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# POSTCOLONIAL TRAGEDY IN THE CROWSNEST PASS

TWO REARVIEW REFLECTIONS BY SHARON POLLOCK  
AND JOHN MURRELL

ANNE NOTHOF

In two very different versions of a story of rum-running along the British Columbia-Alberta border in the Crowsnest Pass in the early 1920s, Sharon Pollock and John Murrell replay history as tragedy. Murrell's libretto for the opera *Filumena* captures the passion and pathos of the exceptional true-life story of Filumena, who at the age of twenty-two was the last woman to be hanged for murder in Canada. In the context of an Italian community compromised by bigotry and ambition, Filumena is rehabilitated and written back into history as a woman who

resists a transplanted patriarchal authority. Pollock's play *Whiskey Six Cadenza* dramatizes the story as the consequence of personal choices complicated by socio-political forces: the doomed heroine is the evitable casualty of misguided loyalty to a powerful patriarch. Both works also engage in an interrogation of the conflict between colonial power structures and individual resistance within an immigrant community and "dramatically emphasize the contradictions of how the personal can be implicated in the way we negotiate traditions, customs, and belief."<sup>1</sup>

Sharon Pollock and John Murrell both believe in the importance of retelling history to those who have inherited its consequences. Murrell focuses primarily on the roles of women: Sarah Bernhardt in *Memoir*, Eleonora Duse and Isadora Duncan in *October*, Georgia O'Keefe in *The Far Away Nearby*, and the supporting roles played by five Canadian women in Calgary during World War II in *Waiting for the Parade*. In a 1994 interview he accounts for the importance of replaying the past:

In every action and every response that we have, if we develop memory as a strong

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organ, we can bring all of our past and all of the past of all of our people, back to the race virtually, forward with us into every instant of life. We can bring all of the wisdom, passion, and perception of beauty that we've ever had (and even that our forebears had) forward into each instant of our lives, or at least we can get closer and closer to doing that, and that is what human evolution is about.<sup>2</sup>

- For Pollock an interrogation of history is a necessary process of self-awareness and understanding—both on a national and a personal level. As in her earlier plays, in *Whiskey Six Cadenza* she probes the postcolonial “nation-building” narratives to dramatize the neo-imperialisms they conceal: the federal government’s decision to starve Sitting Bull’s people out of Canada in *Walsh*, the British Columbia government’s attempt to prevent the immigration of British citizens “of color” from the Punjab in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, and the imposition of a reconfigured colonial authority by the Loyalists in *Fair Liberty’s Call*. Pollock’s critical historiography is postcolonial: “an ongoing reassessment of the past that facilitates a perception of the present and the future.”<sup>3</sup> As Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins point out in their text *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, postcolonial histories “attempt to tell the other sides of a story and to accommodate not only the key events experienced by a community (or individual) but also the cultural context through which these events are interpreted and recorded” (107). Local histories can be reconstituted from old or new perspectives with a new balance of power once “a context for the articulation of counter-discursive versions of the past” (110) is established.

#### WHISKEY SIX CADENZA: PERFORMING REVISIONIST HISTORY AS POSTCOLONIAL TRAGEDY

In *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, first produced in 1983 by Theatre Calgary, Sharon Pollock creates from a melodramatic popular history a

tragic love triangle: a young woman’s loyalty and affection are torn between an Italian patriarch who defies British colonial constraints to build a prosperous community from a degraded coal town and a young outsider whose loyalties to family and lover are also conflicted. However, the focus of Pollock’s play is not primarily on the woman who was hanged, but on the flamboyant rumrunner Emilio Picariello. She freely adapts the details from the past to show the ways in which opposition to colonial authority enacted by one charismatic individual who attempts to empower a community of impoverished immigrants can result in tragedy. In effect, she employs a strategy of revisionist history, which is to reclaim subversive figures as heroes, as has been the case with Louis Riel in plays by John Coulter and in an opera with libretto by Mavor Moore, and similarly with the Donnelly family in plays by James Reaney. As Gilbert and Tompkins posit, “the leader of a rebellion against colonial forces or someone generally historicised as villainous is often reconstructed in post-colonial theatre to play a highly prominent role in the struggle for freedom from imperial rule” (116).

