

control is an important step in asserting civil liberty in contemporary times (Sheptycki, “The Police Intelligence Division of Labour,” 2017, forthcoming).

As devotees of English history will undoubtedly note, the penchant for dexterous use of the law in upholding the avaricious claims of conquering authority has deep roots. For example, the reign of Henry VII was notable for the institution of the Court of Star Chamber and his plundering of the realm for the good of the sovereign, which set the stage for the opulent, womanizing and war-mongering years of the son, *viz.* Henry the VIII. This should serve to remind us that all history is the history of class struggle involving a venal, vicious and avaricious elite. The future history of pre-crime control is part of a present attempt to assert class domination (Sanders and Sheptycki, “Police, Policing and Stochastic Governance,” 2016). Whether in magnificent Tudor garb, stubbornly attired in a business suit, garishly turned out in sleazy night-time fashion, or slackly dressed for the 19th hole, the power elite governs with law when they have to and regardless of law when they can. It is striking that the urge to prevent future harm appears not to extend to such things as crimes against the environment, crimes of the military, financial and economic crimes in the banking system. In short, crimes of the powerful.

Except that they do. One could cite a voluminous criminological literature on all of the above mentioned topics and more. McCulloch’s and Wilson’s slim and perfectly formed book joins this literature, offering a disturbing consideration of the community of practice that makes up “counter-terrorism”—and it is criminal! Keeping in mind that awareness about the plight of the planet at the hands of piratical cut-throats is usually served up filtered through multi-channel mass media and that the resulting smokescreen of “truthiness” is only sustainable in the new social media available in the palm of one’s hand, there is nothing like curling up with a good book. This is one of them.

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William A. Pelz, *A People’s History of Modern Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2016). 256pp. Paperback \$28.00.

William A. Pelz had an impossible task: how to digest 500 years of European history into 217 pages. Even more daunting, how to do it in a way that overturns traditional historical scholarship by making common, ordinary, everyday people the focus and lead actors of European society. “History is often written as if ruler, war leaders, and moneymakers are the only people in society or, at least, the only people who matter,” Pelz writes in the Introduction. “It will be argued in this book that the common people matter and that their history matters” (viii). This is a noble, if elusive, goal. Unfortunately, this book largely ignores the common people. It simply adds a left-wing critique onto a traditional, even old-fashioned, snapshot of Euro-

pean politics since 1500.

When Howard Zinn published his justly famous and still immensely popular *People's History of the United States* in 1980, social history was only in the first years of what became its golden age. Zinn did his best to locate ordinary citizens in the rise of American society. Since then, social history has made considerable strides, describing how ordinary people in the past encounter their environment, communities, and resistance to the long tentacles of the modern state. Today, as Sam Wineburg has recently written, Zinn's book seems as old-fashioned as those it sought to critique (Wineburg, "Undue Certainty: Where Howard Zinn's *A People's History Falls Short*," 2012).

Pelz's problem begins with the "Table of Contents," that is, with the central topics he chooses to investigate. The sixteen chapters are not built around the concerns and histories of the "common people," but they are, in fact, the same topics one encounters in every traditional European history textbook since R. R. Palmer first published *History of the Modern World* in 1950: the Reformation, English Revolution, French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Revolutions of 1848, and so on. Like Palmer, Pelz's program closely follows the development of the modern state—it is political history. And like Palmer, it turns out to be much more concerned with elite statesmen, writers, and revolutionary leaders than ordinary people. The chapter on the French Revolution, for example, discusses Burke, Jefferson, Robespierre, Babeuf and Napoleon, but ignores any discussion of an actual commoner or how the Revolution may have affected everyday life. If Pelz had room to discuss the novel *Tale of Two Cities* and the film *Marie Antoinette*, surely he could have devoted a few lines to peasant life under the Jacobins.

Even Pelz's picture of the Industrial Revolution manages to leave out common workers, highlighting instead Zola's fictional *Germinal*. Instead of recovering the actual people who battled soldiers in the streets of Paris, Pelz discusses Brecht's play, *The Days of the Commune*. While Pelz is right to suggest that World War I was experienced by "the common people of Europe" as the "repression and the suspension of most basic civil liberties" (106), he does not include any names or specific events that chart this significant loss. There is no attention paid to the recent awareness of the hundreds of working class autobiographies now available to history students (see, for example, the Burnett Archive of Working Class Autobiographies at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/services/library/research/special-collections/collections/burnett-archive-of-working-class-autobiographies>).

Perhaps the most glaring absence in the book is women. By my count, there are only three brief mentions of ordinary women; the two dozen other references concern princesses, leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, and well-known writers. There is practically no awareness of how women lived differently than men during these centuries. Gender, sexuality, and family life are categories that Pelz ignores, despite the dramatic and exhaustive recent historical scholarship. Likewise, there is very little in the book regarding migration, immigration, emigration, or

refugees, even though such topics continue, obviously, to preoccupy Europeans. Oddly, links between Europeans and the rest of the world is also ignored. The result is not a “people’s history,” but an elitist history with a populist message.

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Jessica van Horssen, *A Town Called Asbestos: Environment, Contamination, Health and Resilience in a Resource Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016). 256 pp. Hardback \$95.00.

Mention “asbestos” to any Canadian historian, and they are sure to think of the 1949 strike in Asbestos, Quebec. Mention “asbestos” to almost any other scholar, and they are sure to think of health risks and hazards. In *A Town Called Asbestos*, Jessica van Horssen brings these two meanings of asbestos together. She traces the development of the Jeffrey Mine, focusing on the hazards and health risks it posed for the community of Asbestos, while placing the 1949 strike at the core of her narrative.

The book explores the impact of a global industry on a local community through three conceptual lenses, what van Horssen terms bodies of land, the body politic, and human bodies. She shows how the local community repeatedly accommodated the expansion and organization of the physical mine, literally moving out of the way of the mine when necessary. She outlines the history of relations between the local political and business community and the company and its workforce, and the relations between the company and its workers. The most powerful early chapter in the book addresses the issue of human bodies, and tells a compelling if depressingly familiar story of a company, aided and abetted by the company doctor and medical researchers, shaping and reshaping the evidence of serious health risks facing Jeffrey Mine workers. As part of their work, researchers helped invent an idea that would sustain the industry and compliant governments throughout the twentieth century: that the physical structure of Canadian asbestos made it safe.

The pivotal event in van Horssen’s work is the 1949 strike. She contends that historians have been interested in the significance of the strike for the wider body politic in Quebec, and in doing so paid less attention to its impact on the history of the local community. Her account of the strike relies on the reporting of Gerard Pelletier, in part because he took seriously the community’s experience of the strike, and earned their trust. Not surprisingly, van Horssen makes a point of showing how the issue of asbestos worker health appeared and disappeared during the course of the strike. As a result of the events of 1949, she contends that the community “had undergone radical changes in land management, health awareness, and community power” (115).

Those “radical changes” are outlined in three chapters that parallel those