

***It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture.* By Thomas W. Dunk. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Pp. xii + 191)**

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On the whole the book provides the critically important empirical basis for understanding larger theoretical issues in folklore such as the politics of representation, the invention of ethnicity, and the uses of memory in the construction of identity. While issues of continuity and change inform this work, the scholars are more concerned with how people use and manipulate their identities in response to changing social conditions in the present. In keeping with recent developments in oral history and ethnic folklore scholarship, these studies tend to focus on the ways people constantly reinterpret the past to make sense of their lives. The individual is viewed as a social actor who "playfully use[s]...symbols available in the cultural register" (p. 122) to signal and experience Italianess at different levels of intensity. I found the treatment of fascism's role in shaping the Italian ethnic's imagination remarkably interesting and refreshing, especially in a discipline that too frequently views the ethnic in a romantic, apolitical light.

This fresh, contemporary portrait of Italian Americans breathes new life into the area of ethnic folklore and should be essential reading for anyone interested in Italian culture, Ethnic Studies and issues relating to the Italian immigrant experience in the U.S. and Canada. As a scholar who has spent time doing research in Canada and Italy, I found this book both enlightening and extremely useful

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The study of occupational folklife deals with the complex of techniques, customs and modes of expressive behaviour characteristic of a particular work group (McCarl 1978:145). Unlike many studies of occupational folklore, Thomas Dunk's focus is not on work technique, but on custom and various expressive modes of behaviour. His study is concerned primarily with the leisure-time activities of a group of industrial workers in Thunder Bay, Ontario. This emphasis on customary forms of recreation reveals how occupation actually influences everyday life of a group he calls the "Boys."

Dunk makes it clear that there are many forces that act in the shaping and expression of working-class culture. In his investigation of the playing of lob-

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ball, he presents the “Boys” attitudes toward women, bosses and Native Americans; these feelings are expressed during and especially after lob-ball games. Through this investigation of customary sports of the “Boys”, Dunk is able to reveal more pervasive patterns of working-class culture.

He interprets sport as ritual, as having a dramatic element, as role playing, and as a text of ritual rebellion. This investigation lets Dunk look at themes of work, especially the dichotomies of mental/manual, theory/practice and common sense (anti-intellectualism/intellectualism). These themes become even more clear as Dunk analytically presents stories about sports, fishing, Native Americans, housework, women and the home, and the role of women in non-work activities like lob-ball. His exploration is clearly and accurately presented. Ball tournaments like those Dunk describes are obviously widespread throughout Canada; reading this book I had vivid memories of attending similar softball tournaments.

Thomas Dunk’s book, while not intentionally written as part of occupational folklife scholarship, is a valuable addition to it. The introductory chapters place his study in the context of two generations of Marxist theory. The concluding chapter uses Gramsci’s idea of hegemony combined with Lévi-Strauss’ *bricoleur* to show how the “Boys”, in their leisure-time activities, create structures with counter-hegemonic impact for themselves based on the established power systems of work within the culture. While Funk has little to say about work technique, his discussion and conclusions based on custom and expressive behaviour are excellent. His study indicates how the expressive world of work can be so evident and dominant in leisure activities, and that these should be studied just as closely as work itself when trying to understand occupational folklore.

### References Cited

McCarl, Robert S. 1978. Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis. *Western Folklore* 37:145-160.

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