Parker is aiming at a career in psychiatry, he becomes much involved in the most controversial questions surrounding Czolgosz: is he sane or insane? is he really an anarchist? were there others involved? Ultimately, Parker is permitted to conduct several interviews with a willing Czolgosz, which permits Coleman to investigate these questions, ultimately and wisely avoiding easy answers.

The narrative itself is a pleasant one, carrying the reader along quickly and easily. One shares Parker's perceptions not only of Czolgosz, but of the prison in general, daily life in Auburn, and turn-of-the-century American life in general. While definitely middle-class, Parker, as a student, is not wealthy, and therefore frequents a working-class bar, which lets Coleman portray the "other side" of the community. Likewise, Parker's romance with his mentor's headstrong daughter, Lucy, permits the author to bring in issues of women's rights and late Victorian morality. At the end, of course, the questions of capital punishment and of the electric chair also make their appearance.

The author is interested in questions of social justice, and of the nature, controversiality, and role of anarchism at the time. By making his protagonist both inquisitive and open-minded, Coleman is able to explore these issues in an impartial way, to the reader's advantage.

It is difficult to tell how much actual research went into this book. The author seems well-informed on the central and peripheral questions he deals with in the narrative, but the bibliographic note is extremely brief. Notably missing is any reference to A. Wesley Johns' 1970 book, *The Man Who Shot McKinley*, probably the leading secondary source. (If the reader wants to look at the book *American Assassins*, which Coleman does list, its author's name is misspelled there: it is James W. Clarke, with an "e.")

Overall, it is a successful book. For the general reader, it is an "easy read" that also provides a good historical background to an important time and important events. For the professional historian, the book's value is somewhat less clear, but it is informative in a general way, and reminds one of issues that are not entirely in the past.

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Robert McIntosh, *Boys in the Pits: Child Labour in Coal Mines* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

The boys in the pits both impressed and dismayed American journalist Stephen Crane in his 1894 visit to a Pennsylvania coal mine. They "swore long oaths with skill," he reported, and while their boss thought he controlled them, Crane was

somewhat thrilled to show that he did not. Crane described the choking dust, hard work, and low pay, and with scathing irony, "they are very ambitious," the hopeful aspirations of the pit boys to someday follow their fathers down into the mines as full-fledged miners. Crane's story reflected something of a Progressive consensus. The men in the scribbling class, it seems, were unable to describe the boys in the pits without using the term "imp" to convey otherworldly devilishness along with scrawny size and small prospects. These wan rascals appeared often in muckraking journals and government reports as both sources of disorder *and* victims of greed, industrialism, and parental indifference.[1]

Yet the tension between this vision of children in the coalfields as disruptive imps and as pathetic waifs has remained largely unexplored by scholars. More: they have received little focused scholarly attention at all. How many boys really worked in the pits? What happened to them? What was their role in the battle for union recognition? What was their role as *children*? In the system of the industry? With the publication of Robert McIntosh's new book centered on children in the mines, these blind spots in previous scholarly work seem now to have been egregious. This was, after all, an industry that long depended upon a social system of recruitment and apprenticeship. Unlike other occupations that by 1900 faced an aggressive program of deskilling and mechanization that destroyed informal community traditions of recruitment, apprenticeship, and control, these aspects to coal mining remained largely intact in many coal towns. In other words, even into the twentieth century, the future of the coal mining industry depended on drawing the children of coal miners into the life of the mine. It is here that McIntosh wisely places his focal point.

Indeed, the richest parts of this book are those that put the boys of the title at the center, those chapters that put aside the author's admirable mastery of global, business, and technological aspects of coal mining in favour of taking seriously the question of why boys made the decision to go to work. McIntosh's historical treatment of how boys in the mining towns became boys in the pits is comprehensive and exemplary. Reasons for entering the mines changed according to time and place, he shows, and are relevant for understanding the history of working-class families in the industrial revolution. Here he points out the crucial, basic point that different regions handled the creation of full-fledged workers from children in different ways.

