

Culture



Larry KROTZ (photographs by John Paskievich), *Urban Indians: the Strangers in Canada's Cities*, Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1980. 157 pp., \$9.95 (paper)

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Lorsque cette démarche s'accompagne d'un procédé téléologique (parler de mariage, de divorce et de viol dans le cas des non-humains comme le fait D.P. Barash, un adepte de Wilson (pp. 296-297)) et d'une projection des paramètres utilisés pour l'étude des espèces animales sur l'humanité (p. 282), le mythe de la domination masculine ne peut que prendre de l'ampleur.

Combattre ces vues erronées fait partie du programme de libération des femmes et Leacock milite activement dans ce domaine depuis plusieurs années et plus particulièrement au sein du *New York Women's Anthropological Conference*. Au cours des années Leacock est demeurée remarquablement consistante quant à sa reconnaissance de la spécificité de la condition féminine. En 1952, elle constatait que des écrits comme ceux de Margaret Mead (particulièrement *Male and Female* (1949)) contribuaient à détourner le combat des femmes de leur véritable ennemi, la société capitaliste (p. 208). Aujourd'hui, elle demeure critique face au caractère de classe moyenne de ce qu'on désigne habituellement comme le mouvement des femmes (p. 307). En effet le combat contre l'oppression sexuelle doit être mené de concert avec ceux qui s'attaquent à l'oppression d'une race ou d'une classe par une autre (p. 8). L'ennemi n'est pas l'homme (il ne s'agit pas d'une « bataille des sexes » (p. 306)) mais bien le capitalisme. En cela les femmes du Tiers-Monde ont un rôle central à jouer : elles sont tellement opprimées à tous points de vue que lorsqu'elles se mobilisent pour changer leur situation, elles le font contre toute la structure d'exploitation (p. 312). De là également l'intérêt de Leacock pour l'étude des femmes en situation de colonisation (Étienne et Leacock, 1980).

En ces moments d'incertitude à tous les niveaux, on aura avantage à se resourcer au livre de Leacock. Les résultats de ses analyses ethnographiques auront beau être contestés (par exemple Bruce Cox qui propose ce qui me semble être le développement d'un mode de production domestique articulé à une économie mondiale pour qualifier les transformations de la société amérindienne (pp. 174-178)), on aura du mal à faire ombre à la complexité et à la subtilité de sa méthode. La simplicité apparente de l'argumentation de Leacock est en effet trompeuse. Tout comme dans le cas de la bande, il ne faut pas prendre cette simplicité pour un manque de structures. Elles sont d'un ordre différent.

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Larry KROTZ (photographs by John Paskievich), *Urban Indians : the Strangers in Canada's Cities*, Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1980. 157 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

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This small book, apparently written for light reading, is a journalist's account of Canadian Indians living in prairie cities. The reader is introduced to a number of controversial but familiar issues such as urban migration and housing, as largely reflected by personal experiences of a few individuals. Featured prominently are twenty pages of photographs of Indians, both on reserves and in cities. The data are mostly gathered in an empiricist fashion, in Edmonton, Regina, and Winnipeg through interviewing and visitations. No long-term, intensive fieldwork was undertaken nor were the interviews seriously interpreted for the reader. The research was subsidized by the St. Stephen's-Broadway Foundation in Winnipeg, the Explorations Divisions of the Canada Council, and the Manitoba Arts Council.

The author Krotz apparently attempts to interpose life histories with general topics such as city issues, housing, schools, employment, and social services. The net result, however, is that the number of life histories is simply overwhelming. There are twelve as explicitly indicated by subtitles, and a few more in a unit (chapter?) entitled *Two Families*. By the time the reader finally plods through the volume, he comes away with the impression of one joyless life history after another.

One such life history is presented as a narration by a treaty Indian Bev Desmonie. She talked about her work in Lebrique Residential School, renting a two bedroom house, her application for low rental housing, temporary employment, commuting between Regina and various reserves, and

her preference to send her children to integrated schools (so that the prejudice there might appropriately prepare them for adult life). Her narration also touches on her boy friend working as a farm labourer and construction worker, her cousin's involvement in a street fight, and the changes occurring on reserves, where some children were mistreated, some were discouraged to speak Cree by the elders, while others departed for the cities.

Joylessness pervades in all similar histories. The humour and human warmth that exist among the Indians, the Crees in particular, are missing from the author's perceptions. This is rather unfortunate and misleading as well as proof that the informants consistently regarded the author as an outsider. A book focusing on specific individuals has great potential as a medium for expressing not only the difficulties but also the humour of life even in a hostile urban environment.

On more general social issues, Krotz finds the school system to be impersonal, treating children simply on the basis of age and aptitude. The schools have failed to find proper ways to cope with migrants. Psychologists have been employed; breakfast programs and pre-school orientations have been set up. Still children continued to drop out of school, for they generally find urban schools unsatisfactory, discriminatory and irrelevant. Realistic as it is, this scenario has been more fully portrayed and analyzed elsewhere.

Krotz regards the high rate of Indian unemployment as shocking and pitiable. According to him, when they are employed in cities, they are essentially confined to a few places including native organizations, social services, stenographers in Indian Affairs, and administrative posts, as well as to short-term casual work. The author sees job training for Indians as inadequate and unrealistic. He justifiably brands government job-creating programs as "ill-conceived, short term and cynically non-productive" (p. 104).

He regards social services as "shamelessly unrepentant" (p. 148) mechanisms designed to maintain the status quo. Present social services are viewed as too fragmentary to be effective. He advocates that social services should continue but should not create unnecessary dependency among Indians.

Throughout the book in each unit are invariably included casual descriptive statements and comments on social issues, which are followed by outlines of individual lives. Documentation is basically inadequate and there is hardly any sociological analysis of the social issues involved. Moreover, there are many hit-and-run statements. For

example, when Krotz refers to current commercial fishing in God's Lake Narrows, he observes that there is "none in summer because it would take business away from the three lodges which cater to American tourists" (p. 14). There is no further elaboration. By whose authority or power was commercial fishing stopped — the fishing lodges, the band council, the provincial government, or the Federal Government? His statement, as it stands, leaves the reader confused and uninformed. Only a reader with prior knowledge of the God's Lake Narrows may be able to point out that there is indeed a provincial governmental policy which favors sport fishing over commercial fishing in the area, and therefore commercial fishing stops because of provincial governmental regulations.

This book is not suitable for use as a text. Social theories are systematically avoided and a bibliography thoughtfully omitted. The language is highly colloquial, not exactly a good model in academic settings. However, community library should find Krotz a welcome addition to the already existing titles on urban Indians. The Indian viewpoint as presented by a sympathetic reporter and the eye-catching photographs should be of casual interest to the public at large.

Grant MacEWAN, *Metis Makers of History*, Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981. 171 pp., \$12.95 (paper).

By Samuel W. Corrigan
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Cuthbert Grant, Alexander Isbister, Gabriel Dumont, Pauline Johnson — all are names vaguely familiar to most Canadians, yet few people could say exactly who they are or what they did. At a time when native claims are attracting national public attention there is clearly some need to familiarize as many as possible with the very long struggle for dignity and basic freedom which Native people have waged. This is particularly true of Métis, of whom the public knowledge seems to be limited to the names Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont and the loaded term "rebellion". Thus one can welcome any volume which fairly outlines the struggles and achievements of some two dozen Métis of note over the past 175 years.

This book is intended for a wide audience, apparently that very large group of Canadians who are neither historians nor Natives but who have a strong and often romantic interest in the history of