

**Paradise: Class, Commuters and Ethnicity in Rural Ontario**

Stanley R. Barrett

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. xiv + 315 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), \$18.95 (paper)

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Paradise is a pseudonym for a small town in southern Ontario that is the focus of this “diachronic community study.” Located within commuting distance of Toronto, its population consists of natives (long-term residents), newcomers (“white ethnics” who arrived after 1960) and minorities (primarily Asian and African Canadians). The study is somewhat unusual in that Barrett is an insider returning to the community of his youth. However, with six years of research, approximately 400 interviews, participant observation and the use of documentary sources, it is apparent that we are dealing with a painstaking researcher who shows no signs of submitting to the nostalgic imagery of a putative past.

Paradise is a community in only an “administrative and geographical sense” (p. 23), since competition, conflict and clear social divisions (of class, ethnicity and gender) are more characteristic of it than are common values or a common sense of belonging. The study compares the Paradise of the 1950s, an era in which elite families exerted considerable local control, with the restructured community of the 1980s, which is characterized by extensive external bureaucratic regulation of local affairs and the transfer of political power from the old elite to the middle classes. The periods are thematically linked through a focus on stratification, migration and race and ethnic relations, which “identify a tightly integrated system of social change in Ontario” (p. 31). Class and ethnic stratification provide the underlying framework of the book. However, while he recognizes class as the “bedrock of social stratification” (p. 28), a broader, comprehensive understanding of social stratification is central to the organization of the study.

A social stratum is seen as an “unorganized category of people in a hierarchy with similar characteristics, life chances, and social goods” (p. 30). Defined this way, Barrett develops a model of stratification that takes into account the way residents of Paradise rank themselves. The model consists of upper, lower-upper, middle, lower-middle and lower classes, though other strata—such as an aspiring middle class yet to reconcile itself with its lower-middle-class material status—are occasionally introduced.

Barrett aims to “understand” Paradise by revealing the way residents “perceive their community and govern their behaviour” (p. 29). The model is used to organize the presentation of people’s understandings by situating them within the stratification system. Consequently, Barrett is not tempted to represent local perceptions as a logically organized system of belief. Instead, he draws out the complex, and often contradictory, nature of people’s understandings through individual case studies or more abbreviated extracts from their comments. Thus, we hear the voices of the other, as the author reveals their “dreams and anxieties in their own words” (p. 31). These voices are unavoidably muted, for they also serve to carry the narrative structure determined by the author. However, Barrett is well aware of issues of voice and authorship.

Barrett’s examples reveal the reality of status in a small community. In the 1950s, Paradise could be “characterized as an elaborate code of reputation” (p. 77) in which

all knew their place. There is almost a sense of relief in the voices of those from the lower class who left the community and found that their "reputations," unlike those of residents who remained, did not follow them to their new homes. There is certainly distaste, even hatred, of the class system among both those who stayed and those who left. Of two sisters who expressed "rock hard hatred towards the community," the one who did not migrate "can be seen today walking along a street with her head down, too intimidated to look at people, her behaviour and attitudes" reflecting an era in which "poor people were expected to know their place" (p. 73).

The themes of migration and of race and ethnic relations are covered in the same manner. People are located in terms of their place in the system of stratification, and their perceptions are presented through case studies and selected comments. We learn that racist ideas are pervasive, though for the lower classes these are expressed in economic terms, while members of the upper stratum are more likely to employ the fictional categories of scientific racism. While the racism here is "shallow," as opposed to being "the deep racism of urban centres" (p. 270), we are left in no doubt that it intrudes, at times decisively, on the lives of some. For instance, the businesses of ethnic minorities did not always flourish in the way they might have done.

In many studies of locality, broader structural issues are briefly acknowledged, at best, or simply ignored. Barrett falls into the former category. He recognizes the "unseen hands of the political economy" (p. 129) and the intrusion of bureaucratic regulation on local affairs, though these themes are not developed. Yet, this issue of perspective cannot fairly be used to gauge Barrett's work. The author sets out to examine stratification, race and ethnic relations and migration in terms of people's perceptions, and he accomplishes this in an insightful manner. At times, Barrett is tempted to include too much. There is, for example, brief mention of incest, crime and religion, which do not always further the central narrative. Yet even here there are compensations, for Barrett's skills as a researcher ensures that the details he provides are never without interest. Rich in detail, the book offers a rare and valuable account of the extensive changes occurring in a "rural" community where class and ethnic relations are "in line with those in the city" (p. 31). Moreover, despite the particularistic focus, the changes described appear relevant to the experience of "nearby towns" and fringe communities generally.

### **American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly**

Frances Paul Prucha

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. xvi + 562. N.p. (cloth)

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This intriguing book about treaties is both comprehensive and disappointing. It is a comprehensive chronology of treaties from a colonizer's historical policy perspective. It is apologetic for the United States' implementation of treaty promises. But it is incomprehensible from a rule-of-law perspective.

The distance between rule-of-law and historical construction of treaties is clear in this book. The rule-of-law asserts that any ambiguities in treaties are to be interpreted as the Indians would have understood them, but this esteemed historian is content with