

“Fair Descendant of the Mohawk”: Pauline Johnson as an Ontological Marker¹

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“I spent my childhood . . . in reading and dreaming and writing,” Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) once told a reporter, “My verses just sung themselves in my head until I had to write them. Then, of course, I wanted to read them to people. That is all there is to tell.”² In spite of her clarity regarding the motivations that ultimately made Johnson one of Canada’s most enduringly popular poets, scholars at the turn of the twenty-first century have generally agreed that there is indeed more to tell.

Pauline was, as she’d hoped, a reciter of verse. For seventeen years she engaged and enthralled audiences across Canada, the northern United States, and in London, England³ with poetic and dramatic recitals that focussed on such diverse themes as the dispossession of aboriginal land, the hardships of aboriginal and mixed-blood women, Canadian patriotism, loyalty to Britain, and canoes. According to a number of scholars of the past decade, she was also variously a native activist, an early feminist, a post-colonial interpreter or a self-generated “counter-discursive site.”⁴ At the risk of failing to respect Pauline Johnson’s assertion of simply wishing to read her verses to people, I believe that both she and her work can be appreciated in yet another fashion: as religious entities that served as a link between Canadians and a particular transhuman agency that underlay their existence.

Pauline Johnson was born on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario in 1861. Her father was Mohawk, and her British-born mother acquired aboriginal status upon marriage. Her children, consequently, were

by law Canadian Indian.⁵ In 1884, Johnson began publicly performing poetry and prose that would ultimately be published in six collections, as well as in Canadian, British, and American newspapers, literary journals, and magazines.⁶

For most of the twentieth century, this work met with critical disdain or, more often, complete disregard.⁷ Despite scathing literary condemnations of her work, and its absence from major anthologies, Johnson has remained a constant in the Canadian public imagination. During her lifetime, her performances and writing mesmerized audiences,⁸ rendering her, according to *Canadian Magazine* in 1895, “the most popular figure in Canadian literature.”⁹ Public affection continued throughout her life,¹⁰ and when Johnson died in Vancouver in 1913, the response of the city was unprecedented. Offices were closed, flags were lowered to half-mast and her funeral procession was a civic event.¹¹ Nearly fifty years later, in 1961, the Government of Canada issued a postage stamp in commemoration of her birth a century earlier, rendering Pauline Johnson the first woman (aside from the Queen), the first author, and the first person of aboriginal descent to be portrayed on a Canadian postage stamp.¹² Throughout this period, her work continued to be read. Scarcely an English Canadian child has left grammar school without reading her poem, “The Song the Paddle Sings;” and both *Flint and Feather* (from which the poem is taken) and *Legends of Vancouver* are still in print. In fact, *Flint and Feather* remains the largest selling volume of Canadian poetry.¹³

Now, over the past decade, scholars have rediscovered Pauline Johnson, and most concur with the Mohawk writer Beth Brant in calling Johnson “a revolutionary.”¹⁴ The precise nature of her revolution, however, appears to be up for grabs, as issues of ethnicity, gender, and post-colonial power variously drive the figure emerging from this scholarship. Although this growing corpus provides insightful snapshots of the woman’s significance, it betrays a general uneasiness with Johnson’s apparently contradictory nature. Most scholars, for instance, find her use of native stereotypes to be problematic, given her repeatedly expressed resistance to such stock characterizations. Some are simply baffled by the incongruity,¹⁵ while others suggest that she was locked in an inescapably ambiguous position, at home in neither aboriginal nor white culture,¹⁶ that she utilized racist conventions in order to ensure that whites would hear her criticisms,¹⁷ or that her condemnations of white stereotyping were “ideologically underdeveloped” and her work was characterized by “semiotic confusion.”¹⁸ The difficulty

pervading this scholarship hinges on the question of accounting for the paradoxes that emerge once Pauline has been defined as an activist, or feminist, or post-colonial critic. It may be, however, that she is a figure who would best be approached in a reversed manner, assuming as a point of departure these incongruities, rather than one or another form of activism. This approach might well provide the most promising portal through which Pauline Johnson can be viewed and appreciated as a coherent figure. I shall suggest that this reversal of focus is possible if Johnson is regarded as a religious figure who provided Canadians with a particular form of historical and ontological orientation.

