IS DEDHAM AMERICAN?
THE DIAGNOSIS OF THINGS AMERICAN[1]

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It appears easy for certain historians of early America to argue that democracy was not an evident feature of life in seventeenth or eighteenth century Massachusetts towns, but that it would become distinctive of America later on. Conversely it has been traditional for sociologists and anthropologists studying contemporary small town life to assert that they are not democratic at present though they were earlier on. The purpose of this paper is not to demonstrate that either are right or wrong, but that they have failed to see American culture as an integrated system. Individualism and freedom of choice on the other hand, and the pressure for community, unanimity and conformity on the other (democracy and undemocracy) are tied together in a dialectical relationship that is at work both in the earliest settlements and also in contemporary Midwestern towns.

> "To say that there has been no change *of* the society is roughly to say that there has been no revolution or overall reform: a form of organization does not change, it is replaced by another; a structure is present or absent: *it does not change.*" (author's emphasis. Louis Dumont 1970a: 219)

> "Il faut renoncer à fixer le moment où le latin devient du français." (Maurice Merleau-Ponty 1960:52)

In the passages I have used for an epigraph to this paper, Dumont and Merleau-Ponty summarize the two contradictory temptations of all work on symbolic systems, whether language in the narrow sense or culture in the sense Geertz and Schneider have talked about it for the past decade and a half. For it is extremely difficult to write a systematic account of a body of texts without implying integration and uniqueness. Yet one cannot help doubting that to talk of *one* underlying "structure" is to account most realistically for the collected texts. This is true even when the texts have been collected in one place—a town, for example—or over a specific time period, say, a year. How much more difficult it is to write in such a way about a very large place, for example, the United States, or a very long time, say, three hundred and fifty years and conclude with statements about cultural unity.

We cannot ignore the issue of cultural unity for it threatens the very foundations upon which anthropology has been built. The idea of culture implies the idea of "difference." But the idea of difference itself implies the idea of "change." And as cultures change, we must know how to diagnose that change. At what point for example, does a "variant" on a culture become a "different" culture?

Anthropological research has been able to escape consideration of this point to a large extent because of the comparative lack of temporal depth in the records of the population it studies. At most, change was equated with modernization, and the signs of it were considered obvious. It seemed easy to argue that radical changes had taken place in the span of one or two generations under the impact of post-colonial development.[2] The "coming back home" of anthropologists to Western cul-

tures is changing all this. Here, records are available and document what intuitively must be dealt with as several distinctive periods within the passing of time.

This search for the markers of culture change, for the moment when the accumulation of new elements lead to the appearance of a *gestalt* unequivocally different from the one from which it sprang, should contribute significantly to our understanding of the processes of cultural transmission and cultural change. Indeed it should help us refine the central concepts of culture, ideology, pattern, etc. Because of the urgency of this task I feel it is incumbent for anthropologists, who have already recently invaded the traditional domains of sociology in their search for the universal validation of their theories, to also invade, and be challenged and re-vitalized in the process, areas which have been the traditional domain of historians. Such work is well engaged, particularly in Dumézil's studies of early Indo-European ideology (1958) and those of L. Dumont both on India and on modern Europe as cultural ensembles (1965, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c).

The attempt to place boundaries to America also has a long history within the field of American studies. Boundaries have been set at various moments in the past 350 years, from the time of the establishment of the Massachusetts colonies to the War of Independence to the Jacksonian era, and even now to the latest socio-political fads. There are strong arguments in favor of all positions and we are led back to Merleau-Ponty's cautionary statement about Latin and French: the beginnings of America are not obvious[3] and yet the needs of symbolic analyses for a-chronic integration[4] demand that we confront the issue and explicate more fully what is the status of such statements in relation to the total historical situations about which they are made. When the historian K. Lockridge (1970), says that the Puritan settlement of Dedham is "not American," (thereby reversing the normal equation which locates America in such settlements) while at the same time still postulating the reality of an America sometime in the future precisely what is he saying? When Schneider (1968) talks of American kinship, what is he doing?

I shall attempt in this paper to provide a more careful statement of the grounds upon which one might build a theory of cultural integration. Such a theory should not gloss over the many difficulties confronting anthropologists, particularly the great variability in surface forms (even within the same period) and the activity of cultural patterns which may force upon the author implicit theories of cultural integration which must be examined critically. The paper will proceed in two steps. I shall first summarize an analysis of American forms of symbolic expression which I have elaborated on at greater length elsewhere (1977). I shall then look at various historical ethnographies of early Massachusetts towns, both as evidence for "the way it was," and as texts exemplifying a certain style of social scientific writing.

Socio-economically, the town of Appleton (a pseudonym), where I spent twelve months in 1970-71, is not extraordinary but neither is it typical. About 10,000 people live within a radius of five miles around the center of the town and several millions within a radius of two hundred miles which cover the major industrial centers around Lake Michigan. The town is slowly changing from a service center for the local farmers to an industrial town and an upper middle-class suburb. The town and its area are extremely diverse and one can experience there almost the whole range of the subgroups which are to be found in the contemporary United States, from the widows of General Motors executives to poor Appalachian Whites through the various classes and ethnic and religious groups, not to mention hippies or motorcycle gangs.

