Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class, and Memory

Tim Strangleman
University of Kent, UK

James Rhodes
University of Manchester, UK

Sherry Linkon
Georgetown University

Abstract

In this introductory essay we review key themes in the scholarly literature on deindustrialization over the last twenty-five to thirty years. While the term deindustrialization has been in use since the early 1980s, more careful attention needs to be brought to bear on the cultural significance of industrial change over time, including on how individuals and communities reinterpret deindustrialization through the lens of memory. This essay highlights contributions that reflect multiple disciplines and approaches, including interdisciplinary work. We also argue that cultural representations such as photography, literature, the media, and personal narratives offer especially useful insights into the continuing significance of deindustrialization, giving us access to the ways people are drawing on and constructing their memories of industrial work and of the process of deindustrialization itself. This essay and the wider special issue suggest that taking a long view—from the perspective of more than two decades after major shutdowns—and examining documentary, personal, and creative representations provides important insights into the meanings and consequences of the experience of deindustrialization for individuals, communities, and nations.

Introduction

> *"Does anybody in America make anything anymore?"*[1]
>
> *"Why doesn't Britain make things anymore?"*[2]
>
> *"We used to make shit in this country, build shit. Now we just put our hand in the next guy's pocket,"* –Frank Sobotka, *The Wire*, Season 2.

In the last episode of the classic British TV drama *Boys from the Blackstuff* two of the main characters leave a wake for an old trade unionist, George Malone, and decide to mark his passing with a drink at The Baltic Fleet, a Liverpool dockside pub. The powerful scene confronting the protagonists inside the pub is one of chaos, mindless drunkenness, redundancy parties, payoffs, and recreational drugs. The scene, and indeed the whole drama, can be read as

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illustrating the breakdown of the organized working class, left high and dry by the retreating tide of work and industry in the city. The power of *Boys from the Blackstuff* was apparent when it was initially shown in the early 1980s. However, with the passage of time, the impact of this fictional account of working-class life and the mass job loss it reflected has become even more marked on a wide variety of audiences. At the time, *Boys from the Blackstuff* made visible, through drama, the immediate visceral response of workers to mass closures. But neither displaced workers, nor audiences, nor the show's writer and creator, Alan Bleasdale, could fully understand what was happening around them. Bleasdale captures the process of community breakdown, disorientation and detachment with little or no idea what the future holds for his fictional characters, or their real-life counterparts.[3] Looking back to the period of the 1980s we are able to better appreciate both the ruptures and continuities in industrial communities and working-class life.

The passage of time allows us to understand more fully large-scale social and economic trends and to see what was missed, not only in artistic representations, but also in academic accounts, of the process of deindustrialization. Just as it was for Bleasdale and his protagonists, the immediate understanding of deindustrialization by academics was limited; its meaning, consequences, and long-term effects were only possible to really appreciate over the long *durée*.

Three decades after the widespread closing of mills, mines, and factories in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, working-class communities are still wrestling with the legacy of deindustrialization. For all the economic impact of plant closings, deindustrialization has never been purely a matter of work or money. As labor historians Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott have noted, deindustrialization "turned out to be a more socially complicated, historically deep, geographically diverse, and politically perplexing phenomenon than previously thought."[4] Across the disciplines, contemporary scholars are developing new approaches to the study of deindustrialization that focus not on the immediate experiences and effects of plant closings—what Cowie and Heathcott refer to as the "body count."[5] Instead, contemporary scholarship is examining the long-term social and cultural legacies of deindustrialization. How do people remember both industrial work and its loss, and how do they remember the aftermath of closings? What strategies and media do they use to frame and comment on the past? And how do they use the history of deindustrialization to understand the present and build for the future?

The pieces in this special issue examine the meaning of deindustrialization through analysis of its representations in photography, fiction, popular culture, worker narratives, and the landscape. These representations operate as a contemporary "storehouse of memory," as Dolores Hayden has written of the landscape, but they do not preserve the past transparently.[6] Rather, representations reflect and influence memory and perspective. Through them, we can gain insight into the continuing struggle over the meaning of industrial work and its loss, for displaced workers, their families and communities, and for outsiders.

