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**When Our Words Return: Writing, Hearing, and Remembering Oral Traditions of Alaska and the Yukon.** Edited by Phyllis Morrow and William Schneider. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1995. 244 pages. \$36.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Remember the story of the six blind men of India who each felt and described different parts of an elephant? Each description was unique and accurate, but yet the totality of the elephant eluded description.

Oral history in its many forms appears to have developed as a methodology that has served its varied users in diverse ways. Anthropologists used it for their specific purposes as did folklorists, family historians, academics, and even school kids. As varied experiences with oral history have evolved, the maturing coterie of practitioners seek ways of developing a conceptual framework for what they've been doing. In a sense, this is a natural process of retrospectively seeking a unifying theory. Although only a small number of practitioners and analysts would have such interests, this exercise can be intellectually stimulating. Because oral recording began as a methodology, perhaps it can never have a consistent and unifying philosophy; only time and further analysis will tell.

This book of nine essays is divided equally into three sections entitled: "Writing," "Hearing," and "Remembering." Illustrations include excellent maps and photographs of varying quality. The contributors have all had significant experience with oral history, ranging from personal interest to academic research to contract fieldwork to K-12 school curriculum development; and the cross-disciplinary backgrounds of the authors add greatly to the volume. The editors explain these essays' focus on questions of interpretation and representation: how oral narrative is produced and understood in a given time, place, and cultural context; who it is addressed to; and how its meaning is intricately linked to both speakers and listeners (p. 3). The authors represent a virtual who's who of oral history researchers in Alaska and the Yukon Territory; several have researched and published on these topics while others are just beginning. Beyond the major contribution of documenting peoples' lives, events, or places, these essays reflect the rapport and respect of researcher with the interviewee, and how each grew through those personal relationships.

Yup'ik Eskimo literacy is the subject of Elsie Mather's essay entitled "Oral Traditions in an Age of Literacy" (pp. 13-26). As a Yup'ik speaker and writer, she acknowledges the need for a traditionally oral tradition to become written as a means of preserving traditional knowledge and necessarily competing with dominant languages, which are written. As a tradition bearer, Mather discusses the cultural aspects of the oral tradition that are lost when committed to written form.

"On Shaky Ground: Folklore, Collaboration, and Problematic Outcomes" (pp. 27-51) editor and anthropologist Phyllis Morrow discusses the context of Yup'ik stories, the relationship of the storyteller with those who hear the story. Having collaborated with Elsie Mather, Morrow explores storytelling and contextualizing among audiences of different cultures and oftentimes divergent expectations.

In "Pete's Song: Establishing Meanings through Story and Song" (pp. 52-75), anthropologist Julie Cruikshank in collaboration with Angela Sidney, a Tagish and

Tlingit Indian woman, discusses how the multiple tellings of one of Sidney's stories provide a continuous past and present to reinforce the story's meaning.

Educator Robin Barker analyzes two versions of the Yup'ik Eskimo tale, "How the Crane Got His Blue Eyes," and contends that sometimes the listener comes away with a different message than the storyteller intended. Much depends on the backgrounds of both the storyteller and the listener ("Seeing Wisely, Crying Wolf: A Cautionary Tale on the Euro-Yup'ik Border," pp. 78–97.)

In "They Talked of the Land with Respect" (pp. 98–122), researcher Robert Drozda reflects on the manner in which government agency personnel and Yup'ik Eskimo elders document historical places and cemetery sites. The way these Native people see and relate to the land and place-names is significantly different from the way government agents inventory locations.

Professor James Ruppert theorizes that storytelling in the Native language, here Deg Hit'an Athapascan, and in English translation are both wonderfully complex for what the storyteller knows and assumes about her audience, and similarly what the listener knows about the Native language and its stories ("A Bright Light Ahead of Us," pp. 123–35).