Historians take note: we can no longer loosely suggest that coal miners simply imported their work practices from the British Isles. No. McIntosh shows how coal miner work practices and work culture soon became *Canadian,* or more accurately, how they were soon adapted to the particular workplaces and work cultures of different mining towns and regions. As McIntosh describes it, in some places, a formal, state-sponsored system of certification merged with the older method of passing on knowledge through immersion in the mines, and progress from trapper boy, to driver, to miner. He also points out the impact of

certification on school attendance. Where certification was enforced, coal miners were far more interested in sending their children to school so they would have enough book knowledge to pass the tests (63-4). In other words, McIntosh's command of his sources allows him to admirably complicate the question of why children went down into the pits – and in so doing, to deepen our understanding of larger subjects such as coal mining and the Progressive reaction to industrialization. Children went down in the pits not because they were forced to do so, but because in the context of the time the decision made good sense. They went down for different reasons in different places and at different times. Generally speaking, they went down because they were paid in status and in money.

This book complicates its argument as it progresses. For example, in his Introduction and first chapter, McIntosh suggests that Progressive writers failed to recognize the role of children in ensuring the livelihoods of their families – or to recognize the high value children themselves put on that role. Reformers, he argues, mistakenly attempted to impose middle-class ideals on working-class realities. They looked with distaste upon the saucy impishness with which pit boys rejected the boring, demeaning discipline of the schoolroom for the attractions of work. Far from harmless interference, attempts to force children from work to school posed a dangerous threat to working-class families. For workers (and farmers), after all, children were an essential part of the family workforce. The brief period between the time children became productive workers and the time that they reached adulthood served a vital purpose. It allowed families to develop the surplus that might allow them to weather accidents, economic lean times, and old age.

Taking his argument to its logical conclusion, McIntosh suggests that working-class and farmer parents saw their children (of necessity) as adults, only smaller. The distance between Progressive and working-class views of childhood is an important observation that McIntosh makes well. Yet he also seems (perhaps deliberately) to overdraw this dichotomy in his early chapters: "were labouring children capable contributors both to industry and to strained and vulnerable working-class budgets," he asks, "or innocent victims of grasping employers and parents?" (5)

But by his final chapter, McIntosh's view of the role of children in working-class survival strategies becomes far more historically subtle, far more deeply grounded in the formidable pile of evidence that he has sifted. By the end of the book it becomes clear that working-class parents recognized childhood as conferring special status on children – *even as* they relied on their money-making abilities. Employers created special categories for children, *even as* they exploited them. Indeed at the close of his book, McIntosh describes in detail the ways in which coal miner parents eased the way for their children. If they were but the littlest adults, the biggest adults in their lives paid close attention to that mere

fact of their physical size. This was basic. Hundred-pound children after all could do less work than two-hundred pound men. But McIntosh also shows that parents made allowances for childish emotional immaturity and fears as well. A sort of seasoning or toughening to the wet, cold, dark, hard work of the mine was – after all – part of the point of starting miners in the trade as youngsters. At the start of his book, McIntosh takes at face value declarations that this process was relatively swift. "As a Nova Scotian miner explained in 1891, 'there are no children working in the mine. They may be children when they go in at ten or twelve years of age, but a fortnight or so thoroughly works that out of them'" (5). By the end, his thesis established, he is more ready to acknowledge the length and tenuousness of that seasoning process – to acknowledge the more immutable, less historical facts of childhood. ("As trade unionist J. Morrison explained in 1906, 'To help the boy is our bounden duty'" (157). Other examples of adult solicitude for boys abound).

Parents also recognized the significance of childhood work experience and schooling on the future prospects of their progeny in this era. In other words, in the body of the book, McIntosh begins to acknowledge that turn of the century reformers had a point – one rooted in more than condescension toward family labour, community-regulated apprenticeship systems, and the inherent disorderliness of the boys of the pits when they became the boys of the street corners. In this new era of large-scale industrial labour, the mobility of children following their parents on the farm, small shop, or mine was more likely to be mobility *downward* than upward.

McIntosh makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of coal mining, but also of generational shifts in work. In the process, he uses the fruitful perspective of boys in the pits to develop a comprehensive view of the complexities of coal mining. McIntosh illuminates the ways in which all aspects of the colliery interacted – with a changing backdrop of technology, state regulations, and the labour market. In other words, he does not use the refreshing newness of his perspective to avoid doing his homework. This is a diligent book. McIntosh's addiction to the passive tense, especially in the early chapters makes for heavy going at times. Perhaps this is the grammatical cost of comprehensiveness. In any case, he has written a professional book, thought-provoking, deeply researched, and well worth the attention of professional historians or anyone interested in the working-class history or the history of the mines.

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[1] Stephen Crane, "In the Depths of a Coal Mine," *McClure's Magazine*, (August, 1894).