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WHITES SINGING RED FACE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA IN THE 1950S

In 1954, two *red faced* operas were created in British Columbia by white women: Barbara Pentland's *The Lake* imagines the Okanagan from the point of view of Susan Alison, the first white women settler in the region while Lillian Estabrooks and Mary Costley's *Ashnola: A Legend of Sings Water* offers a Gilbert and Sullivan cross-dressed version of pre-European contact Aboriginals. This article analyzes these operas and other 1950s texts like newspaper articles and populist histories of British Columbia to demonstrate how invader settlers seek to control the Other semiotically via *red face* and thus gain a sense of identity that ameliorates their settler status to make them "native." *Red face* in these operas betray an imperial sense of melancholy as white women use it to trouble patriarchy while enforcing white privilege. The paper concludes by considering the persistence of neo-colonial *red face* in the Canadian national imaginary.

En 1954, deux opéras peau-rouge ont été créés en Colombie-Britannique par deux femmes blanches. Le premier, The Lake de Barbara Pentland, imagine l'Okanagan du point de vue de Susan Alison, la première pionnière blanche à s'établir dans la région, tandis que la pièce Ashnola: A Legend of Sings Water de Lillian Estabrooks et Mary Costley propose une version travestie, à la Gilbert et Sullivan, d'Autochtones d'avant la colonisation. Cet article analyse ces opéras, ainsi que d'autres textes des années 1950, tels que des articles de journaux et des histoires populistes de la Colombie-Britannique, pour montrer comment les envahisseurs ont cherché à sémantiquement contrôler l'Autre à l'aide d'opéras peau-rouge et d'acquérir ainsi un sentiment d'identité qui rehausse leur statut de pionniers pour en faire des « natifs » de la région. Le recours au peau-rouge dans ces opéras trahit un sentiment impérial de mélancolie alors que les femmes blanches s'en servaient pour troubler le patriarcat tout en consolidant le privilège des Blancs. L'article conclut à la persistance du peau-rouge néocolonial dans l'imaginaire national du Canada.



Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite* [. . .]. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by indeterminacy; mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. (Bhabha 1092)

In British Columbia in the 1950s, two operas, reflecting hegemonic white privilege, mimic romantic notions of pre-European contact and early European contact First Nations as a way of constructing a “pioneer” [*sic*] theatre that implicitly disavows contemporary First Nations peoples in favour of pliable romantic “historical natives” that “invader-settlers” (Brydon)¹ can speak for and perform. Barbara Pentland’s² *The Lake* (1954)



The Cast of Ashnola⁴

**Mary Costley & Lillian Estabrooks (Soroptomist) Collection
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and Lillian Estabrooks and Mary Costley's *Ashnola: A Legend of Ashnola's Singing Water* (1954) ambivalently perform and mimic the Other as a way of constructing for invader-settlers a settled "native" identity that is neither British nor American, but Canadian where Canadian, in the British Columbian context, is coded as a form of white Anglo privilege.³ The following explores how these operas are embedded in a discourse of white Anglo privilege and the persistence of *red face* as a performative trope in defining Canadian nationalism.

With these operas, *red face* functions as a localized version of Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry which he defines as the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power (1092). *Red face* operates as a performative tactic for invader-settlers to replace their status as newcomers who displace First Nations from unceded territories. On one level, invader-settlers painting their bodies to perform First Nations speaks to their need to regulate and discipline these representations of alterity as a way of comforting the national alibi that the pre-colonial territory of British Columbia constitutes a *terra nullius*. At another level, this move to perform the Other is "stricken by indeterminacy" in terms of gender and race (Bhabha 1092). *Red face*, by nominating the Other in order to achieve "native" status for invader-settlers, risks revealing the mechanism of white privilege and patriarchy.

In 1950s British Columbia, indeterminacy permeated the term "native" that denoted both invader-settlers seeking Canadian identity and a way of signaling a racialized group of original inhabitants of North America that has been displaced into a number of more recent appellations: First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous. Similarly, *pace* Bhabha, *red face* seeks to displace First Nations from the term "native" and strives to give ownership of "native" to settler-invaders who thus become patriotic "native Canadians." Both Pal Ahluwalia, writing in the Australian context, and Mahood Mamdani, writing in the African context, trouble similar nativist longings of invader-settlers. With the use of *red face*, these operas articulate a longing for whites to achieve a sense of stable independent sovereign national identity by performing "native." Thus *red face* enacts an alibi for invasion-settlement that theatrically displaces First Nations into "native" role play for whites.

In these two operas, what emerges is a process of what Bhabha terms mimicry, and what I will term *red face*, that ensures

invader-settlers cease to be outsiders who have disposed First Nations of land, culture, and language; instead, transforming “themselves into nationals” (Thobani 62) and relying on the privilege of whiteness, they become exalted Canadians by ambivalently mimicking the Other in *red-faced* performances that are coded as expressions of Canadian cultural nationalism. *Red face* describes not just a performative mode, but a type of process whereby the invader-settler seeks the semiotic control of the Other without relenting white privilege (Goldie 191-93). Yet, *red face* always operates as displacement and perhaps, as the phrase literally suggests, exudes a sense of shame and “imperial melancholy,”⁵ despite the way white privilege sanctions it (Gilroy 90).

Sunera Thobani, echoing Daniel Francis, notes that this “imaginary Indian” in invader-settler culture is part of a “phantasmogoric project” that embraces colonialism as inevitable and desirable by ambivalently positing First Nations as part of a doomed race to be mourned or as noble savages requiring “forceful subjugation” (58). These operas offer a slightly more ambivalent representation of the First Nations in *red face* that recognizes a desire to integrate into the Canadian context a pliable, nostalgic image of the “noble native” that excludes the narrative of colonization and invasion. Glenn Willmott argues British Columbian painter Emily Carr and Métis poet Pauline Johnson recoil from European modernity (characterized by colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, etc.) to embrace “aboriginal modernity” as a utopian alternative. Meanwhile, these 1950s operas may react against aspects of European modernity like patriarchy via *red face* to imagine a vibrant ancient native culture and the possibility of a more egalitarian and hybridic model for invasion-settlement; however, they tend to occlude the option of “aboriginal modernity” that Carr and Johnson seek. *Red face* ensures invader-settler spectators maintain a *heimlich* distance from the Other via an appeal to ethnographic authenticity and/or a sense of parody where they know a white person exists under the *red face*.

The following essay provides a context for the analysis of the operas by briefly tracing the history of *red face* in Canada, considering how blackface anticipates *red face* in the Okanagan and demonstrating how white privilege in a range of texts from the 1950s structures *red face* in a way that transforms invader-settlers into “natives.”

Red Face as Canadian Tradition

In *Performing Canada*, Alan Filewod suggests “racial impersonations” (xv), akin to what I dub *red face*, inaugurate pre-Canadian, colonial theatre and that this form persists in pageant form into the early twentieth century.⁶ He claims the performative of transforming invader-settlers into “native” begins with the French lawyer Marc Lescarbot’s 1606 masque *The Theatre of Neptune in New France* that offers the classical Greek god of the sea Neptune with his “aboriginal supplicants” welcoming the new governor of New France to the Bay of Fundy (xii). Filewod speculates these supplicants are played by Frenchmen but that First Nations may have observed this spectacle:

In this moment of racial impersonation and colonial masquerade, Lescarbot had claimed the new world in a new way by enlisting the spectating bodies and appropriated voices of its inhabitants in his imagined theatre, and he had established the principle that the colonialism of spectacle is the necessary precondition of imperial vision. (xv)

Filewod sees in various community pageants, parades, and private masques in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the presentation of history is regulated according to invader-settlers’ vision that champions the resourcefulness of the pioneer [*sic*], while relegating the native to a minor supplicant role. Moreover, this type of public national theatre works as a form of surveillance to structure the colonial vision (17), so that spectators are participants in this form of strategic nostalgia that enacts the triumph of colonialism (17). *Red face* persists as a strategy of empire.