Indeed, the historical events performed in *Whiskey Six Cadenza* and *Filumena* have many angles and ironies.<sup>4</sup> And they have been interpreted many ways by many writers: as folklore in Frank W. Anderson’s *The Rum Runners*, first published in 1968 by Frontier Unlimited, Calgary, and most recently by Lone Pine in Edmonton in 1991 and 2004; as melodrama in *The Bootlegger’s Bride* by Jock Carpenter, published in 1993; as popular culture in *Scoundrels and Scallywags* by Brian Brennan in 2002, and as a feminist epistemological inquiry in “Driving Towards Death” by Aritha van Herk in a collection entitled *Great Dames*, published in 1997. Van Herk develops a personal identification with *Filumena*: based on the fact that *Filumena* drove the *Whiskey Sixes* that carried the rum, she constructs an image of a woman who loved to drive fast cars and defy authority—“before Bonnie and Clyde, before Thelma and Louise.”<sup>5</sup> As Elspeth Cameron and Janice Dickin, the editors of *Great Dames*, point out

in their introduction, Aritha van Herk "knows from the documentation 'what happened,' but she refuses to accept this as 'truth,' making it clear that, for her, her own impressions of her subject must be consciously written into the story" (13).

The colorful lives of the protagonists invite imaginative reconstruction. At the age of twenty-five, Emilio Picariello immigrated to Canada via the United States from southern Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. With his wife he moved to Fernie, British Columbia, in 1911, where he successfully operated a confectionary, cigar business, and an ice cream company. He was ambitious and charming, a large and generous man who distributed food to miners' families during strikes. And he knew how to prosper in difficult times, establishing a legal liquor business in 1914 and an illegal one after 1915 when Prohibition legislation was enacted in Alberta. Because he collected used bottles that he sold to the Alberta government, he became known as Emperor Pic, the "bottle king." He moved to Blairmore in the Crowsnest Pass where he purchased a hotel, and in 1921 he was elected to the town council. Emilio sold 2 ½ percent temperance beer but also ran liquor across the border through the Crowsnest Pass from British Columbia into Alberta in large, fast McLaughlin cars dubbed "Whiskey Sixes."

Filumena's family immigrated to British Columbia from Italy, and her life was circumscribed by social and religious strictures in her new home, as in her old. At the age of fourteen she was married to Carlo Lassandro, a man ten years her senior. "Custom, poverty, xenophobia and large families often necessitated that the oldest girls in the family were literally treated as chattel. It was not uncommon for a young girl to be won or lost in a card game."<sup>6</sup> In 1917 Carlo and Filumena Lassandro moved to Blairmore and lived in rooms on the second floor of the Alberta Hotel. Carlo worked for Emilio, assisting in the transportation of illegal alcohol with Emilio's son, Steve. Filumena helped with the housekeeping and the care of Emilio's children. She was also persuaded by Emilio to accom-

pany Steve on trips into British Columbia, since the police would be unlikely to suspect a young couple out for a car ride. Whether or not a relationship developed between the pair is conjectural, as is the nature of the relationship between Filumena and Emilio, but both relationships provided ample material for the press when Emilio and Filumena were accused of shooting Constable Stephen Oldacres Lawson at his home, where they had gone to ascertain the fate of the missing Steve. During the trial, Emilio tried to persuade Filumena to take the blame, as he believed that a woman would not be hanged in Canada. The trial became a focal point for regional and political issues: in a letter to Comptroller Perry of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a citizen of Alberta argued for the acquittal of Filumena, using an argument that Sharon Pollock advances in *Walsh* fifty years later—the distance between the West and Ottawa, and the inevitable miscommunications and misunderstandings:

