Labour
Journal of Canadian Labour Studies
Le Travail
Revue d'Études Ouvrières Canadiennes

Judith Rainhorn, Blanc de plomb. Histoire d'un poison légal (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2019)

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Volume 91, printemps 2023

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1102183ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2023v91.0024

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)
1911-4842 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Fahrni, M. (2023). Compte rendu de [Judith Rainhorn, Blanc de plomb. Histoire d'un poison légal (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2019)]. *Labour / Le Travail*, *91*, 330–331. https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2023v91.0024

between central and peripheral arguments is difficult to follow. The methodological note did not mention how primary and secondary data were analyzed and how theoretical insights came to be developed. The author used an overly convoluted syntax at times and nodded to many concepts without systematically defining them, making this book more appropriate for prison scholars and other academics than for students, activists, or other laypeople. The latter is unfortunate, as the book concludes with abolitionist insights and calls for labour movements and struggles to show solidarity with incarcerated workers.

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Judith Rainhorn, *Blanc de plomb. Histoire d'un poison légal* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2019)

Judith Rainhorn's remarkable exploration of white lead in the workplace is a book that is at once a model of erudite historical research and a reflection on the ethical and environmental questions of our own era. In this scholarly study, which spans several centuries, Rainhorn attempts to understand the persistence of white lead in French workplaces, despite its known toxicity and the devastating physical consequences for the workers involved in its fabrication and use. Her book is a study of collective accommodation, or "l'approbation passive de l'intoxication collective" (5), that is, how societies come to accept a certain degree of risk and tolerate the consequences of known "legal poisons" such as white lead. Far from reciting a typical public-health narrative of steady, if incremental, progress over time, Rainhorn demonstrates that the indignation expressed by some citizens and political authorities over the toxicity of white lead ebbed and flowed over the course of more than two centuries; the dangers that it posed were more perceptible at some moments, imperceptible at others, despite irrefutable scientific proof of its deeply damaging effects on those who were paid to handle it.

Used in cosmetics for centuries, white lead ("céruse" or "blanc de céruse") was also a key element in the paint deployed by artists ranging from Vermeer to Van Gogh. Large-scale production of white lead began in France in the early nineteenth century, with its manufacture concentrated in the outskirts of Paris and in northern France, particularly Lille, already a major site of textile production. The white lead thus produced was integral to the paint that covered the exterior and interior walls of buildings, and that was also used to paint the surfaces of ships and, later, road markings. In a deeply researched study drawing on an impressive array of manuscript and printed sources (government documents, medical reports, business records, union minutes), Rainhorn traces the efforts made over the course of two centuries to draw public and political attention to the catastrophic physical consequences of white lead for the adult men who fabricated it (in France, this was a male workforce, in contrast to England, where workers in this industry were primarily female) and for those who worked with lead-infused paint, including house painters and the young women employed in the porcelain and artificial-flower industries. White lead's toxicity manifested in crippling neurological damage, the symptoms of which included headaches, vision problems, convulsions, deformed limbs, and paralysis; lead poisoning also affected the kidneys, the liver, and the reproductive system. Despite abundant scientific evidence of these symptoms, mainly collected by the physicians who treated the victims of lead poisoning in the hospitals of Paris and Lille, little progress was

made on the legislative front. Indeed, the story told here is largely one of collusion between legislators, industrial employers, and, perhaps most surprisingly, the civil servants responsible for public health, all of whom tacitly agreed to tolerate the consequences of the fabrication of white lead in return for industrial progress and economic gain – what Rainhorn, following Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, calls the cult of the "smoking chimney" (12). Moments of increased "perceptibility" of danger occurred in the 1840s and 1850s, when white zinc was proposed by some as a safe substitute for white lead, and again in the early 1900s, when the unions of building workers, especially house painters, mobilized and when France adopted, in 1909, legislation outlawing the use of lead paint. Yet the legislation adopted in 1919, only a decade later, which integrated industrial diseases, including lead poisoning, into workplace accidents legislation and thus compensated occurrences of such diseases, was a tacit recognition that white lead, like other toxins, had not disappeared from French workplaces. In the wake of the Great War, efforts by the International Labour Office, led by France, Belgium, and Italy, to draft international conventions banning or regulating the use of lead-based paint were ultimately successful, but met with significant resistance from English-speaking and German-speaking nations, as well as from Spain, which was, like Australia and the United States, an important producer of lead.

Rainhorn ends her study by discussing the numerous cases of infantile lead poisoning brought to the public's attention in late twentieth-century France. The vast majority of these cases involved the children of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, growing up in the inadequate housing of Parisian suburbs and ingesting the lead from the paint peeling off the walls of these apartments neglected by landlords and the state. As the author notes, what had for centuries been a workplace risk has become a larger environmental risk, one that was, incidentally, brought to the public's attention again in 2019 when Paris's famed Notre Dame Cathedral burned, releasing huge quantities of lead dust into the air. Rainhorn concludes her book by reflecting on the ultimately modest nature of the gains secured by periodic mobilizations around white lead and on the tenacity of our collective willingness to tolerate these everyday poisons.

Blanc de plomb is anchored in the sociology of risk and deeply rooted in the international historiography, notably the social and environmental histories produced by scholars of France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its author also draws upon the work of Canadian historians such as Michelle Murphy, whose research on sick building syndrome did much to develop the concept of "regimes of perceptibility." Canadian scholars, perhaps especially those studying histories of resource extraction, familiar with the consequences for workers of sustained contact with asbestos and silica, will find much to meditate here in this compelling and beautifully written work of historical research.

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Mike Amezcua, *Making Mexican Chicago: From Postwar Settlement to the Age of Gentrification* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022)

Where jobs existed in Chicago, ethnic Mexican workers, men, and women arrived at barrios to fill them. They consisted of US citizens going back generations—a rare number linked to the US war of aggression against Mexico in

https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2023v91.0024