White Privilege: Performance in British Columbia

Perhaps the question of why British Columbian settler-invaders, and more specifically invader-settler women composers in the 1950s, *red faced* can be traced to the performance tradition of blackface in British Columbia’s late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chad Evans’s *Frontier Theatre: A History of Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Entertainment in the Canadian Far West and Alaska* traces the introduction of the minstrel show in the Canadian West from its origins in the American South of the 1820s where it is used to rationalize the humanity of slave owning (251-260). According to Evans, from 1858 to the turn of the century minstrel shows were a vibrant part of the Pacific

Northwest theatre. He suggests popularity for the minstrel show wanes in the late 1890s in part because the form is associated with young white women crossing gender in black face: “Respectable women, the British felt, would not appear in a minstrel show, let alone tights” (259).

In the Okanagan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, minstrel performances found special favour: Kelowna’s first mayor played the part of the first interlocutor in a 2 March 1895 minstrel show (Benmore 111), and the Kelowna Negro Minstrel Company raised funds for the Boer War (Benmore 112). The minstrel show persisted for decades in Kelowna according to the Janet E.V. Graham fonds at the Kelowna Public Archives that details a production of *Showboat* from 18-22 March 1969 by the Kelowna Community Theatre featuring a number of prominent members of the white community in blackface.

Just as the minstrel show represents African Americans as irresponsible childlike creatures who benefit from the institution of slavery, so does the portrayal of First Nations as simple childlike creatures by invader-settlers in 1950s British Columbia serve, in part, to endorse implicitly the view that colonization is part of an inevitable development of Canada into a civilized nation. These operas enact contact and pre-contact native existence and thereby regulate First Nations, who stand outside of European modernity and thus by implication the White Anglo-Canadian nation; they are apparently passively waiting to be performed by invader-settlers as a form of integrating not just their bodies, but selective “anthropological” bits of their culture into the fabric of the Canadian nation. *Red Face* operates as a displacement to generate multiple alibis about how invasion-colonization or settlement is inevitable and equals progress.

W.T. Lhamon Jr., in *Raising Cain*, challenges the normative reading of blackface as an explicitly racist form by asserting it is an ambivalent form that echoes Bhabha’s notion of colonial mimicry “stricken by indeterminacy” (1092). Lhamon recalls how the first blackface performances invert the Genesis version of Cain as a soul blackened by God for murder to embrace the rebellious energy of Cain. For Lhamon, these performers claim Cain and play “out his fugitive vagabondage, [thus] white and black performers inverted the European legend’s conservatism without erasing it” (117). Lhamon asserts that performers used blackface to invert and flout disciplinary norms in a manner that appealed to lower class whites and blacks who sidestepped the demeaning aspects of the performance to embrace “a radical fabric in a

regressive narrative frame and within a repressive social context” (117). Given the hegemonic nature of Anglo-white culture in the Okanagan in the 1950s, to conclude that minstrel shows in the Okanagan offer a “radical fabric” would be a strained argument, yet the type of transgressive ambivalence Lhamon locates in the minstrel show tradition might help explain how *red face* is more than a specularization of the exotic Other and operates as a flexible alibi for colonization with a potential to subvert some dominant discourses. *Pace* Bhabha, *red face* in these operas “produces its slippages, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha 1092) to question elements of the patriarchal imperial project while ensuring white supremacy’s reign: invader-settlers become the native. In these two operas, White women use *red face* both to assert native Canadian heritage and to trouble the patriarchal elements of the colonial project.

Channelling *Red Face*

An excellent historiographic demonstration of *red face*’s indeterminate erasure of invasion-settlement appears in the introduction to Don Salting’s *Smile of the Manitou* that describes the naming of the Okanagan town of Naramata.⁷ Most of the Okanagan, like much of British Columbia, was originally invaded-settled via the pre-emption regulation that allowed British-born adult males the right to up to 160 acres of “crown land” for agricultural development (“Pre-emption” 10). To overwrite this state-sanctioned land grab, Salting erases the Syilx’s presence⁸ in this region by appealing to safer forms of spectral First Nations, who are not protesting the pre-empting of their land by invader-settlers. His preface begins with an account of the origins of the name Naramata that offers a gothic level of native mimicry by invader-settlers: the town had been called East Summerland, but at a seance in 1907 at the home of the postmaster, J.S. Gillespie, his wife channels “a great Sioux Indian Chief named BIG MOOSE [. . . who] spoke of his dearly loved wife in the most endearing terms and called her by the name that I decided was a good name for our village NARRA-MAT-TAH as she was ‘the smile of the Manitou’” (Salting 1). This channelled Chief with no links to the Okanagan does not lament for lost land, language, and culture, but for his wife. Furthermore, this creation of a “native” name overlooks and overwrites the Syilx peoples by using a form of mimicry that settles for a form of native spirituality filtered through this Anglo invader-settler postmistress who had thought of calling the town “Brighton Beach,” but settles for an abbreviated “Naramata” (1).

Salting elaborates what L. Norris⁹ wonders in 1935 if the name was the “resurrection from the limb of forgotten memories of something previously unknown” or if “something actually happened[,] which staggers the imagination” (1). This conjectured mystical link to a native spirit receives another twist when Salting in the next paragraph adds that Mrs. G. Maisonville in 1948 suggests Mrs. Gillespie, whose first husband was from Australia, takes the word Naramata from “aboriginal Australian dialect” meaning “place of water” (1). This naming and fixing of place serves as a model for the displacement of First Nations who are no longer part of the land or cultural fabric; they serve as “colour” and as psychic outsiders (whether Sioux chief or Australian Aboriginals) and thus enable the invader-settler to play native from a safe psychic distance.

Salting’s version of local history as alibi for invasion-settlement provides what Thobani characterizes as the “fantasy of unsullied origins” (60). She argues in much less fantastical gestures that Canadian invader-settlers tend to mythologize the land as a way of ameliorating “colonial violence” (60). Nevertheless, Salting’s explicit, contrived, fantastical *red face* excuse of naming allows for “the innocence of the land to be claimed by the national subject as its own” (Thobani 60).

