

funciones. Quizá las drogas no fueran realmente capaces de inclinar la balanza de la historia de Alemania, pero sí de alterar el orden de los acontecimientos.

Con un estilo periodístico fresco, lleno de juegos de palabras, imágenes y referencias a la cultura popular este ensayo nos brinda sucesivas experiencias personales del autor durante el proceso de elaboración, buenas reflexiones hacia los historiadores del nazismo y muchos testimonios de personajes que revelan la existencia aún hoy de cierto tabú en torno a las drogas. Pese a que tal vez peque en atender y cuestionar demasiado la historia militar y política nacionalsocialista para abrir una nueva ventana desde donde observarlas, la obra apunta hacia otros campos de estudio sobre el uso de las drogas desde las políticas estatales y la sociedad alemana. La relación entre el poder y la farmacología es un terreno aún por ahondar en el estudio de los fascismos, por lo que seguramente encuentren en esta obra un referente divulgativo y un motivo para empezar y continuar profundizando en estos temas. Nos quedaría todavía por medir durante estos años el impacto real del uso de las drogas y las secuelas que dejaron en la sociedad alemana tras 1945.

Puede que Walter White no llegara a ser para el Nuevo México de Vince Gilligan como una especie de doctor Morell para la Alemania nazi, pero algo tienen en común ambas figuras: sus experiencias vitales nos acercan a la realidad desde otra perspectiva. Acaso esta sea una de las labores principales del oficio de historiador, algo que ha aprendido muy bien Norman Ohler. ■

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Criena Fitzgerald. Turning men into stone: a social and medical history of silicosis in Western Australia 1890-1970. Carlisle, Western Australia: Hesperian Press; 2016, 252 p. ISBN 978-0-85905-635-9. \$ 50.00.

Since the inception of the mining industry, the industry has been characterized by inattention to the health and welfare of its workers. Often governments and regulatory bodies have been complicit in overlooking disabling and deadly working conditions that could have been prevented with appropriate oversight. The overarching question in the age of rapid economic development is «How can we balance the rights of workers with corporate and financial interests?»

What is the legal, ethical, moral, and philosophical imperative for protecting the health of workers in dangerous occupations?

Oral historian Crienda Fitzgerald has previously explored public health campaigns to control tuberculosis in western Australia in her book *Kissing Can Be Dangerous* (2006). Now, she turns her attention to the history of silicosis or «miner's complaint», which explores the disabling social and economic consequences of silicosis on underground miners. Most damning of all, this incurable disease was preventable through regulation and control of dust in the workplace. According to this new history, the mining industry in Western Australia between 1890 and 1970 ignored the health and wellbeing of its workers during and after miners contracted silicosis. This historical overview makes a compelling and irrefutable argument for the critical importance of labor rights in the mining industry. The introduction spells out the debilitating nature of silicosis for miners, developed by breathing in silica particles during underground mining in which air sacs in their lungs were damaged: «Daily life became intolerable, and if they contracted tuberculosis, as many did, they died even sooner, exhausted by breathlessness and general debilitation with death often occurring from hemorrhaging of the lungs in a bout of prolonged coughing or suffocation». The title of the book is apt given this description.

This is not simply a record of the suffering of miners with silicosis and their families, but also serves as a cautionary tale for employers in the mining industry and other industries in which occupational injury rates are high. Fitzgerald explores misguided ideas about disease and possibilities of recovery. In particular, there was an epidemiological theory about silicosis as caused by germs in the mine.

The untreatable nature of this preventable disease differentiates silicosis from tuberculosis. Fitzgerald grounds her study with a historical overview of silicosis, including the 1912 Royal Commission on Miners' Lung Diseases, which denied compensation for industrial diseases. Throughout the text, she illustrates the ways in which compensation failed the miners, both through the Mine Workers' Relief Fund 1915-1932 as well as the Physicians, Silicosis and Workers' Compensation 1926 and beyond. Given the fact that miners did not often develop symptoms until after they left the workplace, there was little incentive for employers to compensate or support their workers with silicosis.