Alongside recent scholars' uneasiness with Johnson's contradictions is a common assumption that she can be situated in a world of relatively distinct, colour-coded, cultural entities. This notion of cultural purity (which is most often articulated in terms of "native" and "white") creates fundamental difficulties when it comes to interpreting her life and work.

George W. Lyon has claimed, for instance, that tensions over her conflicted ancestry created a state of "anomie" within Johnson, and that this confusion and lack of identity was expressed in her native stage costume, which was an exercise in pure fancy.¹⁹ The issue of the costume's "authenticity" is raised also by Shelly Hulan,²⁰ and it is a serious one, as it involves a value judgment that privileges distinct native tribal culture over that of Pauline's own creolized heritage.²¹ In respect to her stage attire, one might ask what an authentic "Indian costume" would have been for a woman educated in English literature by a British-born mother who was, by law and by virtue of her marriage to a Mohawk chief, an Indian. It is not unreasonable to expect that such a costume might look much like the one worn by Pauline: embroidered buckskin, Mohawk-made silver broaches based upon literary images of Minnehaha, the wife of Longfellow's Hiawatha, her father's hunting knife, a Huron scalp that had belonged to her grandfather, a bracelet of mountain lion claws and elk's teeth given to her by the naturalist writer Earnest Thompson Seton, and a neckline cut in the style of an English evening dress.²²

The issue of the costume's authenticity rests on an assumption of static native and white cultural purities – an interpretative construct to which most recent work on Johnson appears wedded. Hulan, for instance, proposes an explanation for Pauline's apparently anomalous character based upon Ashcroft's, Griffiths', and Tiffin's post-colonial theory of "interpreters": colonized figures who learn new languages and cultures in order to save their

cultures of origin and, subsequently find themselves alienated from both cultural frameworks. On this account, Johnson was a “perennially ambiguous” outsider in respect of both native and white cultures.²³ Even if the theory of the “interpreter” is applicable to other figures, the presumption of clearly-defined, native and white cultural categories simply does not apply to Pauline Johnson. She did not oscillate between homogenous tribal and colonizing cultures, acquiring the language of one to preserve the other. If such purities existed, they did not figure in Johnson’s cultural situation.

A cursory examination of her background serves to illustrate this. Pauline’s mother, Emily Howells, was born in Bristol, England, the daughter of an abolitionist Quaker who moved his family to Ohio in the early-nineteenth century.²⁴ Her father, George Johnson was a non-hereditary chief, whose own father Smoke Johnson had been made chief at the request of the British, after heroically fighting the Americans in the War of 1812. Pauline’s grandmother, Helen Martin, was the daughter of George Martin (who was Mohawk) and Catherine Rollston, a Dutch captive who had been adopted as a thirteen-year-old by Pauline’s great-great grandfather, Tekahionwake. The man had taken the name Jacob Johnson at baptism, and both names – Johnson and Tekahionwake – were passed to Pauline through his Dutch daughter Catherine.²⁵

Johnson grew up in a manor (Chiefswood) built by her father, which had two entrances: one facing the water to accommodate aboriginal guests arriving by canoe, and one facing the road for those – principally whites – travelling in vehicles. Numerous members of Canadian high society, writers, and scholars dined at Chiefswood, including the anthropologist Horatio Hale, and Alexander Graham Bell (with whom Pauline’s father conducted the first successful long-distance telephone experiment).²⁶ For the most part, Johnson was educated at Chiefswood, where her mother introduced her primarily to British Romantic literature.²⁷ The context out of which Pauline emerged was not a world of insular cultures in conflict with one another, nor were there new languages and cultures for her to learn, since her first cultural language was that of Chiefswood, composed of Mohawk stories, British literature, aboriginal, British, and Dutch ancestors, Canadian aristocrats, scientists, and academics.

