental reveals a number of eugenic micro-histories, including the continuity of the eugenic rationale in France until the 1980s and the connections between French eugenicists and their American and British counterparts. He highlights similarities between French eugenics and Galtonian eugenics which are rarely discussed in scholarship. Furthermore, the author touches upon a subject that has not been treated adequately in eugenics literature; the interdependence between developmental psychology and eugenics. Ultimately, this book unveils the larger history of eugenics in a country which has been considered by some as immune to eugenics. This immunity is generally attributed to the influence of Catholicism, which is traditionally against eugenics, and to the longstanding pronatalism of the French. What is widely known about the implementation of eugenics in France has been limited to practices against the mentally ill under the Vichy regime, or to institutes such as the Alexis Carrel Foundation. Rosental brings to light and discusses the opposition between the “social hygienist” Latin eugenics, which was traditionally associated with France, and the hereditarian or Galtonian eugenics which prevailed in the garden city’s rationale.

Discussing the creation of a “human garden,” this study challenges the alleged egalitarian political democracy of France. Rather, there were many civilians and politicians who accepted human ranking and evaluation based on eugenic principles. The garden city not only received state approval, but the state actively participated in its establishment and development. Most importantly, the garden city’s management was transferred to the Strasbourg City Hall after 1950. This fact reveals the persistence of officially sanctioned eugenics after the Second World

War. In fact, the interest of the French state grew throughout the decades with many visits from MPs and other political figures who unfailingly praised Ungemach for the health, prosperity, and cleanliness of its residents and the robustness of their children.

The author describes the genesis and development of Ungemach garden city by the non-profit Ungemach Foundation. Ungemach gardens opened its doors in the early 1920s and lasted until the 1980s. This was a neighborhood especially designed to host a small number of young families. Couples were carefully selected based on a set of criteria that would potentially lead to the formation of clean, healthy, and prosperous households. The goal was to form an ideal community with healthy adults and children and a clean and safe environment. A rigorous initial selection would safeguard the success of the human garden experiment. Interestingly, the same questionnaire remained in place from the 1920s until the mid-1980s. This time span is, indeed, impressive because this human experiment continued well after the Second World War, which entailed the condemnation of eugenics.

Ungemach was considered a eugenic experiment because it involved population selection and management. Residents were regularly inspected on their levels of health, cleanliness, fertility, and progress in comparison with previous visits. The process of selection and evaluation was ongoing, with an ultimate goal to cultivate ideal families and citizens by careful selection, by providing them an ideal environment, and by maintaining standards of health and cleanliness for life. The residents of the Ungemach gardens paid monthly rent, which facilitated their regulation and inspection by a review board of the Ungemach Foundation. The review board had the right to expel those who failed to meet the agreed standards of living or procreation.

As Rosental correctly points out, such initiatives were not without precedent in France. After the cholera epidemic of 1849, house inspection to ensure standards of health and cleanliness was common practice. Workers who lived in employer-provided housing were under constant surveillance. As far as fertility was concerned, not only France but many other countries adopted pronatalist policies after the First World War. The more children were born, the more soldiers and workers the country would have. Equally important was the qualitative aspect of this pronatalism; children should be raised by proper parents in a proper environment, illustrating that pronatalism is not alien to eugenics; on the contrary they went hand in hand in France under the umbrella of “puericulture.”^[1] In some respects, the Ungemach gardens experiment blended easily into established norms in French society.

The Ungemach experiment had a protagonist, Alfred Dachert (1875-1972), manager of the review board and vice-president of the Ungemach Foundation. Dachert was responsible for the selection and inspection of the garden city's residents and was a politically influential figure. Unavoidably, Rosental devotes a large part of the book to Dachert. The book is not, however, exclusively devoted to the Ungemach gardens or Alfred Dachert. On the contrary, the garden city is framed as an illustration of broader themes: the survival of eugenics in post-war France and the relationship between the French and the transatlantic versions of eugenics. One of the book's purposes, which was successfully achieved, is revealing the British and American influence on French eugenics. The Ungemach gardens attracted the interest of famous journals, such as *Eugenics Review* and *New York Times*, which praised the experiment. Institutions such as the Population Investigation Committee and the British Social Biology Council expressed their

interest in the garden city as well. Equally important was a book devoted to the Ungemach gardens by the American Charles Goethe,^[2] and Paul Popenoe's praise for the garden city in his famous *Applied Eugenics*.^[3]

The third part of the book, although the shortest, is no less important than the other two parts. It deals with the relationship between eugenics and developmental psychology, which is often neglected in eugenics studies. Most scholarship in the history of eugenics focuses on Social Darwinism, racism, genetic determination, demography, population management, fertility control, and so on. The role of eugenics in psychology is traced in marriage counseling, genetic counseling and parental responsibility towards children's mental, psychological and physiological development. Rosental also explores eugenics as a moral theory and focuses on the conception of "human capital" and its implementation in France and the United States.

Rosental's use of a variety of sources to support his argumentation is impressive. The study benefits from archival sources, oral testimonies, and an extensive bibliography. This variety of sources offers a wealth of information. The book is more vivid than similar studies thanks to its figures, tables and charts. It is certainly a useful addition to scholarship on eugenics: a very well written book which deserves close study. Rosental reveals one of the few examples of applied eugenics in Europe which gained public and political acceptance even after the end of the Second World War.

NOTES

[1] William H. Schneider, "Puericulture, and the Style of French Eugenics History", *Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 8, 2 (1986): 265-277.

[2] Charles Matthias Goethe, *War Profits... and better babies* (Sacramento: The Keystone Press, 1946).

[3] Paul Popenoe and Roswell Hill Johnson, *Applied Eugenics* (New York: Macmillan, 1933).

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