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## Introduction

### *The Meanings of Deindustrialization*

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The point of departure for any discussion of deindustrialization must be respect for the despair and betrayal felt by workers as their mines, factories, and mills were padlocked, abandoned, turned into artsy shopping spaces, or even dynamited. While economists and business leaders often speak in neutral, even hopeful, terms such as “restructuring,” “downsizing” or “creative destruction,” metaphors of defeat and subjugation are more appropriate for the workers who banked on good-paying industrial jobs for the livelihoods of their families and their communities. In fact, the first public use of the term “deindustrialization” identified the Allies’ policy toward Germany just after World War II: an active process of victors stripping a vanquished nation of its industrial power. Indeed, to many workers who walked out of the factory gates for the last time in the sunset of America’s golden age of industry, it must have felt exactly like an occupying force had destroyed their way of life, driving them not only from their workplaces but often their homes and communities as well. As “the great mills fell like broken promises” across the steelmaking region of Ohio and Pennsylvania, Joe Trotter Sr., a thirty-seven-year veteran of Youngstown’s steel industry, made the connection between the two uses of the term explicit. Picking through the rubble of the dynamited Ohio Works, he remarked about U.S. Steel, “What Hitler couldn’t do, they did it for him.”<sup>1</sup>

Although we have kept in mind the people caught in the cross fire of industrial change, the purpose of this volume is explicitly to move the terms of the discussion “beyond the ruins.” While the politics and anxiety that accompanied the shuttering of the organized, high-wage manufacturing centers remains a key component of this book, the collective argument these essays make is that the time is right to widen the scope of the discussion be-

yond prototypical plant shutdowns, the immediate politics of employment policy, the tales of victimization, or the swell of industrial nostalgia. Rather, our goal is to rethink the chronology, memory, spatial relations, culture, and politics of what we have come to call “deindustrialization.” Emphasizing a historical approach to the problem, we seek to analyze the complexity and multiple meanings of one of the major transformations of the twentieth century. Taken together, these thirteen original essays suggest that deindustrialization is not a story of a single emblematic place, such as Flint or Youngstown, or a specific time period, such as the 1980s; it was a much broader, more fundamental, historical transformation. What was labeled deindustrialization in the intense political heat of the late 1970s and early 1980s turned out to be a more socially complicated, historically deep, geographically diverse, and politically perplexing phenomenon than previously thought.

Consider, for instance, how these trends played out at Pennsylvania’s Homestead Steel Works, an icon of U.S. industrial history. On the location that once hosted some of the greatest struggles in U.S. labor history—the famous 1892 strike and the Great Steel Strike of 1919—and was home to the core of Andrew Carnegie’s industrial empire, now sits a strip mall featuring the same retail stores that dot the big-box outer rings of most U.S. towns. Gone are the steelworkers and their union, the United Steel Workers of America; gone are their wages, their product, and the bustling civic life they supported. On that once world-famous bend in the Monongahela River are now a Loew’s Cineplex; a McDonald’s; a Target; a Bed, Bath and Beyond; and other national chains displaying wares produced in an immense global network of production. They mark the completion of Homestead’s move from center stage in the drama of labor and business history, to an industrial ghost town in the 1980s, and finally to “Anytown, USA,” at the dawn of the twenty-first century. While the mill once supported a vibrant commercial district as workers poured out of the Homestead Works gates onto Eighth Avenue, the city itself has since been eclipsed by the faux main street created within the retail complex to simulate—in comforting and safe, if vapid and sterile, ways—the feel of a traditional old main street.