McKelvie’s populist 1955 history, *Pageant of B.C.: Glimpses into the Romantic Development of Canada’s Far Western Province*,¹⁰ argues British Columbia’s origins are always already “sullied” by different forms of rapacious colonialism. He provides a complex quasi-scientific alibi for the dominant invader-settler culture in tune with Salting’s civilizing themes that work to erase the notion of First Nations. Throughout McKelvie’s historical narrative, which focuses on the triumphs of developing the province into a modern industrial power, First Nations are either the loyal friends of invader-settlers or primitive, treacherous murderers who threaten civil society. McKelvie’s first chapter, called “In the Beginning,” suggests the province has been occupied by “successive races” from the Pacific Rim in a way that makes modern British colonialism seem like a civilizing improvement over the series of conquests of the region and its people (1-4). The most astounding hypothesis offered is that the “Jews of China,” part of Kulbai [*sic*] Khan’s fleet in a failed attempt to conquer Japan, were blown off course and drifted onto the Queen Charlotte Islands where they did not “intermarry with the untutored barbarians of the Coast; but any customs observed and the speech used by the strangers would be copied by the savages

[sic]" (4). In this configuration, First Nations are the willing mimics of a superior culture that they can only imperfectly imitate.¹¹ This elaborate historical narrative that posits colonialism as a constant in North American history is informed by orientalism. Edward Said¹² argues Orientalist discourse relies "on this flexible *positional* strategy, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand (7). McKelvie clearly does not cede the "upper hand" as his narrative rests on three assumptions that buttress white privilege: one, First Nations and colonialist, whether "exotic" Jews living in China or Europeans, do not mix via marriage to produce hybridic children; two, First Nations lacking a legitimate indigenous culture must have mimicked another culture that is closely Judeo-Christian but still exotic; and three, colonialism pre-exists European settlement of the Pacific North West and thus assimilation is an inevitable constant that makes the most recent invasion-settlement seem like a kinder, gentler form of colonization. This *red facing* of First Nations' history renders invader-settlers the logical and rightful heirs of a land that First Nations have never been able to exploit properly without the benevolence of others.

Perhaps the oddest example of white privilege in *red face* occurs in the 8 December 1954 *Penticton Herald* article titled "Ode to Winnieaha, White Chief Churchill" that reprints a story claiming Sir Winston Churchill's American mother had First Nation heritage and offers a satiric poem. The poem mixes stereotypes of aboriginality and Churchill's bulldog persona suggesting that only this very privileged and alleged Metis has the ability to pass in white civilization. Okanagan newspapers from the 1950s provide few accounts of First Nations, and even when they do, they seem to default toward a mythical "Indian" as in this article from *The Women's World* page in the *Penticton Herald* which describes how the local white Women's Institute had formed a mirror institute on the local reserve. The article begins, "[a]dopting modern customs and conforming to a way of life entirely different from that of their forefathers does not detract fundamentally from the romance and colour so closely associated with the Okanagan Indian" ("Okanagan Indian" 2). The white women associated with the Women's Institute who initiated this "development" project for the reserve women are Mrs. Bennett, "the first white child to be born in Fernie," and "Mrs. Cawston," who is also "recognized as an authority on the customs and viewpoints of the Indian person" ("Okanagan Indian" 2). While extolling how the First Nations

women are “embracing modern handicrafts, dress making, crocheting, first aid, and home nursing” (“Okanagan Indian” 2), it would seem the white women are becoming slightly more “native” with their involvement in this endeavour as passionate agents of civilizing modernity.¹³ With this paternalistic gesture, “native” is reduced to “romance and colour” which invader-settler women can “improve” upon by making First Nations women more civil and more white. This reading of Bennett and Cawston’s “civilizing mission” is consistent with Jennifer Henderson’s select literary analysis of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Anglo-Canadian invader settler feminists’ narratives that demonstrates how invader-settler women are implicated in nation building and race making (16-19).

These various instances of *red facing* in newspapers and historical accounts indicate the prevailing invader-settler view of First Nations: that, like the land First Nations inhabit, they are an empty signifier waiting to be occupied and/or quite possibly improved by European modernity. In the 1950s, First Nations are a symbol to be manipulated by settler-invaders as a sign of a past pre-colonial moment that precludes considering the violence and persistence of colonialism. *Red face*, in its most literal theatrical form or in more abstracted and outlandish forms like Salting’s and McKelvie’s folk histories, seeks to render the invader-settler “native.”

I Hear the *Others* Singing

The operas *Ashnola* and *The Lake* each use different strategies to mimic native identities. *Ashnola* is set in the pre-European-contact period while *The Lake* is set in the early European-contact period. These operas, by avoiding representing contemporary First Nations, generate representations of the past that silence the possibility of discussing the Canadian government’s policy of assimilation embodied by the Indian Act of the 1870s (Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun 238) or British Columbia’s¹⁴ legal position that native groups had no legal title or claim on lands and were from 1927 until 1951 prevented from raising funds for land claims (“Historical Timeline”). These operas, by representing First Nations as fossilized and often comedic types, *pace* McKelvie, Salting, and Winston Churchill, make possible the construction of a safe, unthreatened Canadian cultural nationalism where the invader-settlers as characters, performers, and audience can play *red face*. In these operas, representations of First Nations resisting the colonial process are nearly expunged or transformed into a monstrous outsider.

Ogopogo [sic], the Opera

Barbara Pentland's chamber opera, *The Lake*, set in the year 1873, is adapted from Dorothy Livesay's poetry inspired by Syilx legend and from the diary of invader-settler Susan Allison¹⁵ (Eastman 61-2; Ormsby 1). The opera was written in 1954, produced as a radio play on CBC's *Wednesday Night* program in 1954 (Wilson 16) and in Vancouver in 1955¹⁶ ("Pentland"). The opera focuses on early colonial relations from a sympathetic albeit naïve white liberal feminist perspective that anticipates a more nationalist mode than *The Lake*. Pentland in her own words as quoted by the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* is a "pioneer" [sic] and champion for composing Canadian music; she based her opera on the autobiography of early Okanagan invader-settler Susan Allison who reputedly is the first European to sight Lake Okanagan's mythic water creature Naaitka¹⁷ ("Research").

In this opera, Syilx's mythology constitutes a harmonious feminine world of balance that is challenged by white patriarchal colonial values (3). The four principle characters constitute an allegorical matrix of race and gender that delineates between the imperial white male realm of rational economic exploitation of *terra nullius* and the First Nations-female realm of superstition and nature: John Allison, as the stiff British farmer, embodies unquestioned colonialism, patriarchy, and rationality; his wife Susan,¹⁸ a 28-year old expectant mother, is inspired by native culture¹⁹ not unlike his manservant, Johnny McDougal, a Metis guide and farmhand.²⁰ Both liminal characters, Johnny and Susan do not entirely fit with either First Nations or colonial cultures. Apparently McDougal's "mixed" blood and Susan's gender put them in touch with the Syilx's beliefs as embodied by the fourth character, Marie,²¹ "an elderly Indian woman from the Reserve, child nurse, and domestic to Mrs. Allison" (3), who functions as a repository of native lore. These characters' delineated and linked subject positions are supported by the score that has characters singing different lines that overlap with each other; for example, while Marie describes the colonial project as the white man's rapacious hunt for gold, Susan Allison sings over Marie's critique with a paean to the Okanagan as a golden land of fruit farms that somehow redeems the colonial project by returning the earth to an Edenic form (31).²² This dialogic structure suggests that, while in some performances Susan Allison's voice might prevail, there is still a dissonance offered unsettling the triumphant hymn to settlement.

The opera opens with the pregnant pioneer Susan Allison

creating a list of gifts to offer her Syilx farmhands, recording native legends of half human, half fish “little people” (5), and listening to warnings about an “evil” lake creature. She is the embodiment of the invader-settler transformed into native. Her husband, John, provides a counterpoint to this Edenic colonial harmony: he plans to sail across the lake to mill his grain at the Mission despite his wife’s protests about a sea creature called Naaitka. He is the “master” who must discipline an offstage First Nations worker, Cherumchoot,²³ who has gambled away his clothing and returned naked to the reserve (23-25).

