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Mauer, David W. *Language of the Underworld*. Allan W. Futrell and Charles B. Wordell, eds. Foreward by Berg Flexner. Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1981. Pp. 417. \$30.00

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analysis proceeds relentlessly from one multivariate complexity to the next with scarcely a concession to the usual conventions of historical reporting. The difficulty is that what the numbers cannot explain remains unexplained, or left in the realm of speculation, as in the example cited above. The result, in any event, is a book peculiarly devoid of primary evidence from non-numerical sources, evidence which might have bridged the gap between speculation and substance and, at the very least, might have partially muffled the sound of numbers being crunched.

In the same vein, Katz's penchant for treating the many limited worlds of nineteenth-century urban social experience as a single, homogeneous universe for the purpose of legitimizing his hypotheses and conclusions is often infelicitous. It is one thing to write comparative history where the framework for comparison is methodologically explicit. It is quite another to draw parallels with other places in a way which obliterates distinctions of time, space, culture and environment as device for peeling away the layers of unique events which surround and explain Hamilton's past but which get in the way of the new historical positivism. This tendency surfaces, at its worst, in the authors' concluding chapter, "Early Industrial Capitalism: The Institutional Legacy," in which Hamilton is never mentioned, although we learn a good deal about the attitudes of contemporary New Yorkers, Bostonians, Catherine Beecher and Horace Mann, and the opinions of more recent American academic commentators.

On balance, then, *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* is unlikely to fulfill the expectations of scholars who admired *The People of Hamilton*. In spite of its expanded temporal framework, the book brings us no closer than its predecessor to an appreciation of the interplay of change and continuity in the lives of those people, of the processes which determined the sway of fixity and discontinuity in their society, or of the social, cultural and political assumptions which the "reality and permanence of class" nurtured in them.

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Mauer, David W. *Language of the Underworld*. Allan W. Futrell and Charles B. Wordell, eds. Foreword by Berg Flexner. Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1981. Pp. 417. \$30.00.

David Mauer was a socio-linguist who examined the links between language and behaviour in American society. *Language of the Underworld* is a posthumous

collection of his articles written from 1930 to 1970. Each selection includes two brief introductions by Mauer: one written when the essay was first published, and another written in 1978 as a commentary upon the original work. As well, most of the essays include a glossary of words extracted from the argot, or speech pattern, of particular criminal sub-groups.

Students of urban crime will find this collection illuminating. Mauer concentrates upon those criminals who operate in urban settings, although he also studies moonshiners and other non-urban lawbreakers. He introduces us to a cast of "jug heavies," "con men," "whiz mobs," and "nautch girls," all of whom depend upon the city for their livelihood.

Mauer's prefatory remarks add depth to his examination of criminal sub-groups. In most of these articles, he studies the relation between the social status of a group and the nature of its argot. Prostitutes, for instance, have a mundane argot reflecting their marginal position within even the underworld:

Whatever system a prostitute may work under she never develops a sense of trade, of group solidarity, of gang morale. . . She is never permitted to develop professional independence, which appears to be the first essential in the formation of criminal argots.

Mauer's analysis, based in socio-linguistics, can thus challenge historians' conceptions of criminal life. We are aware that lawbreakers live in the shadow of the dominant culture, but we still know little about the social hierarchy *within* criminal sub-cultures.

One of Mauer's more interesting assertions concerns the changing technology of crime. While some criminal speech patterns persist over generations, others shift continually. "Whiz mobs," or pickpockets, have used similar techniques for centuries and consequently some use terms which were current in the sixteenth century. Safecrackers, or "jug heavies," however search continually for more sophisticated techniques requiring up-dated terminology: theirs is a very contemporary argot.

Mauer tells us that "argots live principally in the minds and on the tongues of individuals. . ."; written records are rare. His evidence is colourful but limited necessarily to the twentieth century. It is the oral historian, then, who could most directly benefit from this collection. Mauer's work provides a "feel" for criminal lifestyles unmatched by traditional sources.