Of course it is a long distance from Alberta to Ottawa and reports have a tendency to be very worn and distorted, if not utterly lacking in the true perspective, upon the journey, hence the handicap upon a headquarters far removed from its advanced lines, unless its information is all inclusive and absolutely reliable.<sup>7</sup>

Other sympathizers argued that because both Emilio and Filumena were Catholic and Italian, the majority British Protestant population was against them, particularly since the murdered constable was British and a war veteran. And indeed, there were six Masons in the jury. The Canadian press reported that Filumena displayed the greatest fortitude before her execution and continued to protest her innocence. She was executed at the Fort Saskatchewan penitentiary near Edmonton in 1923. Emilio Picariello was also hanged, also protesting his innocence.

Sharon Pollock first encountered the story in a tourist pamphlet and then "read bits and pieces of the popular history and some legal



FIG. 1. Mrs. Florence Lassandro (or Filumena Losandro). Courtesy of Glenbow Archives NA-1234-5, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta.

accounts, and a lot about prohibition.”<sup>8</sup> But it was “Pic” who caught her attention rather than “the last woman hanged etc.”:

I read a little bit somewhere or other that mentioned this prohibition figure loved by all who gave Xmas parties for the miners’ children and the same folk all turned against him with the trial. Prohibition was of interest to me—how a couple of prohibition police and a few horses enforced prohibition in the beginning and as rum-running flourished, the police force became increasingly well-armed and militant, increasing in numbers, with machine guns, and motorcycles. In a way I saw a parallel with pot and the attempts to police and prohibit that drug. Something about a relatively harmless activity getting outlawed and how it caused a dramatic increase in the state’s policing and surveillance power.<sup>9</sup>

From this consideration of the ways in which legal authority and power were exercised to enforce a dubious law, she moved toward an examination of state directives against individual choice “and how eventually that leads (in Mr. Big’s case) to justifying or making choices that serve him but destroy another (his relationship with Leah).”<sup>10</sup> She also read a lot about mining in that part of the country—“horrible stories of the lives of miners and their families.”<sup>11</sup> She recasts Emperor Pic as Mr. Big, whose business provides an alternative,

more lucrative option to the mines that have taken so many lives; his defiance of authority is performed as an expression of freedom, which empowers a community. Pollock also changes the name of Filumena to Leah, perhaps to focus attention away from the sensationalistic hanging and toward the intricate intersections of the personal and political that are engaged in the history. There may also be an ironic biblical allusion to the patriarch Jacob’s unloved first wife, Leah, who was placed with her children at the front of the line in Jacob’s war against Esau.<sup>12</sup> *Whiskey Six Cadenza* is a complex play that builds on its sources to “free the story from the past in order to make it a present-day experience for the audience.”<sup>13</sup>

Like the opera *Filumena*, *Whiskey Six Cadenza* is set against the backdrop of the mountains of the Crowsnest Pass. Blairmore is envisioned in the stage directions as a ghost town emerging from the past:

*Nestled in the crook of the landscape [is] the smudgy and vague outline of a small, distant town that might-have-been. . . . In the Alberta Hotel, a chair is knocked over. Images and figures often appear fractured, refracted, fragmented. Behind the town, surrounding it, is the gossamer depiction of the rolling hills, the misty mountains, but seen from a different perspective—from what was once the main street of Blairmore. The landscape extends into the infinite, giving an impression of viewing eternity through a glass, a telescope, a microscope, a kaleidoscope.*<sup>14</sup>

