

although narrowly presented, does make a convincing case for the importance of exploring technology transfer in regard to specific and specialized industries. ■

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*Pittsburgh-Sheffield Sister Cities* Edited by Joel A. Tarr  
(Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University, 1986. Pp. v, 199. Introduction, notes. \$9.95 paper.)

The practice of city twinning is now well established between British and Continental cities; rather less common are such exchanges across the Atlantic. However, in 1981 officials from Sheffield and Pittsburgh met in Pittsburgh under the auspices of the World Affairs Council of the latter to sign a "sister cities" agreement. The decline of the steel industry has faced both cities with similar problems. Analysis of the effects of that decline and of the ways in which urban regeneration might be achieved provided the context for the conference, held to celebrate the agreement and to explore the histories of the two cities. Seven years later, as the British government looks increasingly to the United States for lessons in public policies which might stem the apparently inexorable decline of old industrial cities, the publication of the proceedings of that conference is a timely one.

The book is divided into four sections: images and architecture; economic development; urban politics; and planning and development; each section contains paired essays by practiced hands. With the exception of a quite bizarre exercise in "scissors and paste" history on "The Sheffield-Pittsburgh Utopian Axis," each essay contains at least some substance. The essay collection derived from an international conference has become one of the most regular types of publication on urban history in recent years. But all too often such collections lack focus, remaining disparate parts rather than forming a coherent whole. Unfortunately this volume conforms to type. I see two reasons for this. No matter how tough-minded the editor, there are very strict limits on how far one can impose coherence on distinguished contributors. It must be said that Professor Tarr has not been well-served by his contributors. Despite the avowed comparative intent, the essays are for the most part free standing

studies of aspects of one city or the other. More fundamentally, the book is revealing about the historiography of the two cities. Over the past two decades, under the direction of Professor Tarr and Professor Samuel P. Hays of the University of Pittsburgh, an extensive body of research has been established on many aspects of Pittsburgh's development, some of which will appear in a forthcoming volume edited by Professor Hays. No such volume could be produced for Sheffield, which has been ill-served by its university historians, who have produced the merest trickle of research on the city over the past 30 years. That contrast, which is especially marked for the twentieth century, an almost untilled field for British urban historians, is all too evident in this book where the chapters on Sheffield are slight both in length and intellectual content. The British contributors — a geographer, a political scientist, and two historians — are established scholars but these essays disappoint. In each case far too much space is devoted to recapitulating an elementary history of Sheffield from the fourteenth century! This failing is exhibited at its starkest by Professor Sutcliffe, who devotes almost half of a short chapter on Sheffield since 1945 to such a survey. Moreover, it is surely time for writers on Sheffield to exercise a self-denying ordinance on quotation of the same two lines of Chaucer.

The most interesting essay on Sheffield is that by a geographer, Kenneth Warren, who raises, albeit briefly, a fundamental question about the extent of the comparability in economic terms of the two cities. Following Peter Shergold, (*Working-Class Life: The 'American Standard' in Comparative Perspective 1899-1913*, [University of Pittsburgh Press: 1982]), Warren argues that once one moves beyond the image of "steel cities" to an analysis of their economic bases it becomes clear how far image and reality diverge. The scale of production, the type and volume of steel produced, the level of process integration and the overall product mix differed significantly between the two centres. The implications of these differences for a comparative analysis are, however, unexplored.

Sheffield and Pittsburgh also differ in another dimension. While Pittsburgh has been the centre of a metropolitan area, Sheffield has never assumed such a role. Indeed, it might be argued that a major cause of Sheffield's economic decline has been its failure to become a significant regional capital in contrast to Birmingham, the British city with which it is so often compared. Perhaps because of the relative weakness of regionalism as a force in British history, historians have been slow to investigate the interrelationships of cities and regions. By contrast, and for obvious reasons, the subject has occasioned significant research in the United States. In this volume the relationship between city and region is

addressed in the chapter by the geographer David Houston, who seeks to place Pittsburgh not only within its regional framework but also within the context of the process of capital accumulation on both a national and an international level. In Houston's words, "Marx's *Kapital* holds the key to an understanding of Pittsburgh's history." While the essay is often suggestive, it is characterised by a stark, and unhelpful, economic determinism, and by a tendency to gloss fundamental problems in Marxist economic analysis. For example, the "transformation problem" — misprinted as "transportation" — of how to relate values to prices, and surplus value to profits is dealt with by assuming that prices are values and by the equally large assumption that the organic composition of manufacturing capital in the Pittsburgh region is identical with that of the country as a whole. Nevertheless, Houston's data on differences in rates of profit and the wages-profits ratio between the national average and the Pittsburgh urban region do suggest important lines of argument for any investigation of the place occupied by Pittsburgh within the uneven geographical development of American capitalism.

In any such analysis the role played by labour is clearly central. Here Houston's assertion that "the working class existed and so did working-class consciousness" does not advance our understanding of the complexity and diversity of class formation and class consciousness, though it does highlight a significant omission from the book: the history of labour in the two cities. While Couvares (*The Remaking of Pittsburgh*, [State University of New York Press: 1984]) greatly exaggerates the extent to which Pittsburgh in the post Civil War years was a plebian city, in which craftsmen exercised power both at the point of production and in the community, there is no doubt that there, as in Sheffield in the same period, labour enjoyed not a "craftsmen's empire" but a significant share of power in both the workplace and the community. Thereafter the experiences of labour diverged. Whereas by 1939 Sheffield was firmly established as a labour city — well on the way to becoming the capital of what in the 1970s was to be called "The People's Republic of South Yorkshire" — Pittsburgh was pre-eminently a city of capital.

Among the many reasons for that very different path of development, one of the most significant was the attitude and behaviour of business leaders, and in particular their role in urban governance. There is no parallel in Sheffield to the part played by business leaders in the life of Pittsburgh, as described and analysed by Stewman and Tarr in much the most important essay in the book. One among many important points to be drawn from their account of Renaissance I and II is the extent to which the capacity of urban government had grown by the 1970s, so much so

that in Renaissance II government rather than business became increasingly the initiator and planner of urban development, a conclusion which does not fit easily with those models of urban political history which see a flow of power and authority away from city governments across the twentieth century. The extent to which the private city had become a public one remains an open question.

The major contribution of this volume is to the historiography of Pittsburgh. It does not make a significant contribution to the development of a systematic comparative urban history. The one lesson which British policy makers might draw from the Pittsburgh experience — that civic leadership has a crucial role to play in urban renewal — would be anathema to a national government determined to turn local government into local administration. Overall, however, I fear that this book would not convince the sceptical British civil servant that either historians or the historical perspective could offer significant guidance on the ways in which the revitalisation of declining industrial cities might be achieved. Rather it is more likely to confirm Mrs. Thatcher of the truth of her view that the pursuit of history is a luxury whose cost outweighs any tangible benefit. ■

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*An American Childhood*      By Annie Dillard  
(New York: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. 255. \$17.95)

In an essay in her collection, *The Eye of the Story*, Eudora Welty, clearly writing out of her knowledge of the experience itself, asserts that there is a confidence, a sense of authority, that comes to the writer who recognizes that he or she has succeeded in creating a feeling of place. What often comes with it, Welty adds, is the sense of a particular time. By this standard Annie Dillard attains admirable achievement in *An American Childhood*, her complex memoir of childhood, adolescence and growing to maturity in the Pittsburgh of the 1950s and early 1960s. The significance of place as a major part of our sense of ourselves, as a fundamental strand of our identity, is established in a way that transcends that immediate sense of recognition which will come to Pittsburghers them-