Writing Back against Canada's Fictive Ethnicity: Bernice Loft Winslow (Dawendine) and Ethel Brant Monture

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Abstract: The period after E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)'s literary career ended and before the emergence of contemporary Indigenous writing in Canada, roughly between 1910 and 1960, has been labelled as a "barren period" for Indigenous authorship. The relative failure by Indigenous Peoples in this period to garner publishers or attract wide readerships, however, had more to do with the political and social environment of Canada at the time, than either an ability (or inability) to write material of value. Bernice Loft Winslow (Dawendine) (1902-1997) and Ethel Brant Monture (1892-1977), in the face of considerable challenges to have their voices heard, demonstrate that the period after Johnson's death was not entirely void of Indigenous authorship. Loft and Monture are among a small body of Indigenous authors during this period who, through persistence and performance, left their marks on the stages and pages of settler Canadian libraries and bookshelves.

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> Most of the literature of America is a saga of the so-called bravery of the Europeans in subduing the savages … who fought bitterly only to hold their homes for their families, and to save the land of their forefathers for a heritage for their children's children. To this day this is a barrier to greater understanding.[1]

The period after E. Pauline Johnson's literary career ended and before the emergence of contemporary Indigenous writing in Canada, roughly between 1910 and 1960, has been labelled as a "barren period" for Indigenous authorship.[2] The relative failure by Indigenous Peoples in this period to garner publishers or attract wide readerships, however, had more to do with the political and social environment of Canada at the time, than an ability (or inability) to write material of value. Bernice Loft Winslow (Dawendine) (1902-1997) and Ethel Brant Monture (1892-1977), in the face of considerable challenges to have their voices heard, demonstrate that the period after Johnson's death was not entirely void of Indigenous authorship. Loft and Monture are among a small body of Indigenous authors during this period who, through persistence and performance, left their marks on the stages and pages of settler Canadian libraries and bookshelves.[3]

As a young person growing up on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Loft (Dawendine) believed it was more important to listen than it was to write.[4] Born in 1902 to a Cayuga mother, De-yohnt-ji-jo-kwa-tah, and a Mohawk father, William De-wau-se-ra-keh Loft, Dawendine learned the dialects of the original Iroquois League of Five Nations—the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, and Mohawk—and could read and write in English before she started school at the Mohawk Institute near Brantford, Ontario. Through her parents and

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[1] Ethel Brant Monture, "The Indian Canadian and His Future," Undated transcript for Talks and Public Affairs, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, File 55, Ethel Brant Monture Materials, Special Collections, Woodland Cultural Centre Library, Brantford, Ontario.

[2] See Penny Petrone, *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (Oxford UP, 1990), p. 95; Thomas King, "Native Literature in Canada," *Dictionary of Native American Literature*, edited by Andrew Wiget (Garland, 1994), pp. 357-58; Armand Garnet Ruffo, "Out of the Silence—The Legacy of E. Pauline Johnson: An Inquiry into the Lost and Found Work of Dawendine—Bernice Loft Winslow," *Literary Pluralities*, edited by Christl Verduyn (Broadview P, 1998), p. 212; and Cecilia Morgan, "Performing for 'Imperial Eyes': Bernice Loft and Ethel Brant Monture, Ontario, 1930s-60s," *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, edited by Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (U of British Columbia P, 2005), p. 70.

[3] Other Indigenous voices in print and on the stage during this period include Charles A. Cooke (Thawennensere), Andrew Paull, and Edward Ahenakew. See Brendan F.R. Edwards, "'A most Industrious and Far-Seeing Mohawk Scholar': Charles A. Cooke (Thawennensere), Civil Servant, Amateur Anthropologist, Performer, and Writer," *Ontario History*, vol. 102, no. 1, 2010, pp. 81-108; Brendan F.R. Edwards, "'I have Lots of Help Behind Me, Lots of Books, to Convince You': Andrew Paull and the Value of Literacy in English," *BC Studies*, vol. 164, 2010, pp. 7-30; and Brendan F. R. Edwards, "Print Culture and the Reassertion of Indigenous Nationhood in Early-Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada," *Comparative Print Culture: A Study of Alternative Literary Modernities*, edited by Rasoul Aliakbari (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 225-44.

[4] Donald B. Smith, videotaped interview with Bernice Loft Winslow, 9 January 1993, Whitman, Massachusetts. Special thanks to Professor Smith for providing me with a copy of this videotaped interview.

grandparents, Dawendine had a living link to a celebrated past, and each provided a role model and precedent for her later career as an orator and writer. On William Loft's eightieth birthday in 1938, the *Niagara Falls Evening News* reported that "Chief Loft and his daughter … are widely in demand as Indian historians, narrators of quaint lore, translators and craftsmen. Chief Loft … has passed both his artistry and historical knowledge to his daughter, Mrs. Winslow, who has long been his right hand and helper."[5]

Preceding her as an author and orator was her celebrated uncle, Frederick O. Loft (1861-1934), founder of the League of Indians, Canada's first pan-Indigenous organisation, founded in 1918. Frederick Loft was a newspaper writer and an authority on the history and traditions of the Six Nations, as well as a political campaigner.[6] His influence, along with the success and popularity of Johnson, influenced and encouraged Dawendine in her writing and oratory performance. While her early poetry reflects the style and subject matter of Johnson, Dawendine saw her role as a writer and performer as a necessary one to educate not only settler Canadians about Haudenosaunee ways, but also her own people, and particularly the young. Performing and speaking regularly as a young adult, reciting her own poetry, as well as that of Johnson, Dawendine often donned traditional dress, in a similar fashion as Johnson and contemporaries like Charles Cooke.[7] Dawendine was encouraged as a writer of original poems and stories by the academic Paul Wallace, who had also offered considerable encouragement to Edward Ahenakew.[8] As part of his professional association with the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, the Canadian-born Wallace actively sought written texts from Indigenous writers, who he believed could offer authentic first-hand accounts of traditional Indigenous life and beliefs.