The events of the play are relived as a memory from the point of view of Johnny Farley, the youngest son of a miner. He imagines what has happened from the time he reluctantly returned home from the East where he could not find work, reassembling the fragments in order to make sense of the past. In effect, the structure of the play mimics the project of postcolonial history. His mother, a temperance advocate, struggles to keep him from working in the coal mines, which killed two of his brothers and is destroying his father’s

lungs. But she also tries to keep him from the only alternative occupation—the rum-running operation of hotel owner Mr. Big. She is allied with Sergeant William Windsor, aka “Bill the Brit,” a member of the Alberta Prohibition police, who shadows and threatens Mr. Big. As envisioned by Mr. Big, the sergeant is a symbol of British imperialist domination and control:

Sur-rounded by shadow—and imprinted on him comin’ was the western hemisphere, and on him goin’ the eastern! . . . If you split him down the middle, you’d have a map of the world—predominantly covered in red . . . The Empiah! (248)

[He stands] lone against the sky preserving the prairies and British civilization from the inroads of barbarism! (251)

Pollock’s law enforcer is a dramatic revision of the murder victim portrayed in the popular histories: he is a sinister presence in the town, growing increasingly threatening as his attempts to shut down the liquor smuggling are thwarted, and he resorts to intimidation, beatings, and bribes. His vendetta against Mr. Big is a personal one, but it also demonstrates the escalating potential for tragic and violent consequences of policing “an unjust and damnable law” (252).

The conflict in the play is more in terms of prohibition and freedom than along cultural lines. Pollock does not exploit the ethnic makeup of Blairmore or the divisions between the Italians and the British within the community in *Whiskey Six Cadenza*. The reference to the “bohunk” girlfriend of Johnny’s last remaining brother, Will, is easily deflected to “blonde” (237), and the conversion of her name from “Polly Yakimchuck” to “Dolly Danielle” is accounted for by her trip to Toronto. The social conflict is played out in terms of the miners’ and rumrunners’ resistance to colonial authority. “Mr. Big” has chosen his pseudonym for himself—as an obvious indicator of his large ambitions and dreams. His image of himself is as a “colossus . . . bestrid[ing his] world” (289).



FIG. 2. *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, University of Alberta Studio Theatre production, Edmonton, Alberta, 1985; Wally McSween as Mr. Big, Lee Royce as Mama George, and Rebecca Starr as Leah. Courtesy of “Whiskey Six,” 1985, 90-80-148, Studio Theatre Fonds, University of Alberta Archives.

But as his wife, Mama George, obliquely mentions, his real name may or may not be “Mr. George,” which has British associations. When asked by Bill the Brit what “mongrel race” he originated from, he responds “Canadian, sir” (252). Pollock plays against the stereotyping of popular culture to create a complex, contradictory character who has “mastered the art a seein’ the multiple realities a the universe, and more than that. [He] has embraced them, though they be conflicting but equally true” (289)—a postmodernist vision that fragments closed systems and invites inclusivity. His voice also has a regional tone of western independence and pride:

And this tiny town will feed and fatten on the efforts a citizens such as ourselves to achieve one day a state a such metropolity it’ll make

Tronna no more than a cow pie, and its environs nothin' but road apples! (261)

His "chosen" daughter Leah has no history; she is a foundling, and the casualty of his misguided patriarchal impulse. Mr. Big has taken her away from a life of destitution and hopelessness and created an independent-minded young woman. She experiences the sexually exploitative consequences of his patronage, but she also finally makes her own choices: she chooses to accept Johnny's love, and then she chooses death when she realizes that this love can never be realized. Pollock's *Filumena* is not hanged as a murderer; she is shot by a patriarchal figure she has rejected, when she implores Mr. Big to "make it right" (329). In a final ironic subversion of the *Filumena* story, Mr. Big kills his dreams and hopes for the future by murdering the woman who embodied them.

As this domestic tragedy is played out, Johnny breaks through a police barricade with the Whiskey Six full of illegal liquor, and makes his escape. In the final scene, an older Johnny listens to the chorus of voices from the past, which fade into the sound of the wind in the foothills. He concludes that what he recalls "may all have been lies, but that still doesn't mean it weren't true" (330). Through the kaleidoscopic images of the past, history is recreated as a performance that speaks to the present.

