

SCRUB GROWTH:  
CANADIAN HUMOUR TO 1912--AN EXPLORATION

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation contends that Canadian humour did not emerge suddenly with the work of Thomas Chandler Haliburton and then vanish until Stephen Leacock's work appeared. The humour that Canadians created in large quantities, both before Haliburton and after, has too frequently been disregarded.

Some of the reasons for this disregard stem from the critical tenets of Canadian critics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Others are to be found in the character of the humour itself. Nineteenth-century Canadian humour is rarely cosmopolitan; it is parochial, satiric and ironic by turns, often racy, sometimes even crude and racist. It mocks both Canada's colonial status and its literary establishment, and it depicts a country in flux rather than a unified nation. Incongruities stemming from the imposition of European literary and cultural conventions on the Canadian milieu provide material for metafictional parody. Critics generally have only recently begun to recognize the complex nature of various kinds of parody.

This study investigates aspects of Canadian humour in selected newspapers, periodicals and books published between 1752 and 1912. It shows that from the beginning Canadians have published humour in the newspapers and that one of their concerns has been the quality of indigenous writing.

The ironic narrative techniques that are still distinctive in Canadian literature make their appearance in this early humour as Canadians devise ways of writing about their own milieu while avoiding "regionalism." There is clear evidence of American influence on Canadian humour throughout the period, but a distinctive Canadian humorous perspective emerges in response to Canada's colonial status in the British Empire and its position relative to the U.S.

The nationalist nature of Canadian criticism has led to rejection of many of the works by expatriate writers, but these works share many characteristic attitudes with those of writers who remained in Canada. Their subject matter may be quite different, but their ability to present several sides to every question and their ironic perspective are similar to those of other Canadian writers.

Obviously, not all humour is literary humour--such humour is exceptional in the literature of every country. In Canada, even today, there is more literary humour than current criticism allows. And the belief that there was no significant Canadian humour between Haliburton and Leacock continues to dominate Canadian criticism. No doubt the works of Haliburton and Leacock do occupy the summit of nineteenth-century Canadian humour; but there is a whole mountain range of lesser elevation surrounding them.

The study concludes that there is indeed a distinctive nineteenth-century Canadian humour, most of which is expressed in the short forms dictated by publication in newspapers and magazines. Robertson Davies reminds us that

in attempting to form an estimate of Leacock's work, we must remember that he wrote in an era when magazines were many and all but the most highbrow welcomed short, funny pieces (31).

Leacock was writing within this well-established Canadian tradition of humour when he published Literary Lapses, Nonsense Novels and Sunshine Sketches of A Little Town. He is not the first Canadian to create humour after Haliburton, but he is the first to present it in a way that could be accepted by the Canadian literary establishment. After Leacock, humour gradually became more respectable in Canada, but that is the subject for another study.

IN MEMORIAM  
ALEXANDER BALISCH 1921-1993

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## INTRODUCTION

"Still we go on writing sermonettes." (Lorne Pierce)<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to prove the existence of Canadian humour in the twentieth century. Robertson Davies, Paul Hiebert, Donald Jack, Robert Kroetsch and Mordecai Richler are just some of the twentieth-century Canadian writers whose works we are proud to classify as Canadian humour. My argument is that such Canadian humour did not emerge suddenly from a humourless desert of dour and serious literary works; instead it has a long history, beginning in the eighteenth century, and developing distinct forms and attitudes in the nineteenth century. This study will search out these early manifestations to the point in our literary history after which there is agreement that Canadian humour exists, and for this study this point is reached on the publication of Stephen Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town in 1912. The critical consensus regards Leacock as the first significant humorist after Thomas Chandler

Haliburton in the Canadian literary canon. As Leacock is generally classed a nineteenth-century humorist even though many of his works were produced in the twentieth, concluding the study with the publication of Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town seems reasonable. At that time, moreover, the First World War had not yet impacted on Canadian society, forcing Canadians from all parts of the country out of their "placid climate" (Allen 8) and into a confrontation which drastically changed both their consciousness and their society.<sup>2</sup>

Writing about humour presents problems for any critic because, no matter what the circumstances, the critic is faced with the paradox of having to write seriously about what is, on the surface, not meant to be taken seriously. Such critical writing is further complicated by the elusive nature of humour itself. Writing about Canadian humour is especially problematic because the accepted nineteenth-century Canadian literary canon, by which I mean the accumulation of literary works judged to be of sufficient aesthetic value to merit the name Canadian literature, admits only the work of Haliburton, Thomas McCulloch and Leacock. This creates the impression that there is no other significant Canadian humour in this period.

This study is an exploration of early Canadian humour. It draws attention to difficulties posed by the term

"Canadian" in the criticism written both during and about nineteenth-century Canada. The term "Canada," as used in this dissertation, is normally interchangeable with "British North America," and is used throughout to refer to all the provinces and territories of the modern nation, without regard to the date of their entry into Confederation.<sup>3</sup> It asks why so little critical attention has been paid to Canadian humour and suggests models that may be useful in exploring early Canadian humour. Then, having settled what is meant by "Canadian" and "humour," it locates and describes examples of early Canadian humour. It deals with criticism as well as with primary texts. The work is exploratory, wide-ranging, and argumentative, but not comprehensive.

Many of the materials used in this study have only recently become readily accessible through micropublication. The Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM) has, since the 1970s, made the works of many nineteenth-century writers accessible on microfiche, and has recently begun to film such nineteenth-century Canadian periodicals as Amaranth (1841-43) and The Anglo-American Magazine (1852-55). In addition to the CIHM microfiche, microfilms of nineteenth-century Canadian newspapers are available through the Canadian Library Association Microfilm project. Microforms of other nineteenth-century Canadian

publications are being produced by commercial agencies. Together they provide access to nineteenth-century materials previously difficult to locate and use. This study is heavily dependent upon such microforms.

Even now, in the late twentieth century, such general studies of Canadian humour as Margaret Atwood's "What's So Funny? Notes on Canadian Humour," and Beverley Rasporich's "The New Eden Dream: The Source of Canadian Humour: McCulloch, Haliburton and Leacock" are rare and apt to be short essays rather than detailed studies. More frequent are studies of individual nineteenth-century Canadian humorists such as Haliburton, McCulloch, and Leacock, and such twentieth-century humorists as Atwood, Hiebert, Kroetsch, and Davies. There are no comprehensive histories or criticisms of Canadian humour *per se*, and there is still very little criticism of contemporary Canadian humour. This is quite a different situation from that in the U.S.,<sup>4</sup> where literary critics and historians became interested in, and began collecting and studying, the humour of their country in the nineteenth century. Studies of Canadian humour even remotely equivalent to those of Samuel Cox, Constance Rourke, and Walter Blair on American humour,<sup>5</sup> Louis Cazamain and J. B. Priestley on British humour,<sup>6</sup> or Lee Siegel on Indian humour<sup>7</sup> do not exist.<sup>8</sup>

Because humorous works often derive from the immediate and the local, much early humour was published in newspapers and periodicals. In the period between 1752 and 1840, the number of newspapers and journals published in Canada was relatively small, as was the number of books. This study examines humour in most of the significant publications of this early period. However, in the period after 1840, as settlements expanded rapidly, the number of newspapers, periodicals and books published greatly increased. I have not been able to examine every book, periodical and newspaper published in Canada or written by an inhabitant of Canada between 1840 and 1912: selection became a necessity. In the period between 1840 and 1912, this study concentrates on selected newspapers and periodicals of some literary standing or which are themselves humorous journals, and on certain individual writers. It notes the forms which humour takes and the characteristics of this humour, and it determines whether any pattern of humour--either regional or national--is discernible.

The study examines Canadian humour which has not traditionally been regarded as literary and which has therefore been disregarded as insignificant. The final chapter reviews writers whose humorous works have received some critical attention. As will be shown, few even of these works have been accorded the epithet "literary". On

the other hand there is quite a large body of "unliterary humour,"<sup>9</sup> i.e., humour that may have received popular acclaim but has since been rejected for even minimal consideration within the Canadian literary canon. Such humour is, therefore, largely unknown.

In its inclusion of materials published in the popular press, i.e., the newspapers and journals of the time, this study oversteps the usual Canadian boundaries of the "literary". The influential Canadian literati have not generally regarded newspapers as significant purveyors of literature, although from the earliest newspapers it is evident that newspaper editors have regarded them as such. Literary critics and historians generally refer to newspaper material pejoratively as journalistic, biased, regional, or provincial. The more self-consciously literary Canadian periodicals have received some critical attention, but writers in these periodicals are, on the whole, a humourless lot. Editors of such periodicals rarely published humorous writing, because it did not meet their objectives. They had nothing against humour per se, but their objectives were to improve the taste and elevate the minds of their readers, not to encourage undue levity or to cater to unformed tastes. Their role was to provide literary material of a high standard to readers of sufficient cultivation to appreciate it.

In the nineteenth century, Canadian writers found a ready market for their writing in the U.S., with book publishers or in journals and newspapers. They also published their materials in Great Britain, but to a lesser extent than in the U.S. Many of Canada's humorists, including Haliburton, Sara Jeannette Duncan, Robert Barr, and James DeMille, published their works outside Canada and frequently wrote with their non-Canadian readers in mind. As a result, much of the material produced by Canadian humorists has been neglected because it is "un-Canadian"--because it was not published in Canada or about Canada. But even though they were not written specifically for Canadian readers, the humour in these books and articles is nevertheless Canadian humour, and should be looked at in order to inquire into its characteristics. The works of these writers frequently display qualities which are more distinctively Canadian than has generally been noted.

That Canadian humour does appear to be subtly different from either American or British humour becomes apparent early in the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century Canadian humour was closely related to eighteenth-century British humour; its main forms are narrative verse satire and occasional light verse. There is a strong satiric thrust to the humour; it is primarily directed at correcting social ills. There is little indigenous prose humour

evident at this time. Early Canadian writing, especially in the years following the American Revolution, differs from either British or American productions of the same period chiefly in the articulation of a growing consciousness that the new society is neither British nor American; it centres on the unrest in the American colonies and the settlement of the Loyalists in Canada.

In treating the period 1815 to 1840, the humour of The Scribbler (1821-27), Canada's first satirical and humorous weekly is examined. So is the humour in such books as Jean Baptiste: A Poetic Olio (1825), The Charivari (1824), and a peculiar little book, The Mysterious Stranger (1813), which was published in New Brunswick. This last appears to be a species of "rogue tale." Based on the number of editions which appeared in the nineteenth century, it likely was Canada's first best-seller.

The most significant development between 1815 and 1840 is the emergence of the prose sketch as a major form for satiric humour. Humorous sketches initially appeared in newspapers and periodicals as discrete, infrequent items but, by the 1820s, began to appear in continuing series of related sketches with a specific cast of characters. Although the writers of these sketches were mostly still anonymous, their identities were often known in their communities. The best known series of sketches to make its



appearance before Haliburton's The Clockmaker (1836) is The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure (1821-23) by Thomas McCulloch. These sketches, and such other series of newspaper sketches as the "Club" papers (1828-32) and "NovaScotian Farming" (1823-4), are examined.

The humour of these sketches laid the foundation for what Robertson Davies identifies as the Canadian "Myth of Innocence or Moral Superiority" in relation to the U.S. that has continued to manifest itself in twentieth-century Canadian literature. Davies says that

deep in our hearts we Canadians cherish a notion . . . that we are a simple folk, nourished on simpler truths of Christianity, in whom certain rough and untutored instincts of nobility assert themselves (One Half of Robertson Davies 275).

Haliburton and McCulloch, the humorists whose work is recognized as the only "literary" humour of this early period, were clearly working within the context of such a myth in their emphasis on moral rather than material development as the shaping principle of their society and in Haliburton's depiction of shoddy American morality. Furthermore, Haliburton and McCulloch reveal the influence of two opposing models of humour available to Canadian humorists: the British model, taken by McCulloch; and the American path, apparently taken by Haliburton. (That Haliburton only appears to take the American path may come as a bit of a shock.)

The humour of Haliburton is dealt with separately. I show that Haliburton was writing within an established Canadian newspaper tradition of satiric humour. Although he appears to embrace the American style of humour, Haliburton uses a variety of techniques to distance himself from the narrative, and to maintain a perspective which is more British than American. The emphasis in this examination is on The Clockmaker, Series I (1836) and The Old Judge (1849). The latter is significant. It represents a new--and rare--development in Canadian humour, for the humour of Haliburton's The Old Judge does not bend itself to the demands of satire but instead adopts the wider perspective of recording life in all its inconsistencies and incongruities. Throughout the nineteenth century, satire continues to be a major component of Canadian humour, and the differentiation of "Canadian" society from its two great models continues to be the focus of attention. That the sketch continues to be the preferred form for humour the end of the nineteenth century is evident in Leacock's choice of this form for much of his writing. He identifies his choice of this form in the title of his most famous work, Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town.

Following Haliburton, most of the humour written by Canadian writers until Leacock either falls into the classification of "unliterary" humour, or is otherwise

neglected by Canadian critics. This includes the humour published in the newspapers and periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth century as well as in the works of individual writers as diverse as James DeMille, Sara Jeannette Duncan, and Peter McArthur. After 1840, the rapid growth of towns and cities in Central Canada and the West gave rise to increasing numbers of newspapers, many of which no doubt contain humorous materials. However, an examination of all of these newspapers is not feasible at this point. Attention is focused instead on the humour in selected journals. These include a number of "literary" journals such as The Literary Garland (1838-51), the Anglo-American Magazine (1852-55), The Week (1883-96), as well as such humorous and satiric journals as Punch in Canada (1848-50), Diogenes (1868-69), Grip (1871-93), and the Calgary Eye-Opener (1902-1922). Many contributors to these papers used pen-names or remained anonymous, but whenever possible the work of specific humorists is examined. (When material originally published in these papers has subsequently been collected and/or expanded in book form, the collections rather than the originals are examined.) Throughout the period, parody, in one or another of its manifestations, is a major tool of the Canadian humorist. In Canadian humour the work parodied is frequently North American.

Finally the humour created by individual writers who published novels, sketches, short stories, essays, or poems between 1840 and 1912 is explored. Of this group, only Leacock is widely regarded as a "literary" humorist. These writers have as a rule achieved recognition at the regional or even national levels--some only as popular writers. A few have received substantial international recognition. Others such as Isabella Valancy Crawford wrote only a few humorous works and gained their reputations from other more "serious" writings. These humorists fall into several distinct categories. The first group, writers who lived and published most of their work in and about Canada includes such "local colour"<sup>10</sup> writers as W. H. Drummond, Peter McArthur, W. H. P. Jarvis, Robert Kirkland Kernighan (The Khan) and E. W. Thompson, as well as Leacock. The second group includes writers who lived outside of Canada and whose works were mainly published elsewhere: Robert Barr, Sara Jeannette Duncan, DeMille, and George Thomas Lanigan. (The work of such writers such as Leacock and Robert Service was so popular and received so much international recognition that it was published simultaneously in Canada, the United States and Great Britain.) The local colour writers include incidental humorists--writers whose works are not intended primarily to be humorous but who incorporate humour in order to give their otherwise moral and socially serious works a

wider appeal. Finally, note is taken of a small group of writers of children's humour which includes DeMille and Frances Blake Crofton.

Very few of these writers are regarded as having made significant contributions to Canadian literature, because their writing is thought to lack the proper seriousness, because it is not sufficiently eloquent or universal, because it is short on Canadian content, or because it follows the formulae of "popular" or journalistic writing. These factors account for the lack of attention paid to the comic novels of Duncan, the best of the comic verse of Service and the parody romances of DeMille.

Finally in the concluding chapter there is a brief examination of the work of Leacock to 1912 indicating why his work has been given the literary recognition denied others.

Late into the twentieth century Canadian humorists continue to work primarily using short forms--sketches, essays and short fiction and poetry--or to create parodic longer works. Newspapers and periodicals, augmented by radio, have remained the primary modes for the transmission of Canadian humour. Many of the distancing techniques which characterize modern Canadian humour and which contribute to its diffident tone and distinctive ironic quality may be traced in the early humour of this country. The popular

humorists were frequently the only Canadian writers many Canadians knew or read, and to ignore them is to ignore an important aspect of our literary heritage.

## Notes

1. Lorne Pierce, Unexplored Fields of Canadian Literature (n.d.). The context in which this remark is made is:

Canadian literature is too serious. Surely there is a place for books of trifles, inter alia, relaxation and escape. We need more resounding laughter, perhaps, but certainly more subtle humour and even satire. Still we go on writing sermonettes, trying to prove something or convert somebody (13).

2. There are many histories of Canada which describe the impact of World War I on what to 1914 was a basically a pioneer country; see, for example, Ralph Allen, Ordeal by Fire (Toronto: 1961) and J. L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1918 (Toronto: 1989).

3. The exception to this statement is Newfoundland, which did not enter Confederation until well after the period of this study. For information about Newfoundland humour, see Herbert Lench Pottle, Fun on the Rock: Toward a Theory of Newfoundland Humour. (St. John's: Breakwater, 1983).

4. In contrast to the ongoing interest of American critics in the humour of their country, Canadian critics continue to pay little attention to Canadian humour. A computerized check of ten years of criticism (MLA Bibliography from January, 1981 to October, 1992) for example, shows that whereas there are entries for 370 items dealing with humour in American literature, there are only 18 such entries dealing with humour in Canadian literature.

5. Samuel S. Cox, Why We Laugh (1876); Constance Rourke, American Humour (1931) and Walter Blair, Native American Humour (1937). I have chosen these three studies to represent American humour criticism because of their historical importance in the field and because each study includes materials that would traditionally have been disregarded by literary critics. Each study includes materials from such diverse sources as legislative orations, newspapers, periodicals, and almanacs, in addition to books. In so doing, each exemplifies the breadth of approach that has been taken to the criticism of American humour. In the 1870s, Cox begins his study with the assumption that there is a distinct American humour and proceeds to show "by collation and generalization the humour of classes and individuals" (Cox, 9) revealed in the legislatures of America. Rourke delineates the specific characteristics of American (i.e. post-colonial) humour and links such humour to the American character and spirit. Blair extends the work of Rourke by

including the humour of colonial America and examining "specific nineteenth century developments" (Blair, iv).

6. Louis Cazamain, The Development of English Humour Pts I and II (1952) and J. B. Priestly, English Humour. (1976). These representative British studies of humour concentrate more on "literary" humour than the American studies mentioned above, although they do examine humour from other sources.

7. Lee Siegel, Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India (1987). Siegel discusses the humour of India from ancient to modern times "in a variety of overlapping ways, following a medley of overlapping methods: [descriptive, causal, modal, functional, developmental and comparative]" (xii-xiii).

8. T. C. Haliburton was the first Canadian to write theoretically about North American humour. He discusses the characteristics of this humour in the introductions to his anthologies of American humour, Traits of American Humour (1852) and The Americans at Home (1854). However, these introductions are clearly about the humour of the U. S.--he makes no reference to Canadian (or Nova Scotian) humour.

9. The term is used here as it is used by E. K. Brown in On Canadian Poetry, 4.

10. Local colour refers to writing which exploits the speech, dress, mannerisms, habits of thought and topography peculiar to a certain region. . . . About 1880 this interest became dominant in American literature; what was called a "local color movement" developed. . . . [Such writers as] Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and Joaquin Miller wrote of the West... (Holman, 249)

In Canada, local colour writing became popular in the 1890s.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Studying Canadian Humour

The objective of this study--the examination of Canadian humour in the period from 1752 to the publication of Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town in 1912--is a new undertaking. It rests on the conviction that there is a significant body of Canadian humour in this period. At present Canadian humour criticism is dominated by the assumption that little humour worth consideration was produced between the work of Haliburton and that of Leacock.<sup>1</sup> Although since 1960 considerable critical attention has been paid to the Stepsure letters of McCulloch, and recent criticism of the work of DeMille<sup>2</sup> and Sara Jeannette Duncan<sup>3</sup> has revealed hitherto unexplored comic and ironic depths, long-standing beliefs about the dearth of early Canadian humour have not yet been seriously challenged. Nor will they be until critics begin to examine writing which has hitherto been overlooked or rejected.

Shaping the Canadian literary canon in the nineteenth century consisted mainly of identifying the serious poetry which could be classified as "literature".<sup>4</sup> The poetry that received critical approbation combined superior poetic qualities, well above the ordinary run of written works, with language and ideals sufficiently elevated to characterize the emerging Canadian "nation".<sup>5</sup> Later critics added belles lettres, drama and prose works such as the novel and the short story to the emerging canon.<sup>6</sup> There have even been attempts--without great success--to include non-fiction such as history, biography and scientific writings.<sup>7</sup> On the whole, this rather extensive canon excludes most humorous writing as well as works which do not focus on Canada and the Canadian character. The criteria of its formation have sent, for instance, into obscurity many of the romances, especially the parodic romances, and significant comic novels and poems of the nineteenth century.

To set oneself up as a literary critic of Canadian humour is, to some extent, to fly in the face of established literary practice. The Canadian critic of humour must deal with a twofold problem, one aspect of which arises from the general difficulties associated with humour criticism, the other from the criteria used to determine the relationship of any given work to the Canadian literary canon. The

general problems of humour criticism will be briefly addressed before we look at humour and the Canadian canon.

Humour is both complex and nebulous. Theories about its nature and mechanics have been advanced since Plato and Aristotle, and the debate is still going on.<sup>8</sup> In the late twentieth century humour theorists have concluded that no one theory explains satisfactorily exactly what humour is or how it works. Anthony Chapman and Hugh Foote assert that

strictly speaking, a distinction can (and ...should) be drawn between theories of humour and theories of laughter. . . [we conclude that] no all embracing theory of humor and/or laughter has yet gained wide acceptance and possibly no general theory will ever be successfully applied to the human race as a whole when its members exhibit such vast individual differences with respect to their humour responsiveness (3-4).

In Humor and Society: Explorations in the Sociology of Humor, Marvin Koller identifies one consensus among humour theorists--they all agree that "humour is a distinctly human quality and manifests itself in human relationships, human organizations and human interactive processes" (13). Unfortunately, this consensus offers little in the way of literary criteria, nor does it explain the nature of this distinctly human quality.

We do know that there is no one humorous technique or genre, and that humour is found in all the traditional genres and modes and symbol systems of all literatures. In The Language of Humour (1985), Walter Nash defines humour in

terms of its medium. He suggests that humour is

a land for which the explorer must equip himself thoughtfully. Here we find wit and word-play and banter and bumfun; slogans and captions and catchwords; allusion and parody; ironies; satires; here are graffiti and limericks; here is the pert rhyme, and here the twisted pun; here are scrambled spellings and skewed pronunciations; here is filth for the filthy (you and me), and here are delicacies for the delicate (you and me). The sheer variety of phenomena is a temptation to the thesis maker. He must try to explain what it is that makes one pursuit of all joking, from high comedy to the low snigger, and one family of all jokers, from the deft designers of fiction and poetry down to the aerosol masters of back walls and bridge arches (1).

Unlike most early Canadian literary critics, Nash accepts humour's diversity, its iconoclasm and its active repudiation of decorum. Yet this very unevenness of the quality of humour, iconoclasm, and resistance to categorization have always posed major problems for literary theorists to whom the aesthetic value of literature is often linked to its serious intellectual and moral quality. In Comic Effects: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Humor in Literature (1989), Paul Lewis says:

In our time, the criticism of humor in literature continues to be shaped by two dated and, therefore, limiting methodologies. On one side are the critics who derive their conceptual framework from an early universalist theory that has either been disregarded or subsumed in the past thirty years or so. On the other side are critics who see no reason to refer to humor research or theory at all (2).