The appeal to uniformly stable cultural forms in order to understand Pauline Johnson is an error that ultimately results in attenuated conclusions in which she is defined in respect to what she is not – as inconsistent, confused, conflicted, or culturally dislocated. She was undoubtedly a

remarkably multifarious figure. This was a woman who, for instance, once emphatically told a London newsman, “You English . . . you have a very poor idea of the Indian nature. I daresay, you, like the rest, think and write of him as a poor degraded savage walking round with a scalping knife in one hand and a tomahawk in the other . . . ,”²⁸ and yet, during another interview she drew out her father’s scalping knife and proceeded to demonstrate the motions of scalping to a bewildered *Toronto Globe* reporter.²⁹ Johnson’s Mohawk name, Tekahionwake, could be translated as either “double wampum” or “double life.” She herself preferred the latter – “double life” – and went so far as to tell a British reporter in 1894, “there are two of me.”³⁰

Although I would argue that it does not point to chronic confusion on Pauline’s part, the knotty issue of duality is nonetheless inescapable when considering her life and work. At first glance, Marilyn Rose’s postmodern account of Pauline Johnson appears to shed some light on the woman while avoiding the pitfall of suggesting an interpretation based upon what she is not. Rose believes this poet should be regarded as a conflicted individual who willfully cultivated “competing identities,” thus creating herself as a “complex cultural site.” Rose locates Johnson in a postmodern arena of language in which colonization is defined as a process of “linguistic acts” that force upon the colonized the need for the creation and deployment of counter-discourses. Depending on the situation, Johnson cultivated and accentuated rival aboriginal and bourgeois European images, alternating identities in order to meet her needs. By refusing to be a clearly classifiable person, Pauline Johnson created herself as a postmodern figure who embodied a form of hegemonic critique.³¹

Rose’s interpretation is appealing, but it may not take us very much farther than other recent analyses. This is due, first, to the submersion of the category of post-colonial within that of postmodern, such that the former is essentially reduced to a context merely of resistance, and second, to a postmodern – and self-constructing – model of identity. The new world is not reducible to a set of linguistic acts, and this is because, simply, something actually transpired beyond language in 1492. What occurred was the beginning of an alteration in the matrix of global population through which unprecedented numbers of people were to be compelled into relationships with one another. Colonization, missionization, and the trade in African slaves were to bring the people of three continents together in North America; and, far from existing in isolation from one another, these people exploited, despised, at times loved one another. No one remained untouched.

This was not a new world exclusively within the discursive constructions of colonial Europeans. This was an arena in which something humanly new occurred; and given this novelty, it is unlikely any North Americans have ever had the option of creating themselves as new world people. In other words, we might pose the question, “What else can a North American possibly be?”

A postmodern appraisal of someone like Johnson risks being flawed because it preserves a Cartesian model of self-construction: if one can construct oneself as a new world person, one might, presumably do otherwise. This, of course, cannot be so. What makes Johnson noteworthy is not simply the fact that she was a self-constructed new world person who embodied a counter discourse. Rather, her significance lies in her ability to express the meaning of being a new world person. Further, I do not believe, as does Rose, that she was multi-vocal,³² but that she was a single voice articulating cultural meanings bound in memories of pre-contact North American life, of injustices wrought aboriginal peoples in the wake of contact, of Canadian patriotism, and of fidelity to the British Crown. This was one voice and body. Some scholars discern contradiction and confusion within this single entity; others believe she exhibited a self-constructed and “slippery racial identity.”³³ Both interpretations presume stable external cultural referents against which Johnson is measured; the latter also assumes a self-generating model of identity that necessarily disregards much of what she actually articulated in both her discourse and writing. What is most remarkable about Pauline Johnson is that she called both of these cultural measurements and this model of identity into question. She did not typify the human power to create itself, but rather the capacity to express the constitutive relationship between the self and the space one occupies. History, and especially colonial history, was for her the principle force in the construction of identity, and she unremittently called those around her to recognition of this relationship.³⁴

Regardless of the palatability of the history of contact, Johnson confronted her public with the fact that it had been a mutual affair. At an early performance at Penetanguishene, for instance, she introduced herself to the audience by referring to their mutual relationship with a nearby shrine dedicated to Father Brebeuf and other Jesuits who had been killed by the Iroquois in the seventeenth century: “Most of you have never heard of me and I am sure we have never met before, but some of my ancestors met some friends of yours not far from here some two hundred and forty years ago.”³⁵

This shared history was not a mere backdrop for her: it was the source for a recreation of human beings through which new cultural entities came to inhabit the colonial landscape. The post-colonial blurring of pre-contact cultural purities was a constant motif in both her poetry and prose, as was the notion that human beings were the creations of historical circumstance.

