

private homes and popular spaces? It is hoped that Deutsch's work will occupy the first step along a road toward a feminist geography of Boston.

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**High, Steven. *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969–1984*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. xi, 306. \$55.00 cloth, \$27.95 paper.**

A casual Internet search for the term *rust belt* produces almost 75,000 separate references, such is the extent to which that phrase has entered popular discourse. Yet detailed definitions, beyond the mere descriptive, of the phenomenon are harder to come by. Steven High's *Industrial Sunset* is, therefore, a welcome addition to the literature on "deindustrialization" in North America. In his own words, it offers "a regional analysis of the economic and cultural devastation of the Great Lakes region and a study of how mill and factory workers made sense of their own displacement" (4). More than that, however, *Industrial Sunset* also explains how and why Americans and Canadians differed in their interpretation of and response to plant closures and mass layoffs, through their contrasting employment of the notion of community.

National differences are rooted in the very concept of the rust belt itself. High opens his book with a meticulous and often fascinating review of the term's origins and etymology, with its obvious echoes of the 1930s dust bowl imagery. The significance is much more than semantic, High argues, for once established, the idea of the rust belt "produced a stigma that attached itself to the once mighty industrial heartland, and hastened its decline" (34). Yet while *rust belt* soon became the accepted metaphor to describe the American Midwest, in Canada it never supplanted established labels such as *Golden Horseshoe* characterizing the industrial cities of southern Ontario. In part, as High shows, this was because the economic recessions that blighted the entire region between 1969 and 1984 were never as severe in Canada as they were south of the border. For example, not a single steel mill or auto assembly plant closed in Canada during these years.

But more importantly, the degree to which *rust belt* became embedded in the public lexicon reflected national differences in interpreting those recessions. In America, journalists and economists viewed "deindustrialization" as a desirable restructuring of the nation's economy, moving it away from reliance on heavy manufacturing. Indeed, there was an air of inevitability to the whole process, with long-term benefits outweighing any short-term suffering. In Canada, however, the closure of factories in the textile, clothing, footwear, and electronic industries was seen as an undesirable function of the branch-plant economy, with American firms closing Canadian operations ahead of their own. This, plus a greater legacy of government intervention in the post-war economy, led Canadian workers to believe that shutdowns were "not part of the natural order but

rather a foreign virus that could be suppressed without killing the host" (38).

High builds his comparative study carefully and convincingly. In successive chapters, he examines the response of workers to the impact of closures and displacement, the aesthetics of the new post-industrial order, and the underlying logic and ambition of those firms that led the drive to "deindustrialize." This is largely preliminary, however, to the book's final two chapters, which analyze, respectively, the efforts of American and Canadian workers and their trade unions to resist and fight back. By the late 1960s, High contends, "American nationalism had been tarnished by the Vietnam War and McCarthyism, making it unattractive as a symbolic weapon to fight plant shutdowns" (133). Instead, unions appealed to the ideal of community in their struggle to build wider support against the closures. It was a policy that ultimately failed, however, for "community identity acted to confirm state and regional difference and did little to dampen the hyper-competitive atmosphere that existed among the fifty states within the breadth of America" (164).

In Canada, the situation was both similar and different. Here unions and workers appealed to the broader community of nation, portraying their plight as part of a national struggle against the post-war rise in foreign (i.e., American) ownership, investment, and control. Accordingly, Canadian trade unionists "literally wrapped themselves in the flag to defy foreign-owned companies that wished to abandon workers with little or no compensation" (191). Plant shutdowns continued, certainly, but much so than in the U.S. Governments in Canada responded to political pressure and intervened to slow down, if not reverse, the process.

Within its own frame of reference, *Industrial Sunset* is an excellent book. It joins the like of Ruth Milkman's *Farewell to the Factory* and David Sobel and Susan Meurer's *Working at Inglis* as a crucial look at the death of industrial America in the 1970s. High overcomes the not inconsiderable obstacle of being denied access to official records of all the major corporations he approached, making intelligent and often ingenious use of other archival and published material. His insights on contemporary pop culture's response to deindustrialization are especially sharp, while his own interviews with victims of plant closures are timely reminders of the ultimate human cost of corporate decisions.

Any reservations I do have about this book have to do with its frame of reference itself. In building his thesis on the potential of economic nationalism, High acknowledges, in passing, the contemporary Marxist critique that "plant closings and job losses were part of a worldwide trend in capitalism that had little to do with nationality," but does not pursue this line of thought (179). Yet surely it is crucial, for if North American corporate bosses were making decisions about plant relocation or closure in response to transnational considerations, then would any amount of community-based protest have been effective in the long run?

It is not without significance that High's study ends with the recession of 1984, four years prior to the U.S.–Canada Free