There is, however, one difference between Homestead’s new Waterfront development and other generic shopping complexes around the country: towering over the cineplex are twelve ghostly smokestacks disembodied from any other reference to the old steel mill—like sentries guarding access to an already forgotten past. (See figure 1.) The strange row of smokestacks was used as the Waterfront’s advertising logo, adding some place-specific color to the otherwise generic beige landscape of strip mall development. While an experienced eye might see the smokestacks as mon-



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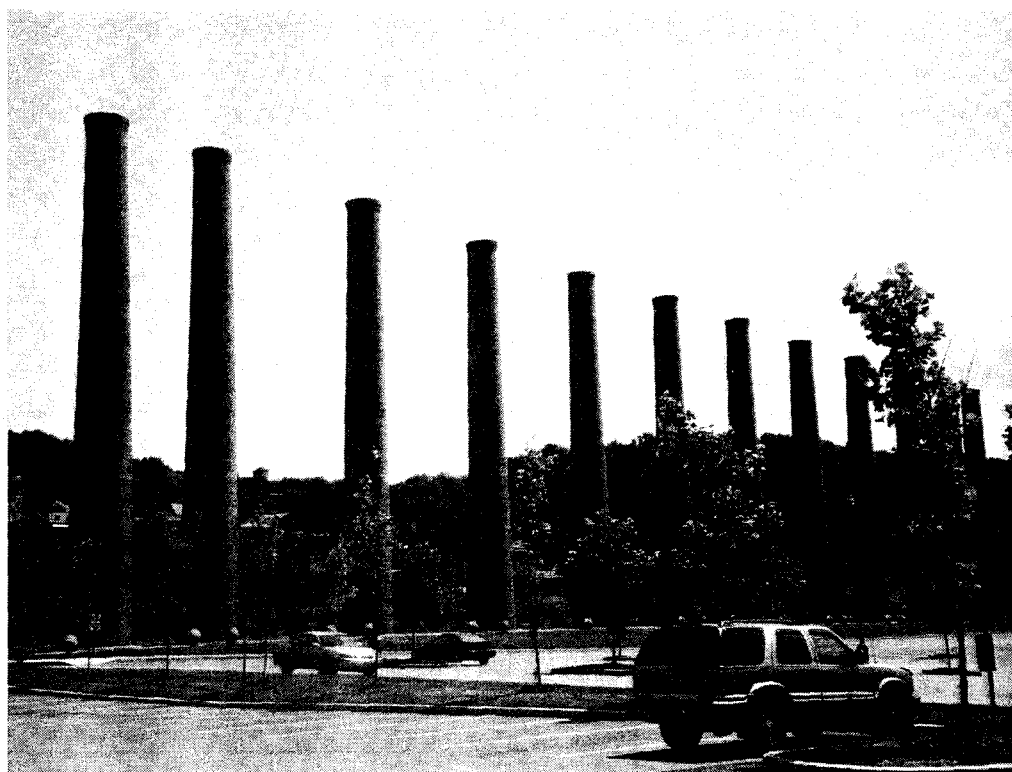


FIGURE 1. Lori Delale, *Twelve Smokestacks in a Strip Mall*, 2001. Smokestacks sit watch above a Loews Cineplex parking lot. For most visitors these structures serve more as commodified nostalgia than history, but to many these postindustrial towers are reminders that what is now a generic shopping complex was once home to the gritty and turbulent labor history of the mighty Homestead Works steel mill. Courtesy of Lori Delale.

uments to the many transformations in civil society, social life, economics, and the power relations of the workplace, for most visitors they serve no such purpose. The smokestacks are neither commemorations nor full obliterations of the industrial past—they stand merely as commodified quotations from a distant modern epoch, which do little more than offer a bit of nostalgia and character to an otherwise nondescript, postmodern retail landscape.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to Homestead's strip mall present, when Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison published their classic 1982 study, *The Deindustrialization of America*, plant closings and capital flight presented an immediate political crisis. From the vantage of a new century, however, deindustrialization seems both less profound and more so. On the one hand, what we call deindustrialization may best be understood with hindsight as one episode in a long series of transformations within capitalism. Indeed, the industrial age is alive and well, even if the locations have changed, and even

if the rules of investment have shifted. Not only has production migrated with capital to far-flung points of the globe, but many areas hit hard by “deindustrialization” in the 1980s have recently experienced a renaissance of manufacturing—though often on different terms. In many respects, the idea that we live in a postindustrial age smacks of a certain northern intellectual conceit, and using “postindustrial” to describe our current political economy and culture obscures more than it reveals.

