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*Regulating Health and Safety in the British Mining
Industries, 1800-1914 (review)*

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reformers Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli as well as of the more radical Anabaptists sects. In theological matters, Paracelsus “maintain[ed] a position of resolute independence” (p. 78). His Eucharistic theology, for example, was distinct from “Catholic transubstantiation, Luther’s consubstantiation, and Zwingli’s symbolism” (p. 200).

In addition to explicating some of Paracelsus’s major ideas, this book provides nonspecialists with a fine introduction to the world of the sixteenth-century Holy Roman Empire. Webster paints a vivid picture of the social upheavals caused by recurrent famines and peasant revolts, the intellectual currents of humanism and neo-Platonism, the looming fear of Turkish invasion, and, of course, the tumultuous religious controversies. The second chapter, “The Power of Print,” is an excellent overview of the print market in early-modern German-speaking areas, ranging from the humanist presses of Basel to the “popular” presses of Strasbourg. In sum, Webster has produced an excellent introduction to Paracelsus and his age that should certainly replace Pagel’s work as the standard biography in English.

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Catherine Mills. *Regulating Health and Safety in the British Mining Industries, 1800–1914*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010. xxv + 284 pp. Ill. \$114.95 (978-0-7546-6087-3).

The history of occupational health and safety, for years a neglected research area, has received much attention of late, especially in the United States and United Kingdom. Mills’s book, based on a Ph.D. thesis and heralded by several journal articles since 2004, adds to the flow of recent work on Britain. The history of dust disease among coal miners, long overlooked despite its ubiquity, was addressed in Johnston and McIvor’s “bottom-up” *Miners’ Lung*, which appeared in Ashgate’s “Studies in Labour History” series in 2007. Mills has little to say about the miner’s experience. In fact, the first half of her book barely touches on miners’ health as opposed to mines safety. Her first four chapters examine in detail the development of regulation in coal mining, with emphasis on the various acts of parliament (1842, 1850, 1855, and 1860), and the introduction and operation of mines inspectors. She makes some attempt to place these regulatory developments within the theoretical context of the “Macdonagh model” of government growth, first posited more than fifty years ago. The effort, however, is half-hearted. She ignores much of the voluminous literature on the “nineteenth-century revolution in government,” along with the evolving state of debate on the issue.

Miners’ health looms somewhat larger in the second half of the book, where metalliferous mining is discussed, but this volume is mainly a history of safety rather than health. The first legislation covering metalliferous mines dates from 1872. But with industries in terminal decline and the relationship between dust

and disease badly misunderstood, the problem of respiratory disease was not addressed effectively.

As the author acknowledges, she traverses some well-worn ground in addressing the history of health, safety, and welfare in coal mines. Many historians have explored the origins and passage of the 1842 Mines and Collieries Act in particular. Mills justifies her study partly in terms of her use of a wide range of rich source material, some of it previously underused, which allows her to provide a comprehensive account of legal developments. It is surprising, therefore, that she has relied almost entirely on printed sources and made no use of the National Archives. There are other omissions too. Notwithstanding that J. S. Haldane is described as an expert on mine gases and a key player in the reform process, Mills ignores Martin Goodman's biography of him: *Suffer & Survive* (2007).

One of Mills's objectives is to explain why safety regulation for coal mines substantially predated the introduction of similar measures for metalliferous mines. She emphasizes visibility: "[C]ontemporaries looked to the most visible hazards, which were not necessarily the most frequent or dangerous" (p. 243). She draws an analogy with the strong public response to the Ladbroke Grove rail crash of 1999, in which thirty-one people died, and the relative lack of public concern about the thousands killed each year on the roads. This explanation is unconvincing, however, given that many mining accidents, whether arising from coal or metal extraction, occurred below ground and hence out of sight, while most transport accidents, whether involving trains or automobiles, occur in plain sight. The real lesson appears to be that large-scale disasters stimulate immediate public responses, whereas disaster "by installment" arouses much less interest.

Regulating Health is not easy reading, for Mills is no literary stylist. Tautologies, oxymorons, and other solecisms abound. The book also carries far too many typographical errors. Among the more grievous: Lord Ashley, the central figure in early mines regulation, appears at various points as Lord Ashleigh or Lord Shaftsbury (not Shaftesbury), and the names of several authors, including that doyen of occupational medicine Ludwig Teleky, are misspelled.

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Mary Wilson Carpenter. *Health, Medicine, and Society in Victorian England*. Victorian Life and Times. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010. xvii + 214 pp. Ill. \$44.95 (978-0-313-06542-2).

The history of health, medicine, and society in Victorian England has been well explored in monographs and textbooks for some thirty years but still attracts study. As scholarship moves on, new syntheses have their merits, and Mary Wilson Carpenter's volume is no exception. Carpenter takes a literary and gendered