

Culture



Moses CRUISHANK, *The Life I've Been Living*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1986. 132 pages, (paper)

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point de vue des individus qui se trouvent là-dedans. Ici comme ailleurs, Juillerat évite l'anecdote, la petite histoire et même la grande histoire, car il veut surtout écrire la grammaire du système. C'est un système logique, construit pour rendre compte de toutes les situations possibles. Ce système distingue entre la croyance, «la simple métaphore» et d'autres représentations entre les deux, «comme si l'esprit par analogie agissait à un certain niveau alors que par ailleurs la raison refusait d'y reconnaître une relation causale» (p. 267). On chercherait en vain une explication *théorique* de ce système. L'auteur ne veut pas en parler, sauf une fois et très secrètement. Il écrit (p. 256): «Le social n'explique pas pourquoi le sang féminin est si chargé de sens; au contraire, c'est parce que le processus de reproduction et le cycle féminin en particulier, furent vécus comme des expériences majeures, répétitives et rationnellement irréductibles que les hommes ont senti le besoin de les contrôler en les socialisant». Il ajoute un renvoi: «Cette remarque suggère une réserve à l'égard des thèses sociologiques de M. Douglas (cf. aussi Vos 1975 et Sahlins 1980). L'auteur ne pense donc pas que la sociologie explique la vie mais que la vie explique la sociologie.

Il reste donc à savoir comment la vie se transcode en ethnographie.

Moses CRUIKSHANK, *The Life I've Been Living*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1986. 132 pages, (paper).

By A.M. Ervin
University of Saskatchewan

Moses Cruikshank, an elderly Alaskan Déné from the Interior of Alaska, is an engaging storyteller. His accounts are vivid, authentic and evoke memories with this reader who used to do field work in Alaska. His narrative style quickly gives a sense of his personality—wise, easily respected and very likable. His accounts were recorded and edited by William Schneider a Fairbanks based oral historian, who placed them in chronological order and provided some footnotes and background.

His stories represent about a hundred years of experience and change, because he begins with tales of his grandfather who hunted with a flintlock rifle and blunt-tipped arrows. His grandfather told him about hunting techniques, animal behaviour, camp movements, trapping and trading with the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Yukon. We then hear of his

experiences at an Episcopal Mission school where he was a student and looked after the dog-teams. As a young man he, accompanied by dog team and boat, several Episcopal ministers and bishops in their travels to communities along the whole Yukon drainage system. Next, his stories relate to wage labour experiences taking us up to the 1960's. During this period he worked as a miner near Fairbanks, prospected for gold in the Interior, served in the Territorial Guard during World War II, intermittently trapped and operated heavy machinery and a saw mill in Beaver. His work experience is somewhat typical for Alaskan natives of his age. He also spent a year in the "Lower 48" when he attended school in New England. Retired and currently living in Fairbanks, he works with the Fairbanks Native Association telling stories to native children.

Schneider, the editor, characterizes the narrative as a combination of life story and life history; life story in the sense that Mr. Cruikshank provided the stories in the first person and partially life history in that Schneider arranges them chronologically. As a result, what is largely although not completely lacking, is a context for the stories. Moses Cruikshank lived through some very important periods of cultural change in Alaska. If there had been more directed questioning I am sure we would have learned a lot about the cultural change effects of World War II, the fur-trade, wage-labour, missions and settlement life. The stories are vivid but incomplete. Schneider does provide some interesting footnotes, but on the whole a person would have to know much more about Alaskan history and culture to gain a full understanding of the importance of Mr. Cruikshank's experiences. For this reason I am not sure whether this small book would be very useful for Canadian ethnologists or in university classes. On the other hand, it probably would be very handy for use in Alaskan high schools.

Wladimir RANDA, *L'ours polaire et les Inuit*, Paris, SELAF, Collection «ETHNOSCIENCES», No. 2, 1986, 323 pages, cartes, tableaux, dessins, figures.

Par François Trudel
Université Laval

En 1979, l'auteur a soutenu un mémoire de diplôme à l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) à Paris, dont l'objectif consistait à faire un inventaire systématique des données sur