On the other hand, the aura of permanence that surrounded the industrial culture of Europe and the United States throughout the twentieth century has made the experience of deindustrialization seem more like the end of a historical epoch. The impact on community networks and institutions wrought by plant closings, and the painful realities of job loss, appear very different on the ground to workers and their families. That we frame our historical experience of capitalism somewhat misleadingly with reference to *the* “industrial era” does not ameliorate the real hardship created by deindustrialization. The central challenge of this volume, then, is to describe a temporary, historically bound set of conditions that are experienced in terms of permanence by ordinary people in daily life. Like any historical transformation—for instance, the industrial revolution itself—the process we call deindustrialization was uneven in its causes, timing, and consequences, and the effects rippled through all aspects of society. As opposed to the changes under industrialization, however, those under deindustrialization were more disorienting than overtly political, tended toward the elusive rather than the tangible, and marked a confusion of power relations that had seemed significantly clearer under the old order. The dramatic evidence of industrial change and capital flight that litters our landscapes does, however, present a basic collective problem: How do we account for the destruction of an economic order that seemed so rooted and pervasive?

In the end, what may be most troubling about these ruined industrial landscapes is not that they refer to some once stable era, but rather that they remind us of the ephemeral quality of the world we take for granted. If Karl Marx was right in saying “all that is solid melts into air,” then the industrial culture forged in the furnace of fixed capital investment was itself a temporary condition. What millions of working men and women might have experienced as solid, dependable, decently waged work really only lasted for a brief moment in the history of capitalism. Because capital was fixed in giant machines bolted to the floors of brick-and-mortar factories, the industrial culture that emerged in various places at various moments had an aura of permanence, durability, and heritage.

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synagogue are all artifacts of a material culture made possible by the location of particular incarnations of capital in space and time. Mobilized into the service of value-added, durable-goods production, this capital provided the basis of a limited but nevertheless expanding industrial prosperity for workers, foremen, managers, and bosses. But the solidity of factories and tenements and steeples masked a fundamental impermanence; it obscured the forces that both created this world through investment and broke it apart by withdrawing investment. Working people saw in the decline of this industrial order the dissolution of their society, culture, and way of life, and the betrayal of their trust by those whose decisions shaped their fate. But owners, investors, and corporate officers did not perceive the world in quite the same terms. For them, the profitability of their enterprise, the need to stay competitive and prosper and thus theoretically serve the greater market good, trumped any considerations for the lives of working families on the ground.

What does this bode for the study of deindustrialization? To begin with, we must jettison the assumption that fixed capital investment in resource extraction, heavy manufacturing, and value-added production defines the stable standard against which all subsequent changes are to be judged. Rather, we should see this political-economic order and the culture it engendered as temporary and impermanent developments in space and time. Secondly, deindustrialization is a critical transformation in U.S. society, to be sure, but of what kind, and to what extent? What is new and old in this latest phase of history? How is it experienced differently by people in varied places, times, and circumstances? And last, our scholarship must work as hard to understand the mental and cultural frameworks of deindustrialization as it has to grasp the political, technological, and financial dimensions. What are the ideas, symbols, and images that shape our conceptions of the “postindustrial”—indeed, that undergird the very way that we think about our work lives?

The dominant method of studying deindustrialization is to trace the death of mills like Homestead and the workers’ experiences of that process—an approach that has yielded an important body of research, even some classics in U.S. scholarship.<sup>3</sup> This collection builds on that scholarship, but pushes for a broader range of methods, frameworks, views, and conclusions. In what follows, we move the focus away from a “body count” of manufacturing jobs (a very misleading approach, since the absolute figure of manufacturing employment has actually remained fairly stable in the postwar era, though dwarfed by the rise in service sector employment).<sup>4</sup> Taking a cue from the changes in Homestead, we look at deindustrializa-

tion as a process, a historical transformation that marks not just a quantitative and qualitative change in employment, but a fundamental change in the social fabric on a par with industrialization itself.

