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**Author**

Bushnell, Jeanette

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story of this work is compelling; hopefully, the limitations will not discourage readers from getting to the heart of it.

*Diane Hirshberg*

University of Alaska Anchorage

**Alaska's Daughter: An Eskimo Memoir of the Early Twentieth Century.** By Elizabeth Bernhardt Pinson. Logan: Utah State University, 2004. 205 pages. \$42.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Elizabeth Pinson had an unusual childhood. The small community of Teller, Alaska, provided the backdrop where her German father and Eskimo mother shaped not only her youthful experiences but also her telling of them more than half a century later. Nearly dying in the influenza epidemic of 1918, she survived but lost both her legs. In *Alaska's Daughter* the nonagenarian shares with us a collage of memories and diary entries from the early decades of the twentieth century. Included with the text are a small map of Alaska that identifies most of the places she talks about and several photographs from 1900 to 1950. Allusion to what the reader can expect comes early in the book, with Kipling's admonition on the frontispiece: "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." Pinson gives us a rambling and detailed account that centers primarily on her father; his friends; his contemporaries as settlers, adventurers, and sons of various northern nations; and Pinson's interactions with these men.

With its claim of being an "Eskimo memoir," this book places itself in a potentially authoritative position to relay a story about Alaska Natives similar to Dorothy Joseph's *Fishcamp* (1997) or Velma Wallis's *Raising Ourselves: A Guich'in Coming of Age Story from the Yukon River* (2002). Pinson, however, spins a near classic yarn of frontier Alaskan common to European and American adventurers and settlers coming to Alaska in the early twentieth century, replete with values that are very unfavorable to Natives and women. This memoir is a personal history told from one in awe of the European men of her time, one who was claimed as their "Alaskan Sweetheart" and adopted daughter. Much of the narrative is reminiscent of romanticized diary writings of young Euro-American women of the early 1900s.

Pinson grew up in the former gold-mining boomtown of Teller, a short hundred miles north of Nome, Alaska, and a long hundred west of the Siberian mainland across the Bering Sea. About four or five Eskimo families lived in Teller, along with several hundred Euro-Americans. By the time of her birth in 1912, the lives of her mother's people had been profoundly altered by the presence of European whalers, explorers, miners, and missionaries, with their technologies, germs, and cultures. Populations of both people and their food supplies had been decimated, and the land had recently been sold by one outside government to another. But environmental realities of life near the Arctic Circle had not changed. The land was frozen and dark much of the year, and everyone had to deal with these conditions, no matter where

they were from or what their purpose for being there. In Pinson's narrative we are treated with details of how many people negotiated life in this climate, including how she lost her legs to frostbite when she was six years old during the influenza epidemic.

Her first story is that of her father's entry into Alaskan residency in 1897 as a survivor of a whaling ship crushed in the arctic ice pack. As with many stories that follow, she provides meticulous details of the white members of the rescue party sent out by President Cleveland and their challenging encounters with the environment, but their local support people are referenced as nameless "native men" (139). Through her father's friendship with the Arctic explorer Roald Amundsen, Pinson is able to tell an unusual personal account of his visit in Teller after piloting the dirigible Norge over the North Pole from Spitsbergen, Norway, to Nome in 1926.

Pinson's troubling accounts of her Alaska Native heritage are often told in distant third-person descriptions and are rarely favorable. She wondered how her grandparents could have "lived in such conditions" when describing their earth igloo (34) in comparison to the "best of the largest houses" that her father bought for his family in Teller (27). She talks of the process of Eskimos becoming "more civilized" (35), with accounts of the positive aspects of this supposed progress away from a time that "few now remember." She claims that she was unusual in that she had the opportunity briefly to experience this past life with her grandparents, whose name for her was "white man" (36).

Pinson feels strongly about her Christian faith and claims that "Eskimos were superstitious" (18) and "naturally resistant to change" (119). She is extremely proud of her German Catholic father, whom she presents as a veritable cultural missionary who worked tirelessly to transform his corner of Alaska. As the purported leader of Teller, he brought wisdom and worldly knowledge to his community and became an expert in anything that was needed, whether it be gold mining, physical therapy, hunting, cooking, dog mushing, food preservation, or healing. Pinson claims her Eskimo mother was duly "affected by Papa's practical ways" (84) and "was still like a child and eager to learn" (117) but continued to eat her own Eskimo food sitting on the floor while Pinson and her siblings learned to prefer the white man's food and eat at a table.

Pinson's time spent in the modern hospital in Nome during her amputations and recovery forever marked her life. While tragic, her loss gave her unique and very privileged experiences unlike those of other Alaska Natives or of any Alaskans of the time. She left the hospital with a wheelchair, more toys than were had by any child in the entire village of Teller, and connections as the daughter of a German sailor that reached as far as a wealthy Samaritan in Pittsburgh, who gave her financial support for her entire childhood. To her memoirs are added vignettes of local events before her parents' lives, but Pinson does not reveal the sources for these detailed historical excursions.

I am left with a nagging unease about why Pinson, an Eskimo/German "Alaska Daughter," portrays Eskimos and women the way she does. Why are the learned and internalized oppressions of racism and misogyny from the last century reproduced in a 2004 book without critical evaluation? While this

perspective is not unique to Pinson, I feel it irresponsible to subject new generations to misinformation that supports continued oppressions. As one contemporary Indian woman comments, "I hear much of this type stuff from my momma's generation, too. I suppose it is in some way a real representation of how many of the women felt during that time, that all that was white was right, and blaming being Indian for all the hardships in life. I really hate the kids to hear them talk like that."

*Jeanette Bushnell*

University of Washington

**Choctaw Tales.** Collected and annotated by Tom Mould. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004. 256 pages. \$50.00 cloth; \$20.00 paper.

*Choctaw Tales* is a compilation of traditional stories from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, collected and annotated by Tom Mould, with a foreword by Chief Phillip Martin. Mould has gathered material from previously published works, the earliest being a creation story published in 1758 by French traveler Antoine S. le Page du Pratz, from interviews he conducted over several years with tribal storytellers in eight communities, and from unpublished transcriptions and tape recordings in the tribal archives. The result is a volume that deftly navigates between the conventions of academic discourse and the needs of the local community.

Instead of a comprehensive selection of stories from multiple tribes and geographical locations, the scope is limited to the Mississippi Band of Choctaws. Pantribal anthologies, like the excellent *American Indian Myths and Legends* (1984) or *American Indian Trickster Tales* (1994), edited by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, allow audiences a panoramic view of the American Indian storytelling landscape, but such breadth comes at the expense of historic, cultural, and political particularity. By contrast, the tribally specific approach adopted by Mould redirects our gaze, giving us a look both at the artistic range of stories themselves and at the practice of storytelling in the community. A lengthy introduction provides a historical overview of this band of Choctaws, who remained in their traditional homelands after others of their tribe were removed to the Indian Territory in 1830. It also offers a detailed discussion of previously published collections of Choctaw stories, giving insight into the circumstances of the storytellers and collectors. Most important, the introduction situates the stories not simply as artifacts preserved from a tribal past but as part of a vibrant Choctaw cultural life in the present.

Following the introduction, the main text of *Choctaw Tales*, instead of proceeding straight to the stories, begins with two key sections that make this an indispensable reference for those interested in the material for the cultural data it yields or the verbal art it represents. The first section, "The Storytellers," includes biographical sketches of the thirty-five tellers represented in this volume, both past and present, with photos wherever possible.