Cherumchoot is reduced to a figure of ridicule. Accompanying John Allison across the lake is the Metis Johnny McDougal, who takes along a pig and hen that he plans to throw overboard as peace offerings to Naaitka. The stage notes direct him to stoop to catch the pig in what is called a “humorous by-play” and thus explicitly *red faces* his character as a buffoon (20). The menacing figure here is the off-stage, anti-colonial Naaitka, who the audience is told “long ago [. . .] devoured an Indian [*sic*] mad with white man’s gold” (Wilson 16).²⁴ Naaitka will upset the colonial adventure but not the offstage male native Cherumchoot or the Metis John McDougal, who, like blackface characters, operate not as figures of menace so much as misrule. Both characters need the restraint of the rational colonial mind offered by the stern English gentleman, John Allison, who will discipline them with creaky civility.

The female characters of Marie, the grandmotherly First Nations elder, and Susan Allison are wiser than these two male native characters. The grandmotherly Marie offers a tale of pre-European contact civilization that suggests the coming of the “White man” with “[g]old burned in his head!” has turned the lake creature Naaitka against all men (31). Why the vengeful Naaitka would not simply prey on European colonists is unexplained. In this opera, violent resistance to colonialism can only be coded as a supernatural being; it cannot reside in the bodies of male natives. White privilege and (not literal) *red face* secures Susan’s grasp of First Nation’s lore, aboriginal reciprocity, so that invader-settlers and their children will become native.

Marie’s account of the post-European contact creating a fallen world overlaps with Susan Allison’s version of the Okanagan as a type of farmer’s Eden where it is not gold but the “green life” she seeks to cultivate (33). Susan repeatedly rhapsodizes about the land and not the people (31-33; 52-3), even though she begins the opera by writing a list of debts she owes

natives: “to Yacumtecum, for bringing me a hide to tan: One bag of sugar. To Jacob One-leg, huckleberries [. . .]. One hat given woven with my own hands from the meadow grass” (2-3). The sugar, most likely the product of the Caribbean colonial project used to sweeten this exchange and the other goods crafted from the land, suggest that although she attempts to live in harmony and economic reciprocity with First Nations, her vision is essentially one of soft colonialization. Rather than relying on physical force to subdue First Nations and their land, Susan Allison, via trade, assumes First Nations are adequately compensated for “granting” land for invader-settlers to develop into an Eden-like British garden and farm system. The script, naturally, does not speak to how she and her husband acquired their farmland via pre-emption or interrogate the exalted narrative of agricultural progress that assumes settler-invaders improve the lot of First Nations by bring them the benefits of European modernity.

The opera concludes with Susan Allison experiencing birthing contractions as she sings, “let our children grow to love and nurture it [the land] from wilderness” (52). This triumph for her family is a triumph for white heterosexual settlement that is coded as an inevitable and pastoral white fertility. None of the native characters have offspring in this opera: Marie is literally the handmaiden to white fertility that will populate the Okanagan and erase Metis and First Nations leaving settler-invaders as the “new” natives to improve the land.

While crossing the lake, John Allison and Johnny McDougal encounter a storm. From the shoreline/stage, looking into the lake/audience, Susan Allison sees Naaikta. Her perspective offers an example of Bhabha’s notion of mimicry producing ambivalence since the situating of the monstrous Naaikta beyond the fourth wall in the audience suggests the monstrosity is not some ancient First Nation’s spirit, but the white audience entertained by this spectacle. Her description of Naaikta is in phallic terms as “a huge tree trunk—undulating—moving fast” (35), and is at odds with her skeptical husband’s perspective: returning from his nautical mishap, he claims to have merely experienced the storm, and not a monster, as his boat was pushed onto rocks and destroyed. John Allison as invader-settler clings to his rational explanation, while his wife Susan, via apparently empirical evidence, has ‘gone native’ and accepted a view that accommodates native spirituality and thus becomes not an *unsettled* invader-settler but a “Canadian” ready to birth white Canadian children.

The image of this monstrous phallic native spirit is used to attack patriarchal structures that see the father absent from his child's birth and as a master over his land and people. By the end of the play, John Allison is unconvinced of this "native" superstition but agrees to stay home with his wife to witness the birth. The opera concludes with all four voices simultaneously singing "Naaikta," with the stage direction in the score indicating that John Allison sings it "scornfully" (58). John Allison's skepticism is in a sense domesticated by his wife's fear of Naaikta consuming the colonial patriarch; quite literally the notion of Naaikta as a threat to the colonial project is domesticated for use within the colonial economy as Susan Allison ensures her husband will remain at home during her childbirth.²⁵ The fearsome Naaikta is placated by the Metis Johnny McDougal's gift of domestic livestock produced by the colonial project and not other gifts like the animal hides, huckleberries, etc. that Susan Allison receives from her workers at the beginning of the opera. Like Susan Allison's native farmhands who receive her gifts at the beginning of the opera, presumably Naaikta is appeased from biting the hand of the invader-settler that feeds. In this text, gender and race are linked in a manner that makes race subservient to a liberal feminist and Canadian nationalist project. The return of the colonial master to the domestic space marks a triumph for both white liberal feminism and Canadian nationalism in *red face* as Susan Allison's sympathies for First Nation's ways are secured by the opera's conclusion. This colonial feminist space operates as pastoral garden that has tamed the bush, First Nations, and monsters by acts of white civility that refuse to acknowledge the ongoing violence of colonialism, while offering a "limited or constrained universality that tends to proliferate and striate not only external but also internal differences" (Coleman 13). Thus Susan and John Allison function as the epitome of white civility, standing in place for the Canadian imaginary, and the racialized characters of Marie, McDougal, Cherumshoot, and even Naaikta are consigned to subsidiary roles. This view of First Nations as background is confirmed by a 1958 *Canadian Music Journal* article, where Pentland indicates how her violin sonata is informed by "folk" music that includes First Nation music:

If there is an expression of Indian [*sic*] colour, it is perhaps due to the fact that the earliest and closest exposure I had to the expression of a people's culture in folk-song was at the occasional Indian pow-wow during my childhood. In retrospect the flavor

of these occasions is made up of monotonous but exciting shouting and the pounding of many feet circling the camp-fire in the dark. These early impressions were probably aroused by the more primitive and universal elements contain in the tunes, and create a sort of fusion of our Canadian background. (qtd. in Turner 16)

Red face allows privileged settler-invaders to become Canadian by using “primitive” First Nations culture as background for the main exalted themes of civilizing settlement.

Domesticating the Native for Invader-Settler Use:

***Ashnola* Displacing *Ashnola* John**

The Okanagan in the 1950s might seem like an odd place for women to cross dress and sing as First Nations on the stage of a high school auditorium, but given the tradition of blackface in the region and newspaper accounts from the period it would seem white audiences found this crossing of race and gender within a theatrical tradition acceptable. An account from the *Vernon News* in 1953 suggests blackface is a source of anxiety when taken out of its theatrical context: Blake Crothers, a member of “the AOTS²⁶ minstrel show,” dressed in blackface has car trouble on a rural road. Unable to flag a motorist down, he knocks on a farmhouse door and inadvertently frightens a woman. This woman frantically calls for assistance, demonstrating that although the blackened white body is designed to entertain comically, it signifies menace for white audiences (“This Minstrel” 2). Perhaps *red face* when used by the white women of Penticton in the “correct” theatrical context is less terrifying for invader-settler audiences than Blake Crother’s blackface in the “wrong” context; nevertheless, *Ashnola* speaks to invader-settler anxieties “stricken by [the] indeterminacy” (Bhabha 1092) of red body paint that reveals the excesses of white privilege seeking to represent First Nations.

