

maternal feminism: "Now is the time for Sir Richard [McBride] to protect the homes and the children. . . . Give work to the fathers [and the] mothers will not [neglect them]" (p. 108).

Returning to Vancouver at the onset of the Great Depression, Gutteridge was soon enmeshed in another quasi-familial situation: the urban intelligentsia of the CCF. Howard's depiction of its peculiar subculture, with one foot in Bohemia and the other in the Puritan Republic, is remarkably original and well worth reading: CCF saints Angus and Grace (Woodsworth) McInnis emerge as dominant and not especially amiable figures. If the Vancouver left seemed to empower a number of strong women, this part of the movement was also structured by "strong male attachments" (p. 157). Gutteridge found comradeship and emotional support in the CCF's 'political family,' but lacking male attachments and/or a place in the parliamentary firmament she remained something of a poor relative. Gutteridge's last job, in the 1940s, was on a cannery assembly line. Social democracy assured her a public pension, but nothing more. The unknown reformer died in 1960, as Howard gently puts it, "without any fuss [and] without causing any undue trouble for her friends."

*Simon Fraser University*

ALLEN SEAGER

*The Bella Coola Indians*, by T. F. McIlwraith. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948; re-issued 1992. Introduction by John Barker. Two volumes. Vol. 1: ix, 672 pp.; Vol. 2: liv, 763 pp. Maps, photos. \$60.00 paper; \$125.00 cloth.

In the history of Canadian anthropology, T. F. McIlwraith's *The Bella Coola Indians* occupies a place similar to that of H. A. Innis's *The Fur Trade in Canada* in Canadian historical writing. Although McIlwraith's classic remained unpublished until 1948, eighteen years after the first edition of *The Fur Trade*, both were written by men who, following service in World War I, became dominant figures in the social sciences at the University of Toronto from the 1920s to the 1960s. Each was a meticulous researcher (the economic historian trained at Chicago, the anthropologist at Cambridge) and an influential teacher. But there were also striking differences. Innis was interested in the impact of Europe on North America, McIlwraith in the pre-contact history of the Northwest Coast. Where native people

played a modest role in Innis's work, they occupied almost the whole stage in McIlwraith's.

The most striking contrast between the work of these two social scientists arose from the way each chose to tell his story. Innis's *Fur Trade* had an unmistakable plot line — a thesis — one which, in case the slow-witted had missed it, he emphatically underlined in the sweeping generalizations with which he concluded the book. ("The present Dominion emerged not in spite of geography, but because of it.") An historical drama. McIlwraith's study, a great sprawling compendium of information about every aspect of Nuxalk society, seemed utterly without a plot. Yet his conclusion evoked the tragedy of his *tristes tropiques*: "The white man's civilization presses forward as an overwhelming flood, blotting out the cultures of lesser peoples in all parts of the world. This is inevitable, probably it is well that it should be, but it offers little consolation to a tribe like the Bella Coola. Their life has been destroyed; and, wonderingly, half-proudly, half-plaintively, the survivors watch the downfall of all that their ancestors cherished. Too often the white man fails to understand this; too often he fails to realize that progress, as he sees it, is wiping out valuable elements of civilizations other than his own instead of seeking the good in them and preserving it for the benefit of himself and the Native alike. The Bella Coola culture is dying, and with it will pass forever something created by a Canadian people, not great perhaps, but ineffably stamped with their personality" (II, 532). This conclusion suggests, of course, that for all McIlwraith's claim that he was merely narrating the Nuxalk's own account of traditional beliefs, ceremonies, and practices, "the anthropologist as author," in Clifford Geertz's phrase, was very much present. As Professor John Barker points out in his helpful introduction to this re-issue of the book, *The Bella Coola Indians* is "a collaboration to which both the anthropologist and the Nuxalk contributed."

McIlwraith's study is the product of a period which might be characterized as anthropological naivety, a time when a scholar could spend a year or so living among a "primitive" people, gathering "field notes" that would be taken "home" for transcription into an objective description of a passing way-of-life. The limitations of this "science" are now familiar, anthropology having passed through a profound intellectual crisis in the past quarter century, as books like Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983), Boon's *Other Tribes, Other Scribes* (1986), Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), and Geertz's *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (1988) attest. An ethnography like

McIlwraith's must now be approached with questions provoked by this literature.

First there is the author and the history of his book. McIlwraith a Cambridge-trained scholar (unfortunately Barker tells us little about family or early education — McIlwraith's father, Ontario's pre-eminent early ornithologist, is unmentioned), spent two sessions among the Bella Coola — March to August 1922 and September 1923 to February 1924, about a year in all. Oddly, he never returned even though he had been adopted into the tribe. He quickly gained some language competence, and found good interpreters and a number of willing informants. He knew little about these people prior to his arrival, but was determined to "salvage" and account of their lifestyle and beliefs before outside influences completely engulfed their past. In 1924 he returned to the east — Ottawa, New Haven, and finally Toronto — where he became the first professional anthropologist appointed to the University of Toronto in 1925. Over the next few years he pulled together his "fieldnotes" only to discover, as Barker tells us, that even translating the passages concerning sexual matters into Latin was insufficient to get the work cleared for publication by the National Museum. "The Canadian government," an exasperated Diamond Jenness informed him, "could publish nothing which might offend a 12-year-old schoolgirl" (I, xxvi). McIlwraith and Jenness laboured over several years editing and revising — purifying — only to find that depression cutbacks again made publication impossible. In 1948 the University of Toronto Press finally printed the book complete with the passages that had offended the Ottawa censors. Having thus passed through several versions — and editors — it must be assumed, though the matter remains unexplored, that the published book moved somewhat beyond the original "fieldnotes."