Politically, Republicanism dominates but the Democratic alternative is very much present; Democrats have been elected to

the county board. Vote-switching for state and national canidates is widespread. However, politics is not something which excites people for very long, particularly when it comes to local politics (in the 1971 municipal elections, of the more than 1500 that were eligible only 118 people voted). There is no town meeting because there are too many people in the town and such a crowd would be unmanageable, or so I was told by a member of the Town Council which expedited local affairs. As for political opinions, these too ranged all over the spectrum. Altogether there would have been very few issues about which conscious consensus could have been achieved within the population.

This experiential diversity must be kept in mind when I discuss the cultural integration of symbolic expression. Similarly one must be aware that Appleton was not such a small town that everybody knew everybody else. Major subgroups lived essentially independently from each other as various species do within the same ecological niche. Solidarity, if it existed, was organic, not mechanical—to use Durkheim's terms. Such a situation is an ideal setting for the type of discussion into which we must enter. It is ideal precisely because it so directly highlights those aspects of the world which must radically challenge any glossing statement about cultural integration.

Let us first summarize what appears to be the most reasonable statement of this integration as it can be postulated from an examination of a body of cultural texts produced by several essentially unrelated persons who lived in Appleton while I was there. I shall look at two sets of texts which exhibit the characteristic combination of traits, which for the sake of this analysis I shall take to exhibit what makes America (if not the United States) distinctive. I shall look successively at various meetings of the Town Council and at certain aspects of Protestant and Catholic ritualism.

As many observers have noted, most recently Vidich and Bensman (1960), for example, the public meetings of many governmental boards are both the most ritualistic performances that America has to offer and the least relevant of the situations where political power is exercized. On the one hand, the form of the public meeting is prescribed by the inflexible laws and customs relating to parliamentary procedures. On the other hand, only very few people attend the meetings or even read the published minutes. As everyone will say, the real decisions are made in private sessions or even at the diner where the main businessmen of the town have coffee every morning. Furthermore, the appearance of unanimity is preserved even at the risk of illegality which the School Board approached when, within a few months, it voted unanimously first to retain the superintendent and then fire him, after the shift of *one* vote in a board split right down the middle. Public unanimity never implies anything as to the situation in private. Unanimity is broken only in the face of an overwhelming clash of interest and even then all votes except for the relevant ones are unanimous. This is expressed in reverse in a common theme which the newspaper editor expanded on whenever public unanimity was broken: the myth of the broken community, where society is made to depend upon a positive public consensus without which the primeval chaos that is constantly lurking behind civilization would re-assert itself.[5]

In democratic ritualism, the interplay of individualism, realized in universal suffrage, and common-alism, realized in the impossible dream of unanimity, which is also uniformity and conformity, is clear enough. To see how it operates more concretely, let us look briefly at the organization of religious expression in Appleton. It is an interesting place to look at for the state does not control this expression, and cultural processes can play themselves most naturally. What is most striking to a European in an American small town is the multitude and liveliness of its churches. Appleton may be slightly above the average with fourteen denominations[7] serving five to six thousand people, but the phenomenon is general all over the United States. It also often appears to a European that many of these denominations do not differ much theologically. Some natives would disagree with this. But I also often heard the equivalent of the following comment: "Am I a Baptist? Not really, I'd rather call myself a Christian. We are all one, when you come down to it." This, of course, is surprising only to the extent that I, as a Frenchman, raised and educated in a continental atmosphere of ideological dogmatism mixed with nationalism, more or less consciously expected that sectarianism would go hand hand with beliefs sharply defined in dialectical confrontation with those held by other churches. No such thing happened in Appleton where even the ministers affirmed their belief in the fundamental unity of Christendom. All this was manifested by a strong ecumenical movement which even included Jews.[8]

The limits of ecumenism, however, are soon reached, and, as one minister put it, "Yes, we are all one, but people should be left free to express their religious feeling with whatever ritual they like." Since Appleton is prosperous enough to sustain half a dozen full-time ministers, and since this is not likely to change in the foreseeable future, one can predict that there is no chance for the actual union of all congregations on a formal basis. This is all the more certain since most youths or young adults interested in religious issues, from the radicals to the conservatives, continue to insist both on the fundamental unity of humankind and on the right to worship (or not worship) in whichever way they please. Formal unity is rendered even more improbable because of the split between "rational" (Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.) and "emotional" (the various Pentecostal churches) Protestant churches which show even less desire to come together than the rational Protestant and Catholics do.[9]

What can we say about these centrifugal forces? Traditionally, sociologists say that church membership reflects class segmentation.[10] In Appleton indeed the average Presbyterian is a well-to-do professional (lower upper class), the average Methodist is a farmer or merchant (upper middle class), the average member of the "Full Gospel" Pentecostal church is the wife of an unemployed blue collar worker (lower lower class). And yet other forms of evidence can be marshalled which cannot be accounted for directly by such an analysis.