Throughout the 1930s, Dawendine was busy as a public speaker and recitalist throughout Ontario, Quebec, and New York State, speaking to children, teachers, women's groups, university audiences, and professional organisations. Much of the time she donned traditional clothing, mimicking the performances of Johnson. Although such activity and dress brought her considerable recognition and a steady stream of bookings, Loft was not always comfortable with how she was presented and viewed. In her extensive correspondence with lifelong friend Celia B. File, Loft hints at her occasional displeasure:

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[5] "Eighty Years or More: Chief Sah-re-ho-wah-ne," *Niagara Falls Evening News*, 2 April 1938. See also Robert Stacey, Bryan Winslow Colwell, and Donald Smith, Introduction, *Iroquois Fires: The Six Nations Lyrics and Lore of Dawendine (Bernice Loft Winslow)*, by Dawendine (Bernice Loft Winslow), Poetry Series 40 (Penumbra P, 1995), pp. 11-21.

[6] Stacey, et al., pp. 15-16. See also E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (U of British Columbia P, 1986), pp. 102-09; and Peter Kulchyski, "A Considerable Unrest: F.O. Loft and the League of Indians," *Native Studies Review*, vol. 4, nos. 1-2, 1988, pp. 95-113.

[7] Edwards, "'A most Industrious and Far-Seeing Mohawk Scholar,'" pp. 83-110.

[8] David R. Miller, "Edward Ahenakew's Tutelage by Paul Wallace: Reluctant Scholarship, Inadvertent Preservation," *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, edited by Carolyn Prodruchny and Laura Peers (U of British Columbia P, 2010), pp. 249-73.

"I'm to appear in Indian dress + speak for fifteen minutes. I'm the monkey."[9] Here Loft's words echo the feelings of Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) one hundred years earlier. On his third tour of Britain in 1845, Jones grew weary of begging for monies in his efforts to fundraise for Indian schools in Canada. At one point, in a letter to his wife, Jones referred to his "odious Indian costume,"[10] mirroring his feelings that the British were interested in him, not as the civilised Christian Indigenous person he perceived himself to be, but as an exotic curiosity.

Worse, Dawendine felt that her performances sometimes drew criticism from her own people, leaving her feeling ostracised and alienated. With her strong upbringing in the languages and history of the Haudenosaunee, criticism and alienation for her efforts to educate settler and newcomer populations in Canada, as well as many of her own people, left Dawendine with some bitterness. Nonetheless, the positive reassurance she received from some of her audience members and friends kept her motivated:

> Do not think … that I am altogether unhappy. I still believe in some Indians, and many *still* need my help. Sometimes it is really a nuisance … Perhaps I believed too blindly, and needed to know where true friends were. And perhaps the malicious comment of one woman hurt "that I was selling my race" … The only thing helped was the saying of some of my people, to keep on. That those people some day would find out how erroneous they were. And letters have arrived even this week from various places I'd spoken, always saying that all their life they'd remember the picture I'd given them of the Indian … It is a curious world … Because first and fore most when I go to speak—my Indian blood stands out and is proclaimed. I am then of necessity a little bit aloof from your people [settler Canadians]. Now it is almost the same with my people. Something told me that when I first started out … I have accepted that now I'll wear the rue—with a difference.[11]

Loneliness, and a sense that she stood apart from other people, often characterised Loft's feelings regarding her active touring and speaking schedule. Her bitterness toward her audiences, whom she sometimes labelled as "dumb" or simply too easy to please, extended sometimes to some of her Indigenous contemporaries and competitors.

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[9] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 23 January 1936, box 5, file 28, Celia B. File papers, Lennox and Addington County Museum and Archives, Napanee, Ontario.
[10] Quoted in Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (U of Toronto P, 1987), p. 204.
[11] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 21 February 1937, box 5, file 28, Celia B. File papers.

Monture, who toured and spoke publicly at the same time as Loft and who was also an author, on at least one occasion shared a stage with Dawendine. While Monture did not typically dress as an "Indian" in her public performances, she always emphasised her familial descent from Mohawk leader Joseph Brant (Thayendanega). Her credentials as an expert on Haudenosaunee history were rooted in her genealogical descent and at her public appearances she was billed as a Brant descendant.[12] In June 1937, both Loft and Monture spoke to the Junior Institute Convention at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph.

One might expect that Loft and Monture would support one another, not merely as complementary entertainers, but also as Haudenosaunee women with a mutual interest in the history and lore of her people, not to mention their shared desire to educate Canadians about the achievements and continuing existence of Indigenous Peoples. But in Loft's correspondence with File, it appears that Dawendine perceived Monture as a potential threat and competitor:

> I got there shortly before and shared a dressing room with Mrs Monture. She amused me by immediately beginning a recital of all Indian successes—to tell me I was not the only pebble on the beach. Miss McDermand asked us finally to sit with her on the platform but Mrs Monture immediately refused for us. I knew it was because my Indian outfit looked so much nicer than hers. I amiably prompted her … I was nervous intensely so because of several things. Frankly speaking, I thought Mrs Monture would be wonderfully improved and I should be nowhere. But her first two verses filled me with a great amusement; she was so colourless. They were the dumbest audience too. I had to go right after Mrs Monture who got no encore, neither of us did … But immediately after Prof Buchanan's wife sought me out and I am to go to the Canadian Club at Guelph in October, so I won. I feel myself to be a flat failure, for I couldn't strike fire anywhere, really, to be honest … I saw Mrs Monture's ineffectual and rather immature attempts to join in. They were all too scared of one another to be real.[13]

Loft encountered financial difficulties throughout her time as a touring lecturer,[14] so if Monture was travelling the same circuit and cutting into Dawendine's potential profits, then

[12] Ethel Brant Monture's published works include "College for Indian Youth," *Maclean's*, 15 April 1940; *Canadian Portraits: Brant, Crowfoot, Oronhyatekha: Famous Indians* (Clarke Irwin, 1960) [republished under variant titles]; and *Indian Hall of Fame*, illustrated by Irva Coucill (Brantford: Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre, 1967). Excerpts from her work also appear in *I Am an Indian*, edited by Kent Gooderham (J.M. Dent and Sons, 1969); and in collaboration with Harvey Chalmers in *West to the Setting Sun* (Macmillan Company of Canada, 1943) and *Joseph Brant: Mohawk* (Ryerson P, 1955).