While the socio-linguistic study of sub-cultures certainly broadens our understanding, it cannot answer all questions. Mauer's enthusiasm for his field, however, is

boundless. He asserts in "The Argot of the Professional Dice Gambler," that

argots are more than specialized forms of language; they reflect the way of life in each of the numerous criminal cultures and sub-cultures; they are the key to attitudes, to evolutions of men and society, to modes of thinking, to social organization, to technology.

Historians will find that Mauer's perspective is more sociological than historical; accordingly, his interpretation of the past is intuitive rather than scientific. He claims, for instance, that ". . . since the sixteenth century the criminal sub-cultures of Europe have been systematically imported to the New World," but he attributes the higher incidence of professional crime in the United States to "the dynamics of frontier life." Mauer is equally vague about the sources of his evidence. Since he compiled his data in large regions across the United States without specifying individual cities, we are unable to draw comparisons between the criminal sub-cultures in various urban centres. With limited evidence of criminal argots in Toronto and Montreal, he makes facile assumptions about the Canadian underworld. His generalizations seem to be based more in myth than research.

Mauer's more recent introductions provide a valuable perspective upon his earlier interpretations, but the original prefaces are needlessly repetitive. The editors of this collection might have dispensed with these opening observations and spared the reader what becomes monotonous claims about the virtues of socio-linguistics.

*Language of the Underworld* is a book assembled as a tribute to a lifetime of a scholar's work. At \$30.00, however, it is a text which only oral historians of crime will possibly find worth the price.

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## Review Essay

"Industrialization and Women's Work: A New Perspective on the Mill-Worker Experience in Ante-bellum Lowell, Massachusetts."

Dublin, Thomas. *Women at Work: the Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Pp. 312. Illustrations, tables. \$7.50

Dublin, Thomas. *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981. Pp. x, 191. Illustrations. \$17.50.

It is not everyone who could recount the oft-told tale of the famous Lowell mill workers with a fresh approach and with stimulating insights. It is to Tom Dublin's credit, then, that in his prize-winning monograph (Bancroft and Merle Curti Prizes, 1980), *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*, he manages to do this. Dublin is a Marxist historian and has a strong commitment to women's history scholarship. Paraphrasing E.P. Thompson, he explains in his introduction that the largest purpose of his study is to show "human agency" in history, more specifically to reveal how people shape and control their fates, as well as how they are shaped and controlled by circumstances not of their own choosing. In this vein his study investigates "both the broad economic and social changes that led to a transformation of women's work in the first half of the nineteenth century and the attitudes and responses of women workers themselves that shaped and modified the larger processes" (p. 3).

Since Dublin's task, as he defines it, is to demonstrate the interdependent and dialectical relationship between material reality and human consciousness, it comes as no surprise to the reader to find the economic history of early industrialization in New England intertwined throughout the book with the social history of women who came to live and work in textile towns such as Lowell. Dublin's first concern is to set the stage: he tells the familiar story of the founding of the textile industry by the Boston Associates (a consortium of kin-related large merchants); the creation of paternalist factory towns replete with boarding houses, churches, lyceums, shops, and savings banks; and the recruitment of a labour force, the "daughters of freemen." From time to time throughout the book Dublin returns to the story of the textile industry as such so that the transformations occurring in the larger economy as well as in the industry itself are kept well in sight. Particularly useful is Dublin's discussion of technological developments and their effect on factory workers. He marshalls convincing evidence in Chapter 8, "The Transformation of Lowell, 1836-1850," to show that the "proletarianization" of the Lowell factory work force initiated in the 1840s was due primarily to changes in technology which allowed owners to water down skill levels, increase work loads, and reduce wages; Dublin also notes that the presence of Irish immigrants was a contributing factor in proletarianization.

Dublin's discussion of transforming economic forces in early nineteenth-century New England society, while competent, breaks little new ground. However, his treatment of the lives of Lowell mill workers bears closer