First we have the statements of informants. Why do they join a particular church? "Because of the pastor, of the type of sermons he gives, because of the building and because of the friendliness of the congregation."[11] Why do they attend a "family" dinner? "Because it is nice to be all together with your friends, we can talk and relax. The congregation is like a big family and this is a way to express it." And what is the theological justification of church membership and attendance? "It is true that God speaks directly to the individual. Yet Jesus has taught us that no individual is an island unto himself and he has asked us repeatedly to pray with our friends. And indeed one can be a completely developed individual only inside a community." I think all these declarations are quite explicit and cannot be ignored.

One joins a church because one has found that the people in it are congenial in taste, ideas, educational background and also, of course, in the ability to actualize these, in other words, in income. A church is first and foremost a voluntary association of like-minded individuals meeting together to pray and worship according to the form which most suits them. We could go even further and argue, reversing the traditional sociological interpretation, that one's status is not determined by the church to which one belongs but that the status of a church

epends on the status of the dominant
nembers of the congregation. This holds
rue even though historical development
as led to the identification of certain de-
ominations with certain types of people:
n any given town, Presbyterians are pro-
ably "high" in the social scale and the
Baptists "low." But it is impossible to pre-
dict whether Presbyterians or Episcopalians
are on top (in Appleton the Presbyterians
probably are). Along the same line of anal-
ysis falls the evidence of a recent ideologi-
cal shift in certain churches in Appleton,
the Presbyterian for example. This church
seems to have changed in the last fifteen
years from a very conservative church
which fired a minister who had preached in
favor of housing integration, to a much
more liberal church that is trying to put to-
gether a "crisis telephone center" for drug
addicts on bad trips, people in a suicidal
mood, and so on. This switch may reflect
most directly pastor personalities; they all
have been liberal in the past years, but it
also reflects a change in the congregation to
younger, more intellectual people, many of
whom are new to the area and give their
ideological allegiance to the cosmopolitan
society of Chicago rather than to the older
merchant elite of Appleton itself.

The other type of evidence militating against a simple class analysis of religious differentiation is comparative. Let us look at the Catholic church, even the very Americanized version of it found in Appleton. People from all income groups can be found there. Historically, this is the result of emigration from countries with a strong Catholic tradition like Italy and Poland, and from the strength of ethnic identification. Even though many if not most Catholic immigrants were poor, by now some of them have succeeded quite well in industry, small businesses and the professions, and thus are moving into the upper classes. Yet, in Europe too the Catholic church spans all classes even in the face of the fact that the social system is still lived and experienced as a class system,—a system in which all classes have a strong consciousness of their existence. A class structure, even a strong one, is perfectly consistent with a national religion to which everybody adheres above clashes of interest or diversity of subcultures.[12]

What makes all this of particular interest is that the great variability in style across denominations, quasi-religious organizations such as the Masons and small groups of friends is accompanied by a great effort toward uniformity *within* each of these social groups. As in government ritualism, public expression must be unanimous. If unanimity is broken, the common choice is withdrawal or expulsion through informal shunning rather than the symbolic manifestation of internal differentiation. To use one of the most powerful phrases produced by Americans during the 1960's, all symbolic communities are governed by the rule, "this community, love it or leave it!"

What was outrageous in the original phrase was that "America" cannot anymore be "left" physically, that there was an implication of coercion in the assimilation of "America" with the United States' laws, and the political conflict was publicized. And yet it was the civil rights and peace movement which first shattered a certain type of political unanimity and thus raised the fears of chaos and destruction which all Americans have experienced more or less directly when "their" church was overtaken by a new elite, when their friends moved away, when their marriages collapsed. "Love it or leave it," even when the injunction is uttered by an insider to a borderline outsider can also be experienced as a tearing defeat when the outsider does leave. A movement away is always a negative reflection upon those who stayed. Conformity and individualism, the attempt to build communities of "shared values" and the decision to build such communities upon the active movement of individuals pursuing the same objectives must therefore be seen as complementary processes which bespeak each other. It is not a matter of

little import that both the conservatives and the radicals should have made so much use of the word "love" in the 1960s. For love, and similar concepts that may be less charged (such as relationship, understanding, role-playing, etc.), answer the dilemma produced by the driving contradiction between individualism and community: love is both an emotional state located in the individual and an interactional matter which binds two individuals in a new unanimous community.

All this can be realized in many various ways either in the sculpturing of physical space or in the dramatistic organization of a temporal interaction. Most dwelling places in Appleton, for example, possess a very strong orientation where an unfenced "front" lot (the house being modeled on the human body) on the public street remains open, an openness reinforced by porches and picture windows, while "back" lots—which often are fenced and the center of private family activities in the summer and onto which the modern addition of "family rooms" open—represent privacy and inevitable withdrawal.