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Along with reflecting the perspectives of those who construct them, representations serve as "moral landscapes," to use David Byrne and Adrian Doyle's terminology, capturing the unresolved political, cultural, and social tensions related to deindustrialization.[7] Representations allow us to consider how those affected by deindustrialization remember it but, because deindustrialization affects not only those who were immediately displaced, also those who have no direct experience of industrial work, those who were not physically or psychologically present during the era of closings. For the children and grandchildren of displaced workers and for outsiders who have created artistic and media texts, deindustrialization is not based in their own memories, but in response to the conditions of the present, the filtered memory of the industrial, either as articulated by those who lived through it or as inscribed on the landscape, heritage and the meanings assigned to deindustrialization in contemporary culture.[8]

By analyzing the way industrial work and its loss have been remembered and represented, the essays in this volume reveal the ongoing contestation between past ideas about work, class, identity, and place and a present in which those things have been destabilized not only by deindustrialization but also by current economic conditions. The contributors draw on a range of intellectual traditions, examine different geographic locations, and analyze representations in varied forms. Taken together, their analyses suggest the significance of economic restructuring and industrial change, and they make clear that, as Cowie and Heathcott argued, deindustrialization is a continuing phenomenon with impacts both deep and wide. Equally important, the essays in this issue offer methodological and conceptual models for studying the ways both those who remember the past and those who create representations of it interpret major historical events.

The Making of Deindustrialization

Deindustrialization as a popular term dates from the publication of Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's *The Deindustrialization of America*. The book's subtitle, *Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry,* signposted that the authors, though both economists, recognized the importance of industrial change for understanding social life.[9] Indeed, the first half of the book was an account of the social impact of closure on individuals, families, and their communities. It was only in the latter part of the book that Bluestone and Harrison provided a forensic account of the political economy of the process itself. They argued that deindustrialization in the US was the consequence of the breakdown of the postwar social contract between labor, politicians, and corporations. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, US corporations aggressively sought to break free of expensive union contracts and to seek out ways to pay lower wages and allied social costs in order to increase profits. Crucially, they argued that while US plants were profitable they were used as cash cows which funded plant investment in non-

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union areas in the US and, increasingly, elsewhere in the world. *The Deindustrialization of America* posed a series of important moral and ethical questions about the role and nature of contemporary capitalism by bridging economics, politics, social policy, and sociology.

This interdisciplinary approach to the issue of industrial change and decline set a benchmark for future study and debate in the area and one that with the passage of time has broadened out still further. During the 1980s and into the 1990s many further studies on the subject appeared, and as the field matured researchers began to study individual communities that had suffered from shutdown and loss.[10] The new millennium however marked an important turning point in the broader discussion of deindustrialization and a maturing of the field, which is best characterized by writers' willingness to try and make sense of industrial change historically. While earlier scholars were, like Bleasdale and his characters, caught up in the immediacy of events, the passage of time has allowed commentators to both see a broader picture as well as better appreciate the unfolding consequences of closure. The best example of this is in the collection *Beyond the Ruins,* edited by Cowie and Heathcott, whose contributors sought to move beyond "a 'body count' of manufacturing jobs":[11]

> . . . the time is right to widen the scope of the discussion beyond 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."[12]

Cowie and Heathcott argued for this new approach to be rooted in an historical account which recognized industrial transition and change in the United States as part of a longer historical process that could only be fully understood as part of the dynamic nature of capitalism itself. Perhaps the most profound insight the editors of *Beyond the Ruins* offer is their reflection on the era of *industrialization* in the US:

> . . . 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.[13]

This is a crucial point; the focus here is not on the loss or closure of individual plants but on a broader set of questions about what this process means in terms of an industrial culture built on, and out of, the illusion of permanence. This proposition begs a number of sociological questions about the meaning of work, identity, culture, and the trauma of loss, and this is particularly marked

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for working-class communities. These are reflected in what David Byrne has described as the "industrial structure of feeling"—sentiments that inform and construct ways of life.[14] Indeed, while scholars from varied fields have examined the economic, social, and political causes and effects of deindustrialization, we would argue that a cultural approach to understanding deindustrialization, one that examines the ways people construct and represent the memory and interpretation of that era, is also valuable, especially as we look back from three or four decades on.