Pollock's *Whiskey Six Cadenza* is also an operatic extemporization, as the title suggests, with spoken solos and duets, and a chorus of townspeople. And in fact, she did originally intend that the play be a musical. The dialogue is sometimes overlaid with music, which acts in counterpoint to the words; for example, Mrs. Farley sings a temperance hymn as Johnny and his father comment on her "Christian" obsessions. Or the music may underscore a mood; for example, the sound of the town's marching band announces the arrival of Mr. Big's cronies who have come to escort Johnny and his father, Cec, to the Alberta Hotel. Like a tragic opera, the play has a strong emotional impact.

#### FILUMENA: PERFORMING A LOVE STORY AS FEMINIST TRAGEDY

Although John Murrell had been intrigued for a decade by the possibilities of the story he discovered in *The Rum Runners*, he could not make it work as a play. He believes that opera is a more appropriate form to convey a love story that is "highly coloured, richly textured, which [has] both . . . subtlety and the passion. . . . Music alone or words alone cannot impart the infinite subtlety of the human mind, in the very same instant when our hearts are expanding to contain eternal passions."<sup>15</sup> Composer John Estacio, the son of Portuguese immigrants, wanted an opera based on a Canadian immigrant story, preferably with a regional resonance. And he wanted to make sure "that there was some soap in this opera"—a strong emotional expression of fraught lives and loves.<sup>16</sup>

Murrell's opera, which premiered in Calgary in January 2003, constructs *Filumena* as a tragic heroine. Murrell reclaims a woman's history and casts his protagonist as a woman who comes to realize her potential as a strong, independent individual, making her own choices and freeing herself from cultural and personal constraints. His libretto also sets the personal tragedy in a social arena, in which bigotry plays a prominent role. *Filumena*'s fate is conditioned by local and national prejudice and intolerance, which surface in the conflict between Italian immigrants and the Anglo population in the coal-mining town of Blairmore. This community is under the generous and benevolent rule of Emilio Picariello, into whose orbit the naïve young wife, *Filumena*, is drawn.

The opera begins with her wedding celebration and a vibrant Italian tarantella. Her father hands her over to her older husband with the admonition:

To this husband that I found you!  
Always cherish and obey him!  
Never mock him or betray him!  
Always honour and respect him!  
Never scold him or neglect him!<sup>17</sup>





FIG. 3. Filumena: *Storm Aria*, *The Banff Centre for the Arts* production, 2003. Laura Whalen as Filumena. Photo by Donald Lee, courtesy of The Banff Centre.

A chorus of wedding guests echoes these words in Italian. Filumena is firmly placed within the strictures of a traditional Italian community, transplanted to Canada. However, already she is beginning to resist this role, and moves away from the other women to stare at the overcast sky and mountains, gesturing toward her freedom and foreshadowing its termination in death. Murrell resists casting Filumena wholly as a victim. He discovers in the character “a dreamer, capable of enchantment and also of enchanting, a person capable of extraordinary happiness, someone who dreams of improving her lot in life. Someone attuned to the majestic power of the landscape.”<sup>18</sup> The line “We will not live like this forever” recurs in the opera. As Murrell has explained, “That’s the dream that raises them above the everyday struggle.

It’s in all my work, whether the characters are Prairie prostitutes or great artists, creative dissatisfaction with their worlds.”<sup>19</sup>

Her husband, Charlie, also attempts to control her by renaming her “Florence”—an English name that denies her culture and selfhood—and by insisting that she speak only English. She resists his authority and promises her mother that she will always keep her own name in her heart. The opera traces her awakening to love and hope for a new life in a new land through her relationship with Emilio’s son and through her growing independence and confidence. But she is also seduced by Emilio’s promise that they will all lead a good clean life once they have enough money to fulfill their dreams:

In our old country, we knew sadness and fear:

Scratching in the dirt to find our future,  
Making other people rich and respectable—  
But we’re going to change all that over here!  
Filumena . . . Filumena . . .