For a dramatistic statement we can look at the ritualization of incorporation into a Protestant church. The myth has many variants, two of the most typical being the Presbyterian and the Baptist versions. In the first case the postulant, after a private active decision on his part about joining is investigated both formally (by the Board of Deacons) and informally (by the congregation when the postulant visits the church as a guest)—at which point negative decisions may be made. The postulant is then required to make a public declaration of intent during the main service, at which point the congregation there assembled is asked to accept the petition through a vote which, at this stage, is always unanimous. The Baptist session differs only in that the original private act of intent is overemphasized while the formal investigation is dropped. In theory, anyone who is "moved by the Spirit" must be accepted—publically—by the congregation.

Many other statements could also be looked at, from the ritualization of marriage to the popular literature about divorce, from the rituals during which ministers are adopted by congregations to certain metaphorical associations of the War of Independence with the rebellion against their parents and towards independence adolescents must live through, to the various pledges of allegiance on which nationality is supposed to rest. Given this type of statement, many of the most visible modes of expression observable in the United States can be said, tentatively, to be organized by the tension between individualism and community that is mediated by love.

An aside of a methodological order is necessary here. First I want to emphasize that in the above summary I have not been primarily interested in realized outcomes except as texts which can be shown to be organized. Indeed I have insisted strongly on the great variablility of surface realizations. A meeting of a governing board, a religious service and a party are not the same things. They can be said to be strongly organized; and they can be said to be in some way related. The exact statement of this relationship is what must be at issue. It is commonly said that varied forms can be organized "by" "the same structure." (I am deliberately using quote marks to highlight a certain way of writing social science.) This can often lead to an unwitting reification of "the" structure, a statement of which can then be made as if it consisted of a descripton of an event in the experiential world. Critics can then challenge the analysis by emphasizing that they have observed a set of events the surface form of which differs from the postulated structure when it is treated as a surface event.

A more appropriate statement is one that would use Piaget's (1968) understanding of "structure" as a *système de transformations*. The analytical process, in this per-

spective, involves a series of operations on the data considered which produce a statement of a structure which is not so much a description as it is a set of rules for the generating of new events which themselves would continue to belong to the set from which the statement was originally inducted. The "structure" thus consists of something that is more akin to a set of quasi grammatical rules than to an ethnography in the narrow sense of the term.

This can be pushed even further. To talk of a system of transformation does allow the analyst to present many different texts as equivalent from a certain point of view. However, if improperly handled, the statement of equivalence may remain a summary of surface commonalities—which brings us back to the initial difficulty. What is needed is a statement that is more generative than it is descriptive of a body of texts including all the actual texts examined but also many other texts some of which (indeed most of which) will never, in fact, be produced. The structure then becomes a statement of *langue* rather than *parole* in the Saussurian sense, a distinction which I feel must be maintained in spite of the many criticisms which American sociolinguists have levelled against it.[13]

As the French semiologist A. Greimas has argued, partially in answer to these criticisms, structuralist linguistics has always implied a mediating term through which langue is actualized in parole. This mediator is a "speaking-subject" (*sujet parlant*) who is indeed the actor about whom one is attempting to make a reasoned statement:

> From the point of view of semiotic praxis which attempts to reach the linguistic act as such [*le faire linguistic en tant que tel*], there are but two ways through which we can get to know the subject of the discourse or, what is equivalent, recognize the processes through which he reproduces and organizes the discourse: either the subject, as he makes himself explicit in the discourses which it produces, tells us himself (partially and often falsely), or else, on the basis of the realized discourse, we postulate the logical presuppositions which are the conditions of its existence and its production. (my translation. Greimas, 1976:12)

In other words, a knowledge of the actor and his products is only possible in terms of a postulated model that must be treated as both paradigmatic, that is a-chronic, and hierarchically prior to the partial realizations that provide the existential base from which the model was elaborated. But this cannot be taken to mean that the analyst has ever or will ever directly experience, in the world about which he writes, the postulated model. The realization of a model is always a temporal, syntagmatic chain, an enunciated text. The methodological consequence of these principles is that no true description of any text should ever, if it is accurate enough, make it "look like" any other text. Surface resemblance must always be considered artificial, and one must always be skeptical of analyses based on the presence or absence of such resemblance either with other texts or with a postulated model.

In terms of statements about cultural integration, all this means that there is a test which allows us to decide whether two texts, however closely or distantly related in time and space, can fairly be treated as mutual transforms; it cannot consist merely in a search for suface similarity. Neither can it consist in frequency statements, for these depend on decisions about such similarity. The test must consist in the demonstration that the two texts can be produced by the same postulated model however different their surface realization may make them appear.[14]

Before we can do this we must first be able to write a statement of cultural particularism and integration in the form of a rule or a set of rules. While more work needs to be done, an approximation of such a formal statement may be offered here. The structure underlying American particularisms might thus be stated as a rule and some correlates to this rule:

The Rule: SUBJECTS ("I") CREATE COMMUNITIES ("WE") THROUGH PRIVATE PERSONAL MOVEMENTS.