[13] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 14 June 1937, box 5, file 28, Celia B. File papers.

[14] See Cecilia Morgan, "Private Lives and Public Performances: Aboriginal Women in a Settler Society, Ontario,

Loft's bitterness toward her contemporary may be understood. Loft also had great confidence in her own knowledge, if not always in her ability to present it to an audience. She did not agree with the political strategies of Monture and felt that her own education and background left her better suited to speak for her people. In Loft's view, Monture relied too much on her genealogical relation to Joseph Brant and made too many compromises in addressing her settler audiences.

Often taking a great interest in the reaction of her audiences and drawing strength from positive reviews, Loft took pride in her ability to be frank and forthright in her approach and criticisms of settler Canadian treatment of Indigenous Peoples. As she explained to File, "I had a letter from an Indian girl on our Reserve afterward (Hazel Miller) thanking me and encouraging my work … She said it must have taken courage to speak to Brantford people as I did—I had a chip on my shoulder anyway and I knew Moses and Mrs Monture always just pat, pat, pat. Do you know I honestly believe they admired me more for being frank."[15]

The public performances of Loft and other Indigenous people like Cooke and Monture, while rooted in heartfelt desire to educate settler Canadians about the historical and contemporary achievements of Indigenous Peoples, could be misinterpreted, leaving an undesired impression. Dressing as an "Indian" allowed audiences to interpret such performances as reinforcing widely held romantic stereotypes about the "vanishing Indian." Loft's observations regarding her audience's reactions suggest that she was acutely aware of this danger. Yet, her self-representation as an "Indian Princess" continued beyond her public performances. Perhaps envisaging a time when she could market herself to an even broader audience, selling souvenirs and mementos of her performances, Loft designed a line of stationary and greeting cards which she labelled "Princess Dawendine." However, financial constraints meant that this project never got beyond the planning stages. As she reported to File, the copyright and trademark fees would set her back as much as $100—a fee she did not readily possess or have access to.[16] Nonetheless, examples of her artistic conception still exist. Subtle in presentation, they are handsome and simply designed, far less flashy and romantic than late twentieth century souvenirs drawing on an Indigenous theme. Presenting herself as an "Indian Princess," however dangerous and open to misinterpretation, was nonetheless a necessity for Dawendine. If she was to be seen and heard at all, with any hope of making a lasting impact, Loft was forced to adopt an "Indian" persona. In other words, she had to play up to the expectations and stereotypical views of her settler Canadian audiences, engaging in a form of strategic essentialism, or mimesis, in an effort to undermine those very stereotypes and influence mainstream perception.[17]

Canada, 1920s-1960s," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2003; and Morgan, "Performing for 'Imperial Eyes,'" pp. 67-89.

[15] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 4 February 1928, box 5, file 28, Celia B. File papers.

[16] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 4 February 1938, box 5, file 28, Celia B. File papers.

[17] The concept of "strategic essentialism," whereby groups essentialise themselves in a deliberate paradox to interrogate and dismantle those very same essentialist ideas, was developed by literary critic and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. See Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History*, edited by Ranajit Guha (Oxford UP, 1985), pp. 330-63. The similar concept of "mimesis," a form of resistance whereby one

Without her costume, in the era in which she was performing, Loft would have been viewed as overtly political, as an example of the positive and effective measures of assimilation policies. This was the criticism and reality that Monture faced, for example. Monture rarely dressed as an "Indian," preferring instead smart and stylish two-piece suits. In the reviews of her talks, and in Loft's criticisms of Monture, her apparent dwelling on the past achievements of Indigenous people was often overshadowed by her own appearance and physical presentation. While Monture may have made concessions to not offend her audiences (in Loft's view, at least), Dawendine prided herself on speaking frankly and directly. But the reviews of Dawendine's performances do not reflect her directness. Instead, they speak of a "lovely cultured" and "soft-voiced" Indian girl. Monture, who rarely dressed "Indian," is remembered as a blunt and straightforward defender of Indigenous achievement. Loft's self-presentation is therefore contradictory: on one hand, dressing as an "Indian Princess" assured her a wide and receptive audience who would walk away at the end of the night with something to talk about. On the other hand, her dress may have distracted audiences from listening to her actual message. Nonetheless, dressing in "Indian" costume was an act of "reverse appropriation of the stereotype," a means of playing the "trickster."[18] In the end, both Loft and Monture—who did not have a close professional or personal relationship—enjoyed modest success.

Monture's tendency to avoid performing Indian-ness was exemplified in her comments to the Centennial Commission, leading up to Expo '67 in Montreal, where she expressed great frustration over the fact that Settler Canadians had generally failed to understand the complexities of Indigenous cultures and histories. In part, she blamed such misunderstanding and ambivalence on the common representation of Indigenous people as little more than "a romantic hangover" of the past:

> Through the years we have been surveyed by an endless parade of observers. We have been simpered over as the "dear dead race" by sentimentalists who see us as a romantic hangover. Or again we break out from the printed page as wooden cigar adornments, seldom as human beings intent on holding to a country and an identity. The writer, always of another race, uses the yardstick of his own values and understanding.[19]

imperfectly imitates stereotypes about oneself to expose and undermine such stereotypes, was advocated by Luce Irigaray. See Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Cornell UP, 1985).