Over the past decade, scholars in several fields have offered models for this more interdisciplinary, retrospective, synthetic approach. *Beyond the Ruins* is but one example. Canadian historian Steven High's first book, *Industrial Sunset*, provides an historical and comparative study of Canadian and US industrial decline that, like the Cowie and Heathcott collection, transcends the one plant/one community study model to examine the range of responses to shutdowns across a decade and a half, beginning in the late 1960s. He also notes how "a certain nostalgia about the postwar period of prosperity in the industrial Midwest permeated the scholarship of the 1980s."[15] High has further explored the topic in a series of articles in his later book with David Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, where he pulls together the larger meaning of individual closures, examining the significant similarities and differences in the experience of loss.[16]

Recent studies of individual communities, on the other hand, suggest the value of analyzing not only what happened at a particular site of deindustrialization but also how the events have been remembered and interpreted. Kate Dudley's book, *The End of the Line* (1994), is one of the earliest examples of this approach, examining the loss of jobs in an automotive plant in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Dudley asks critical questions about memory and culture formed in the crucible of industrial development and the way the loss of industry brings into focus the values of industrial culture.[17] In *Steeltown USA: Work and Memory in Youngstown*, Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo analyze the local landscape and an extensive body of representations, including poetry, company publications, photographs, oral histories, media reports, the built environment, and sculptures, to examine the process of industrial decline and community response in one Ohio steel town. Heavily influenced by labor geography and the interdisciplinary field of working-class studies, *Steeltown USA* examines the way the cultures of work emerge and are embedded in space and place and the process by which deindustrialization disrupts and disembeds this culture.[18] Importantly, this variety of research is being carried out by literary and cultural studies scholars, labor historians, economists, industrial anthropologists, geographers, and others. While asking similar questions about the long-term meaning and effects of deindustrialization, these scholars are transcending disciplinary boundaries and deploying methods that reveal new insights into industrial loss. They suggest the emergence of an increasingly diverse and deeply interdisciplinary field of deindustrialization studies.

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Deindustrialization, Community, and Inequality

While many studies, going back to the early 1980s, have identified the declining living standards and median incomes experienced by industrial communities and workers in the wake of large-scale job loss, more recent research highlights two key patterns that are clarified by looking back over several decades: increased attention to how economic change affects different regions and cities, including its effects on different neighborhoods within a single city, and the complex intersection between deindustrialization and social inequality. Economic and labor geographers have investigated the uneven effects of deindustrialization both between and within cities and regions as the geographies of capitalist production have shifted.[19] Case studies of Chicago, for example, document the loss of the city's manufacturing base, noting that "the onset of deindustrialization in the early 1980s represented the nadir of what had been a dominant mode of urban-economic development and the beginning of a painful shift toward a new pattern of unequal and unstable growth."[20] These effects are most visible over time, as the shift from a manufacturing economy to low-paid service industries becomes not a new trend but a new normal. The result is that cities and regions become more polarized, within labor markets and neighborhoods. In the UK, Byrne's examination of the deindustrialization of Cleveland in North East England reveals such increases in "socio-spatial differentiation." Byrne argues that this has led to a reconfiguration of class composition and social relations, and he identifies a new group of the "dispossessed" whose altered position in relation to the labor market has generated stark forms of inequality and stigma.[21]

Studies of specific cities and regions make clear how deindustrialization constructs inequalities across spatial locations, but large-scale job loss and changing labor markets also play out through differences of gender, race, and class. Moreover, the two are interconnected, as inequalities of race, class, and gender are often demarcated on the landscape, in divisions across and within neighborhoods and regions. Butler and Hamnett's recent account of the impact of deindustrialization on a range of ethnic minority communities in East London documents the "shrinkage" and "transformation" of the traditional "white working-class," the emergence of "a large, new white-collar lower middle-class," as well as a significant rise in minority ethnic communities who have alternately prospered and struggled to negotiate the terrains of the new economy.[22] While such studies are relatively scarce in the UK, in the US they have been much more frequent. Judith Modell and the photographer Charlee Brodksy offer a captivating account of the collapse of the steel industry in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Combining anthropology and photography, the authors attempt to capture the complexity of deindustrialization and its impact on community and social relations. In their account, shared experiences of job loss, urban decline, and unemployment exist alongside entrenched racial, ethnic, and gender divisions.[23] Thomas Sugrue, in his seminal history of postwar Detroit, traces the impacts of deindustrialization on the black community, showing