Although Lewis is not writing specifically about Canadian

humour criticism, his conclusion deserves attention for it applies to the existing criticism of Canadian humour. He suggests that what is needed is an interdisciplinary approach which recognizes the scope of humour investigation. Increasing numbers and varieties of theories about the nature and function of humour and its relationship to laughter are being advanced by philosophers,<sup>9</sup> linguists,<sup>10</sup> psychologists,<sup>11</sup> sociologists,<sup>12</sup> literary critics,<sup>13</sup> and feminists,<sup>14</sup> involved in its study. Lewis asserts that humour should not be studied in isolation from its cultural milieu:

It may be possible to describe the essential structure of a humor stimulus and the essential cognitive, psychological and affective processes involved in the appreciation of such a stimulus, but it is now clear that these descriptions must leave room for such variables as cultural norms, group affiliations and transitory moods (159).

As one of the first Canadians to take humour seriously, Leacock theorized extensively about its nature and function.<sup>15</sup> He asserted his belief that humour contributes to the improvement of mankind. Like the British critic William Hazlitt, Leacock subscribed to the "incongruity theory," one of the major universalist theories of humour. In his essay "American Humour" (1916), he said

the basis of the humorous, the amusing, the ludicrous, lies in the incongruity, the unfittingness, the want of harmony among things; and this incongruity, according to the various stages of evolution of human society and of the

art of speech, may appear in primitive form, or may assume a complex manifestation (106).

He retained this view of humour throughout his career as humorist and humour theorist<sup>16</sup>, saying in Humour and Humanity (1937), that "humour may be defined as the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life, and the artistic expression thereof" (11). To account for cruel and aggressive forms of humour, Leacock suggests that humour must have evolved from primitive to complex and sophisticated forms, and that although all forms may coexist, only the most primitive forms of humour are aggressive and cruel (Humor: Its Theory and Technique 220-37).

In compiling illustrations to explain the nature of humour, Leacock includes selections from North American as well as English humorists. He acknowledges the value of humour in many forms and levels other than those recognized as purely literary. Significantly for the critic of Canadian humour, Leacock places parody and other forms of what he aptly calls "parasitic" literature quite high on the scale of verbal literary humour, saying "the parasitic forms of literature may serve to invigorate and purify the whole body of letters. A large proportion of the pages of Punch are parasitic, and Punch is the most wholesome thing in England" (Humour, Its Theory and Technique 43). Like many

nineteenth-century Canadian humorists, Leacock relies heavily upon parody, particularly meta-fictional parody,<sup>17</sup> as a major device of humour. Because so many Canadian humorists relied on varied parodic techniques to create humour, a reexamination of the value and complexity of nineteenth-century Canadian parody is needed. It will be touched on in this study. Critics of nineteenth-century Canadian writing have, as a rule ignored parody. Unlike American critics, they have also ignored other works of humour that have not satisfied their criteria of the high "literary" plane. On the other hand, humorous works of a high literary calibre are few in the literature of every country.

The high literary plane usually denotes works which belong to the major genres: epic, lyric, ode, drama, novel and short story, prose fiction and prose non-fiction, which are perceived by critics to have aesthetic value. But Canada's writers have communicated with their readers on at least four planes of writing, of which the literary plane is admittedly the highest. The others are the journalistic plane, the popular plane, and the folk plane. Although humorous writing is found on all four planes, Haliburton, McCulloch and Leacock are the only nineteenth-century Canadian writers whose humorous work is generally accepted as satisfying the criteria of the "literary" plane. This is

the underlying reason for the persistence of the myth that there is no significant Canadian humour between Haliburton and Leacock--for significant, read literary.

Most of Canada's humorous writings are found on the second, or "journalistic" plane, which, in part, explains why they have not been studied. Writing on this level is generally presumed to have little of aesthetic significance and has, until recently in Canada, not been catalogued or readily accessible. Writing on this journalistic plane may itself be subdivided into a number of levels. On the highest of these levels writing approaches the literary and appeals primarily to a well-educated, discriminating audience. Writing on the lowest level is colloquial, sensationalist, and racy, and is often found in such publications as the gossip sheet. One characteristic of journalistic writing, regardless of aesthetic quality, is its brevity--short poems, sketches, and stories dominate. Haliburton and McCulloch both wrote for publication in newspapers, as do such modern Canadian humorists as Ray Guy.

Canadian humour is also to be found on the "popular" plane. Popular writing includes novels and romances, short stories and poetry which appeal to the general population, i.e., the people whose literary taste is usually perceived to be more vulgar and less educated than that of the literati (readers of "serious" literature). The language of



such popular works is less elevated, experimentation with form less obvious, and plots and ideas often formulaic and sentimental. The writing found on this "popular" plane tends, of course, to be longer than journalistic writing. As is the case with journalistic literature, little critical attention has been given to popular Canadian works, which, in the nineteenth century, included romances and local colour fiction.

There is a fourth plane of writing in which Canadian humour may be found. This is the plane of "folk literature" which includes writing closely related to oral storytelling and oral culture. Such writing is more frequently studied by folklorists than by literary scholars. For present purposes, folk literature is significant when its influence carries over into the writing on the other planes.

The writing found on these planes is not always as uniform as these labels suggest. In Canada as elsewhere, there is a great overlap between popular, journalistic, and literary writing. Although such conclusions are still tentative in Canada, elsewhere researchers suggest that the difference often lies more in the manner of presentation than in the quality of the writing. Bob Ashley, editor of The Study of Popular Fiction: A Source Book (1989), refers to "the popular/serious distinction [as] a theoretical minefield" stemming from a tendency to connect popular

fiction with an indiscriminating mass readership (2). He localizes the source of that tendency in

the practice of literary criticism and [suggests] it is that negative usage which regards popular fiction as second-rate fiction (or worse), a kind of cultural detritus, left over after literature of permanent value has been identified. Thus, 'good' literature is identified, 'canonised', and takes its place within high culture as serious art. What is left is part of popular culture and the best that can be said of it is that it provides harmless entertainment. . . . More likely it will be ignored. And . . . what is to be said about the left-overs? For the residuum is overwhelmingly substantial. It constitutes the principal fictional reading of the majority of the population. . . . [It] is widely assumed to influence lives profoundly; and it is surely of major significance in the understanding of those lives, particularly the processes by which meanings are constructed and exchanged (3).

As critics become more broad-minded about what constitutes literature, greater numbers of popular and journalistic works are being given serious consideration. Such a shift will help the study of Canadian humour.

As has been mentioned, in Canada little attention has so far been given to humorous writing in either the journalistic or popular planes. Research on humour has focused on works belonging on the literary and the folk planes, with research on Canadian humour at the folk level being undertaken by folklore, not literary, scholars.<sup>18</sup> Canada lags behind the U.S. in recognizing the significance of its journalistic and popular humour and in understanding the relationship between literary humour and that found on

the other three planes. This can be attributed to the dominance of the Canadian literary culture by the literati, whose theories of literature and culture reflect a colonial mentality which, asserting ideals of British educational and cultural superiority, looks to the literature of England (and Europe) to discover the criteria for Canadian literature.<sup>19</sup>

In the U.S., democratic republicanism was clearly more influential than the American literati in determining the character of American humour. In America's Humor (1978) Walter Blair and Hamlin Hill explain that

as Jefferson bragged, we have no distinct class of literati. . . . Writers on farms and plantations and in cities were close to the rank and file who read their words. They felt no constraints against re-working oral materials into funny written pieces (33).

This was not the case in Canada, where the literati were, from the 1840s onward, very influential. Blair and Hill show that

even though many raw materials and methods of American humor were universal, by the 1830s it had been decisively molded by the national character. The exaggeration, the anti-intellectual bias, and the interest in native characters and their modulations of the spoken language came together in ways that would characterize [American] humor for a century (155).

They also attribute a large role to the newspapers in encouraging these developments. They explain that the tales, songs, jokes, anecdotes, riddles, wonder tales,

weather lore, medical and other lore which form the major elements of folk literature have, in the U.S., been transformed and incorporated into written forms, eventually to become the basis of American humour. They also show that these "ephemera, kidnapped from both the folk and scholars by hacks, journalists, fiction writers and even literati, who tinkered with it to suit themselves, the media, and the audiences," form a mingling of folklore and journalism characterizing a category of writing which they call "folk journalism" (32). Their research indicates that

the American folk journalists, the vernacular storytellers to whom they were indebted, their media, their audiences--and consequently their merits--were all peculiar to the country, and therefore could create unique local and national experiences with vividness that no import could achieve (38).

No such connection between the folk and written media was encouraged in Canada, although the works of both McCulloch and Haliburton give some evidence that folk journalism was developing in the Maritimes before 1850. A similar impulse to connect the folk and literature is evident in the writings of such popular writers as L. M. Montgomery and Nellie McClung, and in the humorous and satiric papers published in Ontario and in the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, in this country the anti-intellectual republicanism which, in the U.S., facilitated the crossover between the oral amusements

of the folk and the formal writing we call literature, is entirely missing among the literati, and is only presented, as will be explained later, through various distancing devices even in popular writings. The humour in Montgomery and McClung is significant because it is so closely related to folk humour.

Canadians can learn much from Americans about the criticism of humour. In his introduction to Humour in America: A Research Guide to Genres and Topics (1988), Lawrence Mintz says:

It has become conventional to begin scholarly studies of humour with two standard disclaimers: an apology is offered for the fact that the study of humour is not, of itself, funny, and attention is directed to the apparent irony that though humour is itself trivial and superficial, the study of it is necessarily significant and complex. It is not quite clear why it is expected that the study of humour be more amusing than, say, the study of sex is titillating, but somehow it seems ineluctable that the reader be warned and comforted. So be it . . . As to the second point, humour is deceptively light, ephemeral, inconsequential, if it is so at all. Its perpetual disguise is, of course, that it is mere entertainment, "just kidding", but most of the time the joking mode scarcely masks the fact that the issue at hand is most serious (vii).

Mintz's book demonstrates the tremendous scholarly interest that exists in all forms of American humour. More importantly, it also shows that Americans use the term "American humour" to refer to many manifestations of humour other than strictly "literary" ones.

Canadian literature developed as the literature of the cities rather than of the countryside (Matthews 48). Encouraged by colonial class consciousness and intellectual snobbery to eschew the folk, Canadian humour often turned to parody and satire, especially after 1840, and acquired a mocking tone which was frequently directed at the constrictions of excessive gentility and the pseudo-British pretensions of the literati.

For the most part, the term "Canadian humour" refers to the aesthetically superior literary works of a very few writers, most of whom are twentieth-century.<sup>20</sup> This practice differs not just from American but also from British approaches. In English Humour (1976), J.B. Priestley permits himself very wide parameters for his study of English humour, saying

I must move down the centuries, trying to single out every writer of any importance who has made us laugh or even broadly smile. While eager to welcome a genuine true humorist, I must also consider wits, various odd funny men, any creators of wild nonsense, itself an English speciality (10).

In Canada, we have yet to "consider wits, various odd funny men and creators of wild nonsense." To do so we must devise new and more inclusive criteria, and be willing to examine writing from many sources--even those of dubious literary merit.

This study will adopt current practice in defining the

term "humour" in the broadest possible sense, recognizing at the same time that the highest forms of humour extend well beyond the satiric, the comic and the ironic. It accepts, and extends to include lower forms as well, Leacock's concept of humour as inclusive of, yet reaching beyond, the comic:

humour in its highest reach touches the sublime:  
 humour in its highest reach mingles with pathos:  
 it voices sorrow for our human lot and  
 reconciliation with it. . . . It is born, as it  
 were in perplexity, in contemplation of the  
 insoluble riddle of existence" (Humour and  
 Humanity 232)

The lower forms of humour include jokes, anecdotes, and comic incident (slapstick), which are apt to be crude, cruel, offensive, iconoclastic, and tasteless as well as comical, lively and realistic. The material being examined in this exploration of early Canadian humour includes these comic devices, jokes, puns, witticisms and other verbal devices which act as laughter-producing agents, even though they do not represent the highest form of humour.

There is no established methodology for this examination. Because Canada shares a North American popular culture with the U.S., and has done so since the eighteenth century, American methodology appears to have more to offer than British. However, to adhere too closely to such methodology may result in distortion because of the subtle but significant differences between the two cultures.

Nevertheless, the methodology of such historians of American humour as Cox, Boatwright, Rourke and Blair, and of such collections of modern humour criticism as Critical Essays on American Humor (1984) and Humor in America: A Research Guide to Genres and Topics (1988) provides models for determining which materials should be given consideration. The materials studied here include the works of writers (even anonymous ones) whose humour was published in books, newspapers and periodicals. Mintz states that in choosing the articles for Humor in America, his objective is to

provide a good overview of the serious study of American humor in most of its major manifestations, generic and topical. . . . [To accomplish this] each chapter is organized to provide an overview of either a genre of expression such as literature, the comic strip, film, broadcast, magazine or stand-up comedy, or a topic of significance such as racial and ethnic humor, women's humor, and political humor (x).

If any clear understanding of the range and depth of Canadian humour is to be achieved, Canadian critics would be well advised to consider these categories and devise still others.

Let us turn now to a review of recent literature on Canadian humour. Research into all forms of Canadian writing found in the nineteenth-century periodicals and newspapers published both in and outside Canada is in its early stages, yet these "ephemeral" and often purely local publications were the main outlets for nineteenth-century



Canadian writers--especially humorists. The location, recovery and examination of Canadian literature contained in these newspapers and periodicals as well as in the long out-of-print "popular" books are progressing steadily.<sup>21</sup> To date, only a fragment of the material to be found therein has been catalogued, collected and republished. Current research in nineteenth-century Canadian literature is focused primarily on retrieving and publishing the work of individual writers,<sup>22</sup> especially those who have some previously acknowledged claim to literary merit. Some of this writing is humorous, but, to date, Canadian humour published in nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals has not been systematically catalogued, collected, examined or republished, except for fragments in a few anthologies of Canadian humour (to be discussed later). The works of many humorists remain out of print. The exceptions are selected works of Haliburton, McCulloch and Leacock which are readily available and quite frequently studied. Available also is the work of such humorists as DeMille, Duncan and Barr which was reprinted (often with no critical apparatus) in the Poetry and Prose in Reprint series of the University of Toronto Press in the 1970s. In addition, there are a few collections such as Hugh Dempsey's The Best of Bob Edwards (1975) and Alec Lucas' The Best of Peter McArthur (1967) which contain critical introductions to the humour of these

writers. However, with the exception of Lucas' Peter McArthur (1975) and recent studies of DeMille (Monk, 1991) and Duncan (Dean, 1991), most criticism of nineteenth-century Canadian humour focuses almost exclusively on the writings of Haliburton, McCulloch and Leacock. Even then, Gwendolyn Davies notes in her introduction to The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure (1991), that discovery and subsequent recovery do not guarantee that the work of a Canadian humorist will be given critical attention as humour. She says "in spite of the fact that 'they set the hale kintra laughin', ' the Stepsure letters have received little critical attention as examples of humour and satire" (xlix). Haliburton's humour has been studied in L. A. A. Harding's doctoral dissertation, "The Humour of Haliburton" (1964), and there have been two recent studies which focus specifically on the humour of Leacock. These are Beverley Rasporich's 1979 dissertation, "Stephen Leacock: Canada's Gentleman Humorist A Study of the Canadian Perspective in the Humour of Stephen Leacock" (sadly still unpublished) and Gerald Lynch's Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity (1988). Thus there is some evidence of formal study of individual Canadian humorists.

Some of the groundwork for the study of Canadian humour is in place. Scholars such as Thomas Vincent<sup>23</sup> and Gwendolyn Davies<sup>24</sup> have published studies of poetry and

prose found in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals in the Maritimes, but with the exception of Vincent's anthology, Narrative Verse Satire in Maritime Canada 1779-1814 (1978) and his articles on eighteenth-century satire, their work has not focused specifically on humour. This is also true of the unpublished studies of literary materials in nineteenth-century Canadian periodicals by Robert McDougall<sup>25</sup> and Mary Lu MacDonald.<sup>26</sup> There is no extended study of Canadian humour which includes a detailed examination of humorous writing (in addition to satire) published before McCulloch's Stepsure Letters (1821-3), or during the period between their publication and the appearance of The Clockmaker (1836),<sup>27</sup> or in the period between Haliburton and Leacock.

Although Vincent<sup>28</sup> has begun the examination of eighteenth-century Canadian humour through his work on satire, there are no critical histories or studies of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Canadian humour per se. Most of the criticism of McCulloch and Haliburton concentrates on their satire rather than the humour of which it is a part. General examinations of Canadian satire exist, but these rarely include nineteenth-century writers other than Haliburton and McCulloch. Most of these are unpublished.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, although Leacock achieved an international reputation as a humorist, his work is more

frequently criticized for its irony or satire than as humour. (Occasionally satire and irony are discussed as techniques for generating humour.) A brief survey of some of the criticism of Haliburton should serve as an indication of the state of Canadian humour criticism.

Most Canadian critics acknowledge Haliburton's skill as a satirist, but L. A. A. Harding's doctoral dissertation, "The Humour of Haliburton," is particularly significant because he contends that Haliburton's writing "is more humour than satire" (12). This (as yet unpublished) study is a serious and detailed analysis of the techniques of humour that Haliburton employs. Haliburton's humour, Harding says, "springs from a mind which saw the Yankee as a beggar on horseback or, if rich, a nouveau riche who was just a jump ahead of the 'savage masses' whence he had sprung" (12). He analyses Haliburton's "skilful use of folk diction and his feeling for the humorous possibilities of folk imagery" (26), as well as his narrative method. He discovers that Haliburton uses "seven different kinds of anecdote" which together form "the basis of [his] observations about character" (68). Harding demonstrates clearly that Haliburton was working within the emerging American humour milieu in his blending of literary techniques and folk journalism in creating the character and language of Sam Slick. Harding is virtually alone in this

kind of analysis of Haliburton's humour.

His study is especially important because it clearly identifies a new Canadian way of using the alazon (braggart), a comic figure about which more will be said later. For the moment it is sufficient to note that the subtlety in his creation of this comic figure was not recognized by Haliburton's contemporaries and has not been adequately recognized since. Harding concludes that "most Americans, and Nova Scotians too, understood only about one half the implications of the humour and read [The Clockmaker] as a joke book with a connecting thread, which was the likeable Sam. It took educated Americans to get angry at the hoax of Sam Slick posing as a typical Yankee" (100).

Harding's work is also important because he refutes V. L. O. Chittick's devaluation of Haliburton's skill and importance as a humorist. In Thomas Chandler Haliburton (Sam Slick): A Study in Provincial Toryism (1924), Chittick, who appears to be one of those angry Americans to whom Harding refers in the passage just quoted, states explicitly that his objective is to discredit Haliburton as a humorist of any stature at all--to "correct an egregiously false and unnecessarily long-continued impression of one of the more interesting personalities of Canada's pre-Confederation era (i.e., that Haliburton is the 'Father of American humor')"

(viii). Chittick's study, which has not yet been supplanted as the definitive study of Haliburton, concludes:

Haliburton never achieved greatness, though he occasionally approached it. Nor was he a genius of the first order. . . . Much that he wrote was crude and careless, tiresome, sentimental and laboured, yet with all this that was inferior . . . there was also sufficient of popular appeal, and of solid worth as well to justly obtain for him, a resident of a despised colony still in the pre-Confederation era of Canadian development . . . a more general and more cordial recognition as a man of letters than has been secured by any other colonial author before or since (651).

It is hard to imagine any other nation accepting such unjustified and blatantly hostile criticism of one of its major writers.

Although Canadian critics accept Haliburton as a major Canadian writer, the impact of Chittick's work on Canadian humour criticism cannot be denied. In On Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1979), a collection of critical essays on Haliburton, Richard Davies notes that "the years between 1924-1958 were years of neglect for Haliburton" and attributes this silence to the impact of Chittick's work, saying "few readers have dared to disagree with the portrait of Haliburton that emerges from Chittick's book" (6-7). This anthology of sixteen essays of Haliburton criticism, arranged chronologically, contains three essays by Chittick--the only critic so honoured.

In the 1950s Walter Avis investigated the language

Haliburton created for Sam Slick, and his work went a long way towards dispelling the idea that Haliburton was a less than creative humorist. Then, in the 1960s, a number of theses and dissertations on Haliburton and on Canadian humour and satire appear, with mixed results. R. R. Van Tongerlo's M.A. thesis, "T. C. Haliburton, Satirical Humorist" (1965) concludes that "In The Old Judge the sense of the excessive has been developed into full burlesque. As a result the characters sacrifice some of their humanity for the colour that they gain from their ridiculousness" (79)-- which is an accurate comment regarding technique, but detracts from the effectiveness of the humour. In 1964 D. G. Thompson's M.A. thesis is a devastating attack on Haliburton as leader in Canadian humour. After reading the title of his M.A. thesis--"T. C. Haliburton and the Failure of Canadian Humour,"--the reader is not surprised by D. G. Thompson's assertion that "in Canada, although humour appeared before and after Haliburton, there was no tradition of Canadian humour developed that could be said to have played an important role in Canadian literature" (iv). Thompson's thesis contains no investigation into the humour that appeared before Haliburton and little into what came later, and thus provides little in the way of proof of this assertion. However, he does confirm that early critics in Canada were less than enthusiastic about Haliburton's

humour. He concludes that statements by these critics that Haliburton was "the founder of American humour" meant that "his humour was never called Canadian, and, thus, his successors had logically to be Americans--as indeed they were" (80). He confirms the negative impact of Chittick's work, stating that when Chittick demonstrated that all the claims about Haliburton--that he was "descended from Scott", that he was "a great and good man", that he was "the founder of American humour," or "the first systematic humorist of the English speaking peoples"--to be false, "the critics became dumb. They did not know what to claim for him" (93).

The thesis by Joan Donkersgood completed in 1985 examines the social and political philosophies of Haliburton and McCulloch, and does not deal directly with the humour of either.

More recent is a volume of criticism of Haliburton, The Thomas Chandler Haliburton Symposium (1985) containing papers read at one of the University of Ottawa's "Reappraisal of Canadian Writers" conferences. Of the ten papers selected for inclusion, only Daniel Royot's "Sam Slick and Popular American Humour" focuses on Haliburton's skill as a humorist in the creation of the character of Sam Slick, and shows that "his achievements were ultimately conducive to a new genre combining oral culture, popular culture and literature as later exemplified in Mark Twain's



works. In this respect, Sam Slick amounts to a palimpsest which seems worth scrutinizing" (123). (Note, however, that Twain is seen as the successor to Haliburton.) In his review of this publication R. L. McDougall says "that if I do not see a new Haliburton here, I do, however, see the lights go on in many places that were shadowy before" (188). But these places do not include Haliburton's skill as a Canadian humorist.

Thompson's thesis about the failure of Canadian humour is a good introduction to the dominant critical attitudes to nineteenth-century Canadian humour. In 1968 another M.A. thesis about the failure of Canadian humour appeared. In "Canadian Humorists: Leacock, Haliburton, Earle Birney, W. O. Mitchell," Raynald Belanger attributes the lack of Canadian humour to the "self-deprecating attitude" of Canadians, to the "strong doubts [of critics] concerning the very existence of humour on this soil" (165), and to "the notion [in Canada] that laughter is a waste of time" (168). Although he concludes that there is indeed a scarcity of first-class Canadian humour, Belanger is more forthright than Thompson in speculating that perhaps the reason for this lies in the standards of criticism applied to Canadian humour. He suggests that these Canadian standards are so exacting that very little humour in any age or country would satisfy the criteria (172). Canada, he insists, has made

important contributions to the world's store of humour:

considered on a larger scale, humour may have flourished throughout the centuries of European culture, but universal recognition has been reserved for a few names relatively. That illustrates the difficulties experienced by a writer who wishes to bring the humorous art to its peak in [sic] perfection. Seen from that angle, Canada's contribution to the world's humour should not be underestimated, since our two humorists, Haliburton and Leacock, rank among the great names (173).