Correlates: 1) private movement is made possible through the creation of a stable system of sociolocational correlates (e.g., social classes, ethnic groups, religious cults, etc.): 2) no positive act of marriage is possible without a negative act of divorce: 3) unanimity perceived as "real" is limited by the psychological limitations to intense interpersonal relationships (2 to 3 dozen individuals probably being the largest number of people that can be so related); unanimity perceived as superficial (e.g., smiles, open front lots, unanimous votes, refusal to engage in direct dispute) is the unmarked mode of interaction adopted when no other interests clash.

This statement, however inadequate it may still be, seems to me to preserve the basic principle under which we must operate, that is, that *a large number of discourses* (as paroles) *that are possible may, at any time and place within the spatial and temporal territory of the postulated a-chronic state, never be realized.*[15]

Conversely, a very large number of statements can be produced and, to the extent that symbolic expression has a social work to perform, these statements in their social and emotional content can vary extensively. In the overview of Appleton I sketched earlier, I tried quite consciously to stress the complexity of the lives which are performed there and the paradoxical qualities which can be attributed to it.

To this extent, Appleton is unique. But in other parts of the United States—in two large universities, in a building in a megalopolis—I have also experienced other situations, as complex and diverse as those I experienced in Appleton, which I would still analyze as products of the same anxieties about the nature of human society (see model I sketched earlier). The content of the comedies, dramas or tragedies changed as the sociological pressures shifted from the conflict of suburban concerns with agricultural ones, to attempts at "stabilizing" a neighborhood through urban renewal, to the need to adapt to reduced financial conditions. But the symbolization of these problems proceeded along the same lines. The analytical model suggested here should also allow for the discovery of symbolic patterns beneath surface variation in events spread out over time.

As one moves from the place and time in which one made one's first observations, one cannot expect that the content of the new set of cultural artifacts should have much in common with the original one. Different ecological adaptations, different economic and political situations will provide distinctive sets of problems about which symbolic conversation will proceed. But one may still be able to argue for the presence of a common semiotic grammar.

Let us now look at the recent historiography of early American towns, particularly the early settlements in Massachusetts and their development over their first hundred years. I shall rely principally on three quasi-ethnographies of these settlements, those of C. Powell (1963), K. Lockridge (1970), and M. Zuckerman (1970). I shall supplement these accounts with a few review articles about special points which the three books gloss over, particularly the two latter ones which are both part of the same "revisionist" movement within American historiography against what appeared to be traditional and overly idealistic accounts of early American towns as the undoubted cradle of American institutions. This led Lockridge and Zuckerman to adopt a pugnacious tone that may have made them overstate certain of their points, and necessarily biased their choice of facts to stress or to leave aside. But social science is necessarily "biased." Second hand work is thus doubly biased. This is a limitation on all comparative efforts, including all cross-cultural comparisons, and we must make the best of it.

In spite of their defects these books can still be extremely useful. They give us a detailed and diversified view of life in

parts of Massachusetts over the 150-year period before the Revolution. These studies deal both with ethnographical accounts of single towns in their first decades (Powell, Lockridge), and with a more generalized account of the fate of some of these towns in the eighteenth century (Zuckerman). Powell's study also gives an account of the British background from which some of Sudbury's settlers came, and of the influence this background had on the societies they created in America, as well as the substance of some of their early disputes. All this gives us an overall picture which one could summarize briefly in the following way.

England in the seventeenth century was a varied society to the extent that different forms of social, economic and political structures were prevalent in different parts of the country. Evident almost everywhere, however, was an almost absolute conservatism of the forms which prevailed in particular localities;[16] a hierarchical system with a more or less marked feudal character in which the final authority resides in the Lord or King; an apparent lack of the most extreme forms of persecution and/or exploitation, famine or war; small groups of dissatisfied individuals, often well-to-do people who rather consciously saw in the new colonies economic, social and religious opportunities unavailable in England; and finally a larger group of skilled and semi-skilled artisans, tradesmen and farmers from whom the great majority of the emigrants was drawn.

They arrived in America with a few tools and lots of ideas, some explicit, some implicit, about society and religion. Both these tools and these ideas were evidently rooted in England and European cultures, not only peasant culture as Lockridge maintains (1970: 18-19) since quite a few of the new arrivals had not been peasants in England. Many were educated and quite aware of the most advanced religious and philosophical disputes within the "great tradition" of Europe at the time. Many of them arrived with a utopia in their minds, a European Utopia.[17] These utopias, as they appear to us codified in Covenants and other ideological texts, were centered around the belief in the right of the individual person to a share of the world which he could call "his": politically the individual was entitled to choose his fellow citizens, religiously he was entitled to choose his fellow church members. He was entitled to participate in the government of both his church and his community. Finally he was also entitled to a fair share of the land to enable him to do the above unencumbered by economic dependency.

The apparent uniformity of the Covenants and other similar documents initially led to a view of seventeenth century America as essentially homogeneous. By the late 1950's, historians began to question this assumption and asked for more detailed investigations of local communities. The ethnographies I have referred to were the answer to this new interest in variation. Paradoxically this movement, in that it obliged researchers to focus on one realization of socio-cultural forces, also led to a reappearance of homogenous models of early American society because most authors continued to adopt a model of organization of local communities which emphasized the need for underlying consensus and because they attempted to relate their particularistic findings to broader issues. What seems to be lacking from both this literature and the reaction to it is a consideration that conflict and variation, far from being prima facie evidence for "heterogeneity," may have been produced by what can be treated as a single structure.

