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.

Ronald K. Inouye
University of Alaska

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

schools, however, voluntary participation in the Wild West shows was opposed and regulated by government officials and reformers. They feared the immoral influences of the entertainment world, disliked the way that leaders such as Sitting Bull parlayed their show earnings into increased status, worried that the nomadic nature of the shows too closely resembled pre-reservation life, lamented the lack of supervision over the performers, criticized the Show Indian image as uncivilized, and argued that show promoters often abused and abandoned their Indian employees. The more success Cody enjoyed in America and abroad, the more the reformers protested in Washington. They saw the promises of the Dawes Act—education, the severing of tribal connections, citizenship, modernization—being undone by shows which promoted an anti-modern image of Indians and worked against assimilationist policy. By 1886 the Indian Bureau responded with various regulations designed to make the employment of Show Indians more difficult and increase government oversight.

Not surprisingly, Cody answered the reformers' criticisms by claiming that his shows fostered admiration for Indians (they were, after all, the featured performers), encouraged their independence, and speeded their assimilation into the modern world. Moses supports these claims with his analysis of the Show Indians' experiences. Drawing largely on the Indians' own words as recorded in newspaper stories, he demonstrates that they affirmed their Indian identity through the shows, even as they developed the cosmopolitan skills which the reformers claimed to wish for them. Despite some audiences' interpretation of the Indians as a defeated people, Moses shows that in their interviews they "did not necessarily adopt the part of a conquered race" (p. 44). Instead, they approached their employment as an opportunity to make good money, travel to new parts of the world, and learn firsthand about how other peoples lived. Much of the evidence here is convincing, especially for the European tours, but when the sources are thin, Moses succumbs to speculative comments such as that the Indians at the 1893 Columbian Exposition "probably had a glorious time" (p. 140).

On firmer ground, Moses tests the reformers' specific claims about neglect and abuse, claims which many historians have accepted. He finds that "Cody and his partners went to extraordinary lengths to meet the needs of their employees" (p. 122). Employment benefits even included medical care and pay for married men's wives. The few instances of Indians stranded or dying on the road were the result of fateful circumstances, not neglect. In fact, Moses points out that the death rates on the Show Indians' reservations, due to government neglect, were staggering by comparison. Equally compelling, however, is his careful research into agency reports about the condition and character of returning Show Indians. The reformers argued that these returnees were a bad influence on the rest of the tribe, and the Indian Bureau ordered surveys to document this. Although only a few agents oversaw Indians who actually had joined shows, nearly all "pronounced the Wild West shows as bad" (p. 75). On the other hand, those agents in charge of reservations where the shows recruited said the opposite. John Bullis of San Carlos, Arizona, was typical in his response that the reservation was "profiting by those Indians who have been out in the world" (p. 76).

By the 1890s it was obvious that the shows were not going away, and between 1893 and 1904 government displays of "model" Indians became increasingly common at state fairs, intended to create an alternative public image of productive, domestic Indians. The display of Indians at fairs has received much scholarly attention, but Moses stresses the government's conscious competition with Cody's warriors, who had become a staple attraction on the midway. In a fascinating chapter he examines Samuel McGowan's development of a government Indian Village for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Superintendent of the Chiloco Indian School, McGowan intended for the village to demonstrate the progress Indians had made toward becoming fully assimilated. Yet, despite his opposition to Show Indians, he recognized that "savage" Indians attracted crowds, so plans for his own village evolved to include old warriors, Indians working on traditional arts and crafts, and even a performance of the Hopi Snake Dance (an idea killed by missionaries). The object lesson, he hoped, would be the contrast between the ways of the old Indians and the young students demonstrating their mastery of "civilized" skills. Frederick Hoxie has argued that the St. Louis exhibit signaled a weakened commitment to the idea that Indians could be fully assimilated, but Moses disputes this interpretation. He finds McGowan optimistic about the Indians' future, despite the failure of government displays to modify the public's image of Indians. Cody's warriors, as McGowan himself recognized, were simply more vivid than Indian youths demonstrating the "intricacies of good cookery and housekeeping" (p. 159).