[18] Ruth Phillips, "Performing in the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth-Century Visual Culture," *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lydia Lee Jessup (U of Toronto P, 2001), pp. 26-49.

[19] Quoted in Myra Rutherdale and Jim Miller, "'It's Our Country': First Nations' Participation in the Indian Pavilion at Expo 67," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2006, p. 151.

In their discussion of Indigenous involvement in the planning of the Indian Pavilion at Expo '67, historians Myra Rutherdale and Jim Miller say that "In Monture's view, constructions of First Nations by outsiders too often suggested a static and passive image which did little to create understanding between Natives and Newcomers."[20] In other words, staging Indian-ness or sentimentalising Indians did little to reveal the real efforts of Indigenous people to find equality within Canada. However, in many cases, such as Dawendine and Cooke, for example, Indigenous people were directly involved in the representation and presentation of performing Indian-ness, complicating the meaning and implications of such sentimental activity.[21]

Settler/newcomer Canadians expected Indigenous performers to appear in full "Indian costume," otherwise they were considered inauthentic or too "civilized." In doing so, however, Indigenous people risked being too "Indian." As Paige Raibmon explains in her discussion of Indigenous performances at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, "This sort of double jeopardy, faced by Aboriginal peoples across the continent, resulted from non-Aboriginal society's success at casting all discussions about Aboriginal peoples along the parallel dichotomies of traditional versus modern, and authentic versus inauthentic."[22] Little changed in the half-century following the Chicago World's Fair. In 1967, Indigenous Peoples, like Dawendine and Monture, still struggled with such dichotomies, a kind of civilised/savage paradox. On one hand, settlers disapproved of so-called "savage" Indians in their midst, while on the other hand they made them a central character in museums, exhibitions, fairs, television programmes, films, and literature.[23] American historian Philip Deloria speaks to this same issue with regards to the creation of a so-called "American" identity: "Savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national Self. Coded as freedom, however, wild Indianness proved equally attractive, setting up a 'have-the-cake-and-eat-it-too' dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion."[24] Such ambiguity with regard to Indigenous Peoples existed not only in the minds of settler North Americans, but in the preconceptions and notions of non-Indigenous

[20] Rutherdale and Miller, p. 151.

[21] Several studies have tackled this topic. See Paige Raibmon, "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World's Fair," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 2, 2000, pp. 157-90; Cecilia Morgan, "'A Wigwam to Westminster': Performing Mohawk Identity in Imperial Britain, 1890s-1900s," *Gender and History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2003, pp. 319-41; Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (U of Toronto P, 2004); and Joan Sangster, "*The Beaver* as Ideology: Constructing Images of Inuit and Native Life in Post-World War II Canada," *Anthropologica*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2007, pp. 191-209.

[22] Raibmon, p. 161.

[23] See Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Great Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (Between the Lines, 1999), p. 60.

[24] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Yale UP, 1998), p. 3.

observers worldwide. Indigenous people, like Dawendine, participated in such "Indian" play as a means of "insinuating their way into Euro-American [and -Canadian] discourse,"[25] attempting to direct the image of Indigenous Peoples in useful directions. This was not, however, the approach taken by Monture, who saw such performance as counter-productive.

The individual writing of both Monture and Loft reflected the physical appearance that each constructed for their public audiences. Monture's writing was rather straightforward and historical, speaking directly to the historical achievements and modern possibilities of Indigenous Peoples. Her calls for improved Indigenous education were direct and reached rather large audiences (through *Maclean's* magazine, for example). Much of Monture's creative writing was produced in collaboration with Harvey Chalmers, such as the historical novel about Haudenosaunee life in the era of Joseph Brant entitled *West to the Setting Sun* (1943). Judging by the style and form of Monture's other writing, the creative element in *West to the Setting Sun* appears to be overwhelmingly that of Chalmers. Monture's contribution to this novel was in providing historical details that Chalmers would otherwise have been hard-pressed to uncover. As Chalmers acknowledges in the novel, "entire credit for the Indian viewpoint, reaction and philosophy in this book is due to Ethel Brant … Thanks to her manipulation the writer was privileged to meet Indians on a common footing and to see with their eyes and hear through their ears." To his credit, Chalmers acknowledges that before meeting Monture his ideas about Indigenous people were "the antithesis of reality … as sadistic, vindictive, treacherous people with a racial obsession for murder and torture."[26] In private correspondence, Chalmers was just as candid. For example, on the inside of a copy of his 1962 book *The Last Stand of the Nez Perce: Destruction of a People*, which he presented to Monture, Chalmers wrote, "To Lovely Yonodes, with gratitude for teaching me the truth about Indians."[27]

Monture's main contribution to the novel was as a guide in providing Chalmers with the historical detail to present the Haudenosaunee as human beings, as generous, good-tempered, and skilled in social relationships. Where a lot of previous fiction, written exclusively by settler authors, had worked to solidify the misconception of the "noble savage," Chalmers's novel is unique for its time in presenting Indigenous Peoples in a light much closer to reality; a contribution wholly credited to Monture. Nonetheless, reviews of *West to the Setting Sun* were not entirely positive. Although described as "vivid and exciting,"

[25] Deloria, p. 8.
[26] Chalmers, *West to the Setting Sun*, p. vi.
[27] Monture's personal copy, today housed in Special Collections, Woodland Cultural Centre Library.