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how "blacks bore the brunt of restructuring. Persistent racial discrimination magnified the effects of deindustrialization on blacks."[24] Existing labor market segmentation and discrimination meant that for black workers in Detroit lower levels of seniority as well as their concentration in lower-paid, low-skilled positions placed them at the sharp end of industrial decline. A key strength of Sugrue's study is his focus on the interrelations between deindustrialization, racism, and suburbanization, as the spatial and social relations of Detroit itself have been reconstituted, along lines of race and class:

> As jobs left the city, so too did white workers with the means to move to suburbs or small towns where factories relocated. Wealthier whites also followed investments outward. As a result, Detroit's population began an unbroken downward fall in the 1950s. As Detroit's population shrank, it also grew poorer and blacker. Increasingly, the city became the home for the dispossessed, those marginalized in the housing market, in greater peril of unemployment, most subject to the vagaries of a troubled economy.[25]

Sugrue documents the effect of these changes on the fabric of black communities as a range of institutions and facilities, supported by the rewards of industrial employment, fragmented. In this tradition, a number of US focused studies have examined the interactions between deindustrialization, race, class and gender and the emergence of new spatial inequalities. Wilson traces how the loss of manufacturing and increases in unemployment in Chicago contributed to the development of "jobless" rather than "institutional ghettos," characterized by increasing distance from the labor market.[26] In a comparative study of France and the US, Loic Wacquant observes how the rise of post-Fordism, welfare retrenchment, and the "deproletarianization" of large swathes of poor, and especially black, residents of Chicago and the ethnic minorities of the Parisian *banlieues*, marks the advent of an age of "advanced marginality" and the accentuation of material and symbolic forms of inequality. He suggests that marginalized groups face not only being severed from the labor market and concentrated in areas increasingly devoid of services, institutions, welfare, and opportunity, they also face the symbolic denigration of residing within what are viewed as dysfunctional, decaying, and dangerous spaces of "relegation."[27]

Recent scholarship on deindustialization has shown increased interest in the divergent experiences of raced, classed, and gendered groups. Reflecting the centrality of the white male manual worker in the imaginary of industry and its loss, even accounts that examine race, class, and gender have concentrated overwhelmingly on the experiences of young, white working-class men, particularly in the UK, but also the US.[28] Linda McDowell, in her study of school leavers in Cambridge and Sheffield, observes the complex relationship between white working-class masculinity and the changing demands of the deindustrialized economy. The rise of the service industries, and the tendency for many of these jobs to favor "feminine" rather than "masculine" traits, has radically challenged forms of white working-class male identity, historically formed

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through the demands of manual labor.[29] In Newcastle, Anoop Nayak observes how for young white working-class men born into familial traditions of manual employment, the absence of traditionally-male labor led to the performance of masculinity being displaced from the sphere of production into the arena of leisure and consumption, where it centered around drinking, sexual encounters, and fighting.[30] In the US, in a longitudinal ethnographic study of white working-class men and women in a deindustrialized northeastern city, Lois Weis exposes the pressures and ambivalences that deindustrialization has exerted on white working-class masculinities and femininities. Working-class identities have become both materially and symbolically reshaped in the context of contemporary deindustrialization, transformed through the reorientation of the workplace and the family "in the shadows of the mills," as the lines between masculinity and femininity become redrawn in the wake of the loss of industrial jobs, lower wages, and rising rates of female employment. Shifting divisions of domestic and paid labor have necessitated the adoption of more domesticated and "caring" roles for the males Weis studied, with those most reluctant to embrace such changes to masculinity being those most likely to struggle to adapt to the shifting demands of the new economy.[31]