Some authors have noticed that, to the very extent that the basic principle of Puritanism and the Covenants was individual determination of proper and improper modes of religious life and social organization, its reverse side (once an unimpeded attempt was made to transform utopias into real social systems) was almost infinite variation, litigation, challenge to established power without possible recourse to a higher authority to settle the differences. As Powell notes, the newly arrived immigrants "discovered that when many had a voice, few agreed on the powers of the elect . . . that even a Saint could be voted out of office" (Powell 1963: 76). This probably went beyond what they as individuals had bargained for, and yet they could not do away with this approach since they probably felt that this system could give them redress if ever they needed it—which indeed regularly happened as factions formed, fought for their rights, seceded from their original community and moved on.

The existence of such disputes is nowhere at issue in the literature. Indeed the basic "facts" are well-established and the most recent work has not done much more than provide new and more detailed evidence for the performance of the disputes. As Murrin (1972: 231) summarized the situation, the primary feature that marks the New World as new is that "extreme mobility [was] possible for those who sought it, [and that it] offered unprecedented stability for those whose values were communal". Essentially the same argument was published eleven years earlier by F. Morgan. In fact, it is probable that the end of Murrin's argument is not stated quite right: it does not seem that communal values were sufficient. What was needed was a positive evaluation of a certain type of communal form joined with an active welcome from the people who were already members of the community, particularly in the smaller towns or, I am sure, within subcommunities of the larger towns.

One of the most extreme and more revealing cultural artifacts of this period—an artifact which may be unique in world ethnography—is the dispute which developed in the second half of the seventeenth century about the extension of church membership to new immigrants and, most astonishingly perhaps, to the now adult children of the earliest immigrants. Lockridge (1970) documents these disputes at great length and Morgan asserts that the granting of membership remained a touchy subject well into the eighteenth century.[18] In Sudbury the main problems seem to have centered around the land tenure system.[19] The same issues were raised and were eventually solved in a similar manner: the economic dissidents left physically, through the creation of new towns. The religious dissidents eventually created new churches.

The pattern suggested by such events could be phrased syntagmatically as an organized sequence of 1) an active personnel decision of emigration from something/somewhere, 2) a decision to settle in a particular place and business, 3) the inevitable appearance of serious disputes within the the community created by (2) which could lead either to, 4a) reinforcement of superficial consensus or, 4b) dissidence followed by a new emigration. Indeed it seems plausible to hypothesize that 4a) and 4b) always occurred concurrently and are indeed nothing more than the positive and negative aspect of a search for a conflict-free, consensual, "true community" which this very search made impossible. All this can be summarized by a quote from the end of Zuckerman's book where he notes, about nineteenth century Massachusetts, that: "the bond of commonality had been stretched, but they were still stringent. The dissident in these little hamlets of homogeneity still, finally, had the options of his forebears; he could conform or he could leave." (Zuckerman 1970: 258)

Zuckerman has been criticized, by Murrin for example (1972: 245), for having chosen some of the most conservative towns in Massachusetts in order to bolster his argument.[20] Even in Massachusetts, many towns, particularly the largest, were already internally diverse by the eighteenth century. Certain towns would seem to have been so from the beginning. The province as a whole certainly was. Indeed if one is to look even more broadly across

the original colonies, the diversity in form is even more pronounced as both ideological variation and shifts in the economic base led to the production of extremely visible differences which must have been directly experienced by all but the most provincial of the colonists.

The picture which one gets when all these studies are put together is of a society not obviously "different" from modern America. However, the use of purely descriptive data cannot allow us to state this positively. To do this we shall have to compare the generating structures. But something will first have to be dealt with, and that is the impact of modern ideology on the historians of the 1960's and 1970's. All the works I have examined are also cultural artifacts. I shall do no more here than to suggest how such an analysis could proceed by examining briefly the paradigmatic set of the word "community" in the last chapter of Lockridge's book. There, Lockridge is attempting to fit his description of Dedham as a European peasant village back into the stream of American history: to the extent that Dedham is not American, Lockridge finds himself obliged to postulate a process by which European Dedhams (since he is convinced of the typicality of the town) could transform themselves into American urban centers under Jackson.

The whole chapter is organized around a set of binary propositions which could be summarized as follows:

stability	:	change	: :
old	:	new	: :
order	:	chaos	: :
peasant	:	urban	: :
consensus	:	disputes	: :
authority	:	freedom	: :
traditional	:	modern	: :
community	:	individual	: :
seventeenth century Dedham	:	Jacksonian America	: :

Underlying these oppositions one thing remains constant in Lockridge's rhetoric: he constantly projects social organization into the more or less conscious activity of the participants through the use of such phrases as "men could hope," "it was clear [to the participants]" "the economic opportunities invited even more members of the Puritan communities . . ." (Lockridge 1970: 169, 172); etc.