Chalmers's attempt at presenting authentic Indigenous characters was not successful in the eyes of at least one critic, who observed,

> the picture of Iroquois culture is very one-sided and places extreme emphasis on Iroquois warfare. Had Mr. Chalmers spent more time with Joseph Brant's own people … his characters would neither talk or act after the fashion they do. Neither would his book contain so many erroneous characterizations and interpretations … It is a case of the book being written without sufficient attention to the living people who should serve as models and interpreters. The people of the book are still storybook Indians.[28]

This criticism indirectly is a criticism of Monture as well, who, according to Chalmers, at least, considered the novel to be "truly Indian."[29] Nonetheless, Chalmers and Monture could take some pride in the fact that at least one reviewer considered it a book worthy of teaching in public schools. The *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* recommended *West to the Setting Sun* to teachers, calling it "a competent narrative ... [offering] an entertaining introduction to an exciting episode in colonial history … [which] should be of interest to students."[30] The famous and highly respected American Seneca writer, historian, and anthropologist Arthur C. Parker considered *West to the Setting Sun* to be a positive example of fiction following in the literary tradition of James Fenimore Cooper.[31]

Working with Chalmers a decade later, Monture provided similar insight and contribution to his biography *Joseph Brant: Mohawk* (1955). Reviews of this work, however, were not entirely positive either, noting particularly Chalmers's lack of academic rigour in failing to provide proper footnoting and sources for the information he presented and that the book was less a biography of Brant than a general history of the Mohawk during his lifetime.[32] No doubt, much of this criticism relates to the information and research provided to Chalmers by Monture, who drew heavily on oral history in telling her side of the Brant story. But Chalmers's book omits acknowledging even Monture's oral sources, thus leaving the book open to criticism.

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[28] John Whitthoft, Review of *West to the Setting Sun*, by Harvey Chalmers, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 70, no. 1, January 1946, pp. 134-35.
[29] Chalmers, *West to the Setting Sun*, p. vi.
[30] "Book Notes," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1944, p. 105.
[31] Arthur C. Parker, "Sources and Range of Cooper's Indian Lore," *James Fenimore Cooper: A Re-Appraisal* (Cooperstown: New York State Historical Association, 1954), pp. 85-86.
[32] See reviews of Henry Chalmers's *Joseph Brant: Mohawk* by Milton W. Hamilton, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 80, no. 2, April 1956, p. 253; and Dwight L. Smith, *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4, October 1956, p. 588.

Dawendine's body of writing in comparison to Monture's is of remarkably different character, reflecting her more refined, if not gentle, public persona. While both women drew heavily on the poetic work of Johnson, Monture's writing shows no trace of Johnson's literary grace. Loft's writing, on the other hand, is full of comparisons and tributes to the popular poet. As a young adult, touring as a popular orator, writing was not one of Dawendine's preoccupations. As she became more familiar with the material she was presenting, Loft began to find something of her own voice in telling her people's stories. Much of what she related to her audiences had been handed down to her by her grandparents, parents, and their kin. Following the birth of her daughter in 1938, Dawendine gave up public speaking and, following the death of her father in 1943, moved permanently with her American-born husband and family to Whitman, Massachusetts. It was only at this point that Dawendine began to put pen to paper, writing "word pictures" and poems about the Six Nations. These efforts were supported by Paul Wallace, her long-time correspondent. In addition, she may have been inspired by the positive feedback she received as a public speaker. As one fan and supporter wrote in 1936, "You have a fine chance to do much for your race. I liked the little story you told. These are fine both for telling and writing."[33] In a 1967 interview, Dawendine admitted that much of her writing emerged from "nostalgia or loneliness for those whom I had left and had known for so long. I was trying to describe them because it was one way of bring [sic] back certain things."[34] But despite the attempts of Loft and the assistance of her fans and influential friends like Wallace, her writing was not published until the 1990s.

Before she ceased speaking publicly in 1938, Dawendine used her small celebrity to establish a memorial fund in honour of Johnson. The memorial fund was to be used to establish a library in Johnson's name at Ohsweken, the administrative centre of Six Nations. Although the library itself did not open until June 1969, it was Dawendine's initiative that kickstarted the project. However, as she confessed to File, Loft's motives in establishing a memorial fund for Johnson were not entirely rooted in full appreciation of the famous poet:

> I want to try and raise some sort of Memorial to Pauline Johnson—get my wedge in before others do. I believe this goal would be the one thing needed now to build me up and to make my work pay in some measure. I would announce that above expenses I would donate half of each fee at each engagement to this fund with suitable Trustees—I'd place it in a Brantford bank but make myself the head one. I think I would get a lot more engagements this way.[35]

[33] Walter Wellarve [of Grimsby, Ontario] to Bernice Loft, 29/1936, box 5, file 31 (Bernice Loft Testimonials), Celia B. File papers.
[34] Quoted in Stacey, et al., p. 20.
[35] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 4 February 1938, box 5, file 28, Celia B. File papers.

With help from the local Indian Affairs Superintendent and the Brant County Historical Society, the fund was started in February 1937 and a province-wide campaign was launched to solicit funds. The Johnson Memorial Library was envisaged on a grand scale: "it is proposed that the upper floor of the building be used exclusively for a library and the lower floor as an Indian museum. The two-story structure contemplated will be in the heart of the reserve's activity and the 3,000 Indians, Mohawks, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas, will have easy access." Ontario's Lieutenant-Governor, Albert Matthews was asked to be a patron of the campaign.[36] But by the end of August that same year, Dawendine had ceased speaking publicly and would not resume until after her husband's death in 1962.

The abrupt change of plans came about due to Loft's difficult pregnancy.[37] In an interview with the *Globe and Mail* in August 1938, Loft commented that the library fund "is growing very slowly, but the fact it is growing is some encouragement." She expressed hope that the fund could act in "providing an avenue of further education on the reservations in this Province, where educational facilities are at present very limited."[38] The cessation of Loft's speaking duties no doubt contributed to the stalled efforts of the E. Pauline Johnson Memorial Library fund. As Loft had expressed clearly to File, her motivation in establishing the memorial fund was to boost her credibility and popularity as a public speaker. With the motivation of its founder no longer acting as a guiding presence, the library and education fund simply sat in a state of limbo for several years.