Anthropologist Patricia H. Partnow in "The Days of Yore: Alutiiq Mythical Time" (pp. 138–83) relates how the powerful eruption of Novarupta Volcano on the Alaska Peninsula in 1912 created a benchmark from which Native Alutiiq people created a self-identity blending the previously separate Russian-American and Native elements.

Editor and anthropologist William Schneider's essay, "Lessons from Alaska Natives about Oral Tradition and Recordings" (pp. 184–204), binds the stories to that which triggered the story. He emphasizes the necessity of including the context in which a story is presented as well as the story itself.

The concluding essay, by writer Mary Odden, is entitled "The Weight of Tradition and the Writer's Work" (pp. 205–22). Odden relates in a direct, personal manner how individuals and societies find meaning in stories.

Because the essays are so diverse, the editors have provided the three sections to identify common themes. The introduction and epilogue are basic to understanding why the essays were selected. Similarly the prefaces to the nine essays introduce the author, content, and context, and are sometimes critical to understanding what follows.

Real and implied cultural differences of interviewee and interviewer provided grist for commentary, as assumptions about storytelling, language use, propriety, ethics, and so forth are examined by the authors. Anyone interested in utilizing oral accounts would benefit from reading these essays prior to initiating work; and other essays will resonate later after actual confrontation with some of these issues.

What is lacking in the book are more voices from Native people who are active in the field and who have thought about these topics. We might query how their questions relate to those raised by the authors.

The issues raised in these essays extend well beyond Alaska and the Yukon. This volume is significant for each author's contribution and the issues the editors raise. This volume would serve well as a source of readings

for those contemplating work with oral traditions. Ultimately, by discussing these issues we may gain insight to this universal “elephant” which we and the six blind Indians seek to better understand.

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**Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933.** By L. G. Moses. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. 364 pages. \$39.95 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

When Americans think of the Old West, they call up images of cowboys and Plains Indians, images popularized by William Cody (Buffalo Bill), a late-nineteenth-century entertainer-entrepreneur whose Wild West shows put live Indians, in war dress and on horseback, before delighted crowds of white Americans eager to see recreations of pivotal moments from the winning of the West. Cody's success inspired imitators, created an appetite for dime westerns, and laid the groundwork for the Hollywood western. Not surprisingly, historians have fastened on Cody as a key figure in the creation of the ubiquitous Plains Indian warrior as a representative of “the” American Indian. Moreover, they have argued that this image is an unfortunate stereotype that emphasizes Indian “savagery” and portrays a “defeated” race destined to vanish, unassimilated, into the American past. The Wild West shows thus heaped degradation and humiliation on a people struggling to make their way into a new century.

L. G. Moses correctly notes that the problem with this analysis is that it echoes the criticisms made by reformers of the time, reformers who wanted to erase every vestige of Indianness from America's Native population and saw participation in the Wild West shows as an impediment to full assimilation. His book, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933*, offers a new perspective on the “Show Indians,” as he calls them, a perspective that significantly deepens our understanding of how reformers linked the success of government Indian policy to the creation of a “positive” image of Indians. More important, Moses refuses to marginalize the Show Indians' participation in the struggle over their image, and he puts their experiences (and often their words) at the center of the Wild West show history. The result is a consistently fascinating story of how Indian performers used Cody's shows to pursue economic opportunities, escape the paternalistic oversight of agents and reformers, see the world, and “signal a kinship with a ritualized cultural memory” (p. 277). Moses concludes that the shows, far from degrading their participants, gave them, “for fifty years, the only place to be an Indian—and defiantly so—and still remain relatively free from the interference of missionaries, teachers, agents, humanitarians, and politicians” (p. 278).

Cody staged his first Wild West show in 1883, and its success at drawing white audiences was matched only by its success in attracting Indian performers, mainly from the Sioux agencies. Moses paints a startling picture of five to six hundred applicants assembling each spring for the chance to join Cody's show. Unlike the coerced and even forced removal of Indian youths to off-reservation boarding