Both Belanger and Thompson acknowledge problems created for humorists by the gentility of the literati, whom Thompson calls "Canada's literary aristocracy". Thompson remarks that "Canada's literary aristocracy did indeed triumph, for not since Haliburton has 'trivial, commonplace, melodramatic and even vulgar' been able to 'usurp the place of dignified artistic literature'" (82). Significantly, this conclusion is a more accurate reflection of the state of Canadian humour criticism than an accurate description of Canadian humour. One cannot state too frequently the extent to which Canadians have been trained to overlook their humour (which is "trivial, commonplace, melodramatic and even vulgar;") and, if they do notice it, to consider it irrelevant.

Canadian humour fares better when it is studied as satire, but not much better. In his doctoral dissertation, "The Satiric Tradition in the Works of Seven Canadian Satirists" (1968), Vincent Sharman examines the writings of Haliburton, McCulloch, Leacock, Earle Birney, Robertson

Davies, Paul Hiebert and Mordecai Richler, and concludes

only in Birney's Damnation, Leacock's Sunshine Sketches and Arcadian Adventures, Davies' "Overlaid" and "Hope Deferred", Richler's Atuk and some of Haliburton is a good level of satiric art achieved because the satirist too frequently indulges in nonsense, repetition, pettiness and stereotyped characterization (ii) (my italics).

Sharman clearly recognizes the presence in these works of nonsense, repetition and stereotyped characterization--all common devices of the humorist. However, they appear to be too successful in producing laughter, for the comment implies that they are detrimental to the serious, and, hence, more valuable, satire.

There is one unpublished study of humour in nineteenth-century Canadian drama, a 1978 M.A. thesis by Grace Margaret Huisman, "The Critical Stage: Satire, Burlesque and Parody in Some Nineteenth-Century Canadian Plays."<sup>30</sup> Several volumes of Canada's Lost Plays published since 1978 have made available for study nineteenth-century Canadian comedies, farces, parodies and satires.

As already mentioned, there are no book length studies of Canadian humour, although--and these are rare--there are a number of critical articles. These include an essay on the nature of Canadian humour by Margaret Atwood. Most of the published studies, however, are introductions to the

work of specific Canadian humorists and to anthologies of Canadian humour.

Because of her stature as a poet, novelist and critic, Atwood's comments on Canadian literature are quite influential. Two years after the publication of Survival (1972), in which no works by Canadian humorists were examined, she addressed the question of Canadian humour in the short essay, "What's So Funny? Notes on Canadian Humour" (1974). Atwood confirms the distaste that exists in Canadian criticism for the regional and the colloquial when she says:

It would be possible to deny the existence of such a thing [Canadian humour], as the existence of a Canadian literature distinct from European and American literature was denied for many years (and still is in some quarters). To set up such a denial, all you'd have to do would be to talk a lot about 'regionalism' (Second Words, 180).

She uses selected examples to demonstrate that "Canadian humour is different in kind [from both British and American humour]. . . in the assumptions the laughter makes about the audience and in the kinds of satisfaction or reassurance the audience is intended to derive" (180). She concludes that, whatever its form, Canadian humour assures Canadians of their superiority, "I am not like them, I am not provincial, I am cosmopolitan." Atwood points out, however, the price of accepting this reassurance as truth is that "the audience can only renounce its provinciality by renouncing its

Canadianness as well" (188). She pinpoints the core of irony that runs through Canadian humour as well as Canadians' desire to rise above the regional and the trivial. But, according to critic, W. Keith, while her analysis may be "very neat . . . it just doesn't fit the facts." Keith suggests that the sampling from which she draws her generalizations is inadequate and concludes that, while "admittedly her observations are offered as 'notes', . . . in a country with a healthy critical tradition such preliminary jottings would not get published, let alone republished" (An Independent Stance 58). That her sample includes only one nineteenth-century Canadian humorist, Leacock, is not surprising, because, as noted, the consensus continues to be that there is no tradition of Canadian humour before Leacock.

The lack of such a tradition is described by Robert McDougall in the introduction to Haliburton's The Clockmaker (1960). He describes the "qualities of The Clockmaker that attracted [him] the most [as] two which seem somehow more native to the New World than the Old--audacity and energy" and suggests that, "if these are not noticeably Canadian qualities, it is perhaps because Haliburton wrote long before national self-consciousness gave birth, in the strange Canadian way, to national diffidence" (xi). He later

asserts that, following Haliburton, Canadians were simply not interested in humour at all:

The winning of responsible government ... took the sharp taste out of the nation's drink. Extremes had found their cue in compromise and were soon, duly moderated, to make a holy alliance with Victorian seriousness. Thus the springs which feed such writing as Haliburton's were pretty well dried up at their source ... Whatever the reasons, nearly a hundred years were to pass before Canadians took freely to laughter and mockery again. Leacock was a long way off (xv-xvi).

In 1960 as well, the New Canadian Library released an edition of Thomas McCulloch's The Stepsure Letters containing a critical introduction by Northrop Frye. He contends that there is a tradition of Canadian humour--stemming from McCulloch, not Haliburton. Frye says:

McCulloch is the founder of genuine Canadian humour: that is, of the humour which is based on a vision of society and is not merely a series of wisecracks on a single theme. The tone of his humour, quiet, observant, deeply conservative in a human sense, has been the tone of Canadian humour ever since (ix).

Which critic should we believe? It is obvious that Frye rejects the racy colloquialism and anecdotal narrative favoured by Haliburton, but he offers no more indication of which Canadian humorists belong to the tradition he identifies than McDougall demonstrates the dearth he deplores. Moreover, Frye leaves the reader to determine what he means by "a vision of society."

Introductions such as these have had a powerful, perhaps disproportionate, impact on the Canadian critical outlook because such nineteenth-century works as The Clockmaker and The Stepsure Letters have, until very recently,<sup>31</sup> been readily available only in New Canadian Library editions.<sup>32</sup> Most critics accept McDougall's contention that there is no tradition of humour after Haliburton. As recently as 1989, in "The New Eden Dream: The Source of Canadian Humour," Beverley Rasporich says: "In assessing the early comic tradition in English Canada, it is fair to say that it flourished suddenly in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia with Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Haliburton, died, and was revived some hundred years later by the internationally celebrated Stephen Leacock" (228-9).

Although there are late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian critics who disagree with this assessment, their convictions have either gone unheard, or else have been ignored as the bleating of apologists of "the Maple Leaf school."<sup>33</sup> Many of these critics are defensive in their comments, frequently because they are venturing outside the established canon and, at the same time, contradicting prevailing opinion.

In the introduction to Thrown In (1923), an anthology of the writings of Newton McTavish, J. D. Logan calls the prevailing consensus that

Canadians have no genius for creative humour and .  
 . . Canada possesses no significant indigenous  
 literature of humour . . . uncritical beliefs,  
 virtually superstitions . . . [which] obtain both  
 in foreign countries and in the Dominion itself  
 (v) .

He reiterates his belief in a Canadian tradition of humour in Highways of Canadian Literature (1924). In both instances, Logan lists writers, apart from Haliburton and Leacock, whom he regards as significant Canadian humorists: Joseph Howe, De Mille, Lanigan, John Hunter-Duvar, Grant Allen, Duncan, Drummond, George Henry Ham, Peter O. Donovan, McArthur, Norris Hodgins, Service, Newton McTavish, and Roy Davis (Thrown In v; Highways 322-32). Other Canadian critics of the 1920s who provide similar lists of significant Canadian humorists in their histories of Canadian literature include: Lionel Stevenson in Appraisals of Canadian Literature (1926); Lorne Pierce in An Outline of Canadian Literature (1927); and V.B. Rhodenizer in A Handbook of Canadian Literature (1930). Logan and Rhodenizer both distinguish Drummond and Duncan as very significant Canadian humorists. Logan says: "W.H. Drummond gave the world a genuinely new species of Canadian humour--in verse; Mrs. Cotes [i.e., Duncan], a genuinely new species of Canadian humour--in prose" (vi). But for reasons to be examined later, these views had no impact on the prevailing critical outlook.



Just as there have been a few critics who insist that there is a tradition of Canadian humour, there have been anthologists who compiled selections of that humour. The first such anthology, Humour of the North (1912), was compiled by an American, Lawrence J. Burpee. Burpee is the first critic to direct attention to the the rich vein of Canadian humour to be found in Canadian periodicals and humorous papers. He says in the introductory note to his anthology:

It [Canadian humour] would also include a great deal of genuine wit and humour, largely anonymous, in such Canadian periodicals as Grip, Punch in Canada, the Grumbler, the Free Lance and Diogenes; and characteristic passages from the speeches of such brilliant and witty debaters as Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Joseph Howe and Nicholas Flood Davin (v).

Humour of the North, which is actually quite short, contains both poetry and prose, including selections from Haliburton, Howe, Drummond, Duncan, James McCarroll, Lanigan and DeMille.

In 1936 a new anthology of Canadian humour, Cap and Bells, appeared, this one containing what the anthologist, John W. Garvin, calls "light verse." In the Foreword, Lorne Pierce says that Garvin regarded the absence of "gaiety and even robust nonsense" in Canadian literature and art as a

serious fault, a lack of poise and detachment in our life, some fundamental neglect. The boisterous nonsense and ridiculous dialect of Haliburton, the colossal exaggeration and preposterous verbiage of Leacock were familiar to

all, and came to be regarded as typical of Canadian humour. Poets who shared the popularity of the prose humorists, Drummond and Service particularly, owed their success to similar qualities of exaggeration, pointed ribaldry and grotesque dialect. They were chiefly frontier types, rather fantastic genre pieces (vii).

In this anthology Garvin includes poems by: Lanigan, Charles G. D. Roberts, S. Frances Harrison, William Kirby, Drummond, Isabella Valancy Crawford, Kernigan, McArthur, and Service. Poems by others less well known are also included.

In the 1950s it was clear that the optimistic listing of Canadian humorists found in the works of Stevenson, Pierce, Rhodizer, and Logan, as well in anthologies such as Burpee's and Garvin's, had little effect on the consensus that there is little or no nineteenth-century Canadian humour. In the "Introduction" to A Book of Canadian Humour (1951), Margaret Ray says that the strength of this opinion led her to conclude that anybody challenging this dominant position would feel intimidated by the force of the opposition. She says that she and John Robins, her coeditor,

were intimidated, not to say discouraged, at the outset by the comments we had seen in print on the character of Canadian humour. We were led to believe, in fact, that it was conspicuous by its absence. The consensus . . . seemed to be that Canadians were too busy earning a living to have any time for comedy . . . it is small wonder. . . that we feared our catch would be meagre (ix).

Their catch was not meagre, and A Book of Canadian Humour contains selections from the prose and poetry of sixteen nineteenth-century Canadian writers.<sup>34</sup> Even so, this anthology had little if any success in changing critical opinion about the dearth of Canadian humour between Haliburton and Leacock, as the theses and articles previously mentioned indicate.

Thus in 1957, when F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith assembled an anthology of Canadian satire, The Blasted Pine: An Anthology of Satire, Invective, and Disrespectful Verse chiefly by Canadian Writers, the quantity and quality of Canadian satiric verse apparently surprised D. L. Thompson, who commented in the preface: "The garden was not generally known to be either large or well stocked" (vii). Although most of the contributions in this anthology are by twentieth-century Canadian writers, poems by seven nineteenth-century writers are included. Thompson also states: "It may be useful to ask ourselves why so many of us instinctively judged the Canadian climate to be inhospitable to such prickly blooms" (vii).

Thirty years after the publication of A Book of Canadian Humour, another anthology was published to convince Canadians that there is, and has been, Canadian humour. In The Maple Laugh Forever: An Anthology of Comic Canadian Poetry (1981), the editors, Stephen Scobie and Douglas

Barbour, like others before them, begin by noting the accepted myth that Canadian literature is not humorous:

Our literature is commonly perceived as dour, grim, and Northern; our images, so we are told are of 'survival' in a 'harsh and lonely land.' Our stories are of failures, and victims, our heroes freeze in snowbanks, and our marriages--like most of our shipping--end up on the rocks (10).<sup>35</sup>

It should come as no surprise, after this brief survey of the critical literature and anthologies, that the first problem one must address in the study of early Canadian humour is the conviction that humour of any significance does not actually exist. Why is this conviction so unshakeable?

## Notes

1. This belief has persisted since the late nineteenth century.
2. Linda Hutcheon has recently edited a number of studies of irony in DeMille's Strange Manuscript Found In a Copper Cylinder in Canadian Studies in Irony, Vols.1-3.
3. In 1991, a study of the writings of Sara Jeannette Duncan by Misao Dean entitled A Different Point of View takes issue with the customary dismissal of Duncan from the Canadian canon because her works did not concern themselves directly with Canada. Dean shows that Duncan communicates a special point of view which is consistent with the tenets of late Victorian Canadian idealism, and with a view of the English speaking world as a community united in its attempt to realize justice, and freedom, etc. In the novels Canada is idealized for its ability to blend British ideals with a North American belief in personal freedom. While the emphasis in this study is not on Duncan's skill as a humorous novelist, it does demonstrate the need to examine her work far more carefully than has been done in the past.
4. See, for example, the anthologies of nineteenth-century literary criticism edited by Carl Ballstadt and by Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman.
5. See, for example, Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarwoski, eds. The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada (Toronto:1967) and E. K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry (Toronto:1943).
6. See, for example, Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, eds. Canadian novelists and the Novel (Ottawa, 1981), and Desmond Pacey, Creative Writing in Canada (Toronto, 1952).
7. Some of the critical works which extend the literary canon to include history, and other non-fictional forms as scientific writings include, among others, J. G. Bourinot, Our Intellectual Strengths and Weaknesses (1882), T. G. Marquis, English-Canadian Literature (1913), Lorne Pierce, An Outline of Canadian Literature (1927), and The Literary History of Canada Ed. Carl Klinck et al. Vols. 3 (1976) and 4 (1990).

8. Over the years three main schools of humour theory emerged, and humour theorists are generally classified according to their affinity for one of these schools. Kant, Beattie, Bergson, and Leacock suggest that humour reveals the incongruities of life; others such as Plato, Hobbes, Hazlitt, Ludovici, and Freud indicate that humour provides a non-violent mechanism to release aggression and/or to establish superiority. A third group of theorists among whom are Bergler, Mindess, Eastman, and Monro believe that humour provides an opportunity for release from a variety of tensions. In the last ten years a new group of humour theorists--language theorists--has begun to advance theories of humour based on linguistic analysis. In this latest group, Raskin stands out for his attempt to design a comprehensive theory of humour.

9. See, for example, Luigi Pirandello, On Humour (1908) Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1960; Henri Bergson "Laughter" in Comedy (Doubleday Anchor, 1956), and Max Eastman, Enjoyment of Laughter (New York, 1936).

10. See, for example, Victor Raskin, Semantic Mechanisms of Humor (Dordrecht, 1985), and Susan C. Vogel, Humour: A Semiogenetic Approach (Bochum, 1989).

11. See J. Y. T. Greig The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy (New York, 1969); Jacob Levine, ed. Motivation in Humor (New York, 1969), and Anthony Chapman and Hugh Foote Humor and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications (London, 1976).

12. See Marvin Koller, Humor and Society: Explorations in the sociology of Humor, for example.

13. See, for example, George Meredith "An Essay on Comedy" in Comedy (Anchor-Doubleday, 1956), Walter Nash The Language of Humour (London, 1985), and Paul Lewis Comic Effects (New York, 1989).

14. See Judy Little, Comedy and the Woman Writer (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1983) and Martha B. Bruere and Mary Ritter Beard, Laughing Their Way (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1934) and such articles as "A Laughter of Their Own: Women's Humor in the United States" by Emily Toth and "Women's Humor" by Zita Dresner, among others.

15. Stephen Leacock is not the first Canadian writer to theorize about the distinct qualities of humour. Samuel Wilcocke of The Scribbler published an essay on the nature of wit in 1821. But Leacock is the only Canadian humorist to have undertaken a detailed theoretical analysis of the nature of humour. Leacock's

theoretical interest in humour is clear in such essays as "The Psychology of American Humour," University Magazine (1907); "American Humour" and "The Amazing Genius of O Henry" in Essays and Literary Studies (1916); and "Humour As I See It and Something about Humour in Canada" in MacLean's (1916). This interest continued in the 1920s, and he wrote a number of essays on humour and humorists. In the 1930s, he published two books about major humorists: Mark Twain (1932) and Charles Dickens, His Life and Work (1933) whom he believed to be, respectively, the greatest of American and British humorists. Throughout his career, he was remarkably consistent in his theory of humour. In 1916, for example, he says:

A large part of American humour lacks profundity, and wants that stimulating aid of the art of expression which can only be found amongst a literary people. The Americans produce humorous writing because of their intensely humorous perception of things, and in despite of the fact that they are not a literary people. The British people, essentially a people of exceptions, produce a high form of humorous literature because of their literary spirit, and in spite of the fact that their general standard of humorous perception is lower. In the one case humour forces literature. In the other literature forces humour.

His analysis of Twain and Dickens confirms that his position has not changed in nearly thirty years. Leacock also wrote two purely theoretical works, Humour, Its Theory and Technique, With Examples: A Book of Discovery, (1935) and Humour and Humanity: An Introduction to the Study of Humour (1937). In between these books, he prepared a critical anthology of American humour, The Greatest Pages of American Humour, Selected and Discussed by Stephen Leacock; A Study of the Rise and Development of Humorous Writings in America With selections from the Most Notable of the Humorists (1936).

16. In The Faces of Leacock (1967) Donald Cameron suggests that "Leacock's weaknesses as a writer are more salient in his discussions of humour than anywhere else" (54). He observes that as a result of Leacock's approach to humour which is "literary in the extreme" and his unshaken belief in the kindliness of humour, "the great weakness of Leacock's commentary on humour is this failure of psychological insight, this uneasy avoidance of the real issues except in a fragmentary and oblique fashion (57).

17. I have coined this term to refer to nineteenth century meta-fictional texts which are also parodic. Linda Hutcheon notes that "metafiction today contests the novelistic illusion of realist dogma and attempts to subvert a critical authoritarianism (by containing within itself its own first critical commentary)"

(Parody 72-3). She seems to me to be describing metafictional parody. I am suggesting that nineteenth-century Canadian humorists quite frequently created this kind of parody.

18. There are many studies of humour in Canadian folklore studies. In one collection of folklore articles, Edith Fowke's Folklore of Canada (1976), for example, the following articles about Canadian humour are found: "Tall Tales of Dalbec" by William P. Greenough; "Newfoundland Riddles" by Elisabeth B. Greenleaf; "Newfie Jokes" by Gerald Thomas; "Pat and Mike Jokes from Nova Scotia" by Arthur H. Fanset; "Ontario Yarns from Joe Thibideau" by Edith Fowke; "Tall Tales and Other Yarns from Calgary" by Herbert Halpert, and "How Dave McDougall Hunted Wild Geese" by R. D. Johnson.

19. For discussion and analysis of the effect of colonialism on Canadian literary ideals see John P. Matthew's Tradition in Exile, Robin Mathews' Canadian Literature: Surrender or revolution, A. J. M. Smith's various discussions of the problem in his collected essays, Towards a View of Canadian Letters and MacLulich's Between Europe and America, to name but a few.

20. Vincent Sharman's article "Humour and Satire in English" in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1983) exemplifies this attitude:

In the body of Canadian writing many works of humor are interesting documents in the development of a culture, rather than significant pieces of literature. With only a few exceptions, however, the highlights are modern. But when one considers the frequency of humor in the literature of the last ten decades, and the stature of those writers who handle it well (Richler, Kroetsch, Birney, et al.), one can conclude that humor is a major element in Canadian literature, and perhaps its most impressive achievement (372)

21. Some of the studies of materials in nineteenth century newspapers and periodicals include such unpublished theses and dissertations as: M. F. Anglou, "Canadian Life and Society as Reflected in English Canadian Periodicals 1867 - 1880," M.A. Queens, 1954; Marilyn G. Flitton, "The Canadian Monthly 1872 - 1882" M.A. Simon Fraser, 1973; Mary C. Sparling, "The British Vision in Nova Scotia 1749-1848: What Views The Artists Reflected and Reinforced," M.A. Dalhousie 1978; Gillian Lea Whitelock, "My Kingdom Still: The Role of the Magazine in the Colonial Context. A Comparative Study of the Bulletin, the Beacon and The Literary Garland." Diss. Queens, 1983; and Mary Lucinda MacDonald, "Literature and Society in the Canadas 1830-1850"



Diss. Queens, 1984.

Some of the recent publications which focus on nineteenth-century periodicals and newspapers include Carole Gerson, A Purer Taste. The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth Century Canada (Toronto:1989), and Fraser Sutherland The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines 1789-1989. (Markham, Ont.: 1989).

22. In the past twenty-five years collections of the writing by individual Canadian writers that was published in newspapers and periodicals in both Canada and the U.S. have begun to appear. Some of these collections include Thomas Tausky, Sara Jeannette Duncan: Selected Journalism (Ottawa: 1978); John Parr, Selected Stories of Robert Barr (Ottawa:1977); M.G. Parks, ed., Western and Eastern Rambles: Travel Sketches of Nova Scotia by Joseph Howe (Toronto:1973); Thomas Vincent, ed. The Lay of the Wilderness by a native of New Brunswick (1982) and Penny Petrone's collections of the prose fiction of Isabella Valancy Crawford, and Rea Wilmschurst's collections of the short stories of L. M. Montgomery to mention just a few. A number of unpublished theses such as Catherine Lynn Adams "An Annotated Edition of Sara Jeannette Duncan's Contributions to The Week, Edited with an Introduction," M.A. Carleton, 1980 have also been undertaken.

23. Thomas Vincent's Narrative Verse Satire in Maritime Canada 1779 - 1814 (Ottawa: 1978) and his Eighteenth Century Canadian Poetry: An Anthology (Kingston: 1979) are the most significant collections of eighteenth-century Canadian poetry. Vincent has also compiled indices to a number of early Canadian periodicals, including The Provincial, Amaranth and the Canadian Monthly. His focus is on satire, and except for classifying comic or humorous poems in Joseph Howe, An Annotated Chronology of the Poems (1980), he does not focus on other aspects of humour.

24. Gwendolyn Davies' unpublished doctoral dissertation "A Literary Study of Periodicals from Maritime Canada, 1789-1872" (1979); and her articles such as "Good Taste and Sound Sense. The Nova Scotia Magazine 1791-92" (1985), "The 'CLub' Papers: Haliburton's Literary Apprenticeship" (1985), and "James DeMille's The Dodge Club and the Tradition of American Travel Literature" (1981), all of which are now available in Studies in Maritime Literary History 1760-1930 (Fredericton, 1991) provide valuable sources of information about these early periodical materials.

25. In "A Study of Canadian Periodical Literature," Diss. (1950) McDougall studies the literary materials in five periodicals

published in Quebec and Ontario between 1838 and 1882. These periodicals are: The Literary Garland (1838-51), The Canadian Journal (1852-54), The Anglo-American Magazine (1852-55), the British American Magazine (1863-64) and The Canadian Monthly and National Review (1872-82).

26. Mary Lu. MacDonald, "Literature and Society in the Canada's, 1830 -1850," Diss. (1984). This is a comprehensive analysis of the literary contents of all the newspapers and periodicals published in Quebec and Ontario between 1830 and 1850.