None of this can be understood without reference to Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's politically impassioned benchmark study, from which the actual term and political concept of "deindustrialization" entered the popular and scholarly lexicon. These authors constructed their definition of the problem in the midst of an enormous political and economic crisis two decades ago, but that definition remains the point of departure for launching a reconsideration of twentieth-century industrial history. By "deindustrialization," they wrote, "is meant a widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation's basic productive capacity." At the core of the problem, they argued, was the way "capital—in the forms of financial resources and of real plant and equipment—has been diverted from productive investment in our basic national industries into unproductive speculation, mergers and acquisitions, and foreign investment." They explained that all of this was symptomatic of a very specific historical juncture—the end of the postwar boom—at which the old rules no longer worked and new rules would be necessary for sustainable development. The old "social contract," based on relatively high wages and on respectful working arrangements with unions formed in the New Deal era, had been abrogated by management in the face of the triple squeeze of international competition, high labor rates, and rising safety net costs for workers. The firms' response was often capital mobility—whether through the relocation of manufacturing geographically or through switching to nonproductive forms of investment—as a means of disciplining labor, fomenting regional wars for investment, and lowering the costs of doing business.

Sociologically, at the core of Bluestone and Harrison's study was a fundamental, even irreconcilable, tension between the needs of capital and the needs of communities. Capital needed to control labor costs as the postwar settlement fell apart and investors were ready and willing to build a new system on their own terms—even if it meant destroying communities in the process.<sup>5</sup> Communities, on the other hand, needed the wage and tax base provided by fixed capital investment in large-scale manufacturing to support their households, schools, parks, clubs, hospitals, civic and religious institutions. The higher the wages, the more robust these dense social networks became, until in certain places at certain moments a full-fledged industrial culture took root.

Today the struggle to preserve basic industry that fired Bluestone and Harrison's project is all but gone, but the legacy of deindustrialization remains. This collection both accepts and departs from the fundamental in-

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sights set forth in *The Deindustrialization of America*; it expands on the chronology, complicates the causation, draws out the complexities, and pushes the problem into previously unexplored realms. In so doing, we cover six themes, each organized to challenge our assumptions about the meanings of deindustrialization. The first part, titled "Rust," takes a new look at rustbelt cases: a carpet mill in Yonkers, New York; an auto plant in Lansing, Michigan; and the leisure industry in Atlantic City. We then move into the second part, "Environment," which draws important connections between environmental degradation and the industrial past in Anaconda, Montana, and Love Canal, New York. Part 3, "Plans," examines the range of responses from local, state, and federal government bodies meant to cope with hardships caused by industrial change. The next part, "Legacy," analyzes the ways in which the industrial past is incorporated into, or denied by, the present in three different settings. Finally, "Memory" brings us to the kitchen tables of workers and their families in two southern communities in order to learn how they perceive plant closings and pink slips, and how they construct notions of citizenship, community, duty, and survival in their efforts to carry on with their lives.

The book opens with a trilogy of essays that challenge the typical view of the causes, timing, and effects of deindustrialization in terms that are grounded in specific firms and communities. Tami J. Friedman adds to the growing literature that reconsiders the chronology of deindustrialization. Her study opens with the announcement of the Yonkers mill shutdown in 1954, at the height of the postwar boom, when the employer selected Greenville, Mississippi, as a new production site. Friedman's competitive geography of production builds on Bluestone and Harrison's tension between "capital and community," but she reorients our understanding of the problem. The mounting evidence suggests that the challenges faced by places like Yonkers had less to do with the collapse of the postwar boom than with capital mobility as a constant in U.S. industrial relations—challenges made more difficult with the globalization of industry decades later. Her analysis of the carpet company's relocation, as well as Greenville's attempts to lure industry southward, also reminds us that one town's deindustrialization might just be another town's industrialization—though the theme of labor discipline remains a constant at both sites.