As in invader-settler speculative historical accounts like McKelvie’s history of Jewish-Chinese influences on First Nations culture, the First Nations subject, as racialized Other, operates as a site of primitive fascination for the implied modern Anglo-white spectator. The form of the opera and perhaps the Penticton Ladies Choir’s experience with their production of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* the year before meant that this “pale” mimicry of Syilx culture is inflected by Greek classical form. A caption for a promotional photograph in the *Penticton Herald* neatly captures this conflation as it describes a First Nation ritual as “a dance of

the furies” (“One” 8). Thus the performance of the native can only occur within an ethnocentric framework that suggests this “new” primitive culture is analogous to European classical culture that has also had its rituals transformed into entertainment. As a new rendition of classical culture within an anthropological mode, the authors ambivalently claim the opera to be a clear sign of Canadian cultural maturity; yet, it is a “fantasy opera” (“Authors” 5; “All-Local” 6). Estabrooks’s postscript “How it Happened,” a narrative of origins for the opera, explains that the inspiration for the opera was derived from the need to create an all-women’s opera for the Penticton Ladies Choir and occurred by chance when she was preparing a goose for a dinner and found herself rhyming “papoose” with “goose” (3).²⁷ The women abandon dinner preparations to draft the opera. For these women, creating and playing *red face* quite literally results in liberation from the domestic space.

Counter to the narrative of “How it Happened,” the libretto’s paratextual introduction titled “THERE REALLY IS...” indicates the opera’s inspiration is derived from the Okanagan’s geography and its first peoples, who are clearly not part of modernity: “[t]here really is a Band of Ashnola Indians [*sic*]. Their village is a cluster of log cabins nestled in the trees on the other side of the Similkameen River from the highway and cannot be seen unless one crosses the river.” *Ashnola* never crosses this metaphorical river to locate the Other in “this cluster of cabins” but offers an impression of what life would have been like prior to colonization infused by the sensibilities of musical theatre. The third paragraph of “THERE REALLY IS...” describes a violent post-invasion-settlement history wrapped in heresy that once again maintains the explicitly colonial ethnographic distance:

Back in the early days of this country and for a long time before, Ashnola John was their chief. He and his Braves had once ambushed a Brigade of white men at Brushy Bottom just across the river from their village. They massacred and scalped everyone in the party. The scalps were taken back to the village and the Chief placed them around the inside of his door. I have known people who say they saw them there. There they remained until a Provincial Policeman stationed at Keremeos heard the story. It is said he went to the village and confiscated them. No one knows what he did with them. (n.p.)

This description of the violent Other from across the river

seems to be more about myth than about fact since none of its assertions are supported and its logic is scattered. *Ashnola* eschews this potentially unsettling narrative of a fraught settlement to offer the idyllic pastoral Okanagan in a pre-contact period that is reflected in how the paratextual introduction shifts from this violent narrative of Chief Ashnola John to a description of how the opera perfectly mirrors the geography of the region. The introduction concludes with the disclaimer, “[t]he story itself is entirely a figment of the imagination” that ensures this mimicry is only representing, with red paint, fanciful First Nations and not the ones that inhabit the cluster of cabins cut off from exalted European modernity in 1954.

Ashnola: Madame Butterfly in Red Face

The libretto begins in rhyming lines with “Ashnola: Fantasy” that establishes the audience’s Anglo-white perspective: “[t]his story is a tale of the ancient Band/ of Ashnola Indians/ Who live in the land/ Of the dashing, splashing Ashnola River”. By representing a gendered division of labour in this representation of pre-European-contact civilization where the men hunt while “[t]he old squaws sit/ And brood in the sun,/ While the young squaws fulfil/ A playful desire/ To sing and dance around the fire,” the libretto designates an ethnographic view of “Edenic” traditional native culture, but also by extension an anxiety about the role of white women in the post-World War II era, many of whom are expected to return to the home after working traditionally male jobs in ammunitions factories (Honey 20-24). The second line the dancing squaws sing confirms a traditional view of women as domestic labourers: “We work all day as willing slaves.” The young dancing women also describe how they are empowered as the makers of the domestic sphere who “spear the fish and snare the hare,/ And scrape the hides for the clothes we wear./ We pluck the feathers from the goose/ To make a bed for the wee papoose./ We also weave the baskets fine/ From tiny roots of shrubs and vine.” The libretto demeans the patriarchal elements of pre-contact native culture as represented by the hollow authority figure Chief Ashnola who is described as “covetous” and “wily.”

The trajectory of the mechanical and predictable plot supports this liberal feminist reading that sees First Nations as raw material in order to critique “primitive” patriarchy: act one begins with the arrival of a young “prince” from the Squamish nation, called Shining Arrow, who immediately falls in love with Chief Ashnola’s daughter, Singing Water. After a competition, the

Chief agrees to marry his daughter to this outsider who is described as royalty. Predictably complications ensue in act two, when the jealous local “brave,” [*sic*] Rushing Wind, seeks magic from the Shaman to poison Shining Arrow. However, Rushing Wind’s conversation with the Shaman is overheard by the “squaw,” Meadow Lark, who wants to marry Rushing Wind and thus needs to ensure Shining Arrow marries and departs with Singing Water, reforming the love triangle into a harmonious square. In act three, the Shaman attempts to discredit and poison Shining Arrow, but he is upstaged by a wise old woman, Old-Seeing Owl, who reads her version of a dream while Meadow Lark poisons the Shaman. In lines perhaps inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*, Old-Seeing Owl declares, “[t]he Shaman is dead-/ The Shaman is dead – is dead – is dead” with the rest of the cast beginning to chant this phrase. The murder of the Shaman as the repository of native cultural belief is swept away by the climax that focuses on happy marriages for the young couples.

The libretto clearly characterizes the Shaman not as a respected religious leader but as a purveyor of evil fakery. A note on the original 1954 playbill offers this “ethnographic” detail:

A Mesachie Box is a small box generally made of cedar, used by the Medicine Man in his practice of Shamanism, the malevolent rites in casting magic spells. The natives believed if the Medicine Man had something belonging to them and more especially something from their person, such as a hair or a drop of blood in his Mesachie Box, death was inevitable and they would simply sicken and die.

This use of the past tense and the adjective “malevolent” consign First Nation spiritual beliefs and practices to a remote past outside modern rational thinking. Shamanism is reduced to malevolent fakery rather than a spiritual belief that might also involve healing, an alternative world view, etc. In this case, *red face* uses ethnographic distance to appropriate, authenticate, and insist on the primitive values of the Other.

Meadow Lark’s status as a femme fatale in the plot is not factored into the over-determined joyous ending where marriage resolves all complications. Given the persistence of residential schools and the Indian Act’s policies of assimilation, the shaman’s un-criminalized murder operates as an apt metaphor for how dominant invader-settlers deploy *red face* to imagine and erase First Nations culture.

By shifting the focus away from the poisoned shaman to the two couples married with the chief's blessing, this representation of marriage prohibitions uses First Nations cultural capital much like Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* uses Imperial Japan to discuss the arbitrary values of late Victorian morality.²⁸ *Red face* permits these women to stage cross-dressed male leaders as buffoons and to show older wise women subversively in control of a society. Thus this opera speaks more to post-World War II gender issues for white women²⁹ than to the specifics of First Nations cultures via an anthropological lens.