27. There are two studies of "The 'Club' Papers"--humorous columns published in the Novascotian from 1828 to 1832: Carrie MacMillan, "Colonial Gleanings The 'Club Papers' (1828-1831)" The Atlantic Anthology 51-64, and the study by Gwen Davies (see note 11 above).

28. Vincent published two studies specifically related to Canadian humour: the previously mentioned Narrative Verse Satire in Maritime Canada, 1779-1814 (1978) and "Stratagems of Satire in North American Literature before Haliburton: A Background Paper" in The Thomas Chandler Haliburton Symposium ed. by Frank M. Tierney. Ottawa: U of Ottawa, 1985.

29. In addition to the theses and dissertations referred to in the text, there are such studies as James Hornby "Three Phases of Development of Canadian Satire in English." M.A. Concordia, 1975.

30. This study examines seven plays: The Female Consistory of Brockville (1856) by Caroli Candidus\*; The Land Swap, an anonymous play; The Fair Grit by Nicholas Flood Davin\*; The King of the Beavers (1865) by "Sam Scribble"; The Tearful and Tragical Tale of the Trickyp806XTroubadø1886 by George Broughall; Ptarmagin (1895) by Jean McIlwraith and John Aldous\*, and H.M.S. Parliament (1880) by William Henry Fuller\*. (The asterisks indicate plays subsequently published--and therefore now readily available to scholars--in Canada's Lost Plays. Vol I The Nineteenth Century (1978).)

31. Within the past ten years, the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEEECT) at Carleton University was established "to effect the publication of scholarly editions of major works of early Canadian prose that are now either out of print or available only in corrupt reprints" Mary Jane Edwards, ed. The History of Emily Montague (Ottawa:1985) This is, I assume partly in response to criticism of the editions of significant Canadian texts previously available to students. In "The Quest

for the Classic" (1986) Keith referred to "the general sloppiness of . . . texts in Canadian courses, noting that "there are virtually no annotated editions, [that] typographical errors abound [and] in some cases, complicated textual matters--cuts, revisions, etc--are involved" (86). Since then the work of two Canadian humorists have been prepared for publication--The Letters of Mephiboseth Stepsure Ed. Gwendolyn Davies, and Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder Ed. M. Parks.

32. The appearance of major Canadian texts in well printed relatively inexpensive paperback editions, each with a critical introduction by a Canadian scholar of good repute went "a long way to solving the problems of basic texts for courses in Canadian literature" (Literary History of Canada, III, 11). Keith suggests that "it is not exaggerating to suggest that the serious study of Canadian literature only became possible with the inauguration of the series. A national literature cannot exist if the texts are not readily accessible" ("The Quest for the Classic," An Independent Stance 85).32.

33. A term employed by such critics as A. J. M. Smith to refer to the turn of the century poets who wrote nationalistic nature poetry which appealed to the emotions but not the intellect. The term "the Maple Leaf School" was used by Northrop Frye in his review of Smith's Book of Canadian Poetry rpt. in Dudek 87.

34. A Book of Canadian Humour edited by John D. Robins and Margaret V. Ray includes selections from the work of the following nineteenth-century Canadian writers: T.C. Haliburton, Bob Edwards, Nellie McClung, Merrill Denison, S. Leacock, George Thomas Lanigan, Peter McArthur, Peter O. Donovan, George H. Ham, Edward W. Thompson, W.H. Drummond, R. K. Kernighan, James DeMille, S.J. Duncan, E. Wetherald, and Grant Allen.

35. Although the majority of the poems in The Maple Laugh Forever are by twentieth century poets, it also contains humorous poems by the following nineteenth-century Canadian writers: Wilfred Campbell, Robert Service, Charles G. D. Roberts, and Joseph Howe.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Critical Context

Throughout the nineteenth century in Canada, notions of literature as civilizing, serious, elegant, elevated and intellectual created a literary climate which was unfriendly to the appreciation of humour. Anthologies of nineteenth-century Canadian literary criticism make this clear.<sup>1</sup> Recent scholarly studies question the effect of these nineteenth-century ideals on present understanding of developments in Canadian literature.<sup>2</sup> MacLulich<sup>3</sup> contrasts developments in nineteenth-century Canada with those in the United States to examine how British and European models governed Canadian literary ideals:

our early writers did not show the urge towards national self-definition that is so evident in their American counterparts. They were conspicuously reluctant to follow American writers in creating works of literature that were aggressively North American in subject, outlook, and language. . . . They continued to defer to British example long after a more immediate and

useful standard of comparison might have been found in American letters (20-21).

Matthews and Whitelock each undertake comparative studies of literary developments in Canada and Australia, showing that Canada's dependence on imported literary criteria had negative effects on the development of a national literature.

Throughout the nineteenth, and well into the twentieth century, leading Canadian literary critics put forward the concept of Canada as an infant society and themselves as wise parents to a potentially wild and unruly child. They regarded literature as the primary means at their disposal both to civilize that errant child and to give it an image of what it should become. Eager to maintain their connections with Great Britain and suspicious of American republicanism, they deliberately turned away from American cultural patterns. Matthews points out that in Canada

cultural patterns were to be imported from England, filtered through the cities, and discussed (usually very well) by provincial critics, then fed out to the frontiers. The frontier itself for long was not recognized as a valid subject for serious creative writing. With the deliberate repudiation of native inspiration and with the study of the central tradition came, for the educated frontier settlers, a sense of belonging--of security within an established culture--which made their exile more endurable (48).

In this literary climate, although Canadian cultural and literary leaders recognized the value of amusement, they

were not inclined to give serious attention to literary forms that were not serious and directed to the intellectual and moral improvement of the population.

Many of Central Canada's influential nineteenth-century critics emigrated from Great Britain only a few years (sometimes only months) before they began their North American literary careers. They were eager to establish a literature of which they could be proud in their new country. David Chisholm's introduction to The Canadian Magazine was written in 1823, less than a year after his arrival in Canada. In it he indicates that creating a literature for his new country is a serious task, one which does not admit undue levity. Chisholm sets out his position in such a way that readers desiring to be thought educated cannot help but agree with him:

Such of our readers as may have been in the habit of reflecting with some degree of seriousness on the human learning of the last two hundred years, in its polite as well as its useful departments, cannot fail to have observed, that, in comparison with the literary productions of the present day, it is stamped with the insignia of a far loftier, moral and substantial character (qtd. in Daymond and Monkman 18-19).

Chisholm encapsulates literary attitudes that would prevail for the next eighty years: the literature of Canada would bear the stamp of the loftier, moralistic literature of earlier times. It would do this in tried and proven forms because it should define the new nation and improve the

minds of its citizens both morally and intellectually. The effect of this outlook throughout the nineteenth century was that poetry and prose which addressed the mundane affairs of the colony, or which adopted a less than serious outlook, were not regarded as sufficiently elevated in subject matter, language or tone to warrant inclusion in the new national literature. In 1899 Robert Barr concluded in "Literature in Canada Part II" that

Canada has suffered much at the hands of the cultured class . . . The educated Canadian is conservative because he has no opinion of his own. In literature, he waits until a definite judgment is pronounced outside of Canada; then your educated Canadian knows it all. . . . The cultured Canadian glosses his ignorance with a hard polish, which is utterly impervious to thought that is Canadian in origin (in Measure of the Rule 12-13).

The situation was different in the Maritimes in the first half of the nineteenth century, where the rule of the educated class was not as stultifying as it later became, especially in Ontario. Haliburton, as has already been noted, was one of the first Canadian writers to demonstrate the difference between the new type of humour that was developing in North America and British humour. In the introductions to his anthologies of American humour<sup>4</sup> he explains the special characteristics of American humour and indicates how it has moved away from eighteenth-century humour. He describes North American humour as a new species

of humour, saying it "has a character as local as the boundaries of civil subdivisions [particular states, even counties]," and that it is "not merely original, but it is clothed in quaint language" (Traits vi; x). In The Americans at Home (1854) he suggests that the source and subject matter of this new American humour is to be found in

the peculiarities of the people, their modes of thinking, living and acting, [which] are principally to be sought for in the rural districts, where unrestrained freedom of action and the incidents and requirements of a forest life encourage and give room for development of character on its fullest extent. [By contrast, in the cities and large towns,] society has its conventional rules which it rigidly enforces. Hence, in every community men dress alike, think alike, and act alike, except in such cases, where by the same rules they are allowed to agree or disagree (Americans at Home v-vi).

He was the first Canadian writer of any stature to adapt the techniques of this new American humour for his own purposes. In so doing Haliburton was diametrically opposed to the notions of literature put forward by the Ontario (Canadian!) literati, who shied away from the particularities of the frontier experience.

The essay "A Gossip About Literature," which appeared in The Provincial (1852-53) in September, 1853, is helpful in providing us with a rare insight into the principles of humour criticism that prevailed in mid-century among the Canadian literati. Mary Jane Lawson, nee Katzman, the



editor of The Provincial, a Nova Scotian literary periodical, sets high cultural and literary standards for her readers. She does not discuss Canadian humour; even though Haliburton was by this time the most famous North American writer in the world, she ignores his work. Instead, she examines the humour of four prominent British writers: Dickens, Thackeray, Douglas Jerrold and Thomas Hood. Her words reveal the importance for the literati of continuity with the culture of the old world, and their requirement that even humorous literature should be both genteel and elevated:

Thus while the world goes forward in wisdom and improvement, we find that though our higher and deeper faculties are developed and exercised, our tastes are essentially the same as were our forefathers, that we have only parted with the coarseness and absurdity which disfigured their productions, but that we are no more keenly alive to the spirit of genius and wit than they were. Our Humour may be less broad, our sentiment more strong and manly in expression, our wit more divested of obscurity or scurrility, but we are the same in tastes and passions as they. The germ or pith of what has been handed down to us as the really estimable in the literature of the past, has the same charms for us that it had for them proving incontrovertibly that true genius has no age or locality for its own (322).

Katzmann contrasts modern humour with the baser humour of the past, regretting that the taste for the

pathetic humorous style which pervaded the writings of the literati [of the eighteenth century] has been revived by the popular authors of our time, as exemplified in the works of Dickens, Hood, Thackeray, Jerrold and a host of

lesser lights whose productions overstock the market and give their admirers full opportunity to satiate their appetites for the ridiculous and absurd (322).

She specifically attacks Dickens--and those who praise his work--for a lack of depth and "serious" humour (i.e., satire):

Those who look upon life as one holiday time in which to laugh and revel as we may, who think the meanest puerilities and the broadest allusions worth the exercise of our faculties, who prefer a mawkish sensibility and a strain of childish pathos to the strong manly common-sense which ever distinguishes the self-reliant, large-hearted man of intellect, are those who have built up for Mr. Dickens the reputation which he now wears so exultingly (324).

In contrast she praises the humour of Thackeray, because its satire leads to moral improvement: "It is not enough to merely laugh at what is wrong, it should be lashed as well, and this Thackeray does most effectively" (328). She has little to say about Jerrold, except that he is a writer for Punch and that "he is full of fun and drollery" (329), and she praises Thomas Hood for "The Song of the Shirt" (329) because of his pathos, "he played with the lightnings of sorrow, and as he could not control them, he determined to laugh at them" (329). When a British writer of the stature of Dickens fails to meet the Canadian tests of universality and good taste, it is not to be wondered at that she does not even mention Haliburton's work. Nor is it hard to anticipate the hostile reception awaiting the humorous

writing of any Canadian who follows the American (and modern British) practice of writing about the local or the particular.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Canadian literary critics sought to "articulate those traits thought to be characteristic of, or of particular importance to, literature in a new country" (Ballstadt xii). In 1858, Thomas D'Arcy McGee described the literature he believed Canadian (Quebec and Ontario) authors should create:

[Canadian literature] must assume the gorgeous colouring and the gloomy grandeur of the forest. It must partake of the grave mysticism of the Red man, and the wild vivacity of the hunter of the western prairies. Its lyrics must possess the ringing cadence of the waterfall, and its epics be as solemn and beautiful as our rivers" (qtd. in Daymond and Monkman 44).

How exactly writers were to create literature that assumed the "wild vivacity of the hunter of the western prairies" while yet avoiding the regional and the particular is not made clear. In 1900 J. G. Bourinot reiterated the role of Canadian literature to promote and demonstrate the state of high culture in Canada:

It is for Canadian writers to have always before them a high ideal, and to remember that literature does its best duty, to quote the eloquent words of Ruskin, 'in raising our fancy to the height of what may be noble, honest and felicitous in actual life; in giving us, though we may be ourselves poor and unknown, the companionship of the wisest spirits of every age and country, and in aiding the communication of clear thoughts and faithful

purposes among distant nations' (Short Review, 213).

There is much that is admirable in such high literary ideals. The problem is that for the most part, Canada did not fit the image of culture put forward by the literati who repeatedly said that Canada is not a literary country because Canadians have no leisure time to devote to literature. According to McGee in 1857, literary culture could have little relevance for the ordinary citizen: "In the concerns of his everyday life in a colony, [a pioneer] finds little in unison with the cultivation of literary taste; nor do his duties allow him to become a man of leisure" (qtd. in Daymond and Monkman 42). The literati were not prepared to accept, as Americans did, that literature might be generated in response to the actual living conditions in Canada. These conditions were much too primitive and they were not prepared to compromise.

One cannot say that this refusal to pay attention to humour, especially North American humour, was the fault of British newcomers. Many of those most adamant in rejecting the North American influences which were pushing steadily in favour of embracing popular culture were not British. Many of the ideas of literary decorum and gentility held by these Canadians are actually pseudo-British rather than an

accurate reflection of contemporary British practices.

There was no recognition that

in the making of new cultures the distinctive processes are bestowing names, reshaping imported and indigenous values and fashioning a unique mode of self-articulation. These experiences contribute to a mode of perception that have no counterpoint in older societies (Partridge 30).

Throughout Canada, every social and cultural institution was being transformed as a result of the subtle differences between Canadian and both American and British cultures. In literary matters, from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century there was amongst the literati a fear of a lowering of standards as a result of American influences and mass education.

Canada did not embrace the ideas of a classless society in the way the Americans did; nor were Canadians as rigid in their class beliefs as the British. But British notions of class superiority were more significant to Canadians than to Americans. According to John Carey in The Intellectuals and the Masses (1992), the rise of literacy in the nineteenth century threatened the established position of the [British and European] upper classes who had dominated written culture. He suggests that one of the first European intellectuals to recognize this threat was Nietzsche, who opposed universal education on the grounds that "great and fine things can never be common. 'That everyone can learn to

read will ruin in the long run not only writing but thinking too'. Carey quotes T. S. Eliot as expressing regret for lost literary and cultural standards: "There is no doubt that in our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards" (Carey, 15). In a culture trying desperately to prove its allegiance to British, not American, values, fear of being thought inferior became the governing impulse behind literary criticism.

Like their British and European counterparts, many Canadian intellectuals believed that literature belonged to the upper classes, not the masses; as something produced and consumed by the educated and the leisured classes, it should contain nothing sordid or vulgar. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Canadian literati were determined neither literary standards nor the literature of the country would be lowered to reflect the uncultured taste of the general population. Therefore, popular culture had to be eschewed. In the Maritimes in the first half of the nineteenth century, there is evidence that the gap between literary and popular culture may have been lessening as a result of the literary quality of such newspapers as The NovaScotian. But the gap between popular and literary culture widened from the 1840s on in Ontario and then throughout Canada. In the second half of the nineteenth century, two distinct kinds of writing emerged in Canada:

one directed to the population at large, the other catering to the tastes of a small literary elite. The former includes popular writing and journalism (and most of Canada's humour), the latter the serious, artistic, and frequently pretentious, materials found in the literary periodicals.

And yet as North Americans, the same literary elite recognized the important role of literature in educating and improving the masses. Humour, which not only lacked seriousness but even frequently ridiculed these high literary ideals, could hardly be regarded as significant by the "dedicated, articulate, and usually privileged" (Gerson xi) men who formed the cultural elite. The women were possibly even more genteel. Throughout the nineteenth century, critics called not only for superior writing but also for readers of discriminating taste to ensure the rigorous critical standards that would be needed if a literary culture were to develop. Such discriminating readers were needed because, James Douglas explained in his 1875 address to the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec,

the taste for reading has in most cases to be acquired, and the acquisition is not always easily made; and, therefore, in a population where few have enjoyed the training of a University, and there learnt to love learning for its own sake, ...it is not to be wondered at should there be but little inclination for any other than

merely amusing reading (qtd. in Daymond and Monkman 63).

Increasingly, in a pattern quite opposite to that developing in the U.S. (and Australia), the Canadian literati rejected writing which appealed to the general population<sup>5</sup> even though there was no lack of such writing in Canada. Sketches, stories, anecdotes, parodies, light and comic verse and satire all enjoyed widespread popularity, principally through the newspapers and popular journals. This writing was not thought to possess the elegance demanded of literature--and quite frankly, most of did not. But this popular and journalistic writing includes humour and to dismiss it is to create a gap. To deny significance to all writing except that representing high literary culture meant that the experiences of the lower echelons of society, including the experiences of the ordinary pioneers--their language, their shared jokes, anecdotes, witticisms, and perceptions of the incongruities of Canadian life--were not considered fit subjects for literature.

Although a number of satiric and humorous papers were published in nineteenth-century Canada, and although numerous writers drew upon the ludicrous and the incongruous aspects of life in Canada, none of this writing is considered significant or given recognition--even as humour. Written humour, even more than spoken, depends upon the



reader's willing participation in the humorous event. If there is no willingness to participate on the part of the reader, the humour fails. Lewis reminds us that "there is no such thing as an objective joke." He further explains that humour is all-encompassing:

every variable of human consciousness that influences our sense of how the world operates--from cognitive and emotional development to philosophic and scientific knowledge, to moral and aesthetic norms--must play a role in defining what will strike us as a violation of our sense of reality (that is, an incongruity) (12).

In nineteenth-century Canada, major critics of Canadian literature rejected virtually all the humour that was being produced--usually because it was too "low" to be considered worthy of their attention, and especially because it usually appeared in newspapers and popular magazines, sometimes even in American ones. If there is no willingness on the part of the critic to acknowledge the humour, the myth that no humour exists gains credence.

Participation in a humorous event requires a kind of sympathetic attention that is often unlike that demanded by non-humorous writing, because humour often depends upon the reader's willingness to perceive the world from a changed perspective, to entertain a version of reality hitherto unthought of. Humorists employ a great number of techniques to create such changed perspectives, frequently presenting the world through the eyes of an outsider--a child, a

madman, an uneducated individual, an animal, or an immigrant. Humour exposes the illusions and deceptions of individuals and societies and reveals the pomposities, the blind adherence to custom, and the weaknesses, of individuals and classes. Furthermore, it frequently discloses the intellectual, social and political inadequacies of institutions and ideologies. In working with humour,

we need to proceed from the view that humor both articulates and assumes a set of values, that by delineating what is incongruous in an amusing way, humor can serve to confirm or overthrow accepted approaches to experience (Lewis 14).

The writing which appeared in such Canadian papers as Grip, Diogenes, Punch in Canada and The Scribbler satisfies the social function of humour given above; undoubtedly at the time it strengthened the conviction of the literati--who were frequently the butt of the jokes--that popular humour is too irreverent and/or subversive in its modus operandi to be of any value.

In 1889 Grip, Toronto's satirical weekly newspaper, poked fun at the elite literary standards Canadian critics imposed on their countrymen, and revealed how pretentious and colonial these standards actually were. Although humour is not referred to directly, this satiric piece illuminates the difficulty any writer of humour would meet. The column, which appeared on April 6, 1889, is quoted in full:

1. If possible, get yourself born in England, Scotland, or somewhere outside of Canada, at any rate, and brought up abroad until your ideas and habits of thought are fully matured. This is not absolutely essential, but it is a very great advantage.

2. Be intensely, excruciatingly "loyal" and very patriotic. You will easily demonstrate your loyalty by writing a poem in honour of the Governor-General - any kind of a poem will do, so long as the sentiments are sufficiently enthusiastic. Denounce Yankees and all their institutions on every possible opportunity.

3. Write in a formal, stilted style, and carefully, as you value your reputation, avoid any phrase or expression which is racy of the soil, such as is used in every day life. Of course, Dickens and Scott and Victor Hugo drew copiously on the popular vocabulary, and their works teem with slang expressions, but for a Canadian writer it would never do to depict Canadians naturally. If you must use slang, let it be pure English Slang.

4. Your principal theme will, of course, be Canadian Literature. You will write articles entitled, "Have We A Canadian Literature?" "Need of a Canadian Literature," "Progress of Canadian Literature," etc. As everybody knows, it was by writing about English Literature, the necessity of having it, and the means of encouraging it, that it got its start.

5. Work the mutual admiration racket, by mentioning favourably all the other native Canadian writers - especially, of course, Professor Godwin Smith and Charles G.D.Roberts. They will naturally praise you in return. It is needless to say that criticisms and articles upon Canadian writers form the staple of "Canadian literature," distinctively so-called. N.B.--It is by no means necessary to have read the writings you praise (213).

Despite Grip's objections, literary elitism has prevailed--especially in the criticism of Canadian humour.

To some extent, such elitism stems from a fear of being considered provincial by the literati of the world. In a speech in 1897, John A. Cooper, then the editor of the Canadian Magazine objects to the stringent standards then being demanded of Canadian writing. These standards dictated that Canadian literature was to be

tested, tried and proven by the standards of the world, rather than by any standards that we ourselves might erect, [so] that there should be no narrow provincialism in our literary and artistic productions but . . . we should be cosmopolitan in style, quality and matter. This idea is hardly feasible." (qtd. in Ballstadt 107).

Such standards would certainly not be met by most nineteenth-century Canadian humour, for like American humour, it often relies on concrete detail, dialects, sketches of rural life, tall tales, cacography, and anecdotes, stories and sketches about "low" characters. It is possible that some Canadian humorous parody might meet these standards, but parody was considered parasitic, not original. It is not surprising that the works selected for inclusion in the Canadian canon include very little humour. Without doubt, only the international recognition accorded Haliburton as an original and significant humorist made possible his acceptance by the literati --and that acceptance was qualified. Because of his roots in Nova Scotia and his reliance on American dialect, Haliburton's

Canadian-ness has been questioned.

That the cosmopolitan standard objected to by Cooper prevailed is evident in the tone of E. K. Brown's rejection of such popular writers as Service, Connor and Montgomery. In his very influential book On Canadian Poetry (1944), he says

their only significance . . . is the proof they offered that for the author who was satisfied to truckle to mediocre taste, living in Canada and writing about Canadian subjects, was perfectly compatible with making an abundant living by one's pen (4).

T. D. MacLulich suggests that such a sweeping rejection reveals the persistence of the elitist bias well into the twentieth century:

Brown's analysis, [of the problems surrounding the emergence of a distinctive Canadian literature in the nineteenth century] astute though it is, does not do justice to the way in which certain cultural attitudes shaped the thinking of most of the writers who lived in nineteenth-century Canada. Specifically he ignores the very considerable extent to which . . . Canadian writers [adhered] to a class-conscious or aristocratic notion of literature that was poorly matched to the actual conditions of society in North America (22).

Twentieth-century Canadian criticism has continued to be influenced by the fear of mass culture that underlay the elitism of the upper levels of Canadian society in the nineteenth century. Carey suggests the split between popular taste and literary value arose in response to such fear:

As an element in the reaction against mass values

the intellectuals brought into being the theory of the avant-garde, according to which the mass is, in art and literature, always wrong. What is truly meritorious in art is seen as the prerogative of a minority, the intellectuals, and the significance of this minority is reckoned to be directly proportionate to its ability to outrage and puzzle the mass. . . . The avant-garde is always reactionary . . . it seeks to take literacy and culture away from the masses and to counteract the progressive intentions of democratic educational reform (Carey 18).