It was Johnson's Toronto recitation of "A Cry From an Indian Wife" in 1892 that brought her the public recognition that she would continue to receive over the next two decades. The poem, written the year of the second Métis uprising, concerned an aboriginal woman vacillating between bidding her husband to join in the rebellion against the Dominion forces, and urging him to remain at home.³⁶ In the end, the character urged her mate to join the resistance, yet her final statement underscored a clear lack of human agency in the face of history.³⁷ "Perhaps the white man's God," she wrote in her final version of the poem, "has willed it so," pointing to a sort of inevitability in which human beings were not so much agents as cast members in an historical and ontological drama.

The recreation of human beings within the context of this drama was a theme to which Johnson turned repeatedly in her work.³⁸ We might consider in this respect her short story, "As it Was in the Beginning," which scholars have generally noted is a piece of fiction concerned the discriminatory treatment of mixed-blood women.³⁹ Relatively little notice, however, has been afforded the significance of hell in the story.⁴⁰ At the outset of the story, Johnson had the heroine's mother assert emphatically, "If the white man made this . . . hell, let him go to it. It is for the man who found it first. No hell for the Indians. . ."⁴¹ However, as the story closed the heroine, now back in her village following her murder of her white lover, exclaimed: "I dream nightly of the white man's hell. Why did they teach me of it, only to fling me into it?"⁴² If there was indeed "no hell for the Indians," as the mother claimed, then the heroine who found herself dwelling nightly in that hell, may well have been no longer an "Indian." At the very least, her relationships with whites had brought about an alteration such that she was no longer the person she had been at the beginning. Missionary, romantic, and murderous relationships with whites were, in this instance, the constituents from which a person was recreated.

Although Johnson often explored the disconcerting results of this recreation, she also accepted – indeed, embraced – it as an unalterable event. She stated this clearly in the inscription to *Canadian Born*, where she concluded with a testimony to the defining power of place and national

history: “White Race and Red,” she wrote, “are one if they are but Canadian born.” She appears also to have, on occasion, enjoyed humourously calling others to confront this unavoidable transformation too. Over the course of a return voyage from London in 1907, for instance, a woman from New York City complained to Johnson about English manners: “Why, when I asked for ice water,” she said, “they looked at me as though I were a North American Indian savage.” Pauline is said to have replied, “Do you know, that’s just the way they look at me.” At this point the American woman asked, “Say, Miss Johnson, was your father a real wild Red Indian?” When the writer answered affirmatively, the woman replied, “Excuse me, but you don’t look a bit like it.” Johnson then asked the woman, “And was your father a real white man?” “Why yes,” was the reply, to which Johnson quipped, “Excuse me, but I’m equally surprised.”²⁴³

The world out of which Johnson emerged was not culturally pure. This was a world in which historical circumstances inevitably altered human beings, a world of vicissitude in which events and relationships were the defining principles in human identity. For Johnson, the human being belonged to this changeable realm of history, rather than to the natural world, which throughout her work was described as eternal and belonging to “the God who never changes.”²⁴⁴ Blurred cultural distinctions, malleability in the nature of identity, and the formative power of historical contingency were Johnson’s stock in trade. In the course of articulating this kaleidoscopic notion of identity she came to be regarded as “an authentic Canadian voice.”²⁴⁵

Johnson performed the first half of her recitals in her “Indian costume,” leading audiences to believe that her gestures and glances, “emotions and passions” were “pure Indian.” Dressed in an evening gown for the second half, audiences concluded that she “must surely be almost white,” because “in her features and complexion they could see nothing of the Indian.”²⁴⁶ Johnson was a figure who resided in a space between the cultural categories of native and white and who, by virtue of this position as the “*fair* [my italics] descendant of the Mohawk,”²⁴⁷ possessed the ability to entangle them. In spite of all her apparent contradiction, she ultimately found her way into the hearts of her contemporaries, into school books and postage stamps, and, judging by the sales of *Flint and Feather*, into more homes than any other Canadian poet.

Pauline Johnson may have acquired this significance for Canadians because, to some degree, she served a religious purpose. Mircea Eliade once

suggested that traditional cultures generally accomplished the religious task of orienting themselves within their worlds in ultimate terms by means of sacred points that represented ruptures in otherwise homogenous space. Mountains, caves, temples, and other objects could become such sacred points through which human beings were able to communicate with the “transhuman agencies” that underlay their existence.⁴⁸ If such ontological markers⁴⁹ might exist also in the new world – points through which people are afforded access to the world-defining agency of a transcendent framework – a figure like Pauline Johnson might well occupy such a position.