While such research draws attention to the way deindustrialization plays out across spatial and social inequalities, studies like Nayak's and Weis's, which focus on young white men who are entering adulthood in an era of low-wage service jobs, demonstrate the continuing influence of deindustrialization as it affects not only those who are displaced from manufacturing jobs but also their children. Such analysis is coming from multiple academic fields and diverse geographic locations, and it poses new questions informed by the more complex theoretical perspectives that have developed in cultural history, geography, education, sociology, and other fields. At this point in the history of the study of deindustrialization, they remind us, we can no longer draw boundaries of time, place, or discipline. If we are to understand the continuing significance of deindustrialization, we must look across time, compare what is happening in different localities and nations, and read and discuss with colleagues across the disciplines.

Representation and Remembrance: New Perspectives on the History of Deindustrialization

A significant portion of recent scholarly inquiry into deindustrialization draws on representations to gain insight into how people interpret the experience of job loss, how they remember not only industrial work but also its loss, and how they articulate the continuing meanings of economic change. While some scholars bring the clearer perspective of hindsight to their rereading of news reports, policy statements, and interviews with workers produced soon after plant and mine closings, others are examining more recent texts, considering how the way people remember the past reveals both their changing understanding of what happened, to them and to their communities, and contemporary

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understandings of how economic change continues to affect the landscape, working life, and identities.

Visual materials, especially photographs, have been especially important in marking and recording change, and they have been used as sources for documenting and interpreting deindustrialization by both academics and non-academics. The visual is being used in a variety of ways—to capture and record, to provoke and elicit, and as a source for scholarly analysis.[32] The past decade has seen an explosion of fine art coffee table collections and museum exhibits of photographs of industrial decay. Some have criticized these often aesthetically beautiful images for exoticizing and fetishizing urban decay; one critical commentator has labeled them "ruin porn." Yet these materials can also provide important sources for analysis of the contemporary meanings of deindustrialization, and some of the best work pairs visual documentation with scholarly analysis. A good example of the rich potential of such approaches can be seen in Tim Edensor's interdisciplinary work on abandoned space, *Industrial Ruins*. Edensor's research and writing inhabits an interdisciplinary borderline between cultural studies, sociology, and psycho-geography. Drawing on cultural studies, sociology, and geography, Edensor argues that both academics and society at large should pay more attention to the liminal spaces of declining landscapes and move away from an obsession with the manicured spaces of new structures and developments. This focus on the new has a tendency to obliterate the abandoned, the old, and the disused and, in the process, rids society of meaningful and thought-provoking spaces. *Industrial Ruins* provides a powerful example of how we might think about and engage with spaces of former economic life. In particular, Edensor's work shows how absence—in this case the abandonment of manufacturing plants and machinery—can stimulate a profound reflection on industrial life itself.[33] Photographic representations of industrial ruins raise new questions about the value of industrial life, its organization and politics. It is this power to provoke, to elicit, and to conjure-up that is noteworthy here. We would argue that the provocative and disruptive power of deindustrialization, made visible through representations, has the potential to force society at different levels to ponder the meaning and role of work and industrial society.

Academics, of course, have been using visual methods to explore historical, cultural, and sociological matter for decades, and those with an interest in economic life have increasingly adopted these approaches. In research for their essay "The visual and the verbal," David Byrne and Aidan Doyle used visual images of the industrial landscape to investigate the significance of deindustrialization for coal-mining communities. Using images of destruction and ruin, they ran focus groups with local residents of deindustrialized spaces, attempting to get at "structures of feeling" and the "actual lived experience of change."[34] As they argue, "Images of change—images of how things had been and how they are now—could be used to elicit people's response to those changes."[35] In some cases, academics have collaborated with photographers. One of the best illustrations of such a partnership can be seen in the US volume, *Closing: The*