Ashnola's authors, Mary Costley and Lillian Estabrooks, are part of this liberal feminist movement to provide "culture" but also to provide professional space for female musicians.³⁰ In 1982 *Penticton Herald* recounting of the opera's genesis, they describe how the cooking of their New Year's Eve dinner is disrupted by repeatedly running into the kitchen to write down bits of the opera ("Ashnola" 6). The inspiration for *Ashnola's* plot and scenes are located in the fusion between public music and domestic labour. That the opera's feminism, underwritten by white privilege, is consistent with Henderson's thesis that early nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century "Anglo-Protestant feminism [was] committed to race making" that sees white women gaining status on the backs of Others (Henderson 43).

In material terms, the opera supported and promoted white women. The local chapter of the Soroptimists, a North American-wide club dedicated to supporting and promoting women's rights, sponsored the original performance and witnessed the last performance of the opera in 1977 ("Ashnola" 6; "Estabrooks "How it Happened" 6).³¹ The playbill of this first performance advertises a number of businesses including Monica Craig Fisher, a piano instructor and pianist for the event (*Ashnola: A Legend*, 4), and the composer Constance Waterman. Additionally, the choreographer Marcia Rowland later had a career in New York in ballet ("Ashnola" 8). The 1955 performance in Vancouver for the 10th Biannual Canadian Music Teachers conference was sponsored through the City of Penticton with Penticton's first woman alderman [*sic*], Elsie MacCleave, as an "official representative" with the group (Estabrooks 5). Materially, this musical's *red face* operates to place white women in the public sphere within an emergent Canada free of American or British influences where white women are full citizens able to speak for and represent Others as a way of becoming "native."

Ashnola's limited Anglo feminist project, with its use of First

Nations culture as the raw material for invader-settler imaginings, dovetails with Pentland's feminist nationalist project in *The Lake*. Costley and Estabrooks are proud of creating a libretto based on "original" material that suits the vocal range of their all-female chorus and speaks to local interest rather than simply relying on European scripts written for male voices. On the evening of the 1955 performance, the *Vancouver Sun* reported the libretto's authors "hope [that] *Ashnola* will inspire other operas for women's choirs. Inspiration is plentiful in Canada they point out. It lies in the folklore of the country and in its colourful history waiting for writers and composers to take up their pens and write" (Nicholson 8). Descriptions of pre-European contact native culture are the raw material that these women use to create a nationalist culture for consumption by opera fans seeking to see "Canadian" content on the stage.³²

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of *Ashnola*'s first production is that 26 native children from the Penticton Reserve attend it ("Ashnola' Seen"). Did these children see the play as just more of the dominant Canadian culture's mimicry that seeks to confine native identities to unthreatening pre-contact natives (like Edward Curtis's photography and Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*) or to more negative portrayals like that of the 1950s Hollywood Western (e.g., John Ford's 1950 *Rio Grande*). Or is the reception of this opera by these children something more profoundly brutal because it was not acted by people on a screen but by prominent local white settlers in drag? I was unable to answer these questions when I asked people at the En'nowkin education and cultural centre on the Penticton Band Reserve. I also sense that it is not my role to re-traumatize someone with a hopefully faded childhood memory, but it is my role to unpack how white privilege operated in the 1950s and lingers in the Okanagan and elsewhere in Canada where notions of being Canadian exploits quaint notions of aboriginality as symbolic capital.

Monsters and Outsiders

In *The Lake*, Naaitka poses a monstrous but temporary threat to the colonial order of John Allison. *Ashnola* consciously rejects the portrayal of resistant "savage" natives to defuse menace in Gilbert and Sullivan style. Perhaps the unspoken monster in these two 1950s operas is resistance to the colonial project of assimilation. Instead of showing this "monster," these operas attempt to integrate representations of "historic" First Nations into a national

agenda to generate a progressive liberal feminist project that maintains white privilege.

In the post-World War II, emergent-Cold War era, the federal government began to frame an essential bilingual and humanist notion of Canadian identity as augured by Vincent Massey's *On Being Canadian* (1948) and made more manifest by the publication in 1951 of the Massey-Lévesque Commission report calling for the state to intervene in constructing a common culture for Canada via institutions like the CBC, NFB, Canada Council, and universities (Grace 5).³³ I cannot, in good faith, argue that *Ashnola* consciously aims to contribute to a national or even provincial cultural imaginary given its limited and very local performance history. Yet, like Pentland's *The Lake*, which was broadcast on CBC radio (Wilson) and clearly devised within an explicit Nationalist Canada Council-like vision, the amateur *Ashnola red faces* the image of First Nations to secure cultural capital to make the invader-settler "native."

These operas may reflect the dominant invader-settler view of colonization, but in this same region later in the 1950s and into the 1960s, an explicitly anti-colonial perspective emerges that, instead of offering *red face's* generic representation of pre-contact aboriginality, focuses on representing the material conditions of contemporary First Nations. British Columbian interior playwrights, George Ryga, a resident of Summerland in the south Okanagan, and Gwen Pharis Ringwood, a resident near Williams Lake area north of the Okanagan, explicitly wrestle with the legacy of colonialism as filtered via the state, church, and school system in a way that problematizes the National project. Ringwood's combination of myth and social realism in *Lament for a Harmonica* originally performed in 1959 and George Ryga's expressionistic and sentimental tragedy *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* performed in Vancouver in 1967 mark a distinct shift by representing contemporary native life under this policy of the assimilation (Ryga 36). Ringwood's three indigenous themed plays: *Lament for a Harmonica* (1959), *The Stranger* (1971), and *The Furies: A Tragedy in One Scene*³⁴ (1980), offer a mix of myth and social realism as they deal with miscegenation and assimilation from First Nations heroines' perspectives. Her heroines are self-destructive femmes fatales caught in a colonial patriarchal trap by lecherous white men. The first of these plays *Lament for a Harmonica* offers a degree of social realism mixed with expressive elements. The set's upstage centre space has "the shape of a high-steepled church against the darkening sky," as if to assert

Christianity casts a long shadow over the heroine Maya Samuel (339). This young, intelligent half-native woman, who bears a child out of wedlock and with no support from the white father, resists various forces in her quest to declare “I’m an Indian” (347). Maya is acutely aware of assimilation as she explains to her white ex-lover Allan that their child had few options:

He’d have become more white than Indian, Allan. Would I have kept him on the reserve? Or would I give him to some barren pair to raise as their own? Soon he’d grow tall in a suburban house, watch the wide screen, and behind his thoughts began to wonder who he is and why. (350)

The play concludes in a tragic farce with Maya killing her would-be lover William,³⁵ a young man from the reserve, who decides he must take revenge on Allan. Maya, like Ryga’s First Nations Rita Joe, seeks to escape definition: she ends the play pleading, “I thought to be something different” (353). The inability to self-define indicates how the dominant invader-settler society has inscribed her role as a First Nations woman.

Ryga’s and Ringwood’s representations of contemporary natives are still fraught and no doubt imbued with problematic stereotypes. Lane, in his 2003 “Performing History: The Reconstruction of Gender and Race in British Columbia,” describes how contemporary productions of *Rita Joe* offer two meanings: the first “a genuine well-meant text, and the performative re-enactment of appropriation” (268), but compared to *Ashnola* and *The Lake*, they mark a significant, albeit small, step towards de-colonizing Canadian invader-settler society.