Fitzgerald's expose is unparalleled in its attention to detail and to the suffering of miners and the regulatory and legal paths taken to remedy the consequences of silicosis. For example, she notes that in 1904 the State Mining Engineer disregarded medical data about the likelihood of developing silicosis at the Great Fingall Mine due to the high quartz content of the dust. Instead of

monitoring the mine or taking preventative measures, he blamed the individual miners for developing silicosis and for not wearing a respirator or using sprays. In addition, there is great detail about the particular experience of wives and children of the miners, especially their eligibility to receive compensation both while their husbands were alive and after their passing. These passages are some of the most powerful in the book. For example, the Mine Workers' Relief Fund Board denied eligibility of William Newton, who died of 'Fibroid Phthisis' after 50 years in the industry, and his widow had three young sons. More troubling, widows were at risk of losing any income from the fund if they did work outside the domestic sphere or were perceived to not manage their homes properly. One report denied funds to a widow on the basis of being «by definition unrespectable and undeserving» because her son had been seen carrying alcohol. Other funds were terminated on the basis of having male guests in the home, which led to the automatic assumption that the widow was living immorally.

The final chapter illustrates the reluctance of the industry to prevent silicosis by suppressing dust through their promotion of the bogus aluminum therapy treatment, which was proven ineffective. Unfortunately, since the 1990s, the health department in Australia no longer conducts medical examinations of mine workers and allows the industry to monitor itself. This overview of a social and medical history of silicosis is a clarion call to action to protect the rights of often marginalized and underpaid workers, through legal and regulatory means, in one of the most dangerous occupations.

The struggle of miners with silicosis has parallels to coal and other mining industries today. It would have been instructive if the author had reflected more on the lessons learned from the silicosis experience in Australia. Consideration of its applicability to present-day labor violations in the mining and other industries would have given this fine monograph additional relevance. In the United States, coal mining continues to have high rates of injury and death, and the enforcement of regulations and workers compensation is critical from both a moral and medical standpoint. In Appalachia, a 2016 expose found black lung disease at higher rates than what official government reports showed. Similar to silicosis, black lung disease is also incurable and fatal. Also in 2016, Chinese controlled mines in Uganda and China were have numerous preventable occupational health hazards including exposure to live wires and unsanitary conditions resulting in death and life-long injury. Furthermore, China has limited benefits for workers injured doing a dangerous and not well-compensated occupation. In addition, coal mining has documented environmental consequences, including a chronic mercury epidemic in Peru.

Fitzgerald skillfully evokes the multiple ways in which miners and their families suffered. This book is suggestive of the need to push the contemporary health hazards of mining to the forefront of occupational health activism and regulatory change worldwide. Fitzgerald's historical account is a rich addition to the literature in the history of occupational health. ■

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■ **Paul D. Blanc. *Fake Silk. The lethal history of viscose rayon*.** New Haven-London: Yale University Press; 2016, 309 p. ISBN: 9780300204667. \$ 30.00.

Fake Silk se anuncia en el prefacio como la historia social de los riesgos laborales y ambientales del proceso de producción de fibras artificiales y como un homenaje a las víctimas silenciadas del disulfuro de carbono, el disolvente empleado en su producción y principal responsable de los daños a la salud humana y al medio ambiente de este sector industrial. Este libro es eso y mucho más. Su autor, catedrático de Salud Laboral y Ambiental en la Universidad de California, San Francisco, ha escrito una ambiciosa historia de un sector productivo de enorme trascendencia internacional a lo largo del siglo XX. Aunque con un notable protagonismo británico y estadounidense, el texto examina su desarrollo en los principales países productores, lo que proporciona una valiosa información sobre el resto de Europa, Japón y algunos estados latinoamericanos y del sudeste asiático. Una tarea que combina con el análisis de aspectos tan diversos como la historia de la investigación industrial y toxicológica, de las condiciones de trabajo en el sector, de las estrategias comerciales o de los significados y las representaciones culturales de la seda artificial en el mundo occidental. Para ello recurre a una multiplicidad de fuentes de una amplísima procedencia geográfica y lingüística: informes y publicaciones científicas, comerciales e industriales, expedientes judiciales, fuentes filmicas, radiofónicas, literarias, periodísticas, artísticas, manuscritas y orales, incluyendo entrevistas a obreros expuestos y memorias de trabajadores forzados durante el régimen nazi.

El hilo conductor de la obra, estructurada en siete capítulos de corte cronológico, es la historia del conocimiento científico sobre los riesgos del disulfuro de carbono. Hilo trenzado magistralmente en la trama del desarrollo histórico