



The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination

Alain Corbin

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In a book whose erudition and originality had a dazzling impact on first publication in France and the UK, Alain Corbin has put the sense of smell on the historical map. It is a perfect companion to Patrick Suskind's bestseller Perfume.

The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination Details

Date : Published January 1st 1988 by Harvard University Press (first published 1982)

ISBN : 9780674311763

Author : Alain Corbin

Format : Paperback 307 pages

Genre : History, Cultural, France, Nonfiction, Sociology, Literature, 18th Century, 19th Century

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From Reader Review The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination for online ebook

Rebecca says

A history of ideas about smell, cleanliness, health and illness in France, starting in the early modern period up to the turn of the 20th century... I didn't read all of this in detail because it was research for an essay, but what I did read wasn't particularly easy to follow, dates weren't often mentioned so it was hard to trace exactly what was happening, and it was hard to follow exactly what Corbain was getting at in several chapters. Maybe this was because he was writing about difficult, commonly changing ideas, but first it was odour carries illness, then it doesn't, then it does again... I would recommend Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages instead of this, an earlier book that explains things much more clearly.

Deb says

not as much aromatherapy allusion as i might have liked and indeed that is why i originally bought the book but nonetheless a fascinating insight into the days before sewage was efficiently and effectively dealt with in france...you can almost smell the pages at times...(there are refernces to lovely smells too!)

M. Ritchey says

I can not speak highly enough of this gem. It is a history of smell in France. Yes, smell. How people perceived it, what they thought about it, how it turned up in pop culture. How the perception of smell changed from medieval times to the 19th century. I literally could not put it down. Such a great example of a book that should be boring but is completely riveting. So bizarre. The depictions of 19th century Paris are some of the most revolting images that have ever been placed into my head. GET IN!

Charles says

A magnificent study of the olfactory, good and bad! It just makes scents!

Curtis Newbold says

If you're in the mood for a real strange glance into history, through the lens of smell, this book is for you. Corbin takes the most "pungent" of the five human senses and walks readers through the politics, imaginations, and physiology of smell. It's a creative, interesting book, peppered with glances into how human emotion is affected by the science of our senses. It only gets a 3-star rating from me, though, because of the obnoxious attempt to use as many terms for smell as possible (perhaps 20 - 30), and for encroaching redundancy to frequently. The book didn't need to be as long as it was to be effective.

Alexandra Sundarsingh says

Difficult, but incredibly interesting work to contextualize the absence of scent from everyday/historical analysis. Corbin connects the history of smell to germ theory, the rise of the individual, and even to architecture in unexpected and exciting ways.

Renee says

A tough read, but I persevered due to the frequency of these (and other similar) words: carnage, carrion, cesspool, decay, decomposition, disgust, excretion, fetid, filth, foul, gorge, noxious, odor, odoriferous, ooze, putrid, putrefaction, rancid, repugnance, repulsive, revulsion, rot, sewage, stagnant, stench, slime, vapour, waste. What a delight!

GertJan says

Een beetje er doorheen geskipped, in de tweede helft, maar fascinerend boek over de veranderingen in geur en stank in en rond Frankrijk rond de 18e eeuw. Over weerzinwekkende, maar normale situaties naar nieuwe inzichten en normen over individuele hygiene, en hoe dat door de verschillende klassen heen speelde. Degelijke Franse geschiedschrijving, tjokvol met referenties en citaten.

K. says

I thought this was going to be about perfume, but instead I got 250+ pages on latrines.
