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Rick Helmes-Hayes, Measuring the Mosaic. An Intellectual Biography of John Porter. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010, 588 pp.

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Who is the Canada's greatest sociologist? John Porter (1921-1979). Why? He is the author of a book, *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965), which is the most famous Canadian book of sociology: a classic. I should add a bémol, a flat: if it is true from an English Canadian point of view, it is less from a Quebec's one. According to Jean-Philippe Warren, professor at Concordia University, Porter is not the greatest but "one of the Canada's greatest sociologists" (back cover). Rick Helmes-Hayes, professor in the Department of sociology at the University of Waterloo, has written the first biography of this important figure, who is, according to him, "the pre-eminent Canadian sociologist of his time, and one of Canada's most celebrated scholars." This biography has many qualities: it is well written, it is very well documented, it presents different social, economic and political situations and contexts, and it provides an in-depth analysis of Porter's writings on class, power, social mobility, educational opportunity, and democracy.

Helmes-Hayes' book provides a detailed account of Porter's life, with many wonderful photographs of him, his two wives, his children. We discover the exceptional trajectory of a fascinating and, in a way, atypical scholar: his childhood and teenage years in Vancouver marred by poverty and family dissolution, the London years with his depressed mother and with his brother and sister, assuming a quasi-paternal role, the Army Years with the Canadian troops in Sicily and Italy, etc.

There are many enigmas in Porter's life: how did this young man become a sociologist? How, without a graduate degree nor a major publication, did he find in 1949 a job at the Carleton College (which became Carleton University)? How did he decide to study the class structure in Canada and how did he write his famous book? Helmes-Hayes gives responses to these questions. What is clear is that three years have been crucial in Porter's life: his years at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences where he has been influenced by three professors: Harold Laski, T. H. Marshall and, mainly, Morris Ginsberg. Helmes-Hayes analyses carefully "the Hobbouse connection: Ginsberg, Porter and New Liberalism" and also the influence of other currents of thought. It seems that Porter left the LSE with a Fabianesque scholarly political orientation: rationalist, empirical, humanist, socialist. So already a social critic, but with a practical political orientation. At that times, Porter was, according to one of his friends, "angry about himself and the world [...] He was angry about the class system in England [...]very much in a personal sense." In a way, he was predisposed to do something on class and power, and when he arrived in Canada he was, according to his wife Marion, "staggered by the degree to which Canadians apparently believed that theirs was a classless society" [p. 93].

Helmes-Hayes gives many pieces of information about how *The Vertical Mosaic*, published in 1965, has been "crafted": the collection of data, the collaboration of colleagues, the first grants Porter got, the first three articles ("Elite Groups: A Scheme for the Study of Power in Canada," "Concentration of Economic Power and the Economic

Elite in Canada," and "The Economic Elite and the Social Structure in Canada") he published in the *Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science* in 1955, 1956, and 1957, the large debate and the critical response to *The Vertical Mosaic*, etc.

John Porter has not been the author of only one book. He published alone, with colleagues (B. Blishen, M. Boyd, F. Jones, H. McRoberts, P. Pineo) or his wife Marion Porter, other books: *Canadian Sociology: Sociological Perspectives* (1961), *Towards 2000: The Future of Post-Secondary Education in Ontario* (1971), *Does Money Matter? Prospects for Higher Education* (1973), *The Measure of Canadian Society: Education, Equality and Opportunity* (1979) and few others. The reading of this biography gives us the opportunity to discover two other things: primo, Porter – the professor made an major career shift away from scholarship into academic administration: he became vice-president of his University but only for two years (1977-1979), and he was denied the presidency. Second, his wife Marion played an important role in his life and career. The title of a biography of Porter's wife is *Marion Porter, John Porter's Intellectual Partner*. The conclusion is: "In my view, John Porter, for all his talents, efforts and drive, would never have achieved all he did without Marion Porter's considerable contributions" [p. 334].

Measuring the Mosaic is a real intellectual biography in the sense that the author deals with several aspects of English-language Canadian sociology and of the universities during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and presents a new understanding and appreciation of Porter's activities as a scholar. His book is a (re-)assessment of Porter's contribution to sociology with a critical perspective. The central question is: how to qualify Porter's political orientation? Porter was closed to the Liberal Party of Canada and to his leader, Pierre-Éliott Trudeau and in the 1970s he was accused to be conservative by his opponents. Helmes-Hayes' effort is in a way to "rehabilitate" Porter identifying him to the New Liberalism which is or more precisely was a kind of Liberal socialism. One problem is not to mix up this New Liberalism with today Neo-Liberalism. During his whole career, Porter has been a liberal and progressive social thinker who defended as a science (of a short) but never accepted the principal of value freedom. Helmes-Hayes' conclusion is that Porter has been an engaged intellectual with "the mission to define the good, pursue the truth and create and measure progress" [p. 405].

This John Porter's biography is the result of an amazing situation: it has been written by a student of Wallace Clement, who is a former student of John Porter, but a student who became Marxist and published *The Canadian Corporate Elite: An Analysis of Economic Power* (1975). Clement's book was published with a foreword by Porter, and Clement is now the author of a foreword for Helmes-Hayes's biography of Porter. A book to read if we want to know something about John Porter, the history of sociology in Canada and the relation of different generations of Canadian sociologist with Porter's work.

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