Attempts to describe performance history in British Columbia have missed the notion that white privilege in the 1950s structured representations of First Nations via *red face* to construct a national figure. In 1995, Denis Johnson’s “Drama in British Columbia: A Special Place” boldly claims, “[i]f Canada can be described as a land with too much geography and not enough history, then British Columbia has more geography and less history than anywhere else” (171). Johnson’s account of the province’s theatrical history and sense of its spatial history as *terra nullius* fails to account for the gaps in representation generated by invader-settlers who have erased or re-cast pre-contact history in the drive to tell their own exalted narratives of settlement. It is the history of white privilege in performance in this region that bears more scrutiny to excavate how Johnson’s supposedly excessive

“geography and lack of history” is closely regulated by invader-settler privilege. Lane sees the 1951 removal of the ban on potlatch³⁶ as a defining epoch for a later period associated with socially committed theatre produced by Ryga, Pollock, Hollingsworth, and others from the 1960s forward, which again assumes sympathetic white artists have been working in solidarity with First Nations to address colonization. James Hoffman’s “Shedding the colonial Past: Rethinking British Columbia Theatre” provides a good glimpse of how BC theatre history can be productively excavated from a postcolonial past, but I wonder if it, like Lane’s history, too optimistically assumes the province and country have shed their collective colonial past. It is important to keep in mind how *red face* in these operas and various local historical pageants and narratives defines Canadian cultural nationalism in the 1950s and, in many shapes, persists and continues to perpetuate neo-colonialism with the discourse of Canadian Cultural Nationalism.

Sunera Thobani’s *Exalted Subjects* maintains that Canadian cultural nationalism evacuates the native presence from the national imaginary:

From the paintings of the Group of Seven to the novels of Margaret Atwood’s fiction, and to the iconic image of Pierre Elliot Trudeau in a buckskin jacket canoeing on a lake (featured on the cover of his memoirs), this relationship of real Canadians to the land, emptied of Aboriginal peoples except as symbolized in relics, features prominently in the artistic and mythic representations of their nationality. (60)

I am intrigued by how *red face*, particularly in 1950s British Columbia, like the iconic image of Trudeau, provides a form of mimicry that strives to secure “authentic” Canadian identity via *red face*: to be Canadian is to wear the buckskin coat and paddle a canoe without naming invader-settler privilege. The 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver/Whistler sparked “a return to native” theme with Bruce Ruddell’s *Beyond Eden*, a rock opera devoted to dramatizing the 1957 trip to Haida Gwaii islands by a group of anthropologists bent on preserving First Nations culture (Harris; *Beyond Eden*), and Margaret Atwood’s libretto to be performed by the Vancouver opera based on the life of Metis Poet Pauline Johnson (“New”). These contemporary operas suggest the echoes of *The Lake* and *Ashnola* persist in a manner that hints invader-settlers are constructing a slightly more “unsettled” version of the

national imaginary in 2010. Yet the persistence of symbols like the Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Inukshuk and its *red faced* cartoon mascots Miga, Quatchi, and Sumi³⁷ suggests there is more work to be done to decolonize Canada's exalted invader-settler society. ❁

NOTES

- 1 Diana Brydon in her first footnote to "Reading Postcoloniality, Reading Canada" shifts the nomenclature for describing European settlement from that of "settler colonist" and the late 1980s term "settler-invader" to "invader-settler" in order to "shift the emphasis from two opposing historical narratives and to stress the narrative of settlement in itself occludes and denies the prior fact of invasion." I will refer to "pioneers" with Brydon's term throughout to help signal how these operas and other 1950s histories and narratives of settlement and pre-European contact occlude First Nations, the narrative of invasion, and an ongoing colonialism. I will use "First Nations" as a tactical way of denoting the rights of aboriginal/native peoples.
- 2 Margaret Ormsby in the "Introduction" to Susan Allison's account of being a pioneer woman in the Okanagan credits both the poet Dorothy Livesay and composer Pentland with the opera (1). Both Eastman's 1974 biographical master's thesis on Pentland (61-62) and Tilley's 1997 study of gender in Pentland's work (12) supports this assertion, yet the copy of the opera I have credits only Pentland, and the 1954 CBC reviews of the opera clearly credits Pentland as both the composer and lyricist ("*The Lake*" 2). I will refer to Pentland as the composer throughout the article even though Livesay obviously contributed the text.
- 3 This paper focuses mainly on invader-settlers' accounts and performances from the Okanagan. Due to length restrictions, I have excluded analysis of Morrison's Vancouver Island opera *Tzinquaw* that relies on coastal Indian performers and narratives to offer a mythic pre-contact performance. Additionally, I have excluded from this discussion reference to Lister Sinclair's 1958 revenge tragedy in *red face*, *The World of the Wonderful Dark*, that was the centre piece of the first Vancouver International Festival and toured the province as part of BC's 1958 Centennial celebration (Morse 181-182). *The World* neatly conforms to *red faces's* ambivalent coding of First Nations culture as anthropological fodder for making invader-settler's natives.

- 4 This picture is taken from the Ashnola binder at the Penticton Museum and has no date. The folder contains a series of press clippings and a couple of coloured photos of the cast from what I assume may be the original 1954 performance. The texture, type of colour, backdrop, and age of the picture suggest it is not from the 1977 Penticton performance, nor the Vancouver 1955 performance that occurred in the Georgia Hotel.
- 5 In the British context, Paul Gilroy distinguishes between nineteenth-century imperial melancholia and post-1945, post-imperial melancholia. The former is characterized by its desire to settle the doubts of conquests while the latter term is characterized by “guilt-ridden loathing and depression that have come to characterize Britain’s xenophobic responses” (90) to immigration. I sense these operas embody a more “imperial” sense of melancholia as they negotiate the “native” status of invader-settlers from a point of exalted white privilege.
- 6 Filewod’s account of the pageant form as racial mimicry refers to pageants from Henderson’s “1910 *Pageant of Ontario*” (20) and Lascelles’s “1908 Quebec Tercentenary” (19), and thus would suggest pageants wane in the early twentieth century in Canada. This paper demonstrates how in the Okanagan racial mimicry does not wane, but persists and shifts as it frames the British Columbian Anglo subject against racialized others. Pageant’s racial allegory can be detected in both of these operas.
- 7 Naramata is located on the east side of Lake Okanagan directly across from the town of Summerland. Both towns, and another town north of Summerland, Peachland, were created by J.M. Robinson in the late 1800s. Robinson sought to create communities for Anglo gentlemen orchardists and their families (Salting 3).
- 8 Sylix Nation refers to the First Nations people that inhabit the region defined by invader-settlers as the Okanagan. See *Sylix Nation*.
- 9 Salting does not explain who Norris is, but this quote is taken from Leonard Norris’s report on place names in the Okanagan Historical Society’s 6th report (Norris 143-144). Note the title of the *Okanagan Historical Society* changed to *Okanagan History*, so while the print copies of the journal will bear *OHS*, library catalogues reflect the new name *Okanagan History*. I am grateful to the journal’s editors for recognizing this shift in name.
- 10 His preface notes the book is drawn from a series of short articles published by the *Vancouver Daily Province* between February 1953 and March 1955.
- 11 McKelvie’s alibi that suggests First Nations are derivative of an Asian lineage has a precursor in a 1910 *Penticton Herald* article titled “Chinese Coins Found in Alaska,” which notes that when Natives