The generative force towards which she directed attention was located within the structure of Canadian history. This was a defining context characterized by colonial contact, violence, and reciprocities: appropriation of land, wars and death, love and marriage and mixed-blood children, missionization, and colonial ties to England. Johnson stood before the public as a figure for whom these were neither benign nor disjunctive events associated with one or another sub-group within Canadian society. These were the contingencies through which a formative power revealed itself as a source for the creation of a world. Colonial history was in this sense a cosmogonic (or world-creating) context, due to its transhuman power to create new modalities of being human. Colonial history created a surplus that was entirely specific to itself; and this surplus – this new creation – was the Canadian. Johnson might well be regarded as having both embodied this new creation and called others to recognize it in respect to themselves.

Measured against other human and cultural entities, the Canadian that she substantiated was nonsensical: not quite British, not quite Mohawk, not quite American, nor Dutch. Her public found this complexity intriguing (a contemporary critic described her as the “most unique figure in the literary world of today”).⁵⁰ More recent scholars, however, have stumbled in the face of it, seeing either inadvertent or willfully-crafted contradiction. It may be that scholars’ perception of ambiguity actually obscures what were, in Johnson’s case, both the message and a medium through which the history of the new world could present itself as a “transhuman” agency that undergirded human identity. From this perspective, apparent ambiguities might well constitute the normative state of humans who have been fashioned within the context of colonial history.

She was created by the complexity of the new world, and she wrote and spoke of this complexity at every turn. Her words cannot entirely be regarded as reactions against one or another form of hegemony, since she

was part and parcel of all of these: her Mohawk grandfather was a British war hero; her father worked for the Canadian government; her British mother became an “Indian” by loving and making children with an aboriginal Canadian; and Pauline herself dated only white men. Neither colonial governments, nor European culture, nor white men were objects of her sustained assault in terms of being consistently distinct cultural, political, or gendered entities. Hers was neither a discourse nor a life of resistance against these, so much as an expression of a notion of identity that all too often reeled in the face of such purities. Her language expressed what had occurred – both historically and in transcendent terms of human origins – in the course of the unfolding of the new world: the recreation of human beings.

Endnotes

1. I wish to thank Kristin McLaren for her assistance in the preparation of this essay.
2. *Harper's Weekly* (New York), 23 June, 1894; cited by the E. Pauline Johnson Project, Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University: <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~pjohnson/life.html>
3. Marilyn J. Rose, “Pauline Johnson: New World Poet,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 12, No. 2 (1997): 298-307, 298; George W. Lyon, “Pauline Johnson: A Reconsideration,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 15, No. 2 (1990): 136-159, 137; and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, “Justice for Indians and Women: The Protest Fiction of Alice Callahan and Pauline Johnson,” *World Literature Today* 66, No. 2 (1992): 249-255, 252;
4. The following examples should serve as sufficient illustration: (i) Sheila M. F. Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth: A Celebration of E. Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake 1861-1913* (Toronto: National Heritage/National History, 1997), 10, believes Pauline made use of her eloquence to speak “on behalf of the First Nations of North America”; (ii) Mary Elizabeth Leighton, “Performing Pauline Johnson: Representations of ‘the Indian Poetess’ in the Periodical Press, 1892-95,” *Essays on Canadian Writing* 65 (Fall 1998): 141-164, 148, 158, suggests that she was concerned in her writing with raising issues of Native land loss and “assimilation policies”; (iii) A. LaVonne Brown Rouff in her introduction to Johnson’s *The Moccasin Maker* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 25 and 31-32, discerns in her work variously articulated feminist themes and native resistance to white stereotyping that together render her a writer of “protest