This style is common in American social science and it will have to be challenged. I do not see how one can anymore put together stability, consensus, and peasant. While it may be possible to associate stability and peasant (which, given new evidence of mobility in peasant Europe may not be appropriate), it is certainly not appropriate to qualify most peasant societies as "consensual." Around the Mediterranean at least quite the contrary is true. Lockridge (1970: 176-7) himself suggests that New England may have been *more* consensual than England. Conversely, it is doubtful that, considered as a whole, New England could be justly qualified as stable, orderly or consensual. As for twentieth century America, however modern, urban, free and individualistic it may be, it is also in many of its symbolic expressions, in conscious search of consensual communities. When Lockridge writes that all parties concerned in the early eighteenth century crises "pleaded for peace, unity and order with an almost desperate insistence. *To no avail*" (my emphasis. Lockridge 1970: 173-4) he could also be writing about Appleton (and Springdale, etc.). Many Americans are still pleading in this manner as the success of Slater's (1970) book attests, and to as little avail.

Now, it's possible that Lockridge's own search for a "peaceable kingdom" may have transformed Dedham into another Appleton. But he did not fabricate the disputes over Church membership, and however a-typical such dispute may have been of everyday life concerns, they are, with Covenants and other such texts which have come to us, extremely organized performances in which the placing of conflict and human agency within a temporal sequence seems determined by the same set of rules that eventually also produced Slater's complaint. This is not to mention certain interpretative passages in social science writing which could be exemplified by a passage from Zuckerman's book:

> "Among men who are privy to each other's secret sins, overt hostility becomes unlikely as the basis of enduring relationships; aggressive impulses must be suppressed if not extinguished, *because they can rip the community apart.* It has been found, for example, that an isolated settlement pattern is often connected with substantial self-reliance, but closely-packed settlement forms are likelier to be linked to a high evaluation of responsibility to the group (my emphasis, Zuckerman 1970: 49).

Another version of the myth of the fragile society is the rather empty attempt to differentiate strong communities from weak ones, and real consensus from untried consensus. As Higham (1974) points out, we do not have any yardstick that would allow us to decide whether any real village can be rated in these terms. It is still interesting to note that for those who tried to do so, a real consensus is one where unanimity of values is based on a free movement from each participant (contrived consensus being a matter of nothing else than surface manifestation enforced by authoritarian means). For them, a strong community is based upon real consensus.[21]

It seems that these same issues also framed both the general discourse of the early American colonists and their attempts to realize this discourse in the dramatic performances of their everyday life. The rate of success in the latter endeavor may have been different then from now, the topics around which consensus was built may have changed, but the intellectual style, as Bourdieu (1971a, 1971b) might put it, the culture, as a system of symbolization, as Schneider (1968) might put it, may have been the same.

An element of doubt must still remain, for little attention has yet been paid to the difficulties surrounding the symbolization of symbolic systems. We cannot be quite sure that the composite picture of the period that emerges when one puts side by side the various statements we have looked at, is the product of the period itself accurately reflected in the accounts or the product of the ethno-sociological imagination of the authors.

Only through careful triangulation, using scholarly accounts drawn from various perspectives and ideological points of view, will we be able to settle the question. Even so, we may never be quite sure precisely because of the many reasons which have to do with the fundamental limitations of social science as it is currently practiced. First, such social science is always written in our terms for our use even when our effort is to understand "them" as "they are": there is little doubt that any of the accounts we looked at could not have been produced by seventeenth century British New Englanders. Second, we must turn full circle and re-affirm that the passage from Europe to America was not a revolution. New England was produced by Old England. In its markets and utopias it was European. But something radical may have happened. Certain things that would not have taken place in England soon became possible: economic mobility because easier, local independence became greater and so did established religious diversity. The main reasons for this change were probably ecological, economic and historical. And, as their own artifacts fed back to them an image of themselves that they may not have recognized as such, the seeds were planted for the later recognition of a difference which led most residents of the United States to see themselves as "Americans" rather than "English."

NOTES

[1]For encouragement and–sometimes sharp but always helpful–criticism, I am indebted in different ways to Marilyn Blackmon, Bernard Cohn, Lawrence Cremin, Walt Dickie, Kenneth Lockridge, David Schneider, Milton Singer, Sylvia Thrupp. I, of course, am solely responsible for the content of the article. I am also very thankful to the Wenner-Gren Foundation which provided most of the funds which made possible the field experience to which I refer in the article.

[2]That the impact of European presence would be overwhelming seemed so obvious that many observers failed to recognize persistence of pre-European patterns in the very "changes" which they observed. For an interesting discussion of a particular case, see Boon (1977) on the Dutch in Bali.

[3]Except when it comes to the very definition of the field of American history, the placing of the earlier boundaries to this history and the writing of the history in scholarly work and textbooks. There the situation is unambiguous: America starts with the earliest settlements within what was to become the United States.

[4]I prefer "a-chronic" to "synchronic" for the latter word implies a historical realization which is precisely what is at issue here.

