

Katz, Michael B.; Doucet, Michael J.; and Stern, Mark J. *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982, Pp. ix, 444.

Michael Katz's earlier historical social analysis of a mid-nineteenth-century Upper Canadian city, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West*, introduced Canadian historians to the concerns of the "new" social history, especially of quantitative social and structural and demographic history. The size and structure of families and households, rates of vocational and geographical mobility, the cycle of family life and the nature of individual life-cycle experiences (especially among the young), the nature of work and the distribution of its rewards and, withal, the structure of inequality in the commercial city as revealed by the social and economic distances between the population's various ethnic, religious, occupational and demographic cohorts formed the substance of Katz's preliminary report. In spite of the book's sometimes breathless reportage, its limited chronological parameters and its fuzzy contextual framework, and in spite, more particularly of the well-springs of professional anxiety that overflowed at the appearance of high-tech history, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West* carried off a well-deserved prize for its daring admixture of hard data and rash speculation.

*The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism*, Katz's second volume on Hamilton's social history, written in collaboration with Michael Doucet and Mark Stern, has now appeared. In it, Katz's former sense of discovery and exploration has been replaced by ideological commitment to the proposition that the "structured inequality of social experience," past and present, reflects the "reality and permanence of class" which was neither "accidental nor ephemeral." It was inherent, according to Katz's model and his conclusions, in the relations between capital and labour generally and, in mid-Victorian Hamilton specifically, in the economic organization of the early industrializing city. This is the argument of the book's first chapter, "A Two Class Model." The remaining eight chapters, on social stratification, transiency, property ownership, social mobility, crime, adolescence, and the family, are devoted to testing this proposition. To accomplish this, Katz, Doucet and Stern abandon the simple descriptive statistics of Katz's earlier book in favour of complex multivariate techniques which permit them to sort among an extensive catalogue of explanatory variables to assess the relative power of "class," or its surrogates (principally occupation and wealth) to illuminate the structures of social inequality in Hamilton, 1851-1871, and to compare those results with similar data generated for Buffalo and for Erie County, New York, their control population.

In some respects, the resulting analysis is a *tour de force*. The two class model is a simple, elegant hypothesis, all the more useful because it describes the world of urban-industrial social reality as nineteenth-century Canadians saw it. The book, then, tests *their* assumptions rather than an academic construct. The chapter on social stratification finally establishes that occupation was the most important single determinant of wealth and of membership in one or the other of Hamilton's two classes. The authors' discussion of social mobility reaffirms Katz's earlier contention that a high degree of individual fluidity was compatible with structural rigidity; but there the focus is vastly sharpened to explore the roots of that structural rigidity, the inheritance of occupations which "assured the reproduction of inequality." In the end, the key to class appears to have been "social origin." Finally, the description of the cycles, the structure and the economy of the family adds an important new dimension to our understanding of the historical sensitivity of the family, which E.A. Wrigley described as the elemental building block of society, to its economic environment, and its agility in adapting to changes in that environment.

In certain other respects *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* is rather less successful. The chapter on transiency adds little to our knowledge of that phenomenon, either substantively or methodologically. The analysis of crime in Hamilton is disappointing; and criminality in Hamilton appears to have disappointed the authors both in its limited extent and restricted variety. But they may have asked the wrong questions. How much crime there was, who was responsible for it, and what crimes they committed may be less revealing than, say, the spatial distribution of crimes against persons or property, the relationship between business cycles and levels of criminal activity, or the attitudes (class attitudes, presumably) which explain the homogeneity of jail populations in places like Hamilton. Similarly, the chapter on "Youth and Early Industrialization" lacks authority. Katz returns to his earlier preoccupations with the semi-autonomy/semi-dependence conundrum characteristic of youth in pre-industrial society and posits that industrialization ought to have hastened the advent of independence through the proliferation of economic opportunities. Instead, the authors find only another conundrum. A whole generation of working-class youths freely opted, in the 1860s and 1870s, for more, not fewer years of dependence in their parents' households. The authors conclude, lamely, that culture was apparently a stronger force than either economic opportunism or biological necessity.

This conclusion, or lack of conclusion, illustrates a fundamental weakness of *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism*. Readers of *The People of Hamilton* seized upon Wilson Benson's gulliverian narrative as welcome relief from the burden of numerical exegesis. In this volume, no such relief is available. The