Although Carey is writing about Europe, the practices of the Canadian literati well into the twentieth century indicate their allegiance to such an outlook.

Throughout the century, few Canadian humorists were writing for the literati. Like other popular Canadian writers, they were not overly concerned that what they wrote should be tried "by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world" (Arnold, "The Function of Criticism," Four Essays, 31).

The theoretical positions taken by Canadian critics presented yet another problem for Canadian humorists (and writers generally). In both the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they wanted originality and conventionality--both at the same time. The literature of the new nation should look to the models of the mother country, England, for inspiration and form; but at the same time it should be original, challenging the efficacy of these models and forms as appropriate mechanisms for

delineating the newness of the nation. Canadian writers were to be judged by the universality, the moral and intellectual tone and the decorum in choice of language, subject matter and imagery of their writing. The new nation this elegant literature was to define and explain was a far cry from the real nation which was mostly raw, inelegant, low, and rural. The image, for example, that Stephen Richardson offers Barclay and his travelling companion in Haliburton's The Old Judge may contain universal aspects of the North American reality, but it is not an image the urbane literati of Halifax and other Canadian cities appeared to desire.

To illustrate the problem, let us consider one episode in The Old Judge in which Haliburton attempts to bridge the culture gap between British and North American ways. He knows he cannot change the behaviour of members of either culture, but he tries to create the kind of understanding which breeds tolerance. To do so he creates a humorous situation in which an English gentleman is brought into close contact with ordinary Canadians. Stephen Richardson, Haliburton's narrator, explains to the Englishman that Canadian society is radically different from the British, and consequently he should not misunderstand the free manners of the Canadians he has encountered:

All of them are friends and neighbours. They meet like one family and live with and towards each other as such. Each individual is dependent on the rest for mutual assistance and good offices, and they constitute themselves all the society they have. The protection that forms and ceremonies throw around the members of large communities are not here needed. Where there is no aggression to be dreaded, defences are not required. They are simple-minded, warm-hearted, hospitable and virtuous people. The levity you see is the levity of good spirits and conscious safety (228-29).

Here, Haliburton is depicting the democratic and interdependent North American character of rural Canadian society and making no apology for the fact that North Americans do not treat visitors from Britain in ways the British expect as appropriate to their class. North American ways may appear boorish and uncultured to the British, but, although Haliburton reveals their incongruity from the British perspective, he also shows how incongruous the Englishman's rigid expectations are under the circumstances. As will be discussed later, writers in the Canadian West also created good-humoured portraits of the rural democracy that was emerging in Canada and its response to elegant young British gentlemen. Such humorous writing has been disregarded as "popular" or "narrowly provincial" by the more influential literati.

Such rejection raises the question of what "provincial" and "regional" mean in Canadian criticism. Most of the influential Canadian literary criticism in the years before



Confederation--and after--appeared in literary periodicals published in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. In both periods the critics refer to Canada, but before Confederation "Canada" referred to the provinces of Quebec and Ontario--not the modern nation when contemporary critics referred to it as a province, a country, and a colony. In the 1840s and 1850s Canada is referred to as a country with increasing frequency. At Confederation, "Canada" was chosen as the name for the new dominion, but old habits die hard, and even after Confederation critics often used the term "Canada" to refer primarily to the central provinces. The rest of Canada became "the regions." In this way, since the nineteenth century, Canadian literary criticism has been dominated by a disguised centrality which one might call, for lack of any other term, "the synecdochic fallacy". By this I mean that literature written in Quebec and Ontario continues to be referred to as "Canadian" and forms the basis of the new national literature, in contrast to literature written elsewhere in the country which is referred to by province or region and classified as "local," "regional," or "provincial"--or else given the epithet "local colour."<sup>6</sup> The covert nature of this practice contributes to a significant distortion in our perceptions of the character, even the existence, of Canadian humour.

That after Confederation, as before, critics in Quebec

and Ontario did not regard the writing produced in provinces other than their own as "Canadian," might not have become a problem if it were openly acknowledged and discussed. But even our late twentieth-century literary histories frequently accept as valid for the modern nation, pre-Confederation and other limited uses of the term "Canada." They rarely draw attention to the limitations of "Canada" as it is used in such statements as that made by John Gibson in the introduction to the new series of the Literary Garland (January, 1843): "We have often been told that Canada is not a literary country--that people have neither the leisure nor inclination for the pursuits of literature." Gibson uses the words "Canada" and "country" to refer to the Province of Canada (Quebec and Ontario), but without a gloss his comment appears to refer to the modern nation. By this date, writers from the Maritime provinces had already achieved international literary and/or popular reputations. For example, by 1843 Haliburton had already published three series of The Clockmaker (1836, 1838, 1840), The Letter Bag of the Great Western (1840), The Bubbles of Canada (1839) and The Attache, or, Sam Slick in England (1843). His books had been published in multiple editions in England, Nova Scotia, the United States, France, and Germany. By that date as well, Walter Bates' The Mysterious Stranger (1815) had been published in three or four editions in England as

well as in New Brunswick; Oliver Goldsmith had published The Rising Village in England (1825) and in New Brunswick (1832); and there was a well-established tradition of publishing indigenous fiction and poetry in the local newspapers and periodicals in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.<sup>7</sup> The hidden synecdochic fallacy thus distorts our view of Canadian literary history. What Gibson says in the passage quoted above may well be true for Montreal--even for Ontario--but his lament is regional and provincial, not national.

Some modern critics are aware of such distortions. In a recent article, Allan Smith attributes the power of Ontario's historical dominance of Canadian literary culture to its vision of itself as a nation:

If the fact that the national idea after 1867 was largely Ontario-based is hardly new, less widely broadcast has been the circumstance that as early as the 1820's Upper Canadians had begun to think of their province, and the larger British North American society of which it was a part, as potentially a great nation within the empire (194).

But Ontario is not Canada, and one must constantly be aware, when working with nineteenth-century Canadian literature and criticism, that writing produced in Ontario in 1840 is no more Canadian (in the modern sense of the term) than writing produced in Nova Scotia in 1840. Uncritical acceptance of commentary influenced by the synecdochic fallacy, especially

criticism written in nineteenth-century Ontario and Quebec, has promoted a rather narrow concept of what is Canadian.

The synecdochic fallacy also affects twentieth-century Canadian criticism. When, for example, in On Canadian Poetry (1943) Brown refers to Haliburton as "a Nova Scotian judge, who would not have relished the claim that he was a Canadian" (3), he is contributing to the synecdochic fallacy because he is using "Canadian" to contrast Nova Scotia with nineteenth-century Ontario, not the modern nation.

It is difficult to change assumptions that have such a long and powerful history, but modern critics, especially those from regions outside the centre, are working to do so. Volumes have been published about prairie literature and Maritime and Newfoundland literature. In addition, critics such as Janice Kulyk Keefer and Gwendolyn Davies are exposing the fallacies which led to negative perceptions of Maritime "regional" literature. They both attack such comments as Northrop Frye's conclusion that "Canada has for all practical purposes, no Atlantic seaboard," in his "Conclusion" to the Literary History of Canada (1965). Such remarks, they assert, are indicative of the extent to which Maritime literature has been neglected and ignored (Davies Studies in Maritime Literary History (MLH) 13; Keefer 26). Keefer cites Frye's comment as evidence of the extent to which the "hegemony of the centre ... has alienated [those]

who live outside Anglophone Canada's foremost region-- metropolitan Toronto" (21) and concludes, "Frye's Laurentian paradigm of Canada can, in fact, be seen as an incidental demolition of the Maritimes and that region's vision of the reality it constitutes" (27). Davies says that Frye's comment "fails to address the situation on the Atlantic seaboard." She reminds readers that "No better illustration of ... [the] mid-nineteenth century confidence [of writers in the Maritimes] exists than in the writers' on-going faith that a distinctive new literature will emerge in the region correlative with a growth in settlement prosperity" (14).

Critics must be alert to the synecdochic fallacy if the demotion of literature from the "regions" is to be checked. A first step in this process would be a change in the way in which nineteenth-century critical material is presented. The prejudices of the nineteenth century must be revealed. The term "Canadian" should be used specifically to refer to the modern nation and all nineteenth- and early twentieth-century references to "Canada" or "Canadian", meaning Quebec and Ontario, should be thus glossed. This is necessary in order to disclose the extent of the synecdochic fallacy and to dismantle the hegemony of the centre. In this dissertation, the term "Canadian humour" refers to humour written in any place that is now part of Canada, and references to "Canada" in nineteenth-century texts will be

glossed.

The limitations of Canadian criticism through the synecdochic fallacy and the dismissal from consideration of all but the urbane, cosmopolitan writing approved by the literati have affected our ideas about what Canadian writing is humorous. Priestley has pointed out that "humour comes out of our common life on this earth, out of the interplay of our characters down here. It would be impossible without some recognized society" (9). But in Canada, especially in the nineteenth century, there was little "common society." Conditions of life, including philosophies of social structure, on the prairies and in the Maritimes were very different from those in such cities as Toronto and Montreal.

We are wary of humour in this country, yet we produce it in quantity. Our tradition of humour is primarily a newspaper or journalistic tradition. The decline of the economic and cultural power of the Maritimes after 1840, where this tradition had already produced one humorist of international repute and another beloved in the area contributed to the loss of prestige for this tradition. So did the domination of Canadian literary ideals by a British oriented social and intellectual elite that eschewed popular culture.

Canadian newspaper humour is a living tradition. Most Canadian newspapers have at least one humour columnist or

resident satirist. The St. John's Evening Telegram, for example, has three such columns in its weekend edition; the local CBC evening news programme has weekly "commentaries" by the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal winner Ray Guy. Much of his humour is rooted in Newfoundland life, but the Newfoundland experience includes the universal activities of day-to-day living in addition to the peculiarities of relationships between a small, rather poor province and the federal government, other provinces, North America and the world. Is Guy's work "Newfoundland local colour"--or is it Canadian? When his columns were first published in the St John's Evening Telegram Guy's work was appreciated but regarded as local and ephemeral; when a collected edition of these local, ephemeral columns was awarded the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for humour, Guy's work became the work of a Canadian humorist. Does this mean that being published in book form has somehow transformed his humour? Or does it simply give readers who would otherwise have not had easy access to his work the opportunity to appreciate his skill? What about all the Ray Guy's whose work does not get published in book form? Will their humour be lost to Canadian literature?

If these questions seem out of place, a brief history of the Letters of Mephiboseth Stepsure will reveal how precarious the recognition of nineteenth-century Canadian

humour may be. The Letters were almost lost to the Canadian literary canon. Initially, they were published as mere letters from an unidentified correspondent to the editor of the Acadian Recorder a small provincial newspaper. They were ephemera, but they were by all accounts immensely popular. Because of the tremendous local reception his "Letters" had received, McCulloch was encouraged to send the manuscript, which he renamed "The Chronicles of Our Town," to a publisher in Scotland.<sup>8</sup> We do not know exactly what happened to the manuscript after McCulloch sent it to Scotland in 1826, but we do have a letter written by William Blackwood to the publisher John Mitchell on December 18, 1828, in which Blackwood praises the skill of the letters but declines to publish them. They would, he feared, offend the more refined standards of British readers: "[their] very richness ... would startle readers in this country, for the humour is often so broad, or what many people would call coarse, that it would prevent the work from having a general circulation" (Davies, xlv). Furthermore, Blackwood is concerned that their subject matter was obviously meant for a lower class of North American reader: "There were several topics of a merely local kind, which though suited to the Class to whom the Letters were addressed, would not interest readers on this side of the water" (xlv). In a letter to McCulloch in 1829, Blackwood suggested that if McCulloch



were to rewrite the letters to make them more general he "could give us a more lively and graphic picture ... which would be of interest to everyone" (xli).

The Blackwood letters provide early confirmation that the indigenous humour disseminated in newspapers through Nova Scotia as early as the 1820s differed significantly from British humour. This difference did not come about as a result of the province's loss of literary contact with the old country. Davies points out that "the province's large Scottish population encouraged the literary connections between the old country and the new, and, as a result, newspaper editors in Halifax were acutely conscious of the taste in their constituency for all things Caledonian" (xxxii). McCulloch's humour differs from British humour as a result of his catering to the less couth North American society.

The Stepsure letters were not published in the 1820s in collected form but they continued to be remembered, largely from newspaper cuttings and popular reportage. They might never again have seen the light of day had not a later editor of the Acadian Recorder, Hugh Blackamor, decided to publish them. They appeared as the Letters of Mephiboseth Stepsure in 1862--forty-one years after their first appearance. But, even then, they were ignored by reviewers in Quebec and Ontario, and McCulloch remained unknown as a

Canadian humorist outside the Maritimes.

McCulloch received his first significant recognition in 1924 in Chittick's study of Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Chittick refers to McCulloch as Haliburton's "distinguished predecessor, from one notable production of whose extraordinary wit he learned many of the lessons he subsequently undertook to re-teach to his fellow colonists" (378). Chittick's discussion of the Letters revived interest in McCulloch and a number of articles on him appeared between 1924 and 1939. But the Letters themselves were not reprinted until 1960, when they appeared in McClelland and Stewart's New Canadian Library Series. Following this edition, which contained Frye's critical introduction claiming a major spot for McCulloch as a Canadian humorist, the letters have received substantial critical attention, mainly for their satire. In 1991, a scholarly edition of Letters, edited by Gwendolyn Davies was published by the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEEECT) at Carleton University.

The preceding brief history of the Stepsure Letters has shown that McCulloch's humour was known to very few readers outside the Maritimes before 1960. That he now occupies a place as a major humorist in Canadian literary history, possibly even as "the founder of genuine Canadian humour" (Frye (1960) ix), is quite remarkable. It should

alert us to the possibility that the mass of disregarded newspapers and popular journals may well contain the work of other Canadian humorists who may also make significant contributions to the development of Canadian humour. If McCulloch, why not others? Morris Dickstein reminds us that

not all popular culture is art, but no conception of how art and culture have interacted over the past two centuries can be complete without understanding the role it has played, the needs it satisfies, and the antipathies it arouses among conservative and nostalgic guardians of the old order (66).

## Notes

1. See Carl Ballstadt, ed. The Search for English Canadian Literature (Toronto: 1975); and Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, Towards a Canadian Literature: Essays, Reviews and Manifestos (Ottawa: 1984). A third anthology, Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, eds. The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada (Toronto: 1967) focuses on twentieth century criticism, but confirms the serious, elevated character demanded of Canadian poetry.
2. See dissertations by Fee, Huisman, MacDonald, Smith and Whitelock in addition to published works by Matthews, MacLulich, McKillop, Gerson, and Wood.
3. T. D. MacLulich, Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction (Oakville, Ont.: 1988)
4. Traits of American Humour by Native Authors 3 vols. (London: 1852) and The Americans at Home: or Byways, Backwoods and Prairies 3 vols. (London: 1854). The range and diversity of their contents indicate the extent to which Haliburton was a collector of American humour.
5. See Matthews and Gillian Lea Whitelock "My Kingdom still: The Role of the Magazine in the Colonial Context." Diss. Queens, 1983.
6. In his Outline History of Canadian Literature (1887), H. Mercer Adam says, almost as an afterthought, in the final chapter:  
The citation of Howe, the Nova Scotian orator, reminds us that we have no space to deal with the local literature of the Maritime provinces, not a little of which deserves well at our hands (222).
7. See for further information Gwendolyn Davies Studies in Maritime Literary History 1760-1930 (1991) and Wilfrid Eggleston The Frontier and Canadian Letters (1957).
8. All of the background information about the history of the Stepsure letters in the nineteenth century comes from Gwendolyn Davies' "Editor's Introduction" The Mephiboseth Stepsure Letters (1990).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Eighteenth-century Canadian Humour

Most of the indigenous eighteenth-century Canadian humour appeared in local newspapers in the forms of light verse, parody, moral tales or satire. Much of this humour is in verse--before 1814 as narrative verse satire--although there are a few instances of prose being used for ridicule and satire. In this study, eighteenth-century Canadian literature refers to materials written by Canadians in the period between 1752 and 1814. The former refers to the year in which the first printing press began operation on Canadian soil. The year 1814 (or 1815) has been chosen as the approximate end of the period by various Canadian scholars. Vincent proposed 1814 as the appropriate year to close his discussions of Maritime narrative verse satires in his anthology, Narrative Verse Satires in Maritime Canada 1779-1814 (1978). His reason for doing so is that:

in this time frame [1752 -1814] the style, form, tone and major themes of Maritime poetry were firmly rooted in the central aspects (both Neoclassical and Sentimental) of eighteenth-century English culture. By 1815, however, there is a marked change in the poetry being written by young Maritimers; they no longer look exclusively to established eighteenth-century models to express themselves (viii).<sup>1</sup>

In "Consolation to Distress: Loyalist Literary Activity in the Maritimes" Gwendolyn Davies similarly recognizes 1814 as the concluding year for the first period of literary activity in the Maritimes. Fred Cogswell delineates this period in the Maritimes as ending in 1815 (LHC I 85).

Prior to 1749, the year Halifax was founded, there were no important English settlements in Canada, so Canadian literature in general stems from the second half of the eighteenth century. Following the capitulation of Montreal in 1763, and the establishment of English garrisons in Quebec and Montreal, there were two areas of English settlement in northern North America: Nova Scotia, which included the area now known as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and Canada, which encompassed territory known as the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada in 1793, as Canada East and Canada West in 1840, and after 1867, as the provinces of Quebec and Ontario). In the eighteenth century both before and after the American Revolution, the majority of the English-speaking settlers came mainly from the older

North American colonies and brought with them American ideas of governance and personal independence.

These settlers brought Canada's first printing presses and established newspapers patterned along American lines. These were the first successful publishing ventures in the early Canadian settlements. The first printing press was brought to Nova Scotia from Boston in 1751, just two years after Halifax was established, by Bartholomew Green, the son of the publisher of The Boston News-Letter (est. 1704). Green died before he could publish any issues of the newspaper he planned, but one of his former Boston partners, John Bushell, moved to Halifax and took over. In March, 1752, the first issue of The Halifax Gazette, a weekly newspaper, appeared. In the 1760s, as a result of difficulties arising from the Stamp Act, the Halifax Gazette ceased publication; in 1769, its publisher issued another paper, the Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser, renamed the Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle in 1870. In 1764, Canada's second newspaper, The Quebec Gazette, was established in Quebec City by two printers from Philadelphia, William Brown and Thomas Gilmore. This newspaper was bilingual, the left column of each page being written in English, the right in French. These are Canada's most significant pre-Revolutionary newspapers.

Additional newspapers were established following the massive influx of Loyalists in the 1780s and 1790s. The most significant of the Loyalist newspapers for this study are the Royal Gazette and Nova Scotia Intelligencer, Saint John, N.B. (est. 1783), the bilingual Montreal Gazette (est. 1785), The Royal Gazette and Miscellany of the Island of St. John, Prince Edward Island, (est. 1791) and The Upper Canada Gazette or American Oracle, Niagara (est. 1793).<sup>2</sup> The Loyalists in Nova Scotia brought out The Nova Scotia Magazine, Canada's first literary periodical, which appeared from 1789 to 1792.<sup>3</sup>

In A History of Journalism in Canada, W. H. Kesterton reminds us that from the beginning Canadian newspapers followed the lead of American ones in writing for a mass audience, while periodicals and books aimed for a more refined readership. He suggests that early Canadian newspapers were able to survive when periodicals and books could not, largely because of the experience of their American predecessors and their own inherent flexibility. Journalism, he says,

first, had benefited from fifty years of 'prehardening' in the New England colonies. Second, [it] is much more hardy than some of the other institutions of a civilized society. If literature is a delicate tropical flower that requires favourable conditions of soils and climate, journalism is, at least in pioneer days, a scrub growth capable of surviving in a desert." And third, each newspaper enjoyed government



patronage, which provided it with a guaranteed income (2-3).

Throughout this period, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had stable and populous societies and were the cultural and social leaders of Canada. In his essay "The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia," D. C. Harvey describes the society of these provinces as "aristocratic and conservative" and says that "both education and religion were regarded as the cement of society. Even the Loyalists saw no reason to depart from the prevailing modes" (9). Gwendolyn Davies agrees with Harvey, adding that this orientation is reflected in the writing of the late eighteenth century:

Imbued with a consciousness of who they were and where they were, Maritime writers from the eighteenth century onwards began to define themselves in relation to the region. Most in this period were newcomers who brought with them as part of their intellectual baggage the literary forms and cultural expectations of their British, American or other backgrounds (MLH 11).

These literary forms included the satiric and parodic humour that were popular at the time, as well as occasional light verse and songs. There is not much in the way of humorous prose in this early period. Most of the humour which appears in the early newspapers shows both British and American influences and is conventional and moralistic in its tenor.

When the first newspapers were set up in the Maritimes and Quebec, "nearly all the early printers were American" (Fetherling, 13) and their papers retained many of the characteristics of American newspapers. This does not mean that they were democratic or republican in spirit. They published governmental matter, foreign news and local advertisements of items for sale and services available. As in the other North American colonies, their publishers looked to British eighteenth-century periodicals and newspapers for much of the material they presented to their readers. They also solicited and published contributions by local writers. Almost without exception, they describe their function in terms similar to those used by William Brown and Thomas Gilmore of the Quebec Gazette, i.e., to provide for their readers "a Channel of Amusement, as well as real Improvement and Intelligence" (July 21, 1764).

Kesterton calls the eighteenth-century Canadian newspaper "a pallid, neutral, harmless sheet without any really vital role to play in the social and political life of the community" (9). While it is true that many of these papers served the government uncritically, and promulgated and reinforced the social and cultural values of the ruling class, in many other ways their role was vital. They kept residents of the community in touch with the news from both the American settlements and overseas; they amused and

enlightened readers through literary excerpts from British and American magazines; and they provided the communities with a creative outlet--even if only minimally.

The editors of these newspapers brought from the American colonies the well-established tradition of soliciting and publishing contributions from the local population. From their beginnings, Canadian newspapers printed letters to the editor and contributions in their "Poet's Corner," which appeared very soon after the first issue. The Montreal Gazette, for example, had a thriving "Poets' Corner" less than six months after it was first published; the Royal Saint John's [N.B.] Gazette within two months of its first issue.

Although letters to the editor are not usually regarded as literary endeavors, occasionally some published in these early newspapers clearly belong to this category. Furthermore, some are without doubt fictitious creations of the editors. In both British and American newspapers this was a well established custom for social commentary. Contributions were not always original; correspondents often submitted favourite selections from their own reading to be shared with their fellow citizens. The quality of the poetry and prose in these submissions is uneven, but they include the earliest sampling we have of humour written specifically for Canadian readers.

Usually published anonymously, this newspaper material has generally been disregarded by Canadian literary historians. At best it is regarded, like the newspapers themselves, as "scrub growth," "unliterary," "parochial," and "ephemeral." Such conclusions overlook the view each of the early newspaper publishers held about his role as the supplier of literary materials as well as of news. They obviously regarded humorous material as quite legitimate literature, for as each new paper appeared the publisher advertised in his prospectus that the paper would include, in addition to materials of instruction and improvement, materials whose purpose would be to amuse the readers. The "Prospectus" (July 21, 1764) of the Quebec Gazette provides a very clear statement of this philosophy. Gilmore and Brown state: "We shall . . . present our readers with such originals, both in Prose and Verse as will please the FANCY and instruct the JUDGMENT . . . we shall have nothing so much at heart as the noble cause of liberty; the refined amusements of LITERATURE, and the pleasing veins of well pointed WIT shall also be considered as necessary to this collection."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the publisher of the Royal Gazette (P.E.I.) declared on July 15, 1791: "No Exertions shall be wanting on his Part to render this Paper the Channel of interesting Intelligence, and a Repository of elegant Amusement and useful Information."