- are “on the warpath [*sic*] they never molested a Chinaman [*sic*], as they regarded him as a relative,” before concluding that “the tribes found scattered over the North American continent when Columbus arrived on his voyage of discovery many centuries later, were the posterity of this band of shipwrecked Celestials [*sic*]” (4). This racial conflation of First Nations and the racialized Other of Asians (whose ability to migrate to Canada in 1910 is restricted via exorbitant head taxes) suggests both groups have a secret alliance against white invasion-settlement and that First Nations are not the legitimate owners of the land but simply a band of castaways.
- 12 Goldie’s “Semiotic Control” adapts and synthesizes Said’s post-colonial critique of Orientalism to the Canadian context (191-2).
 - 13 See Henderson for a literary analysis of how white women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century gained prominence working as agents of Canadian civilizing practices. Arguably the authors of *Ashnola* and more ambivalently Pentland as author of *The Lake* operate within this discursive framework.
 - 14 Maintained until the 1990s (Culhane 36).
 - 15 The character names of Marie and Johnny McDougal are taken directly from Allison’s account (40).
 - 16 Kallman, et al. refer to the opera being produced in 1954 in Vancouver but do not state a venue. I assume the 1954 production was a stage performance. The copy of the script at the Banff archive with handwritten notes on it would suggest it was performed at Banff. Eastman on page 130 of her thesis includes a reference to a *Winnipeg Tribune* article indicating the opera was to be staged in Manitoba in 1960. The *Tribune* article mentions she has been commissioned to write a piece for the symphony for 1959 and does not mention the opera or the opera being involved (“Symphony”).
 - 17 This snake-like lake creature “Naaitka” (also pronounced “N’ha-a-itk”) is later identified by whites (likely tourism promoters) as Lake Okanagan’s mythic creature Ogoopogo (“Research”). The name Ogoopogo is apparently traced to a British Music Hall song from the 1920s (Allison 109; Gaal 10). The 1950s Okanagan road travel book *Milestones in Ogoopogo Land* describes how First Nations prior to contact appeased the monster with “a small animal” and that a visiting Chief Timbasket died as he drove his canoe too close to the animal’s lair to offer a sacrifice. The text notes, “[t]he first settlers undoubtedly heard of N’ha-a-itk [phonetic spelling] from the Indians[,] [*sic*] but these pioneers [*sic*] were not much affected by superstitions” (Lyon 139). The creature seems to operate in invader-settler discourse as a way of distinguishing between unruly First Nations and sceptical invader-settlers.

- 18 See MacArthur for a gloss on the historical figure.
- 19 The version of the opera I have from the Banff Centre's library, published without a date by the Canadian Music Centre, describes Allison as a "Scottish girl" (3), but someone has, in pencil, scratched out "Scottish" and written "English." I note the Metis Johnny McDougal is described as a "Scottish half-breed." Throughout the Banff Centre's copy are a number of pencil marks indicating explanations to the text for performance; I wonder if these are Pentland's marks or simply a director from the Banff Centre.
- Since Susan Allison seems to be more in tune with the Syilx's ways, perhaps it is more fitting to have her appear as "Scottish," which offers a sense of a clannish racial type that is open to superstition like Loch Nessie unlike her sceptical English husband who does not see Naaitka. Additionally, if Allison is Scottish it suggests an affinity with the Scottish Metis McDougal.
- 20 The notes to Allison's diary indicate the historical Johnny McDougal was "mixed blood" (116).
- 21 Not surprisingly the First Nation character lacks a last name, and thus historical specificity.
- 22 See Koroscil for a historical account of how invader-settlers frame this region as a pastoral Eden. In terms of traditions in early twentieth-century invader-settler poetry, both Bliss Carman's "Okanagan" (n.d.), which dubs the region "the Eden literary of the North," and J.S. Hatt's epic "Okanagan" (n.d.) cast the region as Eden best suited for English gentlemen farmers. This trope reverberates today in real estate advertisements and articles like Casey's 2008 "The Lost Eden of Okanagan."
- 23 This character does not appear in Allison's diary and thus reflects the *red faced* imagination at work.
- 24 This quote is taken from the 1954 review of the opera's premiere on CBC radio. Another 1954 review of the performance contains a similar detail claiming the initial First Nation's victim of Naaitka "had gone bad with white man's liquor" ("*The Lake*"). It is striking that both reviews of the CBC production sense that the monster's violence is an indirect reaction to invasion-settlement. The 1971 version of the text has Marie sing about a young First Nations male, who throws off First Nation traditions to have "white man-lead him wrong. Gold burned in his head" (Pentland, *The Lake*. Text 83), and thus he is killed by Naaitka who "hates all men" (85).
- 25 Perhaps the opera's narrative plays on the notion that by the 1950s Naaitka, a sacred being for the Syilx people, has become the garish tourist magnet Ogotopogo. See "Welcome to Ogotopogo Country" for a catalogue of how Ogotopogo has been framed as part of the Okanagan's imaginary.

- 26 The AOTS is an abbreviation of “As One That Serves” and is linked to the United Church of Canada.
- 27 This fanciful rhyming on the Algonquin term “papoose” suggests that like the Sioux or Australian aboriginal naming of Naramata by Mrs. Gillespie in 1908, invader-settlers have no problem with connecting local First Nations to a generic notion of “Native” in constructing their version of First Nations culture.
- 28 At a presentation of an earlier draft of this paper, Dr. Janet MacArthur suggested this connection.
- 29 Honey provides a succinct history of how the employment and rights gains women made in the industrial war machine during World War II were by “April 1947” lost with most “employed women” returned to “clerical workers, operatives, domestics and service workers” (20-24).
- 30 This process of adjusting the canon to recognize women composers is ongoing. The composer for *Ashnola*’s music, Constance Craig Fisher, is mentioned only as a stage director and soprano (Kallmann, et al. 466) in the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (1992), and the opera is not mentioned despite the *Encyclopedia*’s criteria of searching for “neglected or forgotten musicians whose considerable contributions have not been recorded in other histories or dictionaries” where preference is given to “New Canadian works” and “towards composers of concert music” (xvii).
- 31 Estabrooks’s “How it Happened” details four attempts to mount *Ashnola* with three successes: the December 1954 performance in Penticton High School (4), a 1955 performance in Vancouver for the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers at the Georgia Hotel (5), a failed 1958 staging initiated by the city asking for a remounting to help celebrate the province’s Jubilee, and the final 1977 performance “celebrating the 25th anniversary of the [Soroptimists] in Penticton (6). *Ashnola*’s performance history suggests the opera had more of a limited local appeal rather than Pentland’s opera which via broadcast on the CBC reached for a wider audience.
- 32 This legacy as part of a national theatre is something that Estabrooks and Costley no doubt hoped for when they donated the script to the Penticton archive in 1982. Although, as already mentioned, they do not rate a citation in *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, Canada’s electronic national archive briefly refers to the libretto as part of the Penticton’s musical heritage and omits reference to its racist contents (Wardle).
- 33 See Grace for the persistence of this national humanist agenda that I sense rubs against the grain of Sunera Thobani’s critique of Canadian nationalism in *Exalted Subjects*.

- 34 *The Furies* jumps between the 1920s and 1980s to argue the persistence of invader-settlers' vision of aboriginal women as something less than human.
- 35 During his fatal struggle with William, Allan shouts, "they fondle us like dogs, or kick us, and take everything. I hate the bastards" (352), which for 1959 seems to portend the residential school scandal to emerge years later.
- 36 Glass argues First Nations successfully circumvented the ban against Potlatch prior to 1951 when Potlatch and other First Nations ceremonies were deemed legal by the state, which suggests Lane's analysis of this legalization as a type of watershed moment for anti-assimilation theatrical impulses is not entirely accurate.
- 37 See *Meet*.

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