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detail will make it difficult reading for undergraduates, but portions of it can still be used at that level. The author's powerful and controversial arguments, however, make it an excellent book for graduate students because it will undoubtedly provoke debate.

Matthew Babcock

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The Dall Sheep Dinner Guest: Inupiaq Narratives of Northwest Alaska.

By Wanní Wíbulwasdí Anderson and John Patkuraq Brown. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2005. 288 pages. \$39.95 cloth.

The Dall Sheep Dinner Guest: Inupiaq Narratives of Northwest Alaska contributes to the body of literature that treats the storytelling traditions of Alaska's Inupiaq peoples. Comprised of eighty-eight stories recorded by anthropologist Wanní Anderson between 1966 and 1987, this collection serves as a noteworthy documentation of stories gathered during a period of rapid social and cultural change among the Inupiaq people of Northwest Alaska. The collection includes stories recorded from sixteen Inupiaq storytellers from settlements along the Selawik and Kobuk rivers. As such, the "storytellers' conceptualizations of adventures, heroic missions, or the search for a way home after getting lost or being taken away from home were all framed with a riverine environmental mindset" (32). Anderson provides a full description of the contexts of story collection, translation, and sources for emic interpretations of the texts that illustrates an effort to maintain the original voice of the storytellers as they told stories in settings that varied from summer tents housing an archaeological/anthropological expedition to the home. The author's voice is absent from the body of stories presented; instead, it is evident in italicized commentary preceding some of the stories. This commentary is intended to assist the reader's understanding of the cultural references within stories as well as to share biological information about the storytellers.

Although there are a number of published works of Inupiaq folktales, no contemporary collections of this scope are available to a general reading audience. The author provides an excellent overview of written sources of Inupiaq folklore, highlighting the ethnographic contexts for the collection of Inupiaq folktales over a hundred-year period. She points out that the majority of the current literature within this specific genre is part of bilingual education efforts initiated by the Bicultural Education Program of the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, including the 2003 publication co-authored by Wanní Anderson and Ruthie Tatqavin Sampson titled, *Folktales of the Riverine and Coastal Inupiaq*. Anderson notes that some of the stories included in this collection have been previously published, and others have not.

This book is intended, in part, to serve as a companion to Inupiaq language and cultural materials developed for the classroom, but it has the potential to serve a broad audience with an interest in Inupiaq culture. In two introductory essays titled "Inupiaq Oral Narratives: Collection History

and Narrative Culture” and “Inupiaq Narratives and Culture: The Interplay,” Anderson offers a general overview of the local contexts and cultural meanings associated with Inupiaq storytelling traditions. These comprehensive essays cover a vast array of Inupiaq cultural knowledge essential to an insider’s understanding of Inupiaq stories. Anderson is particularly successful in her use of examples drawn from the stories themselves to illustrate the themes presented.

The main themes covered in the introductory essays include storytelling contexts, ownership of stories, narrative structure and devices, Inupiaq concepts of identity, in-group diversity, social structure, economics/material culture, cosmology/spirituality, and culture change. Two of the most compelling themes that the author weaves throughout the text are the Inupiaq concepts of identity and the impact of Christianity on the Inupiaq culture and worldview.

Anderson describes Inupiaq identity on many different levels. She discusses the linguistic and cultural differences between Inupiaq villages. Reading the stories, a common theme of travel emerges, in which the reader gains an intuitive sense of Inupiaq identity rooted in settlements both in the past and present. Some of the stories refer to past conflict between Inupiaqs and Indian people living alongside them, which are now (in part) subsumed under a pan-Alaska Native identity. Instead of discussing Inupiaq identity rooted in abstract concepts, Anderson draws examples from the storytellers themselves. By weaving descriptions of the storytellers’ lives and interactional behavior in the storytelling context throughout the texts, the author elaborates on Inupiaq ideas about kinship, place-based identity, and gender differences. The storytellers’ individualities are conveyed by their birthplace, their lineages, the storyteller from whom they learned different stories, and their personalities.

Briefly introducing the storytellers and retaining their metacommentary, Anderson elegantly presents indirect observations on the organic nature of the oral tradition. It is ironic, in a sense, that a collection of published stories should retain the flavor of immediacy of the storytelling context in which storytellers make comments such as, “I have never done this [talking into a microphone] before. I feel kind of strange,” and, “My father told me this story, but I hadn’t learned all of it. Maybe they are Kobuk River people or maybe they are coastal people,” and “One visitor lived at the site where the CAA building is currently located.” While many other collections of folktales present stories as if they remain the same with each retelling, it is commendable that Anderson portrays these stories as part of an ever-shifting cultural tradition.

The twentieth century, particularly the latter half, has witnessed dramatic and permanent changes in the Inupiaq way of life as a result of contact with Westerners and the Americanization of Alaska. A testament to the living quality of the oral tradition, many of the storytellers self-consciously refer to culture change within the act of storytelling by pointing out differences in material culture, for example, between the past when the story took place and the present. Particularly compelling are the instances in which storytellers attest to the impact of Christianity in their contemporary lives. Anderson writes, “The concepts of God’s will, God the Creator, and God as the helper

appear in several remarks of these storytellers. . . . These religious nuances are maintained in the narrative texts to indicate the interplay between the post-contact religiosity, perceptions and textual interpretations of religious storytellers. These reinterpretations of traditional narratives can be interpreted as attempts of these storytellers to forge an interconnection between Inupiaq traditional culture and the logic and meanings acquired from Christianity” (17). In this manner, the author eloquently treats change as an inevitable feature of living cultures, thus providing guidance for reading the stories yet allowing the storytellers to speak for themselves.

The *Dall Sheep Dinner Guest* has a few shortcomings. Understandably, many of the stories in this collection do not follow Western plot devices, and this can potentially confuse or alienate the reader accustomed to Western stories. The author spends quite a bit of space discussing linguistic devices and narrative technique, but does not go into much depth comparing Inupiaq storytelling to Western storytelling. Thus, assuming this collection is compiled at least in part for a Westernized audience (particularly individuals who may use Inupiaq stories as a teaching tool), the author does not fully prepare the reader to follow and digest the stories. Also, it is not clear whether this book is a comprehensive collection of Inupiaq stories since, as the stories collected are from very specific sources, readers may wonder whether the same stories are repeated in different versions among the Inupiaq from villages not covered in this book.

Perhaps another frustrating aspect of this collection is the incompleteness of some of the stories, especially those in which the storytellers state that they do not know the story in its entirety, or did not pay attention when they heard it in the past. Readers may feel frustrated with the “incomplete” stories, as they indirectly convey a sense of the poignancy surrounding the permanent loss of cultural information. It might have served the book had the author chose to comment on whether contemporary Inupiaq people or the storytellers themselves felt any remorse or sadness over the loss of traditional stories.

Overall, this book is a cultural treasure and a testament to the continued importance of the oral tradition in Inupiaq lives. As many of the storytellers featured in this collection have passed away, this collection of stories will be available to future generations of Inupiaq wishing to hear the words of past generations. The stories and metacommentary that Anderson chose to retain in the texts are valuable sources of knowledge about traditional Inupiaq life, cosmology, spirituality, values, material culture, subsistence, and culture change. Moreover, *The Dall Sheep Dinner Guest* contains different and expanded versions of stories available in other collections of Inupiaq stories, rounding out publications that include this rich, storytelling tradition. This book is a fascinating collection of stories told in the real voices of the storytellers themselves, and is a valuable contribution to Inupiaq written materials.

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