

THOMAS DUBLIN. — *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Pp. xiii, 312.

ELVIN HATCH. — *Biography of a Small Town*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Pp. 293.

We have here two radically different books. One is a study of Lowell, the early nineteenth-century town that represented in so many ways a premonition of the future, while the other is a study of a rural California town called by the author "Starkey" that is an echo of the past. *Women at Work* is by an historian, and *Biography of a Small Town* is the work of an anthropologist. The historian, Thomas Dublin, uses the rich documentation on Lowell, including company archives, with great care, imagination, and inventiveness; the anthropologist, Elvin Hatch, offers very little documentation. Partially this is a necessary consequence of the latter's need to preserve the anonymity of the community he studied, but it is also the result of an extraordinary faith in the validity of oral history in a transient and literate society. While Dublin gives precise statistics on social mobility and demographic change, Hatch assesses opportunity by quoting a few memories that stretch back half a century.

Both books refer in a central way to the notion of community, but here too the approach is different. Hatch is interested in community as a spatial and ideological thing; Dublin treats it as an experiential and ideological matter. Most striking of all, for Dublin class and gender are fundamental categories of experience, while for Hatch gender is all but ignored and class enters his story — smuggled in with the word stratification — only after 1960 or so.

Of the two books, Dublin's is by far the better. Lowell is a much studied phenomenon, but Dublin builds well upon this previous scholarship and goes far beyond it. Lowell will not have to be studied again, but Dublin perhaps overreaches himself (or misperceives his task) in his efforts to connect Lowell with the larger history of American industrialization. Indeed, more effectively than any previous writing, even that of Lowell's contemporary apologists, he shows Lowell in the 1820s and 1830s to have been unique, an industrial utopia. It was a utopia, he shows, not because of philanthropy or any sort of idealism, but because a unique conjunction of circumstances (republican pride, the character of the labour pool, the conditions of work under existing technology, and the organization of social and residential life outside of the mills) produced a sense of community that translated itself into worker power.

No one has before gotten so far into the minds of the working women of Lowell. He has tracked down diaries and letters written by operatives, and he has traced these women back to their home towns where he establishes their social circumstances there by using the census returns. Out of this probing of their backgrounds, he concludes that the women who worked in Lowell did so not out of simple need but out of ambition. They sought income, independence and the more interesting life the city offered. They were not sustaining a traditional family economy, though their own migration to the city obviously provided an economic benefit to their rural families. Workers who have been attracted to the industrial city are, of course, less vulnerable than those pushed out of the country to the city.

In tracing their movement into the city, Dublin shows the mechanisms that formed a "female peer group" in Lowell, a community of working women. Migration into the city and into the mills was along lines of village connection, friendship, and kinship. Once in the mills, the more experienced women taught new-

comers. The pace of work allowed and the learning process required a good deal of interaction among the women. And since almost all of the women lived in the company boarding houses the peer group socialization of the mill was extended to the home life of the operatives. Dublin summarizes his point:

They comprised a "community" not simply a "group" because of the growth of bonds of mutual dependence among them. Women's experiences were not simply similar or parallel to one another, rather they were inextricably intertwined. Women recruited one another into the mills, helped each other adjust to work in the mills and life in Lowell, and came to a consciousness of themselves as a sisterhood. (p. 82)

This sisterhood was the foundation for worker resistance and collective protest in the 1830s. What Dublin describes here is very different, it should be pointed out, from another source of resistance being discovered and described by social historians. We do not have here an instance of a survival of artisanal traditions; what was created in Lowell was a new community, a constructed community innovative in values and meaning.

Later, in the 1840s, changes in the social origins, age, and to a lesser extent gender, of the workers, innovations in the work process (speed-up and stretch-out), and the emergence of new residential patterns (from company to private housing, from boarding houses to families) destroyed the pattern of expectation and experience that had earlier created a community of women ready to defend themselves. The result was a much more vulnerable working class in Lowell. By the 1850s, one finds in Lowell the "proletarianization of the female work force" (p. 183). The utopian and largely unique phase of Lowell's history thus ended and Lowell participated in the general process of industrialization.

