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*Chicago in the Age of Capital: Class, Politics, and
Democracy during the Civil War and Reconstruction* by John B.
Jentz and Richard Schneirov (review)

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of portraits of people in the Price Hill neighborhood. Simple and powerful, the images show a refreshing diversity in age, ethnicity, and culture. Wilson's style and familiarity with the neighborhood allow him a level of intimacy with his subjects, whose tenderness and humanity he manages to capture in a single, fleeting moment.

If the strength in these collected narratives is their differences, then their weakness is a byproduct of their similarities. In a city of fifty-two neighborhoods and endless suburbs, the collection focuses extensively on Over-the-Rhine and its development successes and struggles. Because of that, many essays cover similar ground and similar history, which leads to inevitable repetitiveness, and, even more, a reinforcement that stories from the city's urban core dominate city life. While downtown and Over-the-Rhine, in particular, offer abundant avenues for thoughtful examination and reflection about Cincinnati, reading slightly differing accounts of the same events—as the essays were written and originally published at different times—makes the collection less cohesive as well as less comprehensive.

Most all of the pieces in the anthology have been published elsewhere first, some in print and many online, which makes them feel at times disjointed despite their common threads. It is not a neat and tidy collection, but it doesn't set out to be. Instead, it is a celebration and an admonition. It is a history lesson and a piece of art. McQuade describes Cincinnati as "beautiful and sometimes troubled." The phrase applies just as well to this ambitious compendium of creative endeavors as it does the city itself.

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John B. Jentz and Richard Schneirov, *Chicago in the Age of Capital: Class, Politics, and Democracy during the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. 310 pp. \$55.00.

Historians have traditionally centered much of the discussion of antebellum, wartime, and especially Reconstruction America on southern themes and questions. John Jentz and Richard Schneirov, though, hope to reposition our focus to the North, and more specifically the urban Midwest. During the period from the 1850s to the 1870s, in what Eric Hobsbawm dubbed "The Age of Capital," Chicago, like much of the nation, typified

the turbulent relationship between capital and labor. The authors explain how the fight for control in politics and the public sphere spilled into the class and ethnic consciousness of a city coming into its own.

Chicago in the 1840s emerged, albeit slower than eastern cities, as an urban center where wage earners supplanted earlier small scale producers. Labor, particularly foreign born, dominated the city's working class population, and the demand for their work in the Midwest typically brought higher wages. Chicago's early boosters—such as George Pullman, Philip Armour, and Marshall Field—needed only to manage scant class tension and infantile government. Yet by the late 1860s, the authors tell us, the city experienced “a fundamental change in its mode of production,” in investment, manufacturing, and labor expenditure (37).

From the start, and Jentz and Schneirov center much of the book on this struggle, the fight to control labor—politically and otherwise—by the city's emerging capitalist bourgeoisie. Labor in Chicago, we are told, “awoke” in the 1860s, and wage labor emerged as a political interest group. Like most northern cities of industry, labor unions, newspapers, and lobbyists now mattered in Chicago, though as early strikes by both coopers and bakers indicated, the city's labor organizing reflected broader eastern trends. Further, the challenge of ethnicity, notably the cross section of Irish, German, and Anglo American workers posed a challenge for city organizers and politicians throughout Reconstruction.

The shift from the manufacture of whole products to the commodification of labor itself forced wages to be increasingly significant. In Chicago, the fight for an eight hour day held implications for local and state politics, and the 1867 eight hour law was the culmination of a Republican necessity to placate labor. Loopholes in the legislation precipitated Chicago's Eight-Hour Strike of the same year. While it failed, it nevertheless signified a wage-earning class that was now an active participant in politics. Accordingly, labor—particularly transient and immigrant workers—and socialists entered into the public sphere in the 1860s and 1870s at unprecedented levels. The “strangers,” as they were known, worked to preserve their own cultural and ethnic identities in Chicago. The Great Fire of 1871, though, came at a time when the city's broader labor movement was rendered, according to the authors, “impotent” (135). Mayor Joseph Medill, in fact, threatened even the *idea* of strikes with force. Jentz and Schneirov make plain at the conclusion of chapter four that antilabor reactionism in Chicago echoed fears elsewhere: “Like its counterparts in other large

northern cities, the Chicago bourgeoisie also feared that mass marches led by foreign-born communists portended riots, strikes, and perhaps even a local ‘Commune’” (154).