Monture, on the other hand, appears to have been a woman who got things done in a quick, if not more successful, fashion, due perhaps to her wide circle of influential friends and contacts, and to the fact that Monture began her writing and speaking career after raising a family (and leaving her husband), whereas Loft was busy even before she became a wife and mother. Like Loft, Monture was considered an authority on the history and culture of the Six Nations, but her achievements seem to have had a wider reach. Her impact and influence were such that publications were dedicated in her honour (such as Aren Akweks's *The Seven Dancers*),[39] large American publishers considered her opinion of such value that they regularly sent her books to review,[40] and she was one of the founders of the Indian Hall of

[36] "Indian Poetess to be Honored: Campaign to Erect Library in Memory of Pauline Johnson Launched: Trust Fund Is Set Up," *Globe and Mail*, 23 February 1938, p. 4.
[37] Bernice Loft to Celia B. File, 1 September 1938, box 5, file 29, Celia B. File papers.
[38] "Education Fund Growing Slowly: Pauline Johnson Library Project to Aid Ontario's Indian Youth," *Globe and Mail*, 8 August 1938, p. 10.
[39] "We, the Akwesasne Mohawk Counselor Organization, dedicate this pamphlet … to our Mohawk Sister, Ethel Brant Montour [sic]." See Aren Akweks, *The Seven Dancers*, Iroquois Life History Series (Hogansburg, NY: Akwesasne Counselor Organization, St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, n.d.).
[40] Books sent to Monture, which are clearly review copies, are included in what remains of her personal library, today housed at the Woodland Cultural Centre Library. Titles include Katherine C. Turner, *Red Men Calling on the Great White Father* (U of Oklahoma P, 1951); Muriel H. Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma* (U of Oklahoma P, 1951); Hilda Faunce Wetherill, *Navajo Indian Poems* (Vantage P, 1952); *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, recorded and edited by Joseph Epes Brown (U of Oklahoma P, 1953); Ruth Murray Underhill, *Red Man's America: A History of Indians in the United States* (U of Chicago P, 1953); and George A. Trotter, *From Feather Blanket and Tepee: The Indians Fight for Equality* (Vantage P, 1955).

Fame in 1967. She was further recognised for her achievement and influence with the Centennial Medal in 1967, given to "outstanding" Canadian citizens, and was named posthumously to the Agricultural Hall of Fame for her work in founding and presiding over the women's division of the Ontario Agricultural Societies (1937-1939) and her role as a leader in Women's Institute activities.[41] Throughout the 1950s, Monture acted as an informal sounding board and advisor to Angus McGill Mowat, Inspector of Public Libraries for the province of Ontario, who in those years was focused on establishing and improving provincial library services to Indigenous Peoples in the province.[42]

Rather significantly, Monture was one of only a few Indigenous people to participate in the University of Toronto-Yale University conference on "The North American Indian Today" in September 1939. Although Monture did not give a paper at the conference, she was selected as a member of two committees that were formed as a result of the event.[43] Following this historic conference, Indigenous members of the delegation broke away from the main group of settler Canadian and American scholars, government officials, and missionaries and met separately to pass their own resolutions. Monture was a part of this rather dramatic and significant group, which claimed that they did not need government officials, missionaries, academics, or other settler sympathisers to speak for them. On an international scale, Indigenous people declared, "We hereby go on record as hoping that the need for an All Indian Conference on Indian Affairs will be felt by the Indian tribes, the delegates to such a conference be limited to bona fide Indian leaders actually living among the Indian people of the reservations and reserves … that such a conference remain free of political, anthropological, missionary, administrative, or other domination."[44]

Unfortunately, the Canadian public at large generally did not hear this strong, independent Indigenous voice. The press paid little attention to the Toronto-Yale meetings because, as historian Donald B. Smith reports, Germany had invaded Poland three days before the meetings began and two days later Britain declared war on Germany. Midway through the conference Canada declared war on Germany and the day after the meetings were completed the Soviet Union invaded Poland. As Smith rightly notes, "The general public and press were too preoccupied to hear about the poor health conditions, unemployment, and the residential school system experienced by Indians."[45]

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[41] "Ethel Brant Monture Named to Agricultural Hall of Fame," *Brantford Expositor*, 23 January 1984, p. 11.

[42] For more on Angus McGill Mowat, see Brendan F.R. Edwards, *Paper Talk: A History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada before 1960* (Scarecrow P, 2005), pp. 149-53. Correspondence between Ethel Brant Monture and Mowat can be found in the Angus McGill Mowat Collection, J.J. Talman Regional Collection, D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario.

[43] See C.T. Loram and T.F. McIlwraith, editors, *The North American Indian Today: University of Toronto-Yale University Seminar-Conference, Toronto, September 4-16, 1939* (U of Toronto P, 1943). See also R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith, *Destinies: Canadian History since Confederation*, 3rd edition (Harcourt Brace, 1996), pp. 376-77; and Donald B. Smith, "Now We Talk—You Listen," *Rotunda: The Magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1990, pp. 48-52.

[44] Quoted in Francis, et al., p. 376.

[45] Smith, "Now We Talk," p. 52.

