

and white. British Columbia “hovered dangerously at the precipice of Victorian social norms and ideals.” Demographically, First Nations people outnumbered white people and within white communities men far outnumbered women. As well, these white communities did not conform to nineteenth-century Victorian ideals of “sober, hard-working men, virtuous women, and respectable families.” Instead white men, drawn from around the globe to the gold rush in British Columbia, produced a homosocial culture where they drank, worked, and lived with other men or pursued mixed race relationships. All of this challenged prevailing notions of race and gender.

In response, according to Perry, disparate groups within British Columbia sought to create the ideal settler colony; one that was “anchored in respectable gender and racial behaviours and identities.” Reformers attempted to channel colonial masculinity towards acceptable sites of heterosociability, even going so far as to import white women and regulate mixed-race relationships through marriage or by discouraging them altogether. White women, as in other colonial contexts, were regarded as the panacea that would solve the problems presented by the rough plural culture that existed in British Columbia. Ultimately, the efforts of reformers during this period failed and British Columbia remained ‘on the edge of empire’.

Placing her work within the broader international scholarship that deals with colonialism, Perry criticizes Canadian history because it has failed to analyze settlement as part of an internal colonial project. Perry effectively argues that colonialism involved a myriad of processes, not just the physical displacement of Indigenous peoples and the settlement of Euro-Canadians. As Perry aptly writes “notions and practices of manhood and womanhood were central to the twinned business of marginalizing Aboriginal people and designing and building a white soci-

ety.” Representations of white and Aboriginal women were used to delineate and solidify boundaries between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society, thus, making categories of femininity and masculinity central to reformers’ efforts to create a white settler colony.

Moreover, Perry’s work joins the growing body of literature that interrogates the category of white as ‘normal’, recognizing that whiteness is a race like any other. The identity of Euro-Canadian settlers in British Columbia was produced through notions of whiteness. And the actions of reformers and legislators in British Columbia were intended to confirm and bolster the status and power that whiteness conferred. Although British Columbia had failed during this period to become the ideal white settler colony, this success came two decades later when non-Aboriginal settlers began to outnumber Aboriginal people and numbers of white women and men approached parity.

It is only in the last two chapters that Perry investigates the experiences of women who were forced to survive in an environment which presented few job opportunities and guaranteed financial dependence. Readers, particularly those interested in learning more about women’s history, may find it unsettling that women seemed to play such a marginal role. Partly this is because Perry makes little claim to knowing the experience of Aboriginal women through racist white male sources, but also because understanding the context in which white women came to the colony and the role they played in establishing a ‘white man’s province’ is essential to investigating claims white women made to public space at the turn of the century, particularly as such claims were made on highly racialized terrain.

## **FLINT AND FEATHER: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF E. PAULINE JOHNSON, TEKAHIONWAKE**

Charlotte Gray  
Toronto: Harper Flamingo, 2002

REVIEWED BY CLARA THOMAS

Pauline Johnson’s life was both tragedy and triumph: triumph in her indomitable pursuit of a career that was glowingly successful for many years, tragedy in the stumbling blocks that her dual inheritance inevitably put before her. On the one hand she was a proud Mohawk woman, the daughter of George Johnson, a leader among the chiefs of the Six Nations tract along the Grand River; on the other, Emily Howells Johnson, her mother, had so instilled the lessons that a Victorian lady must learn that Pauline was forever caught in the uneasy, often warring, tensions between two cultures. In this meticulously researched biography, Charlotte Gray has shown us a gifted, complex woman who might possibly have lived comfortably today but could never have been completely at home in her own time.

In 1861 when Pauline was born, Chiefswood, the home that her father had built only six years earlier, was a social centre for the Six Nations Reserve and a symbol of the easy relationship that then existed between the reserve families and the wider Canadian community. Pauline, her sister and two brothers, were, she wrote, “reared on the strictest lines of both Indian and English principles. They were taught the legends, the traditions, the culture and the etiquette of both races to which they belonged.” Strangely, in view of his pride in his heritage, George Johnson did not teach his children his native language. Inevitably theirs was a partial education in both cultures. The easy harmony of their

youth gradually gave way to increasing prejudice, instigated by the series of shameful laws that had begun with the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857. These were designed quite blatantly to absorb native peoples into the dominant white culture. They made Indians "wards of the state," who had to demonstrate their fitness for British citizenship by proving themselves debt-free and of good moral character. When in 1860 Britain transferred jurisdiction over Indian affairs to officials of British North American legislatures, native affairs were irrevocably in the hands of land-greedy settler societies.