The chronology in Lisa M. Fine's study of Lansing is less surprising than that in the Yonkers case, but here causation becomes the main problem. "Who killed Reo Motors?" is the question that informs her inquiry into the closing of a major manufacturing plant. Placing the plant shutdown in an analytic tension between a fundamental structural transformation that defines an era and a simpler cyclical phenomenon, she combs through mul-

multiple explanations for the death of Reo Motors. Her approach moves well beyond the binary of capital versus community by looking at key local factors, broad issues in the cold war political economy, and the geography of industry, race, and urban change, all of which underscore the complexity of a single plant closure. When the story ends with the reincarnation of Reo just outside of town—operating under very different circumstances—the complexity of causation is again brought to the fore. The new industrial regime, however, makes it seem as though labor relations have been pushed back in time, as the new firm “re-created the industrial world Ransom E. Olds began at his first Reo Motor Car Company in Lansing, in 1904.” The historical slate has been wiped clean.

Next, Bryant Simon turns to a city that looks like many old manufacturing centers, but was once sustained by a very different industry—public commercial amusements. His examination of the social life of the collapsing tourist economy in Atlantic City touches on a stinging irony first aired in the movie *Roger and Me*. At the end of Michael Moore’s politically charged film about the deindustrialization of Flint, Michigan, we learn that the film cannot be shown in Flint for one simple reason: there are not any movie theaters left to screen it. Simon’s Atlantic City likewise lacks a movie theater today, an even more galling prospect given that the town’s economy had long revolved around leisure pursuits and public amusements. He uses the movie house as a way of understanding not just the economic transformations in the tourist industry but, very pointedly, how reactions to desegregation tragically helped to destroy both a city and a service economy. The success of the earlier, glory days of Atlantic City, argues Simon, rested on racial segregation, and when court decisions removed racial restrictions from those public spaces, public life died along with Jim Crow. Like so many former manufacturing centers across the nation, Atlantic City was on the skids by the 1970s, only to be resurrected by casino boosterism. Gaming has certainly since brought money into the city, but the death of the old industry also represents the death of the (white) “public” city, as people drive in from far away, park in the acres of parking lots, and spend hours staring alone at video poker machines—a far cry from the shared, though segregated, bustling civic and commercial space of the old boardwalk.

The second part of this collection breaks new ground by bringing our attention to issues that are intimately linked but rarely considered together: industrial decline and environmental disaster. Here, the authors remind us of the dual symbolism of “smokestack industries”—part might, power, and prosperity; part pollution, waste, and toxicity. The two studies in this part, Kent Curtis’s on the former mining center of Anaconda, Montana, and Richard Newman’s on Love Canal enrich the broader debate about the

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legacy of industry by bringing the key themes of environmental crisis, regulatory politics, and community activism into the story. At these two sites the workers and their communities were left not only without jobs but with poisoned earth as well.

Before "Love Canal" became synonymous with environmental disaster, the site was called "Love's Canal," which some hoped would become a nineteenth-century industrial utopia. The failure of this industrial dream, Newman explains, would scarcely have registered in the historical record except that Love's ditch, which was to supply hydro power to the community, became a hole into which the chemical industry dumped staggering amounts of toxic waste. The famous local activism that emerged from the area in the 1970s was shaped not just by the rising environmental consciousness of the nation, Newman argues, but by the experience of working-class families faced simultaneously with layoffs and a legacy of industrial pollution. As more than two hundred firms departed the Buffalo-Niagara region, they left behind a classic deindustrialized landscape of poisoned brownfields. Working people, charged with the urgent need to make their community safe from acute toxins, could scarcely afford the luxury of nostalgia for a bygone industrial age.