[5]This is not necessarily dependent upon socio-political necessity. One only has to look at French small towns where it is factionalism which will be ritually emphasized even when the matter at hand is not crucial. See the classic works of Wylie on the life of such villages in modern France, (1964, 1966). See also M. Kesselman (1967).

[6]The State laws are also the result of a cultural process. But the major laws of the United States have been developed at a historical point far removed from the people I worked with. Indeed, for most of them, these laws are a part of the external and given environment over which a person has minimal control.

[7]As listed in a local publication they are: Trinity Lutheran, First Methodist, First Presbyterian, Full Gospel, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, Church of God, St. Mark's Episcopal, Seventh-Day Adventist, Assembly of God, St. Mary's Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses, First Baptist, Church of the Nazarene (rural).

[8]In fact, it would seem that his playing down of dogmatic differences between churches has a long history in America. S. Mead (1963) argues that this has been the explicit policy of even establishment churches and political philosophers since at least the eighteenth century. It is also possible that it is the expression of dogmatism which differs between Europe and the United States rather than dogmatism itself, something which is very difficult to measure. We might thus generalize to religion what I said earlier about the expression of political struggle.

[9]One has but to look at the recent history of Protestant denominations to realize the continued power of centrifugal forces upon American religiosity: the creation of small countercultural cults, the split within the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church over the conservation of the leadership, and the split within the Episcopalian Church over the liberalism of the leadership, all attest to the liveliness of the American approach to religious organization.

[10]For the most typical of such analyses, see Warner and his students' work on "Yankee City" (1941-1959).

[11]This is based on an informal survey of Methodists compiled by the church. It lists the main reason for joining a church as the respondents listed theirs in order of importance. The absence of dogmatic matters is striking.

[12]Not to mention variability in theology and style of worship. The Catholic Church admits within its fold both conservative liturgies and the most radical of innovations such as charismatic preaching, including many forms typically associated with Southern lower class Baptist evangelism.

[13]See in particular Labov (1972).

[14]There are here positions of scale which I am not addressing. Whether two texts are mutual transforms is not a question of fact but of chosen level as all work on Indo-European languages and ideology on the one hand and Lévi-Strauss's work on myth demonstrates. At a high enough level all forms of symbolic action are mutual transforms, at a low enough level, each expression is unique.

[15]For an elaboration of this position, see Greimas (1970).

[16]This conservatism of local forms, which seems well attested, does not imply a parallel "stability" of the individuals which fitted into them. England in the sixteenth century was a "mobile" society. John Murrin (1972) in a review essay on the recent literature about early New England life notes how certain authors are coming to see the conservatism of the social structure as "essential to a swift changing of population." The facts are interesting; the hypotheses about the causal relationships are just as gratuitous as the preceding generation of historians' accepted position that conservation of forms meant stability of populations.

[17]In recent years historians have come to emphasize more and more emphatically the mercantilist impulses to the emigration to the Colonies and to discount the ideological statements of the most vocal authors of the time who may have been

the basic source of the traditional histories. While there is here a healthy reaction against over-idealistic theories of social change, it is certain that, whatever may have been the most powerful forces to move people out of England, these people were also involved in symbolic performance. It further seems probable that most of the emigrants from the "middling classes" were drawn from subgroups actively involved in "non-conforming" religiosity (Campbell 1959: 86-9). Other ideological impulses than Puritanism may also have been at work, particularly in the eighteenth century. If we are to accept Leo Marx's (1964) argument some immigrants also saw in the move to America the opportunity to create an ideal political society, a society dreamed of more in pagan (pastoralism) than in Christian terms, but still a new society in which man could be reformed.

[18]Morgan goes so far as to argue that, in some cases the second generation refused membership: "The second generation of Puritans may have become so sophisticated in the morphology of conversion that they rejected, as inconclusive, religious experiences that would have driven their parents unhesitatingly into church membership" (Morgan 1961: 242). The least we can say with Morgan is that "there were various shades of opinions and practices with regard to admission of members . . ." (Morgan 1961: 239).

[19]Murrin sees in all this "a truly astonishing extension of patriarchal authority" (Murrin 1972: 236). The term "patriarchal" is very dangerous here as it seems to imply the possibility of direct comparison between New England and other cultures where this trait is supposed to be more or less present. Murrin is attempting in his essay, among other things, to decide whether New England was more or less patriarchal than England itself. Once again "patriarchy" must be understood within a particular cultural context and has no explanatory value in itself.

[20]Indeed Murrin believes Zuckerman's conclusions to be all but invalid. I would rather follow J. Greene's (1974) more balanced assessment of Zuckerman's work where he stresses its utility in terms of the very uniqueness of the towns, not only in Massachusetts behavior, but also in economic and social terms.

[21]Anthropologists should recognize here the classical Redfield-Lewis divergence about Tepoztlán. My own position on this issue is that of Redfield (1960: 133ff) when he said whether a town is to be considered a consensual community or an anomic aggregate of conflicting individuals is a matter of approach, not of fact.

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