I don’t want you to be sad, or live in fear.

All the dreams you ever had can come true  
over here . . .

We will not live like this forever,  
Hiding from the light, keeping out of sight,  
Dodging from the Police, hiding from the  
law—

Once we can afford to buy some respect,  
We’ll lead the cleanest life you ever saw!  
(*Filumena*, 17)

He encourages her reading and even suggests to his wife, Maria, that he will send her to school. Like Leah in Pollock’s *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, she is his protégé and hope for the future, but in the end she is sacrificed to his business ambitions. He persuades her to accompany his son Steve as a decoy on the rum-running trips. Ironically, it is while on these trips that their relationship develops into a love affair, and her jealous husband, Charlie, informs on the rum-runners to Constable Lawson.

Filumena’s role in the murder of Constable Lawson at his home and in the presence of





FIG. 4. *Filumena*: *Filumena and Steve*, *The Banff Centre for the Arts* production, 2003. Laura Whalen as *Filumena*, David Pomeroy as *Steve*. Photo by Donald Lee, courtesy of The Banff Centre.

his family is performed as accidental. But the response of the Anglo public is a virulent denunciation of Italian immigrants:

Since they came here, the streets aren't safe!  
They spit on both law and order!  
Send them back home, that's what I say!  
Or, at least, south of the border!  
(*Filumena*, 55-56)

The Italian community responds by calling the English hypocrites and liars. As does Sharon Pollock in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Murrell tracks Canada's fraught and occluded history of multicultural dysfunction in this opera.

Emilio attempts to shift the blame to Filumena, and even Steve tries to persuade her to accept the responsibility and save his father, but Filumena insists on telling her own truth, and faces her death with courage.<sup>20</sup> Murrell describes Filumena as "a bit of an outsider." Like Picariello she had a dream that was larger

than herself: they both wanted more than the circumstances that life offered them. And this paralleling of the two characters is evident in the last scene, as both express their thoughts before the morning's execution. Picariello agonizes over the injustice of the verdict and laments that he will no longer be a part of the community he has labored to build. He prays that his name and his dream will not be forgotten. Filumena admits her mistakes and her involvement with Picariello. She thought they shared a dream, but all they shared was their mistakes, and now, their dying. When she sees God's face, she will ask him "What is true?" (*Filumena*, 67)—much the same question asked by Johnny at the conclusion of *Whiskey Six Cadenza*. Her final aria, "I love a storm," expresses her irrepressible love of the freedom she finds in the storms that rush over the mountains:

There will be a storm tonight . . . I loved a storm!  
When there was nowhere safe in sight . . .  
and nowhere warm!  
I could have run to somewhere safe, free  
from all harm—  
But I loved a storm!

A storm to lift the heart,  
A storm that's just for me.  
Come, storm, and let me fly.  
Come, death, and set me free.  
(*Filumena*, 68)

In opera, perhaps of musical necessity, emotions are writ large, but in *Filumena* the moral and cultural complexities are also invoked through the use of both Italian and English in the libretto, and the eclectic, culturally evocative music, which references the Italian operatic tradition, popular Italian tunes, Scottish hymns, and a neo-romantic evocation of the expansive landscape of the Canadian Rockies.

In their performances of Canadian history, Sharon Pollock and John Murrell evoke memory and desire to inform the present, and to show the many sides of one subject. For



FIG. 5. Filumena: *Full Chorus*, The Banff Centre for the Arts production, 2003. Photo by Donald Lee, courtesy of The Banff Centre.

both playwrights neither history nor theatre is ever simply neutral documentary. They imaginatively interpret historical facts to express a postcolonial vision of individual freedom.

#### NOTES

1. Anthony Kiendl, program note for "Reading History Backwards," an art installation by Gisele Amantes, Banff Centre, August 2003.