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Life and Death of an American Factory, a powerful and evocative book in which text and images complement one other. Photographer Bill Bamberger and literary scholar Cathy Davidson recorded in words and images the final six months of production at a traditional furniture maker in North Carolina. The images elicit new understandings of how the workers experienced job loss, how they felt about the work they once did, and how this personal and community change told a wider story about industrial decline.[36] Steven High and David W. Lewis's *Corporate Wasteland* offers another example of collaboration between a social historian and a photographer, in this case with an emphasis on the way industry, both in its heyday and in its decline, creates a moral landscape of meanings and memory. The book sets Lewis's photographs in an active, dynamic relationship with the oral histories collected by High.[37]

Just as visual images of abandoned industrial sites reflect a contemporary interest in remembering and reinterpreting the history of deindustrialization, so, too, does the continuing interest in industrial heritage, which often emphasizes the part labor plays in this story. Numerous sites of labor have been preserved and converted into museums or have found alternative uses[38] and, like photography, these sites serve dual purposes. That is, they preserve and make available the memory of industrial life for diverse audiences but they also provide sources for scholarly analysis of the relationship between these physical remains and the culture and practice of workers. In *Heritage, Place and Community,* Bella Dicks examines the way the industrial identity of mining is negotiated and reinterpreted through Rhondda Heritage Park in South Wales. In this and other writings, Dicks explores the role and portrayal of labor in both past and present.[39] A recent collection by Laurajane Smith and her colleagues looks at the struggle for public memory and history at various sites of labor. *Heritage, Labour and the Working Class* is interested in the role and meaning of intangible cultural heritage rather than the built environment. The collection raises important questions about whose history is being preserved and what say former workers and their families have in its documentation.[40]

Representations take many forms, and a variety of narratives of deindustrialization circulate in contemporary society in popular music, advertising, media reports, and literature as well as in visual forms and industrial heritage sites.[41] Scholars are only beginning to examine these texts as critical resources but, as essays in this issue by Linkon and Rhodes suggest, these contemporary representations reveal emerging tensions about the meaning of the industrial past and the history of deindustrialization itself, especially for the generations who have grown up in the aftermath of industrial decline. As studies by scholars such as Valerie Walkerdine suggest, industrial identities may be transmitted across generations, as ideas about the meaning of masculinity and of working-class identity including, in many cases, the meaning of whiteness, continue to rely on forms of labor that are no longer available.[42] Studying the way a generation of fathers who had worked in the steel industry projected strong expectations about what was and was not legitimate employment for their sons to engage in—with work in the service sector deemed to be unworthy and

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unmanly—Walkerdine conceptualizes the social response to deindustrialization as trauma, at least in part a grieving process for lost industry and the stability it once provided.[43] The psychological trauma of deindustrialization can be traced in media stories about deindustrialized communities such as the reports on boxer Kelly Pavlik that Rhodes studies, in advertising such as a Levi's campaign focused on Braddock, Pennsylvania or Chrysler's "Imported from Detroit" ads, and in poetry and fiction written by the children of displaced workers three decades after their parents lost their jobs to major plant closings. At the same time, these representations show that negotiation over the meaning of deindustrialization is a continuing process, one in which the past and the present remain in tension.

Whatever their form and regardless of whether they focus on memories of industrial work or on the ongoing effects of deindustrialization itself, representations offer insights into their present. The context in which they are created shapes their content and perspective and, as such, representations tell us about how the meaning of deindustrialization is changing over time. By studying representations, scholars are able to analyze not only the immediate experience and effects of deindustrialization but also, and importantly, its evolving, contemporary significance. Representations both suggest and allow scholars to examine new questions about the nature of industrial work and its decline, expanding the study of deindustrialization beyond the vitally important earlier focus on unemployment, but also complicating contemporary discourses of regeneration. As this growing body of work suggests, understanding the history and social effects of deindustrialization requires new methods and different types of evidence. Such research, in turn, provides fresh insights into work, the loss of work, working-class culture, and contemporary society.