From the beginning, Canadian publishers were wary of the frequently disreputable nature of humour and warned their readers that they would not print submissions which did not meet their standards of acceptability. The first published comments about humour in Canada warn against the excesses of humour in a letter to the editor printed in the second issue of the Halifax Gazette on March 30, 1752. The anonymous letter-writer cautions John Bushell, the editor, to be careful about printing humour because it may become too exuberant or get out of control. The editor's response indicates that such he is already aware of the dangers. The letter also provides insight into the meaning attached to the word "humour" at this time. The writer, "Y.Z.," refers twice to "humour," each time using the word differently. He says:

I would not have that same liberty degenerate into Licentiousness, nor that which is introduced for the good of the Province be made into an Instrument to raise useless Broils and Disputes or Cavil, things that may not hit the Humour of particular Persons. It is hoped that nothing may appear in your paper but what may be laudable: for that purpose, I would not encourage shallow-brained Politicians, underwitted poets, or any Invectives against particular persons; I would not even give room for a Rebus, tho' never so finely span, and for Lampoons, I would treat them as I would the Authors, that is, have nothing to do with them. On the other hand, I think everything that tends to promote Virtue and Industry ought to be encouraged, as well as papers that treat of Humour and Wit, as long as they keep within the bounds of Decency and Morality.

Y.Z. is fully aware of the two meanings commonly attached to the term "humour" in the eighteenth century. When he refers to "things which may not hit 'the Humour' of the person," Y.Z. is using the term in the physiological sense, referring to the emotional or psychological state of the individual. However, when he refers to "papers that treat of humour and wit," the Haligonian is using the term to refer to a literary manner. This latter use was relatively new, having been formally articulated a mere sixty years earlier in Sir William Temple's Essay of Poetry (1690). Louis Cazamain describes Temple's essay as "the first text in which the existence of a literary manner, answering to the name of humour, is implicitly and explicitly registered" (398). Y.Z., our Nova Scotian correspondent, is clearly ambivalent about humour, quite happy to read it, but afraid that unless severely restrained, it would easily get out of hand.

In an italicized note Bushell thanked Y.Z. for his "Cautions and Advice" and gave future contributors fair warning, saying: "as they [Y. Z.'s words] entirely agree with our Sentiments and Settled Purposes, [he] hopes they will be taken proper Notice of, not only by us but also such as will correspond with us in future." Bushell's agreement seems to indicate his own wariness about humour, which may be useful in pleasing an audience, but could be coarse or "low" and offend both literary and social decorum. Forty-

seven years later, William Cochrane, editor of The Nova Scotia Magazine, expressed similar misgivings when he refused to print a humorous submission: "We have received the poetry entitled Winter Reversed: Though it is not altogether void of humour, it is much too incorrect for insertion. We would recommend the compositions of Pollio<sup>5</sup> to this writer, rather as subjects for imitation than burlesque" (1.6 (1789) 480). This concern about the decorum of humour may be detected in Canadian literary attitudes to humour to the present day. It was certainly a major concern throughout the nineteenth century.

When it served the cause of moral or intellectual improvement and fell within the prevailing conventions, eighteenth-century Canadian publishers printed humour. Both the pre-Revolutionary and Loyalist newspapers reprinted humorous fables and moral tales as a way of educating and amusing their readers. One moral essay, "It Will Do for the Present," seems to have been popular as it was reprinted at least twice although it is probably not original. It was published in the Nova-Scotia Magazine in July, 1791 and in the Royal Gazette (P.E.I) for Friday, July 14, 1799. A narrative in the first person singular, this essay reminds us of the essays of Benjamin Franklin which also sometimes appear--correctly attributed--in these and other Maritime newspapers. It proceeds by anecdotal examples to convince

the reader that the current practice of make-shift solutions to problems is indicative of moral decline. The final example given indicates that this makeshift attitude has even affected the clergy:

I have only to add, that I went to Church on a late cold Sunday when a neighbouring Clergyman officiated. He had spoken to his fifteenthy when the clock struck one. Every man was shivering with cold, and shuffling his feet--the parson took the hint and broke off with, 'this will do for the present.'

This unexpected dismissal of his congregation--and, as the story indicates, in mid-sermon--provides the comic twist to the tale, as Sunday services were spiritual ventures and not expected to cater to the weaknesses of the flesh. Custom would dictate the minister's ignoring both his own discomfort and that of his congregation. In addition, the newspapers and The NovaScotia Magazine printed vast numbers of amusing anecdotes about incongruous events and comic incidents in the lives of the great and the famous. Such anecdotes, of course, did not originate in North America--here there were no princes, great lords or famous literary figures to provide such anecdotes. In the introduction to Frances Brooke's History of Emily Montague (1769; 1985), Mary Jane Edwards reports that an anecdote in which Samuel Johnson refused to kiss Frances Brooke good-bye in public appeared in the Quebec Herald, Miscellany and Advertizer on February 22, 1790.



Cautious attitudes notwithstanding, a surprisingly large number of humorous poems were published in Canadian newspapers and periodicals before 1815. In their Chronological Index of Locally Written Verse Published in the Newspapers and Magazines of Upper and Lower Canada, Maritime Canada and Newfoundland through 1815 (1979), Ross Stuart and Tom Vincent list more than twelve hundred original poems of which, in the genre index, they place nearly three hundred in categories which are either humorous or satiric. They identify, for example, twenty humorous songs, fifty-five humorous and satiric bagatelles, one hundred and twenty-nine satiric poems, and seventy-two enigmas and riddles (331-4). No similar index of original prose compositions exists for this period.

The first original humorous poem--and the first humorous composition of any kind--to be published in Canada appeared in the Halifax Gazette on February 23, 1754. It is entitled "A Touch on the Times: or Honora's Address to Cupid."<sup>6</sup> and in it,<sup>7</sup> the author, known only as "R.T.", makes sport of the fashion for writing poetry among lovestruck young men. He suggests that if they truly want to win the love of a worthy woman, they should prove themselves in battle. The tone of the poem, from which a short excerpt is given below, is mocking and lighthearted:

Sweet Wanton teach; for well you ken,  
 (Parent of Love in Gods and Men)  
 Directed by what Fascination,  
 The Bard, profuse of Reputation;  
 Whose brain, by Love turn'd top-side Turvey:  
 Turns Author, invita Minerva.  
 What Frenzy moves the Swain pray teach;  
 Whose heavy genius scarce can reach,  
 A dull conundrum, or a Rebus;  
 Write Panegy'r'cks, in spite of Phoebus.

Young Milo, thus, employs his Parts;  
 To wound our ears and not our hearts;  
 His restif Muse now climbs the Spheres;  
 Now down to earth him breathless bears.

Readers of such verse as this were obviously expected to be educated and reasonably sophisticated. A similar quip on the "scribble" of a conceited author is found in a sarcastic, but witty, epigram in the manner of Pope, found in the Quebec Gazette on June 7, 1770:

Scribble no more, Friend Clodio, be advis'd,  
 Your Works are nonsense, totally despis'd  
 Be wise in Time - throw by the Pen and Ink,  
 And ne'er write more - till you have learnt to think.

The stifling gentility and pretentiousness of some Canadian writers provide subject matter for satiric compositions through to the twentieth century, as we shall see.

Some of the early poems use ridicule to satirize local customs and individuals as, for example, "The Apotheosis of the Reverend Doctor -----" from the Quebec Gazette, of September 24, 1767, which mocks the self-indulgence and complacency of the clergy. Although the quality of the verse leaves something to be desired, and the rhyming

couplets do not always scan, the puns and incongruous images make this short character sketch humorous. The Reverend Doctor is presented to the reader "arm'd for the fight," as he militarily hews his way through a sumptuous feast:

In vain for Quarter, Custards, Tarts, implore him,  
The lighter Troops of Pastry sink before him.

The battle won and his meal complete, the Doctor lights his pipe and muses upon his impending divinity:

"No Human Happiness can equal mine! --  
I drop the Mortal and am all divine!  
Though eighteen stone, free from my Flesh I  
spring,  
And, light as a cherub, up to heav'n I wing!"

The pre-Revolutionary newspapers in Canada, unlike those in the U.S., contain little political satire, probably because they were dependent upon the government for business. Much of what they printed consisted of government acts and edicts-- the Halifax Gazette ceased publication when such government patronage was withdrawn because of the paper's opposition to the Stamp Act. They do, however, occasionally publish social satire, especially when that satire is both moral and didactic. One such satire appears in the Halifax Gazette on January 9, 1770. This poem, called simply "A Satire" proclaims its serious intent: "Inscribed to the good people of HALIFAX, wherein the Error of attending PLAYS are plainly shown, and the Folly of encouraging STROLLERS to erect a PANDEMONIUM." The poet is

clearly no friend to the theatre which he believes to be a waste of money and an evil influence on the lower classes and youths subject to temptation:

While Faults on others Heads to us are shown,  
We view with Pleasure, but neglect our own.  
For had we sense, since Money is so scarce,  
Should we encourage any Play or Farce?  
And teach the meaner Sort while Trading's dead,  
To give to hungry Dogs their Children's Bread?  
And yet behold fresh Bankrupts ev'ry Day,  
With Tears unfeign'd, lament they cannot play.

The poet continues, for another fifty-six lines, to berate travelling players, whom he calls "these vile CANDLE-SNUFFERS" and "the very Dregs of human Kind." The writer does, however, have a kind word for wit, which he calls "a chaste Nymph, divine and Heav'nly Fair," in contrast to plays which appear to be "Nonsense and Ribaldry." The number of enigmas, conundrums, and acrostics printed in these newspapers indicate how popular such wit was with eighteenth-century Canadians.

A few compositions treat life in Canada humorously; most chide Canadians satirically. One of the most delightful of the early poetic compositions is a lighthearted poem called simply "Song", found in the Quebec Gazette of December 24, 1767. This poem celebrates winter and the combination of courtship with the great Canadian sport of racing in horse-drawn sleighs. It is one of the earliest indigenous works to amuse readers by reversing the

traditional roles of winter and summer. In Canada, winter is an time of courtship and amorous adventure:

Of all the Seasons in the year,  
For Love, and Mirth, or Jovial Cheer,  
There's none to Winter can compare,  
    When all go Carioling. [\*]

To see the ladies in the Snow,  
In furs wrapt up from Top to Toe  
With sporting Sparks consent to go,  
    In Party Carioling.

Not Venus self the Queen of Love,  
Drawn by her Sparrows or her Doves,  
Does half so sweet or graceful move  
    As Ladies Carioling.

The Sun himself oft hides his Face  
As if asham'd, gives up the Race;  
But JENNY well supplies his Place  
    When she goes carioling.

Not all the Verdure of the Spring,  
Not all the tuneful Birds that sing,  
Can to the Plains the Ladies bring,  
    So soon as Carioling.

Then mount your Carioles, you Smarts  
Get on before, and shew your parts;  
For ablest drivers gain the Hearts  
    Of Ladies Carioling.

[\* a cariole is a two passenger horse-drawn sleigh.]

The anonymous poet's sentiments about the joys of this Canadian activity were evidently well known in Quebec. A week after the poem appeared, another version was published together with an indignant letter by "Rebus" alleging that the previous poem was an incorrect version of a popular song. He includes the correct version (December 31, 1767), which is reprinted in Vincent's Eighteenth-Century Canadian Poetry An Anthology (1981). Two weeks later, on January 14, 1768, "Jack Snail" regaled Quebecers with a parody of the second version in response to Rebus' comment that "by

his own Over-driving, the Sun was glad to hide his face; and indeed he might well be on such an occasion" (December 31, 1767). The final three stanzas of the parody reveal the real, if somewhat embarrassing, reason that the Sun should hide his face when young people go carioling:

But have a care with whom you go,  
For all they aim at is to shew  
How clean they'll toss you in the snow  
By way of Carioling.

In Pity then Miss \_\_\_\_\_ hide  
The dazzling [sic] beams of your B----side,  
Or with you I no more dare ride  
At all a Carioling.

The Sun was asham'd to shew his Face,  
Indeed it caused him great Disgrace  
To be outshone by such a place,  
And that by Carioling.

Carioling turns up again as an instance of a Canadian winter amusement in The History of Emily Montague (1769), "the first Canadian novel" [Pacey (1946-7) 143]. In her epistolary novel, Frances Brooke conveys the popularity and excitement of this Canadian winter activity in a letter from Arabella Fermor to Miss Rivers in England. Arabella revels in the freedom and daring associated with this perhaps undignified but very enjoyable Canadian winter sport to which England, lacking the clean crispness of a Canadian winter, has nothing comparable for fun and vigour:

Your dull foggy climate affords nothing that can give you the least idea of our frost pieces in Canada; nor can you form any notion of our

amusements, of the agreeableness of a covered  
 carriage, with a sprightly fellow, rendered more  
 sprightly by the keen air and romantic scene about  
 him, to say nothing of the fair lady at his side.  
 Even an overturning has nothing alarming in it;  
 you are laid gently down on a soft bed of snow,  
 without the least danger of any kind; and an  
 accident of this sort only gives a pretty fellow  
 occasion to vary the style of his civilities, and  
 shew a greater degree of attention (1985; 148-9).

Such examples of whimsical humour and nonsense are rare  
 in eighteenth-century Canadian writing. "The Hot Air  
 Balloon" by "T.P.E.", Canada's earliest nonsense verse,<sup>8</sup> is  
 found in the Montreal Gazette of November 17, 1785. For  
 all its nonsense, this poem points to the intellectual and  
 scientific link between Canada (i.e., Quebec) and Europe,  
 especially France. After J. A. C. Charles had, in December,  
 1783, reached an altitude of 9,000 feet and landed safely,  
 ballooning had captured the imagination of the Western  
 world. Several poems about hot air balloons appeared in  
 newspapers in Quebec in 1784-85<sup>9</sup>. Of these, the November  
 17, 1785 nonsense verse from the Montreal Gazette is  
 especially delightful, for in it the speaker imagines  
 himself sailing into outer space in a balloon and sharing a  
 meal with the planets in their ancient incarnation as gods:

In my chariot aerial how pleasant to go,  
 To see all my friends in the stars;  
 --Take a breakfast with Mercury, and dine if I  
 please,  
 With Jupiter, Saturn or Mars.<sup>10</sup>

The very thought of sitting at the breakfast table with the normally distant and warlike Mars is incongruous enough, but to imagine getting to the planet that bears his name in as flimsy a craft as a hot air balloon is both ridiculous and mind-boggling.

Some of these social satires are occasional poems such as "The Birth-Night," which appeared in the Montreal Gazette on February 15, 1788. This poem contains, among other familiar devices of the eighteenth century satirist (Pope especially comes to mind), a mock heroic catalogue of the guests at the ball held in honour of the Queen's<sup>11</sup> birthday:

Now in the graceful windings, of the Dance  
 The smiling Belles, and scarlet Beaux advance,  
 Oh happy colour! form'd to charm those Eyes,  
 Who by comparison brown coats despise;  
 The Captains name, still charms the willing Fair,  
 What awkward Husband can with him compare?  
 The gay Lieutenant tells his am'rous Tale,  
 A Tale so tender, surely must prevail;  
 The Ensign too, still makes a graceful bow,  
 And wins and captivates, one can't tell how.

Other social satires are more general in their depictions of the errant ways of Canadians. In "Winter: An Ode," which appeared in the Quebec Gazette on December 5, 1782, the poet, known only as "Censor" ridicules the behaviour of Canadians in winter. He begins his burlesque ode in conventional elevated language,

Awake my Muse! sing Winter's reign  
 See where the glories of the Plain  
     In gelid chains she binds:  
 Nor less the liquid Current's Tide



Feels all its rapid Pow'rs subside,  
Nor course, nor motion finds.

But, very quickly his subject matter, language and tone change and what in the first few lines appeared to be an ode in praise of winter becomes a burlesque. Censor mocks and ridicules the living habits and amusements of Canadians during the long winter:

The Villagers resign'd to slothful ease,  
Now dose in fumes the tedious hours away;  
For who no cause for emulation sees,  
Will no great Pow'rs of Industry display:  
Nor Art, nor Science, here informs their mind,  
'Tis superstition's task its Votaries to blind.

He ridicules the way they give their attention to "Folly and her daughter Fashion," to "Conversation" and card games, and to "the Court of Bacchus." In the final lines of the poem he is ironic as he says

But should the Muse their noblest feats reveal,  
She'd tell of empty Houses bravely storm'd,  
By troops undisciplin'd, nay ev'n unform'd,  
With many other deeds of equal Note,  
But these the Muse leaves History to quote.

Quite often in the Montreal Gazette, a humorous poem in French is published on the same page as an English one, but the two poems are not merely translations of one another. On December 27, 1787, for example, the French poem "Epitre sur la Noblesse" appears opposite the English poem "The Contest of the Seasons; or Winter Triumphant." On the whole, the humour in the Montreal Gazette is more cosmopolitan, friendlier to the U.S. and less circumscribed

by aristocratic British attitudes than, for example, that in the Upper Canada Gazette. This should not come as a surprise once one knows that the Montreal Gazette was established by an American, Fleury Mesplet, whom the rebel Congress had approached "with a commission to go to Montreal and [to] establish there a newspaper that would speak to Canadians, especially French Canadians of the American cause" (Fetherling 8-9).

The violent separation of the northern colonies from the southern ones during the American Revolution and the subsequent arrival of the Loyalists in the 1780s and 90s had a major effect on Canada. In Understanding the Loyalists Bumstead reminds us that

the political impact of the Loyalist arrivals was complex. In the first instance, they imported Anglo-American institutions of government and politics . . . The Loyalists through their sudden emergence as a political group which tended to be hostile to the existing establishment and through the relative sophistication of their techniques of partisanship created considerable . . . political turmoil . . . [They] helped to both Anglicize and Americanize in subtle and less subtle ways the political culture of British North America, and the latter aspect was probably more critical. However much the Loyalists may have hated the United States, they remained "His Majesty's Americans" (34-35).

They also had an major effect on Canadian humour. Their first ventures in humour were satiric, directed against their position as exiles and losers in the war and later against what they perceived as unwanted American influences

creeping into Canadian society. More bitterness is visible in Loyalist submissions to newspapers of the central provinces than in the Maritimes.

In most Loyalist settlements newspapers were established almost immediately. They contain satiric prose and verse indicating the anger and bitterness of the Loyalists about what has happened to them in Canada. The humour in these pieces is bitter, the laughter it evokes derisive. It frequently depicts the incongruity of their situation and is characterized by images of citizens jolted by the gap between expectations and reality. It contains anecdotal reports of the political and social strife which continued to plague the new United States, reflecting the anger of the exiles at their former homeland and perhaps comforting them and alleviating their own disillusionment. Neil MacKinnon says: "the Loyalist newspapers played an important role in reflecting and extending this attitude, offering the refugees a steady flow of stories from and about the [discord and discontent in] the United States" (47). Within a decade a more conciliatory attitude and tone are evident, and Gwendolyn Davies notes:

on the whole these disillusionments were the exception rather than the rule in early Maritime writing, and the majority of Maritime people, whatever their backgrounds, were busily engaged in getting on with life in the new world (MLH 11).

One of the most intriguing original pieces of early Loyalist satire is a letter to the editor, two columns in length, published in The Royal Saint John's Gazette on February 28, 1784. This piece is the earliest example in Canada of what Vincent refers to as "rationalist satire," a form of satire usually identified with the rebel side of the American Revolution. In this sketch the satirist attacks those who administered land grants and supplies for the Loyalists in their first year in the new location, not from a moral perspective, but from a purely rational one.

This sketch is written in the form of a monologue between a person interrupted while writing a letter to the editor of the newspaper and one of his neighbours. Only the letter-writer's side of the conversation is given. Reading this satire is like listening to one end of a telephone call--the reader is left to guess what the other party is saying from the responses. The understated humour of this letter lies not only in witty reportage but also in the implications of the responses. Underlying this sketch is the assumption that the problems are so well-known that they do not even have to be stated! Both gentlemen in this dialogue are angry about the lack of preparations for the arrival of the Loyalists as well as their subsequent treatment and the appalling conditions in which they must live. A brief excerpt should suffice to indicate the

peculiar typography and flavour of this sketch.

? I certainly  
 expected to find the lands surveyed and laid out  
 previous to my arrival last July.

They ought to have brought surveyors and  
 instruments with them.

? By  
 no means; they could not expect them to be found  
 growing upon the trees, or produced, as they  
 wanted them, by magic. They might as reasonably  
 have expected to have found the lands laid out,  
 cleared, houses built, and every convenience  
 prepared to their hands by some friendly demon.

Typography has a humorous function in this piece. The  
 interrogation marks indicate a question has been posed by  
 the neighbour. The responses come from the correspondent;  
 his hyperbole indicates his exasperation with the  
 incompetence of their leaders and officials of the British  
 government who were supposed to have prepared for the  
 Loyalists' coming.

The Loyalist humour in the newspapers in Quebec and  
 Ontario, as in those of the Maritimes, is initially satiric.  
 Here it is also used to maintain the status quo by holding  
 up to ridicule those people (usually members of the working  
 classes) who have been affected by American republican ideas  
 of equality. This topic is addressed in letters to the  
 editor from writers who clearly believe that those who would  
 challenge the social hierarchy are either fools or

subversives. In Quebec, this kind of satire is generalized--no single individual is held up to ridicule, but those who ape their betters in ways unsuited to their station are shown to be fools. In the January 28, 1786 issue of the Montreal Gazette, for example, there is a letter to the editor which ridicules those "impostors" who "with a salary not equal to the wages of a plow boy assume all the airs of Nobility, and affect a most ineffable contempt for every person who is not like themselves; Dressed more like a Monkey than a Man."

In Ontario, individuals were singled out. In Niagara, which was one of the first Loyalist settlements to publish a newspaper, a farmer who has taken it upon himself to write for the newspaper is satirized as a subversive influence rather than merely a fool. In the Upper Canada Gazette a correspondent who signs himself "Cato" uses a combination of prose and verse satire to enforce aristocratic social ideals and openly ridicule American democratic practices. Cato says he regards the essays of "A Farmer," a man of little formal education who has written to the newspaper to advance his opinions, with "Pity and Contempt." Cato describes the farmer's writing as the "idle, nefarious belchings of an assuming ignoramus" and warns the farmer to get on with farming and leave writing to those who are properly educated. One can imagine the chagrin and anger of the

farmer and his friends as well as the satisfaction of the educated class as they read Cato's response. Cato says: "If in his pitiful production he had other aim than of making his folly a public spectacle--that aim on his part has been completely defeated," and, switching to verse he tells "your learned Farmer:"

Drop then the quill, again resume the plow,  
Such is the service due your country now.  
Stain not the sheet, nor prostitute the type,  
Till as your corn, your genius is ripe;  
Until that time, plow, sow, manure and till,  
Nor thus outrageous vex the type and quill.  
(April 26, 1800)

Cato's sentiments indicate a class consciousness unaffected by "American" democratic principles; he appears to be angered by the effrontery of the farmer who dares to write to the paper. For Cato, literature is clearly the property of the upper classes. After a catalogue of what he considers to be the prerogatives of a farmer, Cato concludes:

Such are the cares incumbent on your line;  
The mother wit in which attempt to shine!  
The Almanack will teach you spring and fall,  
The Bible Peter, next to know from Paul.

In Niagara, at least, colloquial language and "plain speakin'" are not acceptable, and subversive republican American influences will be quashed. The tone and the aggressiveness of the ridicule in this letter and its accompanying verse are more unsympathetic than anything I have found in the papers of the Maritimes in the same

period.