If Monture's circle of influence was wide, her beginnings were not remarkable. The fifth of nine children born to Robert and Lydia Brant, who lived on the New Credit Reserve (known today as the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, located close to Six Nations Reserve), Ethel was a great-great grandchild of Joseph Brant, through his third wife Catherine Croghan. Described as "interested intensely in books" at a young age, her biographers claim she "could read and peel potatoes at the same time."[46] Encouraged by her father to continue reading, Monture is said to have acquired "the basis" of her knowledge in Haudenosaunee and Indigenous history and culture while attending elementary school on the Reserve. Although she attended high school in nearby Hagersville, she did not obtain her diploma or attend university. After marrying and raising two children, Monture began writing and lecturing in her late thirties. Driven by a "desire to see a history of the Indian people that had been written by an Indian person," she undertook research into the life of her great-great grandfather.[47] This work led to her collaboration with Harvey Chalmers on *West to the Setting Sun* and *Joseph Brant: Mohawk* and her own work *Famous Indians* (1960). Monture lectured at clubs, schools, and universities across Canada and the north-eastern United States, her main goal being to enlighten her audiences about the contributions made by Indigenous Peoples to the development of Western civilisation. And although she never graduated from high school, from time to time she taught home economics and history on reserves in Ontario.

At the time of Monture's induction into the Indian Hall of Fame, it is said that she wrote her own biography for the official archives. Conceived in 1967 by the Indian-Eskimo Association with help from Monture herself, the Indian Hall of Fame is housed at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford and is devoted to celebrating the lives of Indigenous people who contributed to the advancement of Indigenous society in Canada. In the biography she wrote about herself for the Hall of Fame, Monture describes herself as "one of the great living authorities on Indian Culture and History" and as "an author of several books."[48] Although she may not have been the only living expert on Indigenous culture and history in her lifetime—and had written but one book herself—her frequent speechwriting and lecturing could have filled the pages of several volumes. At the peak of her lecturing career, Monture gave ninety-four lectures in three months for the Canadian Club.[49]

[46] Cathy Porter and Daniel Moses, *Ethel Brant Monture* (Brantford: Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre, 1978), p. 1.
[47] Porter and Moses, p. 1.
[48] See "Ethel Brant Monture: Lecturer, Author, Expert on Indian Culture," *Significant Lives: Profiles of Brant County Women*, by Carol Kent, Patti McCleister, and Margaret Simpson (Brantford: University Women's Club, 1997), pp. 101-03.
[49] "Ethel Brant Monture," p. 102.

In writing her own biography, Monture well understood the power of print. For more than thirty years this biography was included in the promotional literature of the Indian Hall of Fame, thus perpetuating the identity that Monture herself created. And it was through publication and speaking combined that Monture sought to promote better relations between Indigenous and settler Canadians. Equally important, she sought to develop leadership within Indigenous communities and to dispel the persistent negative stereotypes about Indians by the settler majority. In her own words, she was a "one-woman crusade to reverse over four centuries of propaganda."[50] It was Monture's wish that the contributions of Indigenous people be known to all Canadians and that school textbooks be revised to eliminate bias and falsehood, to reflect historical reality in relation to First Nations.

Like Loft, Monture had an immense interest in and respect for Johnson. Included amongst her small collection of books and clippings housed at the Woodland Cultural Centre Library is a bulk of material relating to Johnson. At Monture's speaking engagements, Johnson was often a topic of interest.[51] That both Monture and Loft tried to ride the crest of Johnson's lingering popularity amongst settler Canadians is clear. Both women modelled themselves after Johnson and frequently recited her poetry at their public speaking engagements. However, using Johnson as a model and selling point was also dangerous, particularly for each woman's reputation on-reserve and within the Indigenous community.

To this day there is a kind of animosity toward Johnson amongst some members of the Six Nations, who consider her to be from "the other side of the river." The Six Nations of Grand River Reserve is located southeast of the city of Brantford. The city and the reserve are separated by the Grand River, but the Chiefswood mansion (the family home built by Pauline's father George Johnson), the Mohawk Chapel (the oldest Protestant church in Ontario), and what was once the Mohawk Institute (a residential school) are all located on the Brantford side of the river. Although this land is technically a part of the Six Nations Reserve, its proximity to Brantford means it is sometimes viewed with trepidation and suspicion by some members of the reserve community. Johnson's habit of playing the civilised white woman one moment and an "Indian Princess" the next for her public audiences (and in her writing) did not sit well with some Indigenous people. Johnson's early writing, in particular, usually took the stance of a civilised white woman, using possessive pronominal adjectives to distinguish between "them" (i.e. Indian) and "our" (i.e. settler Canadian). On other occasions, Johnson argued on behalf of the Haudenosaunee, but declined to identify explicitly with them.[52] Despite Johnson's now secure and celebrated place in the Canadian literary canon, her reputation amongst First Nations has never been clear-cut.

[50] Quoted in "Ethel Brant Monture," p. 103.
[51] See Ethel Brant Monture, promotional flyer, Special Collections, Woodland Cultural Centre Library.
[52] See Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahiowake* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2000), pp. 157-59.

Loft experienced the dangers in modelling herself after Johnson to a greater extent than Monture. Dawendine's efforts in establishing the Pauline Johnson Memorial Library at Ohsweken, for example, were hindered to some extent by the fact that Johnson's name was attached to the project. Original support for the Johnson Memorial Library notably came from Brantford rather than the Reserve. And when the library finally opened some thirty years after Loft's original efforts, it did not bear the name of Pauline Johnson. Nonetheless, for the settler public to take notice of Indigenous writers and performers—particularly those who were female—Johnson's persona and celebrity were unavoidable. Johnson's behaviour and approach may not have been perfect in the eyes of some, but her influence and memory amongst most settler Canadians of the first half of the twentieth century was large and overwhelmingly positive. For both Monture and Loft, Johnson was an example or model to whom they could look for inspiration. Both envisaged a time when Indigenous Peoples in Canada would be treated with respect. Because Johnson's memory, at least, was treated with apparent respect by an apparent majority of the Canadian public, her stance as a role model was natural, if not inevitable.