Reflecting on Deindustrialization: Why Memory Matters

So what does deindustrialization tells us about the contemporary nature of work and the value of employment in society more generally? How does industrial change manifest itself in our culture and its artifacts? One way to think about deindustrialization is to extend Douglas Ezzy's ideas on the role played by redundancy and unemployment.[44] He examined the way the experience of unemployment was narrated by those he studied and conceptualized the event of losing one's job in terms of a "breaching experiment." The term was coined by ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel who described how a breaching experiment, such as picking an item out of another person's shopping cart at a supermarket, would disrupt the normal or conventional patterns of social life.[45] The point was that this disruption breached everyday norms and values and thus exposed the taken for granted social structures and understandings underpinning everyday life. Ezzy used this idea in theorizing the disruption caused by unemployment and the way individuals self-narrated the experience. While Ezzy examines this sense of breach at the level of the individual, we could and should see the process of deindustrialization at the level of the community,

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or even the nation-state, as a gigantic breaching experiment in itself, wherein the taken-for-granted assumptions about the present, future and, indeed, the past come into question at a societal level.[46]

This sense of a breaching experiment is one way to understand what Cowie and Heathcott describe in their introduction to *Beyond the Ruins*, pointing to the atypicality of the full employment during the period of the long boom and the social relations, identities, and values that were produced as part of that period. Many of the studies of deindustrialization cited here deploy powerful testimony from the workers caught up in the process, capturing the sense of outrage, regret, confusion, anger, and loss. The disruption of deindustrialization is captured poignantly, for example, in these comments from Steven High's interview with General Motors (GM) worker Gabriel Solano:

> To watch the people go to work. To watch my Dad get up. To see this just was mesmerizing, because this was what America was about. This was what we all worked for, to make corporations their money so we could get on with our lives. People tended to their houses. Everyone was part of the community. Community was whole and it was wholesome … This was what we lived for. And I enjoyed it. I enjoyed going to work. I enjoyed being with my coworkers because this is what we lived for … And this was taken away. To see the abandoned houses popping up, to see the storefronts closing, to see the devastation of the joblessness, because the small shops fed the big shops. It was like a domino effect.[47]

Any researcher who records the lives of working people has to confront the issue of nostalgia in the narratives they elicit, and the passage above from Gabriel is no exception.[48] Several of the volumes discussed here confront this topic head on. Cowie and Heathcott return to it several times in *Beyond the Ruins,* explaining their concern that nostalgia could cloud more critical attempts to make sense of the deindustrialization process in the US. They speak of preventing a "creeping industrial nostalgia from dominating the debate,"[49] creating what they memorably label "smokestack nostalgia."[50] Cowie and Heathcott are correct that we must guard against the danger of sentimentalizing the past, as the articles in this special issue suggest, but we should also not dismiss the ideas and experiences of ordinary people caught up in the process of industrial change. Consider, for example, the story of International Harvester worker Rob McQueen captured by Tracy E. K'Meyer and Joy L. Hart in their oral history collection *I Saw it Coming: Worker Narratives of Plant Closing and Job Loss*:

> Jobs were easy back then. You didn't have to have a high school education … You could walk out and Philip Morris, Harvester, [the] railroad—you could get a job anywhere. Like at Harvester, it was something like this: I applied for the job, they called me the next day to have an interview the next day. And [then] the physical the next day, or possibly the same day, and then [they] asked me right after the physical if I could start to work right then … Hell, you could just start right then and make good money … I was making back at Harvester something like $12-$13

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> an hour or something like that, and right now I'm not even at $10 an hour. And this was twenty years ago.[51]

McQueen's comment is a stark reminder that for many industrial workers the past really was objectively better, certainly in terms of pay and conditions. But, as the passage from Solano implied, high wages were not the only element that workers valued. There was also an important sense of identity and value born out of industrial work. As Phil Nalley, another International Harvester worker quoted in *I Saw it Coming,* observed about his father:

> He worked the same job for twenty-one years. He stayed on that job because, first of all, he had gained a lot of respect from the people there. They could depend on him to do a good job. They could depend on him to get the work out and it'd be done right. They treated him with respect because of that. I know he felt good that he was accomplishing more than just a job. He was proud of what he did.[52]

The quote captures the way stable work, even dull repetitive labor, allows people to develop character over time. It allows them to mature and form powerful bonds with others around them. Often this quality of working life is left unspoken and unrecognized but the jolt provided by losing a job is an inherently reflective process.