The outcome for Indians was dire: George Johnson died a beaten man, violently attacked and gravely wounded by lawless elements among his own people. His wife and children, Pauline, her sister Eva, and brothers Beverly and Allen, had to leave the spacious house and grounds of Chiefswood and settle in a small rented house in Brantford. Eva went to work as a filing clerk in Brantford's Indian office, Allen and Beverly found positions in Hamilton and Pauline remained at home trying to satisfy herself with the occupations of a proper young lady of her time.

Charlotte Gray's most notable strength in this biography is her attention to context and her success in making it an authentic background for her subject. Her research into the times and places of Pauline's life is detailed and far-reaching, whether it be the history of the Johnson family, the social scene in Brantford, Ottawa, or London, England as Pauline knew them, or the everyday preoccupations and pastimes of young women of her time. A craze for canoeing, at which Pauline had excelled since childhood, swept North American society in her early adulthood, and about this Gray is particularly expansive. She does not give us the scholarly apparatus of footnotes, but appends instead a brief chapter by chapter record of her research. The sources listed in these brief essays constitute a remarkably

sweeping bibliography.

From an early age Pauline was an enthusiastic parlour performer. In a day when families made their own amusements it was customary for children to be drilled in "saying their piece" and Pauline thrived on the experience and the attention it brought her. It is essential to understand the importance of travelling performers in those days before movies and radio; an appreciation of that important part of the social life of the time is a necessary factor in comprehending Pauline's early enchantment with the stage and her lifelong career. She grew up into a beautiful woman and, incidentally, to her great enjoyment, an accomplished flirt, who managed to star in amateur theatricals, and take acting and dancing lessons in spite of her mother's disapproval of their frivolity. From an early age she wrote poetry and it was her highest ambition to be a recognized writer in Canada's budding literary circles. From early days also, she was very good at publicizing herself, sending out her poems indefatigably and writing letters introducing herself to various men of influence. Gradually she built up a repertoire and began to branch out beyond Brantford as an entertainer.

The year 1892 was a landmark in her career. In Toronto, at an "Evening with Canadian Authors" arranged by her friend, the influential young Liberal, Frank Yeigh, a former classmate at the Brantford Collegiate, Pauline recited "A Cry from an Indian Wife," to tumultuous applause. She had rescued the evening; practised poets, among them William Lighthall and William Wilfred Campbell, had read their work, but Pauline was the only woman. She took centre stage, beautifully dressed in pale grey silk, and passionately recited the poem about the Riel rebellion from the points of view of an Indian wife and a white mother. "At the age of thirty-one, after nearly a decade of hard work and regular, though always ill-paid publication, Pauline had finally been discovered."

It was the beginning of decades of even harder work and varying success. With partners Owen Smily and later Walter McRae, she travelled throughout the towns and cities of Canada by train, on a crushing schedule of one-night stops, performing on all manner of stages and living in primitive lodgings, presenting a programme: her own poems, skits with her partner and recitations by him. One half of the programme was given in full Indian dress; the other half in ornate evening dress. She loved the life, whether it was the heady social success of London drawing rooms and the praise of aristocrats and political grandees or the heartfelt cheers of lonely miners in makeshift settlements in the west. Her schedule throughout the years is almost incredible in the demands it made on her stamina and her talent. Sometimes her appearances took on the homespun qualities of vaudeville and sometimes she played the great lady to perfection. She and her partners were accomplished in matching their performances to the requirements of their varying audiences. Always she appeared in her dual roles, and as spokesman for her race, her poems and skits were often impassioned indictments of the dominating white culture.

She had always wanted to be ranked with the very best of Canadian poets, and some of her poems, particularly "The Song My Paddle Sings," which became familiar to every school child, placed her in that group. As time went on, however, the demands of constant travelling, of simply making a living, took their toll. She was not in a position to cultivate her writing peers as she had been in her youth. Her work suffered and so did her reputation. Her health undermined, she retired in 1908 to Vancouver, a city she had fallen in love with when it was in its raw beginnings.