fiction” (see Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women: The Protest Fiction of Alice Callahan and Pauline Johnson,” *World Literature Today* 66, No. 2 (1992): 249-255, 249; (iv) Veronica Strong-Boag, “No Longer Dull: The Feminist Renewal of Canadian History,” *Canadian Social Studies* 32, No. 2 (Winter 1998): 55-57, 56, defines her as a “counter-hegemonic figure” who understood the ways in which women were injured by ethnic and sexual prejudices; (v) Carole Gerson, “The Most Canadian of all Canadian Poets: Pauline Johnson and the Construction of a National Literature,” *Canadian Literature* 158 (Fall 1996): 90-107, 102 has shifted Johnson into a wider arena, believing that her work has contemporary relevance for those who are concerned with issues of “power, literary value, race and gender”; (vi) Shelly Hulan, “Life of Johnson: From Biography to Celebration,” a review of *Buckskin and Broadcloth: A Celebration of the Life of E. Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake 1861-1913* by Sheila M.F. Johnston, *Canadian Poetry* 44 (Spring/Summer 1999): 85-100, 97, characterizes her as an “interpreter” concerned with preserving traditional aboriginal culture; and (vii) Marilyn J. Rose, “Pauline Johnson: New World Poet,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 12, No. 2 (1997): 298-307, 299, calls her a “complex cultural site,” that embodied a postmodern Canadian identity.

5. Her father’s band had been moved by the British from upper New York state to the Grand River area subsequent to the revolutionary war in the United States (Rouff, “Introduction,” in *The Moccasin Maker*, 1-2; Betty Keller, *Pauline: A Biography of Pauline Johnson* [Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981], 1; and Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 24).
6. Johnson published, during her lifetime, *White Wampum*, *Canadian Born*, and *Legends of Vancouver*. In addition, she prepared a third volume of poetry, *Flint and Feather*, for publication immediately prior to her death from breast cancer in 1913, and wrote sufficient prose to warrant posthumous publication of two volumes, *Shagganapi* and *The Moccasin Maker* (see Rouff, “Introduction,” in *The Moccasin Maker*, 1-2; Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women,” 252; and the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University).
7. Aside from an article by Norman Shrive published in 1962, Johnson’s work was virtually absent from the Canadian literary scene until another article by George W. Lyon, which appeared in 1990. Aside from these (and her inclusion in Margaret Atwood’s Clarendon lectures on the North in Canadian literature in 1991), she remained removed from critical discussion until the mid-1990s. Any attention afforded her work tended to be scathing.

Earl Birney pronounced her writing to be “not at all important;” R.E. Watters dismissed it for lacking “philosophical or intellectual content;” Robertson Davies described it as “elocutionist fodder;” and Desmond Pacey dismissed it as “meretricious,” “cheap, vulgar, and incredibly bad” (Norman Shrive, “What Happened to Pauline?” *Canadian Literature* 13 (1962): 25-38; George W. Lyon, “Pauline Johnson: A Reconsideration,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 15, No. 2 (1990): 136-159; and Gerson, “The Most Canadian of all Canadian Poets,” 90, 98-99).

8. The *Toronto Globe* reported in 1892, for instance, that a number of prominent political and literary figures had remained throughout an entire performance in Ottawa. This “unusual” conduct, the article concluded, was “a tribute to the artiste.” Another review the same year claimed that she had outshone Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott, with whom she had shared the stage on one occasion, winning a “storm of applause” in response to her “earnestness and intensity” (see the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University).
9. Hector Charlesworth, *Canadian Magazine* in 1895. The writer added that she was also “in many respects the most prominent one” (cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 138).
10. When Pauline became too ill to work, a number of Vancouver Women’s societies joined together to create a trust fund to promote national sales of *Legends of Vancouver*. The cost of the book was set at the unusually high price of \$2.00. The group (whose vice-president was former Prime Minister Sir Charles Tupper) elicited an exceptionally large response from the Canadian public (see the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University).
11. The procession was comprised of distinguished Vancouverites, representatives of all the city’s clubs and societies, and a delegation of Squamish led by their chief—the son of Pauline’s closest friend during the last years of her life, Joe Capilano. Johnson had been living in Vancouver since her retirement from the stage in 1908 (see the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University; and Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women,” 252).
12. Gerson, “The Most Canadian of all Canadian Poets,” 90; Roseanne Hoefel, “Writing, Performance, Activism: Zitkala-Sa and Pauline Johnson,” in *Native American Women in Literature and Culture*, eds. Susan Castillo and Victor M. P. Da Rosa (Fernando Pessoa University Press, 1997), 107-118, 117.

