

practice). Lord Byron, in Canto IV of *Don Juan* notes, “And if I laugh at any mortal thing, ‘Tis that I may not weep.”

The process of becoming a physician ironically, and perhaps unfortunately, separates the physician from others. “These nights [on the wards] made me realize how far apart we had moved from the other world in such a short time. . . . Our view would forever be skewed toward the abnormal. The remainder of the other world remained invisible and inaccessible to us. We were separated by the work we did and the things we saw and heard. . . . Never again would I walk casually to a football game with nothing on my mind except my date and the upcoming game” (p. 154).

Med School offers insights into the process of medical education and into the hard-won knowledge that informs and endures through a lifetime of practice. In his prologue, Meador states that he hoped “to capture the zeitgeist of medicine as it was taught and practiced in the mid-twentieth century” (p. xii). In that, he has succeeded. But he has also captured much of the fundamental process of contemporary medical education as well.

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GERALD MARKOWITZ and DAVID ROSNER. *Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002. xx, 408 pp., illus. \$30.

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What are the responsibilities of major American corporations to their workers, consumers, and the public at large? To what extent can industry be held accountable for the production of threats to occupational, public, and environmental health? In *Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*, Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner seek to answer questions such as these by examining three case studies in the history of industrial pollution: lead, vinyl chloride, and Cancer Alley. As a result of their involvement as expert witnesses in a series of legal cases involving silicosis and later cases involving lead and vinyl chloride, the two historians enjoyed “unfettered access to a range of materials never before viewed by historians unaffiliated with industry” (p. xviii).

Beginning with tetraethyl lead, the chemical additive in gasoline to reduce “engine knock,” Markowitz and Rosner detail the extraordinary lengths to which the major oil and automobile producers went to downplay and restrict the risks of lead poisoning. When the Lead Industries Association (LIA) sought to defend lead paint, they emphasized the

resiliency and whiteness of the paint while ignoring documented risks to children. Markowitz and Rosner carefully deconstruct numerous images from advertisements that extolled the virtues of lead paint while obscuring the risks to children. Despite the claims of the LIA, leaded gasoline inspired an early foray into the environmental justice movement as community health workers realized that urban children suffered from elevated blood lead levels.

Although *Deceit and Denial* offers fresh insight into the risks of lead, “the mother of all industrial poisons,” Markowitz and Rosner delve into completely new territory in their examination of plastics and vinyl chloride specifically. Having introduced the pollution debates within the chemical industry and beyond, the authors narrow their focus to vinyl chloride. Like the lead industry, the chemical industry sought to obscure health risks while promoting its product as safe. Yet as cases of cancer, birth defects, and other conditions were documented within the factories and (even more distressingly) among residents who lived near factories, it seemed that the chemical industry would have to begin to address risks associated with the thousands of new chemicals introduced each year. Through a detailed analysis of industry attempts to defend vinyl chloride, efforts toward its regulation at the federal level (involving OSHA, the FDA, and the EPA), and the evolution of toxicological measures with which to assess risks associated with the chemical, Markowitz and Rosner introduce critical episodes, including the Delaney Clause (widely accepted) and the Precautionary Principle (still resisted by industry).

Finally, *Deceit and Denial* reveals how environmental justice arose out of the politically empowered constituencies of the labor and civil rights movements, environmentalists, and a new breed of activist scientists who imbued their studies with a social conscience. Cooperation between such coalitions and residents resulted in significant victories against major, international chemical corporations, located in Cancer Alley (a term for the lower Mississippi River in Louisiana where hundreds of chemical and petroleum companies built factories in one of the most impoverished parts of the United States).

Insofar as *Deceit and Denial* is a book about the genesis of regulation of industry through the rise of activist scientists, Markowitz and Rosner themselves represent a new breed of historian. Fully engaged in the legal battles around chemicals, they have immersed themselves in primary documents previously inaccessible to historians without industry ties. They bring to this research a high level of critical perception, and they manage to balance the contexts of several histories (industrial, regulatory, scientific, and social) with a deep appreciation of present legal concerns surrounding

chemicals. In this and other ways, *Deceit and Denial* moves seamlessly from past to present and back, from lead to vinyl chloride, and from industry to consumer to agency. It is a tour de force that draws together the somewhat disparate strands of the history of occupational health and environmental health and policy as well as environmental activism.

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