

Il reste qu'en dépit de ces petites coquilles, l'*Histoire de l'Amérique française* demeure une excellente porte d'entrée pour ceux et celles qui désireraient en savoir plus long sur l'histoire de la présence française jadis disséminée sur presque toute l'étendue du continent nord-américain.

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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. 306.

The social and economic dislocation produced by technological change, new trade relationships, and innovations in finance and capital has been a staple of historical investigation since the Industrial Revolution. Unleashing population movements, destroying and remaking communities, transforming the conditions of life, and often showing the economic order at its most arbitrary and inhumane, that dislocation has an impact and force that scholars and observers have been unable to resist.

Taking its place in this long tradition of scholarship and examination, Steven High's study — focusing on the fate, in the years 1969 to 1984, of the once-mighty industrial region of the lower Great Lakes — looks at matters in ways that both follow its predecessors and strike off in new directions. Much careful attention is paid to the scope and extent of the changes taking place, particularly in the centrally important steel, rubber, and automotive industries. Explanations are advanced, with the usual suspects — cheap goods from elsewhere, lower costs in rival producing areas, failure to innovate, poor management, lack of strategic vision — brought in for scrutiny and interrogation. Discussion of effects on the communities involved is allotted much space, attention in that important area focusing on the efforts made by those communities to get control of and to limit the damage being done by what was happening in their midst. The effects of dislocation on workers are brought under review in a particularly prominent way. Filled with analysis and discussion based on extensive interviews with workers themselves, the pages devoted to this important matter bristle with indignation, sympathy, and much respect and approval for the cleverness and ingenuity with which the victims of change attempted to deal with their situation.

Unexceptional in many of its concerns, the book separates itself from its analogues through the attention it gives to the region's distinguishing features. The most important of these is, of course, that region's partition by an international border. Seen as a marker of quite substantial difference between the communities lying on either side, the border is awarded a central place, not only as a line dividing two types of industrial base but also as a marker separating two labour cultures, two approaches to government, two types of nationalism, and two mindsets. Understood in this way, the border's role as a determinant of much of what happened is sharp and distinct. Plant closings, certainly, emerge as much affected by it. Canadian plants, relatively new in both equipment and design, had a high survival rate — “not

one integrated steel mill or auto assembly plant closed in Canada between 1969 and 1984” (p. 130) — while American plants, older and more outdated, shut down in droves. The degree of protest registered on the two sides of the border was a function of difference as well: Canadian unions, politically active and used to having impact, intervened, often with success; American unions, business-oriented and surprisingly conservative, accepted much of what the bosses decided to do. The playing of the national card was tied to the different circumstances of the two countries, too: Canada’s high degree of foreign ownership made it easy to blame foreigners — especially Americans — for decisions to close, while the more complicated situation in the United States — where foreigners often created the problem through imports and cheap labour, but responses to that problem came from American owners and managers — meant that this was harder for Americans to do.

Not all pitfalls likely to be encountered in a study of this sort have been avoided. A potentially strong chapter on terminology and terminological difference does not quite establish the significance and meaning of the terms it brings forward. In consequence, as readers contemplate even a number of familiar designations — “middle west”, “heartland”, “dustbowl”, “rustbelt”, “sunbelt”, “smokestack America”, “The Foundry”, “The Golden Horseshoe” — they do not see those designations analysed in a way that negotiates the differences between their status as “regions of the mind” and their role as signifiers of concrete and very tangible social and economic reality. An interesting discussion of plant architecture, industrial parks, and the aesthetics of industry never quite connects to the overall theme. There is much deploying of terms from theory in cultural studies and social analysis, but it remains mechanical and perfunctory. Use of interview material — despite contact with theorists of its relevance and ability — is not managed in a way that attends to the manner in which interviewees, consciously or not, are involved in self-presentation, performance of roles, and position-enactment.

That said, this study stands as a solid, workmanlike, carefully assembled contribution to the understanding of a difficult, complicated, multi-faceted problem. Its emphasis on border-demarkated difference responds to Courchene’s claim that Ontario is essentially a North American region-state and takes up Helliwell’s argument that borders matter in ways that give them a place in an important, ongoing, highly charged debate. Flawed in some areas, strong and effective in others, this book emerges, on balance, as one very much worth having.

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LAMARRE, Jean — *The French Canadians of Michigan: Their Contribution to the Development of the Saginaw Valley and the Keweenaw Peninsula, 1840–1914*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. Pp. 209.

This excellent book is an English translation of the author’s *Les Canadiens français du Michigan : leur contribution dans le devenir de la nation québécoise*, published