13. Charles Lillard, review of *The Moccasin Maker* by E. Pauline Johnson, in *Canadian Literature* 118 (Fall 1988): 154-155, 155; and Lyon, "Pauline Johnson: A Reconsideration," 137.
14. See the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University.
15. See Rouff, "Introduction," in *The Moccasin Maker*, 32. Roseanne Hoefel suggests that Johnson was simply providing her white audience with what they wanted to hear, but in so doing she supported Canadian imperialist interests (see "Writing, Performance, Activism: Zitkala-Sa and Pauline Johnson," in *Native American Women in Literature and Culture*, 107-118, 137, 140).
16. Hulan, "Life of Johnson," 97.
17. Leighton, "Performing Pauline Johnson," 148.
18. Lyon, "Pauline Johnson: A Reconsideration," 139-140.
19. See Lyon, "Pauline Johnson: A Reconsideration," 139.
20. Hulan, "Life of Johnson," 99, 95.
21. Johnson created the outfit with some initial assistance from her sister Evelyn, who later referred to it as Pauline's "Indian costume." "Indian" was the term that the writer used freely as both a description for herself and a blanket-term useful for speaking with whites for whom tribal distinctions were irrelevant. In an interview published in *Harper's Weekly* (New York), 23 June 1894, for instance, Johnson described herself as "only a Mohawk with an ambition to show that even an Indian can do something in the world." In an interview conducted in London the same year (published as "Tekahionwake," in *The Sketch* (13 June 1894), she told a reporter, "I am a Red Indian, as you know, and feel very proud of my 'copper-tinted face and smouldering fire of wilder life.'" Both interviews can be accessed through the E. Pauline Johnson Project, Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University. In "A Strong Race Opinion on the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," *The Dominion Illustrated Magazine* (February 1893), Johnson wrote: "I quote 'Indian' as there seems to be an impression amongst authors that such a thing as tribal distinction does not exist amongst the North American aborigines" (Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 110). In the *Boston Herald*, a year earlier, Johnson was quoted as saying, "You will say that I am not like other Indians, that I am not a representative. That is not strange. Cultivate an Indian, let him show his aptness, and you Americans

- say he is an exception. Let a bad quality crop out and you will stamp him as an Indian immediately” (Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 115).
22. Evelyn H.C. Johnson, *Chiefswood* (Toronto, Ontario, 1936), manuscript in Archives of Ontario; cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 113; and Lyon, “Pauline Johnson: A Reconsideration,” 139.
 23. Hulan, “Life of Johnson,” 97.
 24. Pauline’s cousin was the American novelist W.D. Howells. Emily moved from Ohio to the Six Nations Reserve in 1845 to live with her sister and brother-in-law (who was a clergyman). There she met and married Pauline’s father, George Johnson.
 25. See Rouff, “Introduction,” in *The Moccasin Maker*, 2-4; and Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 23. Both Smoke and George were noted orators, with George having represented the Council before the Canadian Parliament on several occasions (see Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women,” 252; and Hoefel, “Writing, Performance, Activism,” 111).
 26. Others included the Marquis of Lorne and the Princess Louise, Lord and Lady Dufferin, General Sir Garnet Wolseley, See Rouff, “Introduction,” in *The Moccasin Maker*, 5; Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women,” 252; Marcus Van Steen, *Pauline Johnson: Her Life and Work* (Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968), 3; Pauline Johnson, “The Story of the First Telephone,” in *The Boy’s World*, 27 October 1910; and Pauline Johnson, “Forty-Five Miles on the Grand,” *The Brantford Expositor* (December 1892); cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 56.
 27. Johnson spent two years respectively at the Reserve school and Central Collegiate in Brantford (Rouff, “Introduction,” in *The Moccasin Maker*, 5; Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women,” 252).
 28. “Tekahionwake,” in *The Sketch* (13 June 1894), the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University.
 29. The E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University.
 30. The reporter had asked Johnson whether she could deny that the European “invasion” of North America had created the possibility of her “life of culture,” to which she indicated agreement before adding the above comment (*The Gazette* [London], Summer 1894; cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 121).