The value of Dublin's study of the utopian phase is not, as he seems to want to argue, perhaps out of an unnecessary professional defensiveness, its representativeness; rather it is its uniqueness. To understand the specific sources of the particular pattern of social relations of production in Lowell during the 1830s illuminates the structure of power and vulnerability within the larger industrializing process evident elsewhere and in Lowell at a later period.

It is the focus on community evident in both of these books that justifies reviewing them together. For Dublin community is a specific and historical social formation. It is constructed — and, if you will, deconstructed — at a certain moment for identifiable historical reasons. Dublin's portrayal of community in Lowell is an impressive achievement, rich in historical detail and boldly conceptual. Hatch's entire book is a study in the definition of community at Starkey, but it is on the whole less satisfactory. There is much less responsiveness (in a conceptual way) to historical detail and far less in the way of genuine social explanation. The book accepts — and adds little to — sociologist Roland Warren's model of a "great change" wherein twentieth-century communities cease to be spatially ordered and find a principle of order in interests, including many translocal interests.

Hatch's most promising argument, though one anticipated many years ago by Clifford Geertz's *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (1965), is his insistence that community is fundamentally a matter of the mind. In Starkey he seeks to explicate what he calls the "folk theory of community" — that is, the theory "by which the people represent their community to themselves and by which they interpret the events that take place there" (p. 54). What he in fact finds is two folk theories sharing the same geographical space and interacting with each other in ways he does not fully specify, particularly in the period before World War II, before the big change. He calls these alternative visions of self and community the "establishment" and the "non-establishment" idioms of cultural interpreta-

tion. One of the tasks he accepts is the explanation of the criteria that define these two groups and their perspectives in Starkey. What he finds and specifies are moral respectability (usually defined in terms of drinking or non-drinking and church-going) and participation in community affairs. Wealth becomes a factor — in fact an important one — only after World War II in his interpretation.

Do we have in pre-World War II Starkey another utopia, a place in which wealth bears no relation to the existence and behaviour of an establishment? If so, the war surely represents the great change, even a fall from grace. Hatch says: "I have no evidence that this factor [wealth] entered into the division before World War II" (p. 231). What evidence did he use or look for? Here the method of this book poses problems. We do not know what documents he looked at. Nor those he neglected. We depend upon his recapitulation of two years of conversations and interviews (subjective reporting of subjective statements). Yet even without knowledge of what he left out, the evidence he offers lends a strong presumption of a decisive economic division in early twentieth-century Starkey. He observes that the most powerful (and establishment) organization in the town was the Farm Bureau Federation. Without a glint of recognition of the implications of his statement he reports that for some reason most of the "agin'ers" or non-establishment people had ties, by contrast, to the local Grange. If his reading in history had gone beyond Page Smith on small towns and Paul Johnstone and Richard Hofstadter on the agrarian myth to Grant McConnell's *Decline of Agrarian Democracy* (1953), he might have recognized the evidence he had. Had he been as aware of gender as is Dublin, he might have pondered somewhat more the fact that in the later pre-World War II period the most significant non-establishment and by definition non-respectable organization in Starkey was the Women's Club, organized by Hazel Joseph, a woman who drank.

Hatch's work misses too much and does too little to change conventional understandings of community change over time. It offers little to historians. Dublin's book takes a much studied topic and place, and he tells much we did not already know. His book is of value not only to historians but to anyone interested in community formation and social change in the industrial era.

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L. F. S. UPTON. — *Micmacs and Colonists*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979. Pp. xvi, 243.

In recent years Native studies and Indian-White relations have become popular subjects and Upton's book is one of the most recent contributions to this field. He states that "the object of this book is to trace the interaction of the Micmac Indians and British colonists over a period of one hundred and fifty years" (p. xi). In the light of this statement, his subtitle, "Indian-White relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867", is somewhat of a misnomer since he decided virtually to ignore the other Indians in the Maritimes, mentioning them "only when their activities shed light on the relations of Micmacs and colonists" (p. xv).