There she was virtually adopted by Chief Joe Capilano, the politically astute and influential chief of the Squamish. In the canoe that he gave

her she recaptured much of the pleasure of her girlhood, exploring English Bay and Burrard Inlet. She made many other friends in Vancouver and her death from breast cancer in 1913 occasioned the sincere and moving tribute of a public funeral. She was buried at her favourite spot in Stanley Park where her memorial stands today.

Charlotte Gray has given us this present memorial, one which will stand for decades as a faithful portrait of this complex, talented, and gallant woman.

## **WOMEN, NATIONALISM AND THE ROMANTIC STAGE: THEATRE AND POLITICS IN BRITAIN, 1780-1800.**

Betsy Bolton  
Cambridge: Cambridge University  
Press, 2001

## **WOMEN IN BRITISH ROMANTIC THEATRE**

Catherine Burroughs, Ed.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University  
Press, 2000

### **REVIEWED BY KYM BIRD**

Beginning almost fifteen years ago with Jacqueline Pearson's *The Prostituted Muse* (1988), women's drama and theatrical activity in England during the romantic period has flowered into a variegated field of study. Such works as Sandra Richard's *The Rise of the English Actress* (1993), Ellen Donkin's *Getting into the Act* (1995), Catherine Burrough's *Closet Stages* (1997), and Judith Pascoe's *Romantic Theatricality* (1997) have constructed a canon of women writers, generic propensities, and dominant political conditions

that revise the literary/dramatic history of this field. Two new books have joined the conversation: *Women in British Romantic Theatre*, and *Women, Nationalism and the Romantic Stage*. Each, in its own way, questions central precepts underpinning romanticism, including conventional periodization, genres, and definitions of drama, theatre, and performance. Each argues that women's relationship to dramatic/theatrical activity, whether as actress, playwright, critic, or manager, expresses ideological ambivalence: at once subversive and emancipatory and at the same time reaffirming patriarchy and the status quo.

*Women in British Romantic Theatre* is a rich compendium of essays that expand the conventional parameters of theatrical studies and elaborate the nature of women's conflicted relationship to the art and business of theatre. Jeffrey Cox considers the social and cultural power held by playwright Joanna Baillie, actress Sarah Siddons, but also Anna Margareta Larpent, wife of the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays between 1778 and 1824. He asserts that, while the individual gender politics of these women was liberatory, it was "most often exercised . . . in support of a conservative ideology." Greg Kuich reflects upon the reviewing industry and what he calls the "conflicting postures of welcome, containment, and threatened resistance" that distinguished its response to the work of women dramatists like Baillie, Hannah Cowley, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Robinson, and Jane West. Katherine Newey discusses how the construction of dominant discourses of national identity and the nation state are formed in the historical tragedies of Hannah More, Ann Yearsley, Frances Burney, and Mary Mitford, a subject that is refocused in Jeanne Moskal's chapter on Marianna Starke's *The Sword of Peace*. Susan Bennet argues that Baillie's dramas reconstitute the genre of closet drama and examines the ways in which they were "deeply

invested in matters of public performance." Marvin Carlson interprets Inchbald's biographical-critical prefaces, concluding that in the act of critical writing she "dared to enter a domain traditionally reserved for men," though she buttressed her authority by confining her critiques largely to moral concerns associated with women. Thomas Crochunis explicates what he calls the "performance of authorship" in Inchbald and Baillie and how this performance was conditioned by gender. Jane Moody looks at how translations of plays by Inchbald and Anne Plumptre dramatize female identity, exploring in particular "the constraints and liberties of female authorship in translation." Three essays specifically examine the construction of gender in individual plays: Marjean Puritan is attentive to the means by which Baillie's *The Tryal* challenges gender roles while participating in a social system that commodifies women as objects of marriage; Jane Scott's collectively written essay on the production of "Camilla the Amazon" reveals how the play "reinforces and disrupts conventions articulated in her female characters." Julie A. Carlson analyzes plays on remorse by Baillie and Inchbald and "their efforts to reform love and female beauty in the theatre."

*Women, Nationalism and the Romantic Stage* focuses its polemic on the "interrelation among genre, gender, and anxiety. The first chapter introduces the authors and their political and intellectual environment, the changing critical fashions with respect to didactic fiction, and the methodologies and terminology for the study. The subsequent chapters explore the authors' experiments with the novel form until ultimate abandonment of it in favour of nonfictional moral and religious writings, which most had previously pursued together with fiction, as well as conduct literature and philanthropic activities.

In the introductory history and historical context. She also gives signifi-