

of university-initiated anthropological field research on the Northwest Coast and the beginning of an era of re-evaluation of previous descriptive ethnography by Indians themselves. Indeed, each passing year leaves fewer and fewer Indians who recall the ethnographic period or speak Indian languages, and it seems logical that the future will increasingly find researchers concentrating on the rich collections of Northwest Coast lore reposing in museums and archives. For many bands it is already too late to find Indian consultants who can provide ethnographic material. As a case in point, almost 20 years ago, Ram Singh prepared a study of aboriginal economic systems of the Olympic Peninsula similar to Oberg's work on the Tlingit, and found that much of the detail was already eroded from memory. Despite this attrition of Indian informants, more anthropologists than ever seem to be engaged in fieldwork and I see no impending change in the pattern (although there is evidence of a wholesome trend toward programs in which bands retain anthropologists and linguists to prepare culture programs). Neither do I see a movement toward consistent re-evaluation of previous work by Indians themselves, as desirable as this would be. Isolated examples of such critiques can be cited — Professor Duff notes an instance involving a review of Oberg's work by an informed Tlingit elder. Hopefully, such new departures as the University of Victoria's program to train Indian teachers certified to prepare and conduct culture classes will promote a trend toward reviewing the ethnographic literature on the part of Indians.

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Fire In The Raven's Nest, the Haida of British Columbia, by Norman Newton. Toronto: New Press, 1973. 173 pp., illus., \$9.50.

In his Preface, Newton begs the reader's pardon for the generality and . . . necessary superficiality of this brief book, which makes no pretense either to deep sociological analysis (Indians have had enough of that, Heaven knows) or to a profound exploration of the Haida soul. (p.1)

After a prolonged struggle to finish reading *Fire In the Raven's Nest*, one is inclined to agree with the author that the book is, indeed, superficial, sociologically irrelevant, and lacking insight into any aspect of Haida soul or culture.

Newton claims that the book is basically a documentary

... organized on a clear intellectual curve, but the surface is broken up prismatically, the parts being connected by transformation and juxtaposition. (p. 1)

Whatever else is meant by this astonishing bit of prose, it is clearly an apology for the book's lack of internal coherence and for the way in which odds and ends of miscellaneous information, taped and otherwise collected by Newton, have been stuck together in order to produce something resembling a manuscript.

The book rambles through a series of Newton's interviews with non-Haida met in bars, or buses, and in passing, and with Haida people, including artists, the band manager of one reserve, and others willing to talk with him. The interviews are coupled with Newton's own pessimistic impressions and observations of the people interviewed, the Queen Charlotte Islands, and fragments of Haida culture, past and present. The author alternates between a condescending liberalism that attempts to excuse what clearly shocks him about the lifestyle of the aboriginal Haida and a pitying disapproval for modern Haida ways. Thus, he states on the one hand that

... [although] Haida civilization ... was, at its worst, grim, narrow, crude in its material satisfactions and deadeningly conformist. ... (p. 101)

it was no worse, in its ritual aspects, than Freemasonry!

On the other hand, he bemoans the general moral decline of contemporary Haida society. He refers to

... the gauche and countrified girls of the reserve whose future ... [holds] at best, an early and insecure marriage ... at worst ... [prostitution] (p. 13)

and to adolescent white girls walking the streets of Masset

... with a complacent and relaxed sensuality ... Had their skin been dark, such a walk would have been considered an invitation. (p. 21)

An invitation to whom, one wonders.

Inserted among interviews and impressions is Newton's description of the history of Haida contact with Europeans and his attempt to fathom the origins and symbolic structure of Haida myth. The historical account provides a relatively balanced readable treatment of the major outlines of European-Haida interaction, but Newton's conclusion that Haida social order has crumbled and broken down before the onslaught of the European cultural invasion, so that only a few meaningless rituals performed for tourists remain (pp. 47, 94), is evidence of the superficiality of scholarship to which he admits. That Haida culture has changed is

undeniable; yet Newton, so critical of sociological analysis, fails to penetrate beyond his own preconceptions of "the poor Indian" to see the tremendous vitality and strength that has enabled Haida culture to survive, to endure, to persist. Changes in social order do not necessarily reflect social disintegration and decline but may, on the contrary, indicate the incredible adaptability and flexibility of human culture, enabling it to survive in the face of devastating and oppressive conditions imposed by other cultures.

Where Newton does attempt "analysis," in his discussion of Haida myth, he entangles himself and the reader in a confusing and muddled interpretation that can hardly be called enlightening. If *Fire In the Raven's Nest* is meant for the lay reader, Newton is unfair in expecting that reader to sort out Tsimshian and Athapaskan themes from Haida ones, and to comprehend the presumed relationships of complex Haida mythological elements to both the geography of the Queen Charlottes and the "movement of stars and planets" without at least a chart of the heavens and some explanatory diagrams. Newton states that "since this book is not a technical study I have not outlined my method nor its detailed results." (p. 4) One doubts that there was either method or result in such a subjective "study."

Newton's temerity in claiming that his analysis is based, in part, upon Levi Strauss' *Mythologiques* does not make this dull and over-priced little book any more comprehensible.

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Pillars of Profit: The Company Province 1934-1972, by Martin Robin.
Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1973. 351 pages, illus., \$12.95.

One of the peculiar attributes of the scholar is his ability to find joy and delight and beauty in the most prosaic of subjects, lifting the ordinary and commonplace to the highest levels of abstruse appreciation. What, then, might we expect as the product of an academic and the most delightful parade of political characters and events ever to grace or disgrace the political stage of this or any other country: a feast of fascinations, surely? Alas, no, *Pillars of Profit* demonstrates that other ability of the academic, that of being able to reduce even the Venus de Milo to a commonplace assortment of numerical dimensions and other dusty attributes.