In Nova Scotia, William Cochrane, the editor of the Nova-Scotia Magazine, Canada's first periodical, published a poetical epistle from a farmer in Cornwallis. In his "Poetical Letter to the Editor of the Nova-Scotia Magazine," the farmer presents himself as an earnest "little man" caught in the snare of circumstances which, while adverse, are not beyond his inventiveness to surmount. This is significant as an early appearance of a narrative stance which Leacock will develop to its greatest potential in such sketches as "My Financial Career" more than a hundred years later. The "poetical letter" is quite short, so I will quote it in full:

Dear Mr Editor, when tired with labour,  
 I went just to rest me and chat with a neighbour,  
 He was reading a book, with a blue paper cover,  
 Which differ'd from others, being printed allover[sic].  
 I thought at first sight 'twas a methodist sermon  
 The country of late being full of such vermin:  
 This thing said my neighbour you never have seen  
 Tho it looks like a book 'tis a new magazine;  
 There's nothing in nature but what it contains  
 Peruse 'twill amuse you and puzzle your brains.  
 It exceedingly pleased me, and made me enquire  
 How I could obtain it; why answered the squire,  
 You may have twelve a year, for the trifling expense  
 Of four crowns, two shillings and one single six-pence.  
 I went home, and have been three days a contriving  
 Which way I could pay, for I've thoughts of subscribing  
 As cash in this country is quite out of use,  
 The only way left is to pay in produce.  
 Indeed my friend Jacob tells me he supposes  
 An honest Hibernian will deal in Blue-noses  
 If this pay will answer, to be sure, Sir I shall,  
 Become a subscriber and pay full in fall (I (1789)  
 389).



Originally Cochrane appears to have had some misgivings about including this epistle in his magazine, for in the "Note to correspondents" in the September, 1789, issue he refers to the letter, saying it "will probably be admitted" (320). When the letter appeared in the October issue, Cochrane remained diffident, following it with a note in which he said he hopes the bluenoses (potatoes) are better than the farmer's verse. Cochrane's amused reaction is indicative of the toleration towards the American influenced aspirations of the middle class in the Maritimes. There is little evidence of such tolerance in Central Canada where class attitudes remained much more rigid.

In certain ideals there was no dichotomy. In both areas of the country, the governing and upper middle class sought to establish a society, and a literature, which would reflect the best of British society, untainted by American republicanism. But in the Maritimes the Loyalists had come to "a province ruled tightly by a small circle in Halifax, and their attempts to share in and limit this power exacerbated feelings on both sides, deflecting much of the Loyalist venom onto the ruling body in Nova Scotia [and New Brunswick]" (MacKinnon, 51)--as the sketch quoted from the Royal Saint John's Gazette indicates. By the late 1780s,

MacKinnon reports, "there appeared [to be] an increase in and easing of communications between Americans and Loyalists" (47). The local newspapers carried reports of activities in the American states and reprints from American sources in much the same way as they had before the Revolution.

In Central Canada, resentment of the U.S. did not appear to have calmed as quickly, and the late Loyalist migrations of the 1790, the War of 1812, and the massive British immigration of the 1820s and 1830s increased anti-American sentiment. By the mid-nineteenth century, as W. G. Hardy explains in From Sea to Sea,

both Canadas cherished a suspicious hostility to the United States. The depth of that hostility and suspicion may seem incomprehensible . . . in these days of friendship on both sides of the border. . . . It instilled in them an intense suspicion of American greed and an extravagant loyalty to the British connection (18).

Anti-Americanism is far more prevalent in the papers published in Quebec and Ontario than it is in those published in the Maritimes, and American influences, once detected, were rigorously rooted out. In the Maritimes, American influences on humour, especially on satire, became part of the writers' milieu. This is particularly noticeable in the verse satires which appeared in the New Brunswick newspapers before 1815.

Fred Cogswell tells us that among the Loyalist publishers,

poetry [was] a prestige symbol. Prose was common, but only the well-born and well-educated could properly appreciate poetry. The most valued quality of a poetry so conceived and appreciated was apt to be its decoration, conventionally moral and derivative of the fashions in the motherland." (LHC I:117-18)

Editors preferred to print serious poetry such as that of "Pollio," which met rigorous standards of correctness. However, they were willing to print humorous poetry if it resembled what was found in British literature. Various forms of verse humour were quite acceptable: light verse, especially occasional verse, parody, travesty and burlesque, especially items sending up canonic texts, satire which had respectable British and classical precedents, jokes, riddles (enigmas), acrostics and epigrams. When a humorous text was satiric, aimed at moral or social improvement, it could use ridicule.

One of the earliest Canadian poems to be published in book form, Stephen Dickson's The Union of Taste and Science To which are subjoined a few Elucidating Notes (Quebec, 1799), is an allegorical encomium of Canada (Quebec) and Robert Prescott, the Governor of Lower Canada. As a whole the poem is not humorous, but the image Dickson creates of Quebec as the young and unruly giant "Science" is amusing. Canadian readers in the late eighteenth century must surely

have been entertained by this reverse "taming of the shrew". Dickson's poem depicts Science, as a handsome North American youth, who has grown up wild and unruly, "cradled in forests," and dominating Nature from its wildest aspects to its most orderly. When Science falls in love with "Taste," a beautiful British maiden, whom he vows to serve by inspiring and aiding British invention and British conquest even in the remotest parts of the earth, he learns how to curb his hitherto uninhibited behaviour.

A number of narrative verse satires also appeared in Canada's eighteenth-century newspapers. The most significant of these have been edited by Vincent in Narrative Verse Satire in Maritime Canada 1779-1814 (NVS). Vincent's critical introductions to each of the seven verse satires form the most comprehensive critical study to date of eighteenth-century Canadian satire. Of the seven satires collected by Vincent, only three actually appeared in local newspapers. With the exception of "The Times: A Squabble" (1814), which is anonymous, all were written by men who were prominent in the community, either in politics or the church. Vincent does not, however, speculate on the extent to which the vision of these satirists may be representative of the vision of the general population or of a relatively small elite. (NVS xx) He does indicate that, although the verse satires exhibit a wide range of subjects and satiric

modes, they reveal

an underlying uniformity of perspective: they share a vision of human civilization which manifests itself in particular political, social, moral and political terms. The specific character of that vision owes much to the assumptions of English Augustan Toryism (x).

Vincent recognizes the significance of the North American influence on these verse satires. Responding to political and social events through the forms of eighteenth-century British satire published in the local newspaper was a mechanism of literary expression which Loyalist poets brought with them from the not-too-distant Rebellion years:

The importance to Maritime satire of the satiric activity surrounding the American Rebellion should not be underestimated. . . . The vigorous satiric reaction by North American poets to the circumstances of the American rebellion was the immediate source of the poetic energy which stimulated and sustained the efforts of Maritime satirists (xiii).

Furthermore, Vincent contends, American Revolutionary satire had "directed attention to the main question at issue: what kind of political and social order is desirable?" (xv) For the Maritime satirists the primary vision of society was based on principles of reason and morality. For some the vision of society based on reason and morality seemed to be breaking down, and their verse is directed at exposing the agents of such collapse.

"Creon" (1802) and "The Agonizing Dilemma" (1812-3), which Vincent collected from local newspapers, are

significant because of the way in which they present particular social and political attitudes. The poet of "Creon" writes from a stance similar to that taken by the American pre-Revolutionary satirists as he describes the situation in the New Brunswick House of Assembly in 1802 and creates an authentic North American narrative voice to do so.

"Creon" was probably written by Samuel Denny Street (Vincent NVS 121). It was published in four cantos in the Saint John Gazette, beginning on October 23, 1802, and continuing on November 6, 13 and 20, of the same year. "Creon" satirizes the situation which developed in the New Brunswick House of Assembly in 1802 when an opposition group boycotted the House in order to force adjournment and prevent the passing of a Bill. Guy Carleton, the Governor, refused to adjourn the House and proceeded to carry on business even though the quorum of thirteen members required by tradition was not present. The matter escalated and the conflict became very bitter. In the poem, Carleton is depicted as selfish and autocratic, a violator of the rights of the elected House and supporter of irresponsible, self-serving actions (NVS 117-20).

Vincent suggests that the members of the New Brunswick House of Assembly are analogous to the Rebels and Loyalists thirty years earlier in the American colonies:

The poet of Creon is implicitly setting the political situation of New Brunswick in 1802 against the background of the American Rebellion and Whig-Tory politics in eighteenth-century England. To employ such a widely accepted frame of reference may seem like a rather obvious thing for the poet to do, until we remember that New Brunswick in 1802 was overwhelmingly loyalist and Tory in its political complexion. Both sides in this election saw themselves as champions of British rule (NVS 83).

The language of the poem is informal, as befits satire of this kind, and the information given is detailed and concrete. It is one of the first poems that offers Canadian readers a sense of the vernacular, instead of the more correct but artificial poetic diction. The first person narrator uses slang and colloquial expressions: he, for example, describes the Speaker of the House as "chock full of zeal" (I, 71), refers to "that pimp call'd curiosity" (III, 43), and attests that the actions of the House are "as true as you're alive" (IV, 153). Furthermore, his metaphors are homely: he describes the escalation of the situation as "finding that heat was in the embers" (I, 20), and describes the actions of the members by saying they "turned their tails to [sic] and ran away" (I, 24). A few lines later he uses the analogy of an unholy resurrection to describe the essence of the matter:

So, we my friends were satisfi'd  
That this same House had gasp'd and dy'd,  
But see -- in midst of all our scoffing  
-- A resurrection from a Coffin --  
The Game is up -- the scene is chang'd,

And all our matters are deranged,  
 The Boys they shout -- the girls are laughing  
 --May curses light on such a Coffin (ll. 45-52).

The narrator may be a gentleman, but his language at times seems close to the informal language of the North American that appears years later in the sketches of such writers as Haliburton.

"The Agonizing Dilemma" by Jonathan Odell is the second narrative verse satire that is important in the history of Canadian humour. This poem is a travesty which appeared in The Royal Gazette (N. B.) in two instalments, the first on December 29, 1812, the second on January 4, 1813, at a time when Canada and the U.S. were at war. Odell mocks a report of the battle of Queenston Heights by the American Major General Van Rensselaer. His official report had been picked up from the American papers and published in the Royal Gazette a month earlier, on November 25, 1812, and so would have been familiar to readers of the newspaper. In "The Agonizing Dilemma" Odell sets out to make this enemy of the state and his soldiers look like fools. (NVS 175)

The humour in this poem is subdued, and lies not so much in incident or direct ridicule as in tone and subtle shifts of meaning. In A History of Canadian Literature (1989), W.H. New says: "in this octosyllabic burlesque, Odell transformed [Van Rensselaer's report] into a story of incompetence and self-justification, turning the language of



the original into the voice of a narrator who defends himself with empty rhetoric and bathos" (37). Vincent points out that Odell develops the poem "as a satire to travesty Van Rensselaer's dispatch while appearing to write a straight-forward versification of it . . . He wants the Americans to reveal [their] foolishness themselves" (NVS 175). Lines such as

They, one and all, cried now or never.  
 Give orders now to act--or know,  
 Pack up's the word--and home we go.  
 Had I refus'd, would not this army  
 Have all agreed--to feather--and tar me?  
(ll. 34-9)

establish the narrative voice of Van Rensselaer as a commander without the will to command. He is unable to control his army, and, as the threat to go home implies, reluctant to fight. He is afraid of his soldiers' individualism as well. The tone of voice that Odell creates for the persona of Van Rensselaer in the poem indicates he is trying to shift the blame for his failure to his soldiers rather than shouldering the responsibility of command. The tone, the images of the soldiers, and the lack of moral fortitude all fit well with Canadian perceptions of American lawlessness and disrespect for authority, and confirm Canadian revulsion for American-style democracy which, from the time of the Revolution, often seemed little more than mob rule. Van Rensselaer's fear, in the passage quoted

above, of being tarred and feathered would have given old Loyalists moral satisfaction--they had faced such threats and had not given in, unlike this cowardly American Major General.

The third of these verse satires to appear in print is "The Times: A Squabble" which appeared in the Acadian Recorder on March 5, 1814. It is significant because of its author's assumption that he is writing in a North American satiric tradition. Vincent says that

in terms of its tone and the forthrightness of its attack, [this anonymous poem] is much closer to Revolutionary satire than Odell's 'The Agonizing Dilemma' although ironically Odell had been a leading Revolutionary satirist . . . Where the Revolutionary satirists had originated . . . combinations [of different English satiric traditions], the author of "The Times" is responding to their examples as if their poetry represented a satiric tradition in and of itself (NVS 188).

The poem is written in the expectation of a major British offensive which would crush the Americans and bring the War of 1812 to an end:

Britannia! O hear me! don't sleepingly nod--  
Thou art spoiling thy Children by sparing the rod,  
Like Nero exactly their schemes they pursue,  
Their hands in their parent's heart's blood do  
embrue.

Vincent claims that these narrative verse satires are important to the study of Canadian satire because they provide insight into the complexity of the satiric tradition that writers in Maritime Canada inherited from both the

British and the American satirists--especially from those engaged in the war of words associated with the events of the American Revolution. Although verse satires "no longer dominated the field of poetry in North America [the United States] after 1783" (NVS xv), the works in his anthology indicate "the influence of a strong Augustan element in North American literary culture (in general subject as well as style) some time after its effects had passed from the centre of English literary activity" (NVS xvi). In keeping with the prerogatives of Augustan satire, it is the satirist's duty to attack abuses which threaten the stability of society. In these verse satires, Vincent notes that the satirists appear to have been troubled by "a sinking feeling that growing irrationality and immorality were rapidly undermining the elements of civilization in their world, and would return that world to chaos" (NVS xix). They are important in the study of Canadian humour both for their use of satire and for the ways in which they made people laugh at otherwise serious events. Readers of "Creon" would have laughed at the informal colloquial expressions used to describe serious political situation, at the allusions the poem contains, at the descriptions of the various participants in the affair, and at the incongruity both sides claiming British precedent for their actions. "The Agonizing Dilemma" followed so quickly on the

publication of Van Rensselaer's report that the incongruity of its travesty should have been immediately apparent, and quite funny.

For a hundred years after the American Revolution, the Canadian official and upper classes looked to the English model of a stable, hierarchical society. The encroachment of American democratic and republican ideas on the minds of the middle and lower classes appears to threaten the establishment of a Canadian society based on this model, and is a major concern of Canadian writers throughout the nineteenth century. In the 1820s and 1830s, the dominant medium for the expression of such concerns becomes prose, perhaps as a way of winning over the middle class readers of newspapers. Distaste for American values and their accompanying disruptions of the traditional societal values underlies the work of both McCulloch and Haliburton, the two most prominent writers in this period.

## Notes

1. Vincent is not totally consistent in this choice of year; in his other publications about eighteenth-century Canadian poetry, Vincent does not conclude his surveys with the year 1814. In Chronological Index of Locally Written Verse Published in the Newspapers and Magazines of Upper and Lower Canada, and Maritime Canada and Newfoundland Through 1815, (1979) he and Ross Stuart complete their survey with the year 1815. However, in his Eighteenth Century Canadian Poetry An Anthology, (1981) Vincent includes poetry published only to the year 1800.
  
2. The information regarding the eighteenth century newspapers has been taken from W. H. Kesterton's A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto, 1967). He refers to the period from 1752-1804 as the first press period. Other newspapers published in this period include the Halifax Journal (est. 1781), the Halifax Chronicle (est. 1786), the Royal American Gazette (est. 1783), the Port Roseway Gazetteer and Shelburne Advertiser (est. 1783), the Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser (est. 1783), and the Canada Constellation (est. 1799).
  
3. This may appear to be a short life span for a significant magazine, but it is actually quite a respectable lifespan for the time. According to Frank L. Mott's chronological listing in A History of American Magazines 1741-1850 (1957), of the twenty-eight magazines which were published in North America before 1789, only seven lasted two years or more. Of the five that were first published in United States in 1789, the year in which The Nova Scotia Magazine appeared, only one outlived it, and none of the others continued past 1791 (787-789).
  
4. Because the Quebec Gazette, La Gazette de Quebec is bilingual, the same announcement follows in French, "Les Imprimeurs au Public".
  
5. Pollio, is the penname of a poet who published regularly in The Nova Scotia Magazine. Gwen Davies calls him "the most capable and most prolific" of the Nova Scotian poets who published at that time ("Consolation to Distress" 40).
  
6. This poem is reprinted in the collection, Eighteenth Century Canadian Poetry An Anthology ed. Thomas Vincent, Kingston, Ont. Loyal Colonies Press, 1981, 39-40. In the Introduction, Vincent notes that all of the poems in this anthology are "locally written poems", collected "from newspapers, magazines, or manuscript collections and in the majority of the cases the author is unknown." (v)

7. Because "A Touch of the Times" is Canada's earliest humorous verse, it is quoted in full.

Almighty Archer of the skies!  
Whose crafty wiles alike surprize,  
The careful matron's studied Arts;  
And chaste Resolves of virgin Hearts.  
Each Age, each Sex, thy Power proclaim;  
Not Heaven itself disowns thy Flame:  
Each Breast thy Sport; each Heart thy Game.

Sweet Wanton teach; for well you ken,  
(Parent of Love in Gods and Men)  
Directed by what Fascination,  
The Bard, profuse of Reputation;  
Whose brain, by Love turn'd top-side Turvey:  
Turns Author, invita Minerva.  
What Frenzy moves the Swain pray teach;  
Whose heavy genius scarce can reach,  
A dull, conundrum, or a Rebus;  
Write Panegyrics, in spite of Phoebus.

Young Milo, thus, employs his Parts;  
To wound our ears and not our hearts;  
His restif Muse now climbs the Spheres;  
Now down to earth, him breathless bears.  
Now soars again, salutes the Gods;  
Now sweats, now pants, now jaded, nods.  
He swears that Face, those killing Eyes'  
Exceed Description; then he cries;  
If Flames, if Wrecks can Pity move:  
Pity sweet Nymph th' excess of Love.

Some Pity, true, Milo excites  
Not that he loves, but that he writes.  
And pray dear Cupid, let him know it;  
That ev'ry Lover's not a Poet.  
And as he would avoid offenses;  
He, tho' in Love, must keep his Senses.  
This Maxim's true, let him but mind it;  
And most of all, he sure will find it;  
To write whene'er he feels a strong Fit:  
Poeta Nassitur et non Fit.  
But this, he'll find it nought avails,  
To scratch his Head, or bite his nails;  
For he t' Apollo proves refract'ry:  
Qui Acetum habet in pectore;

Yet writes, and thinks it Loss of Time,  
To breath his Muse, or leave his Rhyme.

If means like these, all conqu'ring Mars,  
Instead of glorious Feats of wars,  
Had practis'd on thy Mother's Charms:  
He ne'er had revel'd in her Arms.  
She ne'er had favor'd his Embrace,  
Nor Vulcan mourn'd his foul disgrace:  
For she, tho' drawn by gentle Doves,  
The most heroic, most approves.  
In whining Scriblets ne'er delighting  
She bore thee blind to keep from writing.  
And had that nervous God, in Strains  
Of plaintive mourn, like modern Swains;  
Thus teased her Ears, you'd doubtless find,  
She'd born thee Dumb as well as Blind.

Then teach our modern Sons of Mars,  
To search for Laurels in the Wars;  
The greatest Dangers, bravely chuse;  
And for Bellona change their Muse,  
Nor spend their fruitless Sighs in Air:  
The brave alone deserve the fair.  
For Drums, and Trumpets, quit those Boy's tricks  
Of Sonnets, Anagrams, Acrosticks.  
These, though they think are most endearing,  
Ne'er win a heart that's worth a wearing.  
While reason guides, or beauty charms;  
The fair will chuse the hero's Arms.  
They then succeed , by surest Means;  
Who trust their swords, and not their Pens.

8. Cuddon says that "true or positive nonsense writing is never intended to make formal sense; nevertheless, it has a kind of inverted logic of its own and often comprises enigmatic variations on the absurd. . . . There is quite a lot of nonsense verse in English, French and Latin dating from the 15th and 16th c" (590).

9. A poem entitled "The Air Ballon" [sic] appeared in the Quebec Gazette on July 29, 1784 and another entitled "Balloon Song" was published in this paper on August 19, 1784.

10. "The Air Balloon" was published in the Montreal Gazette on Thursday, November 17, 1785 under the signature, "T.P.E."

By Land let them travel, as many as list,

And by sea those who like the hard fare;  
In an airy Balloon whilst I sit at my ease,  
And pleasantly glide thro' the air.

Round this globe is the farthest the [sic] even can reach,  
Let them travel night, morning and noon;  
Such excursions as these are but mere bagatelles  
When compar'd with a trip to the Moon!

In my chariot aerial how pleasant to go,  
To see all my friends in the stars;--  
Take a breakfast with Mercury, and dine if I please  
With Jupiter, Saturn or Mars.

And should I fatigue or wearisome prove,  
Whilst from planet to planet I'm dodging;  
With Venus I'm welcome to tarry all night,  
Where on earth can you find such a lodging?

11. Queen Charlotte, wife of George III.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Prose Sketch and Other Developments, 1815-35

Canadian humour, like Canadian writing generally, became more nationalistic and localized in the period between 1815 and 1835. The Maritimes continued to dominate the cultural scene, although significant developments took place in Quebec and Ontario. Humorous poetry retained its dependence on English verse, although there was some movement away from eighteenth-century models towards the romantic satire of Byron. Prose took over from poetry as the favoured medium for writing about the local scene-- perhaps as a consequence of the newspaper medium and the need to interest a wide readership. The sketch emerged as the preferred and most versatile prose form. In the Maritimes the beginning of a tradition of humorous sketches was revealed in the newspapers. But there was no unified pattern of development throughout Canada, except that traditional British forms were being modified by the

exigencies of North American publication for a mixed readership.

Before turning to the prose sketch, we should note a strange little volume generally referred to by its short title, The Mysterious Stranger,<sup>1</sup> published in New Brunswick in 1816. Written by Walter Bates, it is one of the first books to have been published in Canada. Bates describes his experiences with a felon, Henry More Smith who was noted throughout the Maritimes and New England for his daring exploits and his skill as an escape artist and creator of mechanical effigies. An immediate success in North America, the book was published in Great Britain and New England in 1817. It was reprinted in New Brunswick throughout the century. The 1866 edition even contains an updating of Smith's criminal career to 1841. The Mysterious Stranger was still of interest as late as 1890 when Jonas Howe reports in the Saint John Daily Sun that "no book published or printed in this province has had so wide a circulation as this little pamphlet, which contains all the information its author could glean of the life of the accomplished vagabond, the hero of the tale" (June 10, 1890).

This book is difficult to classify. In the preface, Bates declares that the story is true: "The facts are not conjured up from memory, having been registered in a journal kept from day to day containing the most interesting

particulars of his conduct" (1817). But the events he describes are so incredible as to defy belief. Only his personal reputation--for Walter Bates was Sheriff of King's County, and one of New Brunswick's first Loyalist settlers--lends credibility to an otherwise outrageous tale.

The Mysterious Stranger is more significant in the history of Canadian humour than has previously been acknowledged. It is clearly a popular rogue tale, a type of tale whose provenance reaches back to Elizabethan times. Mark Shorer explains the nature of such tales in his introduction (1950) to Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders:

Conventional if low forms of expression since Elizabethan times, rogue biographies were usually the lives of real criminals fictionally foreshortened and sensationalized. Their ostensible purpose was to expose the operations of criminals and thereby to warn; their actual purpose was rather to thrill an indiscriminating audience with melodrama (xi).