A similar set of problems involving development, class divisions, postindustrial transitions, and environmental catastrophe can be found in Anaconda, Montana. When Anaconda Copper's smelters stopped running, explains Kent Curtis, the city was left not only bereft of employment but also in the midst of the nation's largest Superfund complex. As the town, the company, and the Environmental Protection Agency searched for solutions, they came up with the idea of building a golf course atop two hundred acres of smelting waste that they buried under an earthen cap. Although the sand traps are made of black slag and each of the eighteen holes is nostalgically named after an old industrial installation, Curtis concludes that the golf course essentially allowed all the parties involved—especially the company—enough cover to get out of their predicament. They were able to escape from, rather than deal with, the industrial past by figuratively and literally burying it. "It is a landscape manufactured not so much to remedy the errors of the past," he explains, "as to recast them long enough for capital to be mobilized elsewhere." The conversion of the brownfield site into a space of leisure and recreation provides a final, fitting twist to one of the worst cases of pollution in the history of U.S. industry.

Since, as Curtis explains, contending with deindustrialization is more complicated than building a golf course, the third part, "Plans," opens up a discussion of the role of city, regional, and national politics. Here the three chapters explore a variety of key issues, including suburbanization, white

flight, urban renewal, taxes, investment climate, and the pursuit of high-technology alternatives. The authors argue that race, space, industry, residence, and local power are all intimately linked, and that strategies for reorganizing the city after World War II took hold, often rather ineffectually, as responses to the shifting industrial and residential terrain. This set of studies begins with Howard Gillette Jr.'s examination of the municipal politics of Camden, New Jersey. In perhaps the best and most understated summary of the problems faced by former industrial communities like Camden—or Flint or Gary or East St. Louis—Gillette writes that “disinvestment is not a one-time process. It has cumulative effects.” Indeed, plans to deal with the snowball effect of industrial flight continually met the recalcitrant problem of an inadequate property tax base. As more and more industries fled Camden, the city lapsed into fiscal crisis. With less money from ratable industry, the city’s physical plant and social life deteriorated, and middle- and upper-income families began to flee, taking their tax dollars with them. The larger the city’s debts grew, then, the greater its problems became, but the greater its problems became, the less able were municipal institutions to attract and capture business and residence. In the absence of real support from the state or the federal government, Camden was forced to tax already poor people and already struggling businesses even more, leaving each successive generation of politicians to inherit a larger and more tangled mess from their predecessors.

The “Plans” part then moves to larger geographies of analysis. Robert O. Self’s exploration of San Francisco’s East Bay area reveals the tension between an old urban core and the new suburbs wrought by the flight of industry and people. The planners of Oakland, California, sought to improve their city by recruiting industry to peripheral towns, which ironically undermined the industrial growth of Oakland itself. But in the postwar era, white citizens saw in their residential enclaves a retreat from the noisome, dirty industries, and a refuge from the black and Latino families that had migrated to the Bay Area during and after the war. Such decentralizing forces fundamentally altered not simply the industrial landscape, but the political one as well. A distinct politics of “homeowner populism” emerged in the industrial suburbs, linking low taxes with growth and high property values with racial segregation. Given these complicated patterns of residential and industrial location, Self argues, Bluestone and Harrison’s term “deindustrialization” obscures more than it illuminates. Self posits that we ought to think more in terms of the “spatial dynamics of industrial restructuring,” which frame uneven metropolitan growth and expansion over time.

Such uneven spatial dynamics, argues Gregory S. Wilson, were the primary reasons behind the federal government’s Area Redevelopment Ad-

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ministration (ARA). Created under the Kennedy administration, the ARA sought to build on the regional planning successes of the New Deal, but emerged in the throes of the cold war as a weakly structured and thinly funded attempt at industrial policy. Federal planners and policy makers understood the important link between regional industrial decline and poverty, Wilson explains, but they never had the funding or congressional backing to make a dent in the problem. Moreover, race, rather than uneven development or industrial decline, became more closely associated with poverty among U.S. policy makers. The weakness and ultimate failure of the ARA, then, represents an important point of transition between the structural liberalism of the New Deal and the racial liberalism of the Great Society. The emergent political discourse, which favored a racialized and urbanized explanation of broad economic problems in the 1960s, left policy makers with few tools to deal with the consequences of uneven development, regional transformation, and capital mobility.