As the Wild West shows reached the heights of their popularity in the 1900s and 1910s, reformers stopped attacking them. Unfortunately, this period marked a decline in pay, rights, and working conditions for the Show Indians. The emerging film industry used white actors to play Indians, and after WWI it siphoned off much of the public's interest in live spectacles such as Wild West shows. Employment opportunities in shows declined and eventually disappeared.

Moses illustrates the history of Wild West shows with numerous photographs of performers in action, in studio poses, in casual settings, and at home. Although most of these photographs receive little attention in the text, many have extensive captions (up to a page) and offer compelling evidence for some of Moses' points. A photograph of a show's integrated residential encampment, for example, nicely illustrates his argument that the public saw not just the "show" side of the Indians but also the relaxed, familial side.

One might conclude that the Wild West shows marked a colorful but brief episode in American Indian history, but Moses insists that Indians used these shows "not so much to play a role, but simply to be themselves" (p. 272). Some readers will no doubt challenge this notion, but Moses provides evidence that Indians introduced elements of the Wild West shows into the reservation "Indian Fairs" that agents established as an alternative to Cody's shows. Moreover, he suggests that the modern powwow is an evolved version of the Wild West show, a place where Indians can celebrate their identity.

"Identity" is of course a slippery term, and depending upon the reader's theoretical inclinations, *Wild West Shows* is either frustratingly or thankfully

free of jargon. For example, Moses follows the Show Indians from isolated reservations, around the American landscape, across the Atlantic to England, and through the European continent—all without once referring to "border crossings" or postmodern notions of "travel." Moses discusses Indian identity in similarly straightforward terms, satisfied that the contrast between the reformers' vision of culturally invisible Indians and Cody's elevation of Indians "as Indians" is sharp enough to indicate that the latter gave more space for unrestrained self-expression. Some readers may wonder, however, what he means when he writes, "one of the things that Show Indians helped to create was a *genuine* 'Indian' identity that went well beyond ethnic or national affiliation" (p. xiv, emphasis added). Perhaps Moses oversimplifies, but the result is a satisfying narrative with sharply drawn good and bad guys.

Those looking for a more complex story may also lament some inherent weaknesses in Moses' sources. In his preface he promises to "frequently [use] the words of the [Indian] participants" (p. xii), but later regrets that "given the holes in the historical record regarding Show Indians, it is difficult to present much in their own words or from their perspective" (p. xiv). The Indians' "words" turn out to be taken mostly from newspaper accounts of the shows, sources which Moses analyzes with both creativity and judicious restraint, but which can give only a partial glimpse into the Show Indians' actual experiences. A careful investigation of oral histories might yield a fascinating study of the short- and long-term impact of the Show Indians' employment.

On the whole, *Wild West Shows* makes a valuable contribution to the literature on the assimilation period. It takes a group of Indians usually dismissed as sad victims and casts them as heroic resisters of the reformers' forced assimilation schemes. We follow these Indians around the world as they enjoy the freedoms and adventures that a government tried to deny them. Sadly, the audience for academic books can hardly rival that for the Wild West shows, but once again the Show Indians will ride to cheers.

Erik Trump
Saginaw Valley State University

Winona's Web. By Priscilla Cogan. New York: Face To Face Books, 1996; 1998. 274 pages. $24.95 cloth; $12.95 paper.

Northern Michigan streams navigate through forests to the profusion of lakes that nourish the environment, year-round residents, and the tourist industry—creating a trinity of economy, recreation, and survival. First-time novelist Priscilla Cogan weaves an incredible story of discovery whose characters and lives are as melodic and as sustaining as the trinity carved out by the meandering streams.

Winona's Web introduces readers to Leelanau Peninsula (northwest tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula) inhabitant Dr. Meggie O'Conner a thirty-nine-year-old psychologist. She is intelligent, funny, physically fit, introspective, and happily single after a semi-disastrous marriage. Meggie is not looking for the meaning of life, but instead aspires to become fully human. Her heartaches