By the Depression of 1873, Chicago’s upper class capitalists continued, the authors contend, their quest for Gramscian hegemony and were met with increasingly active labor politics, such as the Workingmen’s Party, established in 1874. While they proved weak in elections, they turned toward unions and (often) leftwing newspapers with the hopes of appealing to transient labor, known as “tramps.” A key response came with the formation of the Citizen’s Association that same year which aimed to strengthen local government (and their agendas) by focusing on “social disorder,” violence, and Chicago’s “lower orders” (179). This group of business “reformers” led the effort to marginalize immigrants and workers. By the beginning of 1877, and the Great Railroad Strike, it seemed the bourgeoisie were winning out. As a national event, the strike also appeared to thrust workers, from Chicago and elsewhere, into the American consciousness. As demonstrations, and violence, spread in Chicago, the city’s bourgeoisie once again hoped to capitalize on the lawlessness of “the criminal class, the mob, the Communistic faction” they claimed ran amok (207). In 1877 Pullman and Field founded the “Commercial Club,” an inward looking social club for elites that at the same time openly advocated the use of federal troops as a means of suppressing disorder. In the end, despite a brief socialist rise with the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) after the strike, Democrats took hold in Chicago under Carter Harrison in 1879. His election symbolized the moment when labor had to be accommodated in the public sphere. The politicization of the working class, we learn in the brief conclusion, had arrived by the 1870s.

This is a worthwhile tale of labor in Chicago, though executed in broad strokes. The account offered here is exceptionally “top down,” as business elites and institutions drive the narrative. While impressive in its data and research, some readers may wonder about more rank and file workers and their particular moments of activism. Some instances of activism materialize—organizations such as the Workingmen’s Party of the United States, smaller strikes, and the formation of ethnic newspapers—but individual working class characters are rather scarce. The reader may be left wondering just *how* the sweeping power shifts occurred locally. Still, *Chicago in the Age of Capital* is a welcome addition to our understanding of the emerging and early working class politics of the nineteenth century. Jentz

and Schneirov have rightfully pushed us to continue thinking about Chicago and the Midwest within a larger national story—one that has previously been limited to southern regionalism—as boosterism, capitalism, ethnicity, and labor all formed a complex web of power and politics.

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Rochelle Hurt, *The Rusted City*. New York: White Pine Press, 2014.
96 pp. \$16.00.

The reason Rochelle Hurt's homeland is called the "Rust Belt" echoes all the way back to Steinbeck. In the early 1980s, as the industrial cities of America's heartland began to choke and decay, the term "Rust Bowl" was evoked from the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, a similar period of collapse, displacement, and supernatural ash. The moniker quickly spun into "Rust Belt" and has remained ever since. Hurt, in a finely tuned and sharply detailed debut collection of poems, successfully etches a grimy set of human faces onto the aesthetic and cultural patina that covered her own experience. Her work is neither sociological nor geographically specific but rather a closely private series of episodes within an eroding family whose back-drop is stained with the tones and textures of a real American place.

Hurt—such an apt surname for a child of the industrial collapse—was born and raised in Youngstown, Ohio, a city that has struggled longer and harder than most amid the decline of the nation's steel industry. Her real city's brick is darkened with soot, its fences stained with rust, its windows grimy, its asphalt cracked and choked with weeds. The ubiquitous red dust of her poems comes literally from her own backyard. And while it seems certain this landscape informed her aesthetic, Hurt's writing both avoids and transcends the specificities of place and time. She uses the tangible details of an actual "rusted city" to generate a clanky, junkstrewn, often magical wasteland.

Her created city consumes its denizens, choking them down, staining them red. And it consumes itself; in one poem, "It jostles (scraps) down its throat, shaking an old tune out as the scraps rub and clash their way underground, groaning into their beds of dirt." And the various members of this family consume the city, especially the young girl at the center of