In the fourth part, "Legacy," three chapters come to terms with the complicated meanings of place. As various cities endure the tremendous stress of industrial decline, they lose not only their industrial work but their identities as well. John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon show the double victimization of Youngstown—first as a site of horrendous job loss and then as the national poster child for deindustrialization and political corruption. The legacy and public memory of plant shutdowns, Russo and Linkon suggest, can be just as burdensome to the community as the immediate crisis of job loss itself, reifying the symbolic weight of the city as a national site of despair. As the community drifted from its status as a shrine to industrial power to the "murder capital" of the nation, "locals internalize[d] the image of their community as a site of loss, failure, crime, and corruption." Thus, the problem is not simply that Youngstown as a place suffered a loss of identity; the larger problem is that, as yet, community members do not have the power and tools to challenge the images created about their place. The political project that remains after the mills are gone is to reclaim a positive civic identity by shunning the version of the town others thrust on it and developing ways for citizens and workers to lever their own past en route to a better future.

Similarly, S. Paul O'Hara's analysis of the image and legend of Gary is concerned with the impact on urban culture and esteem of deindustrialization. He traces several successive images of "Steel City"—a rational, planned, industrial utopia at the beginning of the century that became a hard-working, sin-filled, violence-prone, blue-collar town in the popular imagination. As black workers moved north for employment and jobs began their agonizing departure, Gary's image changed first to that of a great

“black metropolis,” and then to that of an “urban wasteland.” Racial politics has had a particularly devastating role in shaping the city’s national status, and the city finally became a poisoned symbol of everything the nation was trying to avoid—jobless, black, the other murder capital of the nation. Finally, as with Atlantic City, Gary found itself forced to embrace the casino industry as a path toward reshaping the national understanding of a place in which the words “industrial” and “utopia” were once linked.

Kirk Savage takes a different tack on the problem of imagery, representation, and legacy, exploring how the industrial past is commemorated in a city firmly committed to a postindustrial future. In his explorations of Pittsburgh, a city that hosts the Steelers football team but does not make any actual steel, he documents how industry is commemorated in much the same way war is commemorated, with monuments to generals, soldiers, and battlefields. This martial imaginary organizes the industrial past into a narrative about a collective war of technological man against the wilderness. Absent are narratives about the nature of industrial work itself, the experience of community formed by a manufacturing ethos, or the bloody conflicts between workers and bosses in the streets and factories of the city. Indeed, Savage reports, reigning strategies of commemoration manage to avoid any of the major issues of the industrial past—or the postindustrial present. Searching the landscape, he selects an enormous pile of slag (the same type of industrial refuse lining Anaconda’s new sand traps) as the most fitting tribute to the industrial legacy. What some see as a worthless industrial dump to be covered over, others see an eco-monument to the industrial past. It is in the “perverse poetry” of industrial trash that Savage finds “a landscape that asks us to view our industrial legacy not as a heroic episode from a golden age but as a living challenge in the present.”

The fifth and final part of the book, “Memory,” moves from how we think about cities to how people think about themselves by investigating workers’ intimate understandings of plant shutdowns in two southern communities. In the homes of former employees, Joy L. Hart and Tracy E. K’Meyer listen to workers in Louisville, Kentucky, and Steve May and Laura Morrison interview people “downsized” in Shelby, North Carolina. These are not the old industrial Midwest cities that we have come to associate with deindustrialization. While the large northern cities capture the lion’s share of scholarly attention, the main story may just be in hundreds of small shutdowns, layoffs, and restructurings around the country. That the South, a place known to attract migrant capital, faces its own ephemeral industrial patterns reinforces the themes of the volume. Moreover, only rarely did workers have the means or drive to take action, as did the Youngstown workers who stormed the U.S. Steel building in protest of the

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