So what have we here? At the outset, let it be noted that *The Bella Coola Indians* remains an indispensable "compendium" and "encyclopedia" (Barker's terms) of information concerning the Nuxalk based on the memories and oral traditions of those people in the early 1920s. It is of great value both to scholars and to contemporary Nuxalk people engaged in relearning and refreshing their traditions. But, as ethnography, does it bear the same lasting influence that has characterized Innis's *Fur Trade*?

Clifford Geertz offers this dual test for ethnography: "Ethnographers need to convince us . . . not merely that they themselves have truly 'been there,' but . . . that had we been there we should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt, concluded what they concluded"

(*Works and Lives*, 16). *The Bella Coola Indians* easily meets the first test. The sense of "being there" is palpable. But what about the second? Here the answer must be more ambiguous. As Barker notes, "salvage" anthropology was based on the questionable belief that it was feasible to reconstruct, from oral testimony, the outlines and details of a culture that had existed in pre-contact times. "Salvage ethnography," he writes, ". . . relied less upon careful historical reconstruction and more upon simply ignoring historical influences" (I, xx).

By 1922 Bella Coola people had been in contact with Europeans, intermittently, since Alexander Mackenzie had passed through in 1793. Of course, McIlwraith knew that "the old customs had broken down enormously" (I, xlv) — he had trouble getting informants when the canning season was in full swing. And he complained that one informant, John Moodie, had the "unpleasant habit of comparing indian mythology with parts of the Old Testament, *about which he know more than I*" (I, xiv, my italics). Nevertheless, he still thought he could filter out the impurities leaving nearly unadulterated "traditional" Nuxalk "culture."

But even that claim, or hope, concealed two doubtful assumptions. The first was that Nuxalk "culture" had once existed in some, almost Platonic, static form before contact. That seemed to leave no room for cultural change before contact. Secondly, like all anthropologists — or painters, or historians — McIlwraith came to his subject equipped with a grid into which he fitted much that he found. Insofar as he recognized this fact, he dealt with it by dismissing it. He wrote that "though every field investigator is strictly objective as to the facts he collects, yet his interests and his methods of presenting them, are coloured by his background; in my case by the older school of English anthropology. . . . It means that the Bella Coola are portrayed as I was them when I came fresh to a new field, practically uninfluenced by the problems of Northwest Coast culture, and full prepared to throw myself into their life" (I, xliii). His very lack of knowledge he saw as an advantage — Montaigne's "plain, simple fellow."

This statement of faith in the "innocent eye" was common enough in McIlwraith's time, but anyone who takes it seriously today should read Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* or Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. Or *Heart of Darkness*. Even simple description — being "strictly objective as to the facts," as Clifford Geertz once remarked — amounts to "interpretations all the way down." The "facts" are selected and placed in order. McIlwraith's categories (chapter heads) may not have been derived from "the problems of North-

west Coast culture," but neither did they result from simply throwing himself fully into Bella Coola life. He came with an intellectual grid — something more about Cambridge anthropological teaching would have helped here.

Then, too, there is the language problem. From the earliest explorers and missionaries to the modern, educated anthropologist the semiotic predicament has been constant. Here is Father Biard among the Micmac in 1612: "The savages have no definite religion, magistracy, or government, liberal or mechanical arts, commercial or civilized life, they have consequently no words to describe these things which they have never seen or even conceived." Some three centuries later, McIlwraith on Chinook: "It has enough words pertaining to fishing, hunting and trading, but for the realms of sociology or theology it is inadequate" (I, xliii). And he continued, confessing forthrightly that "I found it almost impossible to differentiate certain sounds; in fact, I sometimes recorded the same word with different spellings. Consequently, I cannot guarantee the accuracy of native terms used in this monograph" (I, xlv). Jacques Cartier listed Iroquois words for non-existent plants! The implications of these remarks are far-reaching. For now the obvious needs only to be underlined: McIlwraith's *The Bella Coola Indians*, like Magritte's pipe, is a representation composed of many elements, some derived from "being there," others from what was brought and what was not brought by the visiting ethnographer.

All of this leads to an enlightening irony. Among those who have benefited from *The Bella Coola Indians* are the Nuxalk people themselves. "The cultural co-ordinators and teachers of the Nuxalk nation," Barker tells us, "have regularly used the work as a resource in their efforts to teach the old songs and dances to new generations of children" (I, xxxv). But what is being taught? Pre-contact Nuxalk culture? An invented tradition? Probably some of both, suggesting that the revival of native cultures, based as it sometimes is on the writings of anthropologists (Bill Holm's *Northwest Coast Indian Art*, for example), is more complex than sometimes admitted. McIlwraith's great work, this "collaboration to which both the anthropologist and the Nuxalk contributed," would surely be a rewarding place for some scholar to begin unravelling these complexities. That scholar — an ethnohistorian rather than an ethnographer — would probably begin not with an "innocent eye" but with an understanding, as James Clifford contends, that "identity is conjunctural, not essential."