2. John Murrell, interview with Linda Hall, "Remembrance of Things Past and Present," *Canadian Theatre Review* 79/80 (Summer/Fall 1994): 122.

3. Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 106. Further citations to this work are given in parentheses in the text.

4. Alberta author Peter Oliva has reconstructed the tragic story of Italian coal-mining families in the Crowsnest Pass in his novel *Drowning in Darkness*.

5. Aritha Van Herk, "Driving Towards Death," in *Great Dames*, ed. Elspeth Cameron and Janice Dickin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

1997), 55. Further citations to this work are given in parentheses in the text.

6. Nancy Tousley, "Tracing a History: Gisele Amantea," *Canadian Art* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 62.

7. This letter, dated December 9, 1922, was excerpted and mounted as part of the installation entitled "The King v. Picariello and Lassandro" at the Banff Centre, August 2004, by visual artist Gisele Amantes. This installation interrogates the way history is "read" by exploring the role of subjective impressions, assumptions, and stereotypes in historical narratives in terms of the Filumena story, framing newspaper coverage of the trial, the responses of the Italian community, and archival photographs of the protagonists as another form of interactive performance. Amantes complicates the story by placing it in a context of a popular culture, showing how it affects the construction of memory and identity, creating myths through Italian gangster movies or romance novels like Jock Carpenter's *The Bootlegger's Bride*, a 1993 reconstruction of the Filumena story. Amantes believes that you can't talk about Italians in the 1920s "without looking at all these things that have already been made" (quoted in Tousley, "Tracing a History," 62).

8. Sharon Pollock, e-mail to Anne Nothof, September 28, 2005.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Genesis 29:15-30.

13. On this point, I differ with Diane Bessai's interpretation in her essay "Sharon Pollock's Women: A Study in Dramatic Process," in *Sharon Pollock: Essays on Her Works*, ed. Anne Nothof (Toronto: Guernica, 2000), 59. Indeed, Pollock's philosophy of history is in accord with historian R. G. Collingwood's views: "Finally, since the past in itself is nothing, the knowledge of the past in itself is not, and cannot be, the historian's goal. His goal, as the goal of a thinking being, is the knowledge of the present . . . and how it came to be what it is" (R. G. Collingwood, "The Philosophy of History," in *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. William Debbins [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966], 139).

14. Sharon Pollock, "Whiskey Six Cadenza," in *Blood Relations and Other Plays*, ed. Anne F. Nothof (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2002), 229. Further citations to this work are given in parentheses in the text.

15. John Murrell, program note for *Filumena*, Eric Harvie Theatre, Banff Centre Summer Arts Festival, August 6, 8, and 10, 2003, 3.

16. John Estacio, quoted in Brian Bergman, "The Bootlegger and His Moll," *Maclean's*, January 27, 2003, <http://0-web1.infortrac.galegroup.com.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca> (accessed February 13, 2004).

17. John Murrell, *Filumena*, unpublished manuscript, Calgary Opera Draft, December 2002, revised July 2003, 1-2. Further citations to this work are given in parentheses in the text.

18. Liz Nichols, *Edmonton Journal*, January 30, 2003, C2.

19. Ibid.

20. Ironically, *Filumena's* sentence may also have been a consequence of Emily Murphy's letter to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, in which she argued that in the interests of gender equality, women murderers should be hung as well as men: "I protest against the pernicious doctrine that, because a person who commits a murder is a woman, that person should escape from capital punishment. As women, we claim the privilege of citizenship for our sex, and we accordingly are prepared to take upon ourselves the weight of these penalties as well" (quoted from Bill Rankin, "Execution expediated [sic] by changing social barometer and racism," *Edmonton Journal*, November 25, 2005, G5). Emily Murphy was the first female magistrate in the British Empire, and in 1929 successfully argued that women should be designated as "persons" under the law.