Loft and Monture are examples of Indigenous authors who made a concerted effort to create an intellectual space for Indigenous Peoples in early twentieth-century Canada. Daniel Coleman has shown that not only do people write books, but that books have a role in writing people. In other words, the literary project in Canada leading up to the early twentieth century had been dominated by a "romantic-nationalist idea that equated each nation with a single culture."[53] That single culture was portrayed as white and predominantly British. The literary work of early Canadian writers supported such ideas, thereby naturalising whiteness as the norm for English Canadian identity. Early Canadian fiction, poetry, drama, journalism, and political writing all served to strengthen this norm, in the process squeezing out all cultural voices that were not white and English-speaking. The writing of settler English Canadians established for the country a "fictive ethnicity," whereby Indigenous people, for one, were decidedly pushed to the margins, characterised as existing firmly in the past and denied any existence in the present or future of the country. Loft and Monture, as much as they could, attempted to discredit such assumptions, to modify and correct Canada's fictive ethnicity.

[53] Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006), p. 4.

Figure 1: Promotional brochure advertising Ethel Brant Monture as a public speaker and recitalist (Special Collections, Woodland Cultural Centre Library)

Figure 2: Bernice Loft Winslow in her Indian costume, which she wore as a recitalist and entertainer (Iroquois Fires, Penumbra Press, 1995).

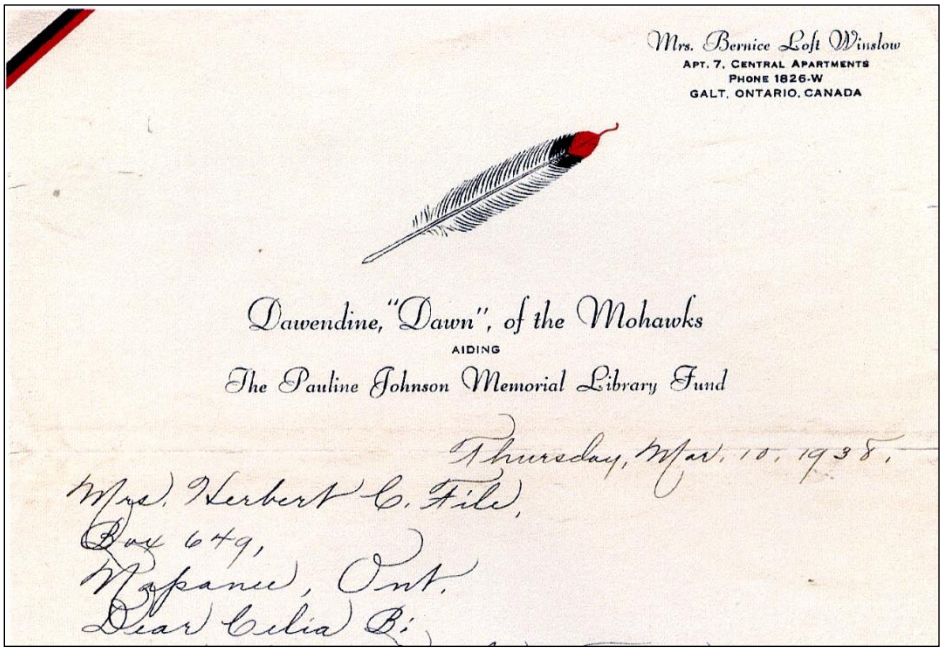

Figure 3: Letterhead designed by Bernice Loft Winslow, 1930s

(Loft Correspondence, Celia B. File fonds, Box 5, F.29, item CFC720, Lennox and Addington County Archives)

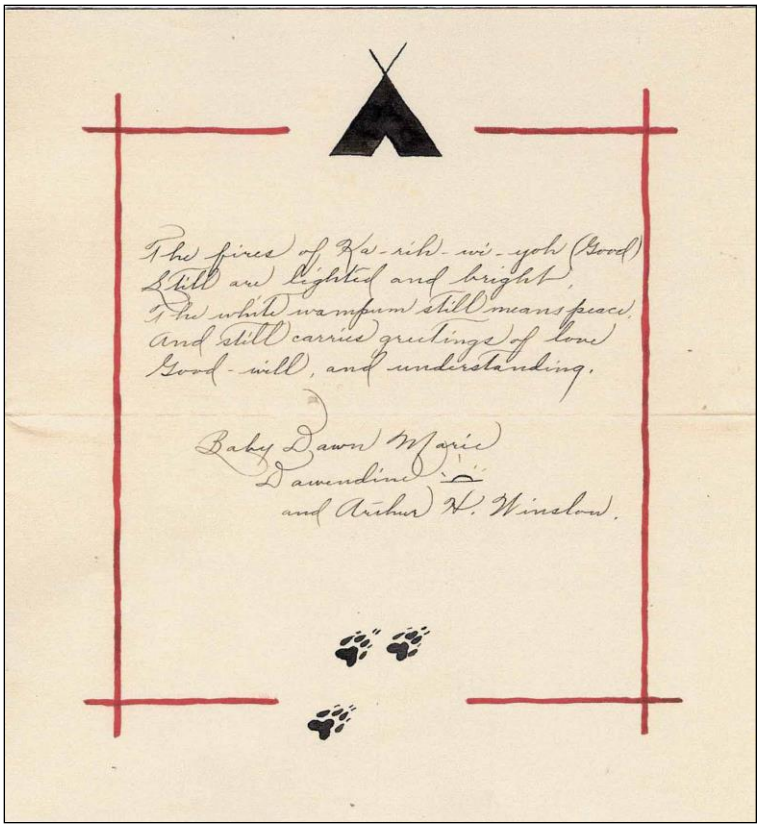

Figure 4: Greeting card designed by Bernice Loft Winslow, 1930s

(Loft Correspondence, Celia B. File fonds, Box 5, F.30, item CFC745, Lennox and Addington County Archives)

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