Narratives and images of industrial work and its loss, as captured in interviews with displaced workers and other, later representations, serve as more than "storehouses of memory," to use Dolores Hayden's term. Steven High has talked about industrial sites, for example, as "moral landscapes," and morality is a common theme in narratives and interviews about plant closure. The bitterness about the timing and nature of plant closure, the often wasteful termination of industrial production, and redundancy caused by mismanagement rather than worker inefficiency that surface in worker accounts, especially, construct moral tropes of betrayal and bad faith about absent or incompetent management. As a former worker from Johnson Controls told K'Meyer and Hart:

> I don't have no really harsh feelings. I just don't like the way they kicked people out. I just get mad on payday. I have a lot of resentment to 'em for taking my living away from me. Especially when I worked hard, and everybody else worked hard too, and it wasn't really from lack of work, it was something else, some of their money-saving schemes or techniques or something was the reason they moved. I have a lot of resentment.[53]

As these examples show, deindustrialization creates a powerful set of responses in relation to past, present, and future. It prompts workers to think about their present condition, obviously, and their future prospects and security. But it also stimulates reflection on what work meant, the values that were created by industrial labor, the bonds and friendships that developed among coworkers, and the way in which being embedded in work allowed one to mature and grow. This

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active consideration of the past allows for a critical evaluation of society's future, especially in relation to the type and quality of work on offer. Further, representations of deindustrialization demonstrate that a similar process of reflecting on the past, navigating the present, and imagining the future in relation to the past matters for those who inherit the economic landscapes of deindustrialization and even for those who are not directly affected but who examine it as outsiders. Importantly, these critiques span both a consideration of the human qualities that past modes of work created and also a powerfully moral set of narratives about the importance of tangible work and the making of things. Emerging from these studies is a broader questioning of what it means and how it feels to live in a deindustrializing society, one that has ceased to make things or that produces less with fewer workers.

The articles in this special issue reflect the contemporary trends in the study of deindustrialization that we have outlined here in varied ways. All but one frame their studies through the lens of place, examining how people in particular locations understand the past, experience the present, and, in some cases, imagine the future of specific deindustrialized communities. Rhodes draws our attention to the complex ways that representations of deindustrialization engage discourses of race, gender, and class. Most of these analyses examine contemporary representations of industrial work, the experience of plant and mine closings, and the subsequent decline and decay of industrial spaces. Perhaps most important, all address the question of memory and how the way people think about the past influences their understanding of themselves and the economic, political, and social landscapes of the present. Phillips demonstrates how the moral economy of the Scottish coal fields came into play during the long period of mine closings and suggests how the memory of that era is shaped by that moral economy. Perchard's paper describes the corrosion of work and industrial culture in the Scottish coalfields and shows how that process fed collective narratives of class and the national question. Rhodes examines the way local narratives surrounding a "white working-class" boxing champion from Youngstown, Ohio alternatively incorporate, disavow, and downplay various facets of that city's industrial past in the remaking of contemporary understandings of place and identity. Linkon and Strangleman both examine contemporary texts, fiction and photography, respectively, in order to make visible and problematize the relationship between the past, present, and future in deindustrialized landscapes. Davies, too, uses visual texts to read a landscape deindustrialized by proximity to the nuclear accident at Chernobyl. Finally, High provides a critical essay reflecting on the issues, themes, and approaches developed in these writings. Together, we believe, these essays make a strong case for the significance of deindustrialization as both an historical event and a continuing influence on contemporary culture, communities, and identities. They demonstrate the potential of, and model critical strategies for, ongoing interdisciplinary research in deindustrialization studies.

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NOTES

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7. David Byrne and Aiden Doyle, "The Visual and the Verbal" in *Picturing the Social Landscape: Visual Methods and the Sociological Imagination*, eds. Caroline Knowles and Paul Sweetman (London, 2004).
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18. Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo, *Steeltown USA: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence, KS, 2002).
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27. Loic Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge, 2008).
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37. High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*. For a fuller discussion of how scholars and artists are constructing visual arguments about the meaning and significance of deindustrialization, see Tim Strangleman's piece in this issue.
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