31. From this perspective, even the notion of the new world is bound by language, since it can be considered new in the eyes only of the colonizers. On this account, Pauline Johnson's father provided her with a model for the cultivation of dual identities, as a non-hereditary chief who worked for the Canadian government, wore English clothing, revered Napoleon, and spoke three European and six Iroquois languages. He lived in two worlds, as his daughter would ultimately do (Rose, "Pauline Johnson: New World Poet," 298-302, 304-305. She draws specifically on the work of Gayatri Spivak, Stephen Greenblatt, and Helen Tiffin in constructing her argument).
32. Rose, "Pauline Johnson: New World Poet," 305.
33. Rose, "Pauline Johnson: New World Poet," 304.
34. She once told a Canadian reporter, for instance, that the images that most writers of "Indian stuff" propagated were "dwarfed, erroneous, and delusive," owing to a general lack of knowledge of both the history of contact and contemporary aboriginal peoples. Most had never been on a reserve, she said; most were unaware that there were "many combats he [the aboriginal] had won in history . . ." and, moreover, "there are many girls who have placed dainty red feet upon the white man's neck" (Johnson, "A Strong Race Opinion on the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," *The Dominion Illustrated Magazine*, February 1893; cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 110-111). On another occasion, she raised the issue of a general lack of knowledge with a *Boston Herald* reporter, in this way: "let [an Indian] show his aptness, and you Americans say he is an exception. Let a bad quality crop out and you will immediately stamp him as an Indian" (*The Boston Herald*, 1893; cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 115).
35. Van Steen, *Pauline Johnson: Her Life and Work*, 21.
36. Considering the fact that colonial Canadians "forget we Indians owned the land/From ocean unto ocean," and had brought only "wars and graves" to native peoples, she told her husband in one moment, "Therefore take your tomahawk and go." Yet she considered also the way in which colonial history had made pawns of all its participants, she wavered, and she advised her husband, "Revolt not at the Union Jack/Nor raise Thy hand against this stripling pack/Of white-faced warriors . . ./They are all young and beautiful and good;/Curse to the war that drinks their harmless blood./Curse to the Fate that brought them from the East" (E. Pauline Johnson, *Flint and Feather* [Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1931], 17-19).

37. Pauline wrote two versions of the final statement. In the original version of 1885, the woman directed her husband to fight because “God and fair Canada have willed it so.” The second version appeared in *White Wampum* four years later.
38. The young son of an Irish immigrant who was the subject of “Joe,” for instance, and who was pictured sitting on a grey prairie fence after an exhausting day of “husking Indian corn,” was described much as one might imagine an aboriginal child being depicted by a white author from the period: “. . . perched upon/The topmost rail, sits Joe, the Settler’s son,/A little semi-savage boy of nine” (Johnson, *Flint and Feather*, 44-45).
39. Rouff, “Justice for Indians and Women,” 252; and Rouff, “Introduction,” in *The Moccasin Maker*, 27.
40. In a review of the 1998 edition of Johnson’s *The Moccasin Maker*, Patricia Clark Smith makes note of the presence of hell in “As it Was in the Beginning,” but minimizes its importance. She suggests that aside from the central character’s dreams of the “white man’s hell” (a notion learned from her “hypocritical teachers”), she “gets clean away” with the murder of her lover (see *American Indian Quarterly* [Summer 1990]: 338-339).
41. Johnson, *The Moccasin Maker*, 145.
42. Johnson, *The Moccasin Maker*, 156.
43. See the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University; and Van Steen, *Pauline Johnson: Her Life and Work*, 4.
44. In “The Trail to Lillooet,” for instance, she referred to “God’s country,” “God-begotten nights,” and “God’s copper-coloured sunshine;” in “The City and the Sea,” she wrote, “the city is the work of man/But all the sea is God’s”; and in “Golden of the Selkirks,” she spoke of “God of the *eternal* [my italics] peaks . . . God of the days so golden.” It is in the poem, “The Cattle Country,” that one finds a definitive claim regarding the immutability of the God of nature. In speaking of the Canadian prairies, she wrote: “the God who never changes/Holds it in His hand” (Johnson, *Flint and Feather*, 142-143, 121, 99, 138). One senses that Johnson did not clearly equate the God of the natural world with the Christian God who was implicated in the history of colonial contact. “A Cry from an Indian Wife,” for instance, referred specifically to the “white man’s God”; and “As it Was in the Beginning” pointed to the non-universal nature of the realm of hell.

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45. Leighton, "Performing Pauline Johnson," 141.
 46. *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 1897; cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 145.
 47. See the E. Pauline Johnson Project, McMaster University.
 48. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 20-37; and William E. Paden, "World," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon and New York: Cassell, 2000), 334-347.
 49. Paden, "World," 343.
 50. *The Magnet Magazine*, 6 January 1897; cited in Johnston, *Buckskin and Broadcloth*, 143.