It is conceivable that Bates may have been influenced by such writers of rogue fiction as Defoe and Fielding. It is equally possible that he was influenced by North American popular journalism.

The Mysterious Stranger is obviously written for a mass audience rather than one of discriminating literary taste. Its dry, unadorned prose is brought to life by concrete detail which recalls the accounts of trials, Indian attacks, anecdotes and other shocking and surprising events

which were a regular feature of North American newspapers. The veracity of Smith's skill as a criminal is substantiated by the inclusion in the text of letters from officials and references to newspaper coverage of the events. Just as Smith dupes his captors, this narrative dupes the reader. In some ways it resembles the early American tall tale, in that it establishes its credibility through the use of extensive realistic detail, piling up detail upon detail until the unwary reader has been lulled into accepting the impossible as somehow reasonable under the circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Initially, the reader has no doubt that the story is true, but as the account proceeds the events surrounding Smith become utterly impossible to believe. At this point, the tale appears to be more fiction than fact.

The story is well-named The Mysterious Stranger, as nothing about its rogue hero is certain, not even his real name. The American edition of 1817 refers to him as "Henry Frederic Moon, alias Henry Frederic More Smith alias Henry Newman"; the 1866 New Brunswick edition refers to him simply as Henry More Smith. Because the criminal is the hero of the tale, the reader identifies with his cleverness and enjoys his successes. When the authorities themselves evince admiration and wonder at the capacity of the rogue to outwit them, as happens in this narrative, his invincibility

increases the believability of what are otherwise unbelievable feats.

Bates narrates the story in the first person, as the sheriff in whose jail Smith was a prisoner when most of the events occurred. But the hero of the tale is Smith. Like other writers of rogue tales, Bates is "not without some admiration [for] the exploits of his hero, [even though] he explains that his book was written to prevent future mischiefs" (Lochhead 45). He is fascinated by Smith's daring and skill both in eluding capture and in escaping his captors. Throughout the book he provokes laughter at the expense of the gullible officials outwitted by Smith. The comic aspects of this book must have been as much a factor in its popularity as wonder at Smith's exploits.

The rogue, Smith, is a daring and impudent thief, a superb actor, an escape artist of the first order, an accomplished liar and a master conjurer. He does everything with such consummate skill that even those who are affected have difficulty believing the truth. In the passage quoted below, for example, the confusion surrounding his initial escape from jail provokes laughter, not only because he escapes, but because he so successfully dupes his jailers and the concerned citizens of the town.

In this episode, Smith pretends to be ill after he has been captured, and convinces those with whom he comes in

contact--his jailer, the guard, the doctor and the town preacher--that he is dying. Having established the various characters and shown how Smith has won their sympathy and trust, Bates reports Smith's escape:

He [Smith] begged of John to run and heat a brick that was near, to give one moment's relief while he was dying. John, of course, ran in haste from the gaol, round the stairway through a passage that led to the kitchen, where there was a large fire of coals into which he put the brick, waited not more than three minutes and returned with it warmed, but to his indescribable astonishment, FOUND NO ONE IN THE BED. He ran with the tidings to his father and the Rev. Mr. Scovil, (who were sitting in a room by which he must have passed to go out) ... on going out and looking round the house for him, Mr. Scovil met Amy with the feather bed [being brought to comfort the prisoner in his dying hour], who said to him "Missus send the bed for Smit"--Her master told her to take it home and tell her mistress Smith was gone. Amy ran home and told her mistress "Massa say Smit gone. He no want em bed. -- Ah! exclaimed her mistress, poor man! is he dead. Then Amy you may run and carry over a shirt and a winding sheet to lay Smith out in. Amy ran over and told her master accordingly. -- You may take them back, said he, Smith is gone -- Where he gone, Massa? I don't know, said he, without the devil has taken him off -- so great was his astonishment at the deception (26-27).

In this passage, the anecdotal style, the colloquial nature of the reported dialogue, the dialect of the servant, and the visual representation of emotion through typographical manipulation are necessary ingredients in setting up the pun on the word "gone" which brings about laughter because Mrs. Scovil mistakes her husband's literal message for the expected metaphoric euphemism. The innocent confusion of

Amy, the servant, and the exasperation of the Rev. Mr. Scovil add to the reader's perception of humour.

Smith's dominant characteristic is his determination to humiliate those who have power over him. In succinct, but ironic, understatement, Bates recalls how once, for example, after he had escaped from prison, Smith went out of his way to rob the Attorney General who had sentenced him:

There being much company in at the time, his [Smith's] modesty would not permit him to intrude among them, but he paid his respects to their loose garments, the whole of which he carried off, consisting of five greatcoats, three plaid cloaks, tippets, comforters and other articles (43).

Smith is a veritable Houdini. So great is his ability to overcome any restraint, that once he is in jail no amount of handcuffs, shackles or even iron collars, heavily stapled, can successfully restrain him. Bates describes Smith's incredible escapes from increasingly complex restraints. In one account, Smith is "stript of all his clothing, except his shirt" and his berth is torn apart and every inch of his cell searched. His captors "replaced all his chains and padlocks, put on a pair of screw handcuffs which confined his hands together" (50). He is found a few hours later lying in his cell looking as if he had not moved since he had been shackled, but "on examining his handcuffs [they] found them cut in two, and that he could put them off and on when he pleased" (51).

Even more incredible are Bates' reports of Smith's skill in creating mechanical lifelike effigies. Not only do these figures act like human beings, but Smith apparently creates dozens of them from materials found in his cell. He starts with just one or two mechanical figures, presumably constructed from materials in his cell. Then as people come to gape in amazement at his handiwork, he increases the numbers and complexity of his "companions" until "By late July, he had created 24 figures, male and female, 6 of which beat music in concert with the fiddle while 16 danced to the tune; the other two were pugilists: Bonaparte with his sword fighting an Irishman with his shellelah." This inexplicable talent makes him an even greater source of wonder than his ability to escape all restraints.

Despite its popularity, there is little critical commentary on this work. There is not even consensus on its status as fact or fiction, and no comment on its status as humour. In the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, Lochhead describes it as "an intriguing oddity in early Canadian literature [which] provides an insight into the rough-and-ready conditions of prisons in the early nineteenth century" (45). Fred Cogswell classifies it as fiction and praises its realistic detail, saying that it is

an exception to the moralistic and melodramatic trends in amateur fiction in the Maritimes . . . it presents an illusion of reality much more



vividly than any of the works [of fiction previously] mentioned . . . it achieves its modest success because its author was not sufficiently acquainted with popular British fiction to spoil it by imitation" (LHC I 124-25).

The Mysterious Stranger has a place in Canadian humour as Canada's first rogue tale and because of its use of ironic understatement to present the incongruous in a matter-of-fact manner. It is slyly subversive in its implications. It reverses social expectations in its elevation of the criminal Smith to hero, and in its depiction of how he humiliates and dupes those in authority over him.

Books which we can classify as humour are rare in the early 1800s. Most Canadian humour from this period is found in the periodicals and newspapers which were appearing in increasing numbers. In the 1820s and the early 1830s a number of periodicals appeared and disappeared; most had life spans of less than two years. Several of the more successful were religious, and not amenable to the publication of humour. Newspapers were also often short-lived, but "if the death rate [for newspapers] was high the birth rate was higher and the newspaper totals throughout British North America grew steadily. The rise was from twenty news sheets in 1813 to 291 in 1857" (Kesterton 11). In the central region increases were very rapid. In 1813, Lower Canada boasts only five newspapers, Upper Canada, one. By 1824, totals had risen to twelve and seven respectively

(Kesterton, 11). Klinck notes that the number of newspapers in Upper Canada alone increased from eight weeklies in 1825 to thirty eight in 1836 (LHC I 154). In the Maritimes the situation was similar. In his article "The Press of the Maritime Provinces in the 1830s", James S. Martell notes that "forty odd papers first saw the light of day in this period" and recognizes that with increasing numbers came a "rapid rise of the power of the press" (111). This phenomenon occurred nation-wide.

Not only were there more newspapers, but there were more independent newspapers. Unlike the earlier papers, they depended upon printing advertisements and acquiring subscribers rather than the patronage of the local government for their success. As the competition for customers increased, they became more critical of government and published more local news and new features. By the 1820s newspapers all over Canada had taken on many of the functions of the periodical in addition to their traditional role. In a way very different from that of newspapers in Britain, they combined news from the world with news from the local scene. They continued the practice of printing foreign exchanges high in human interest and they devoted significant space to literary excerpts and serious instructional pieces. Most continued to uphold reactionary, conservative social ideas and to serve not only as mirrors

of society but also as creators of public taste. More and more frequently, they published locally written poetry and prose.

The Maritimes and Quebec, with their well established, stable societies, continued to be major centres of literary creativity. Harvey pictures "Nova Scotians [in the period between 1812 and 1835] . . . emerging, rubbing the sleep out of their eyes and facing their own problems in various ways but with discernment and energy" (21). The people of Maritimes were becoming aware of themselves as New Brunswickers or Nova Scotians although Harvey suggests that in their fiction they had difficulty conventionalizing [sic] a type (21). In suggesting that none of the fiction or poetry published in this period delineates a character which is clearly distinguishable as a Maritimer, Harvey may have been overlooking McCulloch's Mephibosheth Stepsure and Sanders Scrantoscreech, John Willison's farmer in "Novascotian Farming," and some of the characters in "The Club Papers." These characters, as well as those in the serious realistic sketches "Scenes from Real Life," do emerge as believable Maritimers in the 1820s and early '30s (as shall be shown later).

In Quebec (Lower Canada) the coexistence of French and English under a single government was at best uncomfortable to both, and made for an uneasiness in the social fabric.

Ontario (Upper Canada) society in this period was unstable, but not unmanageable. Ontario was still a frontier settlement area in which many disparate groups: the Irish, Mennonites, Loyalists, Scots, English, New Englanders and other North Americans were undertaking the process of consolidating social mores. Between 1823 and 1840, the population increased from approximately 130,000 to 450,000 persons (Klinck LHC I 155)--an increase hardly conducive to stability.

It is little wonder then that nineteenth-century Canadian writers were so concerned about stability and order--they were living in a world which was neither orderly nor stable. Furthermore, it seemed to be constantly threatened from both within and without by the United States which appeared to want to absorb Canada or which made dangerous democratic and republican sentiments very attractive, especially to the lower and working classes. Canadian humour--often through satire--reflects this instability. Throughout the period indigenous humorous material appeared more and more often in prose, and poetry became more parodic. Local writers across Canada took advantage of the letter to the editor to publish their creative efforts as well as to record their reactions to various events taking place in their society and debate issues of importance to their communities. Newspapers

across Canada continued to have more readers (or listeners!) than customers as a rule. The practice of public reading aloud meant that even those with few reading skills had access to the newspaper. A letter to the editor printed in the Colonial Patriot on March 28, 1828, provides a detailed image of small groups of people coming together to read and discuss the newspaper:

Generally on the evening after the paper comes to hand, a few of the neighbours assemble in my house, and, after our homely and heartfelt compliments are exchanged, a reader is appointed, who, after drawing his chair up to the head of the table, trimming the candle, coughing and clearing his throat, unceremoniously bawls out 'Silence' -- and immediately all are attention. After the reading is over, then come the remarks (qtd. in Martell 128).

As newspapers became more competitive, the demand for literary material short enough for inclusion yet interesting enough to expand the paper's circulation increased, and editors became more open to publishing weekly contributions from local writers. Although they published some formal essays, few are humorous. The preferred form for humorous contributions to local newspapers and periodicals is the sketch. This prose form is quite versatile and can take many different guises: the travel sketch, the social satire, the anecdotal and narrative sketch, the character sketch, and the domestic sketch about aspects of life in the colony. It has a long history in British periodical publishing,

dating back to Richard Steele's Jenny Distaff.

The sketch has not generally received a great deal of recognition as a significant literary form--perhaps because of its association with journalism. In The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (1991), Cuddon's short explanation of the sketch as "a short piece of prose (often of perhaps a thousand or two thousand words) and usually of a descriptive kind. Commonly found in newspapers and magazines" (884), perhaps suggests its lack of literary appeal for him. In Canada, the sketch is much more significant than such a definition would indicate. Gerson amplifies its significance in her introduction to The Prose of Life, an anthology of nineteenth-century Canadian sketches. First she describes the sketch as

an apparently personal anecdote or memoir which focuses on one particular place, person or experience, and is usually intended for magazine publication. Colloquial in tone and informal in structure, it is related to the letter, itself a device allowing a writer to be personal.

Then she also reminds us that

in the nineteenth century, the sketch, a popular and accessible literary form describing 'the prose of life' frequently appeared in Canadian magazines. More descriptive and episodic than the essay, but less bound by plot and character development than the short story, the sketch provided an appropriate medium for recording noteworthy Canadian experiences (Prose of Life, 1-2).

Because Gerson's collection is limited to sketches which

appeared in periodicals, in her introductory remarks she does not mention newspaper sketches. What she says, however, is equally applicable to newspaper sketches, which are both more plentiful and often more humorous than those in periodicals.

Until Gerson's book, most of the research on the sketch form has been focused on Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush. Ballstadt (1972) shows that when Moodie "emigrated to Canada, she brought with her knowledge of British models for a book of sketches about a region and its people" (33). In his study "Susanna Moodie (1803-1885)," Michael Peterman adds that the sketch form gave Moodie "a freedom to range widely, not only in mood and subject but to present material in a personal and informal way" (81). Alec Lucas who examined the function of the sketches in Roughing It, suggests that this form was "the only way, other than the essay open to Moodie to write realistically and imaginatively about her experiences in the backwoods" (146). Clearly, the sketch enabled Canadian writers to speak in ways that the rigid and artificial conventions of romantic fiction did not, and to write about subjects ordinarily too "low" or too intimate for contemporary literary forms. Most of the indigenous material--fiction and non-fiction, serious and humorous--about life in Canada in the nineteenth century is written in the form of sketches.

In the introduction to Nineteenth Century Canadian Stories (1976) David Arnason relates the sketch to both the letter-to-the-editor and the short story. He says that letters-to-the-editor were a "form natural to the newspaper" (vi) which played a significant part in the evolution of fiction in Canada. Letters to the editor offered newspaper editors "one solution to the problem of providing brief but readable short fiction." Arnason suggests that narrative letters evolved into "a specialized literary form" (v) which became popular because each letter was

brief, pointed, self-contained and complete. It spoke directly to the audience in informal and easy language so that it had a wider appeal than more consciously literary pieces, but it could and did, reach a high level of sophistication" (vi).

These letters, in the hands of such writers as Willison, McCulloch, Howe and Haliburton, evolved into formalized creative and imaginative prose sketches containing fictitious characters and colloquial dialogue. They are also often humorous.

Prose sketches are not limited to newspapers in Nova Scotia; they turn up all over Canada in newspapers throughout the nineteenth century. But the form reached a developmental peak in Nova Scotia in the 1820s and 1830s. Gwen Davies suggests that the preeminently literary quality of Nova Scotia newspapers in this period may well be a result of a peculiar Maritime trait:



throughout the history of nineteenth century Maritime publishing, many authors preferred to write either for the newspaper or the periodicals but not both. This was particularly true of the satirists like Howe, McCulloch, Haliburton and 'A Little Bird'. By writing in newspapers, these critics of social, human and political folly could reach a large segment of the population ("Literary Study" 47).

The usual assumption is that the more erudite writers would publish in the literary periodicals, as well as or in lieu of the newspapers. The newspaper sketches are decidedly more colloquial in language, and do not expect the same level of education in their readers as do the more consciously "literary" pieces in the periodicals.

They did not start as a series of related sketches. The first narrative prose sketches submitted as letters to the editor were discrete items. One of the first series of related sketches, the sixty-eight letters by "Agricola" on agriculture which appeared in The Acadian Recorder in 1818-19, are of a decidedly educational cast and serious mien. But from the 1820s on, related series of narrative sketches bearing pseudonyms began to show up regularly, especially in such newspapers as the Acadian Recorder (1813-1829) and the NovaScotian (1824-1926).

These humorous sketches are usually fictional, anecdotal, and are frequently introduced by a narrator like Mephibosheth Stepsure who purports to be the writer. Others are introduced as oral tales through a frame story, "a story

which contains another tale, a story within a story, or a series of stories" (Cuddon 354), in which the opening narrator introduces or solicits information from another person who then becomes the actual teller of the tale. This happens in the "Patty Pry Letters," and in a variation of this, in Haliburton's The Clockmaker.

The frame story serves several purposes, the most important of which are to provide the illusion of fact, and to elicit a person's recollection of experiences from before or shortly after he or she emigrated to Canada, or to provide an opportunity to tell a tale about some other character--usually of local renown. Neither the Canadian setting nor the characters, often ordinary settlers or farmers, about whom the tales are told meet the contemporary criteria of fiction. Using the sketch enables the writer to supply appropriate realistic detail and to speak in the vernacular. Sometimes either the frame tale or the elicited tale is humorous, sometimes both.

The narrative strategies devised by these sketch writers are early instances of a device which continues to be favoured by Canadian humorists to the present. Most of the sketch writers appear to be using multiple narrators and frame tales to create an artistic distance between themselves and their sketches--perhaps in order to disassociate themselves from the low form of writing they

are creating, to separate the humorist from the humour, as it were. When there is no frame tale, the writers often create a narrator who is quite their opposite in class, education and mental acuity. McCulloch does this in his creation of Mephibosheth Stepsure as the writer of the Letters. Stepsure is one of the earliest examples in Canada of the sincere but naive narrator who is utterly convinced of the correctness of his point of view, a pose later favoured by Stephen Leacock. This type of narrator continues to be Canadian humorists' favoured narrator.

As has been mentioned earlier, Chittick suggested that Haliburton had been influenced by McCulloch. In 1960, Frye claimed that the Stepsure letters are the foundation of Canadian humour. He suggested that the "the tone of McCulloch's humour, quiet, observant, deeply conservative in a human sense, has been the prevailing tone of Canadian humour ever since" (The Stepsure Letters [SL] ix). As a rule Canadian humour is less effervescent, more ironic than American humour, and less erudite and nonsensical than British, but, as will be shown in later chapters, it is frequently more boisterous than Frye leads us to believe. Furthermore, the humour of the satiric papers and of the West later in the nineteenth century is far less conservative than the humour of, for example, a literary humorist such as Leacock. Although, unlike McCulloch's,

Haliburton's humour appears to be oriented towards American than British forms, there is little doubt that McCulloch had an influence on Haliburton. Lochhead affirms "The Stepsure Letters had a strong influence on Haliburton's Sam Slick sketches, and it can be stated that McCulloch wrote in the tradition that had its flowering in Leacock" (OC 481) as a way of establishing, even if faintly, a Canadian tradition of humour. Gwen Davies refers to McCulloch's letters as "pav[ing] the way psychologically and thematically for the later sketches of Haliburton" (MLH 159).

Thomas McCulloch, the creator of Mephibosheth Stepsure, was not quite as conservative as Frye's remarks suggest. He was a leader in the reform movement in Nova Scotia,<sup>3</sup> and in the decade before he published the Stepsure letters had conducted letter campaigns in the newspaper against certain government practices. By 1821, he clearly recognized the possibilities this medium offered both for the moral edification of the population and for the ridicule of pretentiousness and aping of the "gentry" among the middle and lower classes. On December 22, 1821, the first letter signed "Mephibosheth Stepsure" appeared in The Acadian Recorder, followed in 1822-23 by twenty-four more.<sup>4</sup> In them the self-righteous Stepsure sets out to educate the citizens of Pictou, a community in northeastern Nova Scotia, about the virtues of "home," i.e., the farm, and to praise the

benefits of virtuous but unpretentious living by ridiculing the shortcomings of those who strive for quick wealth and gentility.

The name Mephibosheth Stepsure is itself a joke, the wit of which would have been quickly appreciated by the Scottish Presbyterian community as well as others in Nova Scotia. The name "Mephibosheth" alludes to King Saul's son who was lame in both feet. That the possessor of such a name should also have the surname "Stepsure" and speak in the tone of superiority frequently adopted by one who has not been tripped up by the enticements of worldliness is ironic, and would possibly have delighted Nova Scotians because of its ironic overtones and comic understatement. McCulloch gets the most out of his joke by waiting for several letters before revealing that Stepsure is lame. He increases the irony of the joke even more several letters later when he lets his readers in on the secret of Stepsure's lowly social position. He waits until the eighth letter to reveal that Stepsure, who presumes to advise and judge the actions of his betters, is an orphan who was left a charge upon the town and who, because of his lameness, was rejected as worthless in open bidding by the townsfolk. He grew up as a servant in the house of the local Squire and on the completion of his apprenticeship settled on a farm of his own. The full extent of this joke creates a delightful

oxymoron and sets up the ironic nature and subtle complexity of the humour which encompasses the satire.

In the formality of their language, the general absence of dialect and their use of understatement rather than hyperbole as a humorous device, these sketches initially appear to belong more to the English literary tradition than to the emerging American one. Frye says they are "written in the formal, almost stilted, literary prose of the age of Scott and, like Scott, they unfold at a maddeningly deliberate pace" (SL viii). For many Canadian critics, this feature gives them a "literary" quality and makes them more acceptable than they might be were the North American influences more obvious, as they are with Haliburton's sketches.

But McCulloch is lively too. In his use of slapstick and wit, McCulloch is closer to the North American humorous tradition than has usually been indicated. External evidence in the form of the letters previously mentioned written by William Blackwood to John Mitchell in 1828 and 1831 indicates that Blackwood believed McCulloch's humour to be too ribald and outspoken for contemporary British sensibility. In the 1828 letter Blackwood praises McCulloch's skill as a writer, saying, "these letters are . . . written in a style of humour [that he had] seldom seen surpassed." He acknowledges that "this very richness" would

startle British readers: "the humour is often so broad, or what many people would call coarse, that it would prevent the work from having a general circulation" (qtd. in Davies Letters xliv). In the 1831 letter he says: "Taste in these things has now a days got even more refined and what was fine for the tea table in the days of Queen Anne would hardly be tolerated now in the servant's hall" (Letters xliv). Blackwood's letters provide early indications that the increasing gentility that affected British literary taste from the 1820s would impact deleteriously on developments in Canadian humour.

McCulloch's ideas about education and society were also at odds with those of the colonial administration (Whitelaw 1985) and more in keeping with American ideas. In his analysis of the pragmatism underlying McCulloch's satire Vincent draws attention to McCulloch's North American leanings:

McCulloch's satire has a fundamental element of pragmatic rationalism that is in no way softened by any of the self-depreciative aspects of Stepsure's ironic sense of humour. Pragmatism underlies the sentiment of McCulloch's depiction of the virtues of 'home' or the homestead ...undoubtedly drawn from sources within Scots culture and thought, but his perspective is sufficiently close to American pragmatism to share its central concerns if not its tone ("Stratagems" 59).

Stepsure feels himself capable of criticising those who are socially his superiors because of certain democratic

religious ideals in Scottish Calvinism. Predominantly Scottish settlements such as McCulloch's Pictou present small town societies which appear more attuned to American republicanism than the traditional British class-based social hierarchy. Throughout The Stepsure Letters McCulloch, through Stepsure, ridicules the indulgences and shallow moral standards of the aristocratic classes in Halifax and other places. The fact readers could accept that a low born self-educated person such as Stepsure would unselfconsciously write such letters to the editor of the paper is North American.

Much of the humour in the letters stems from the fact that McCulloch's hero, Mephibosheth Stepsure, is a type of anti-hero, a North American self-made man who has risen from nothing to a respectable place in the community. He constantly grumbles that people won't believe him although he is telling the exact truth. Since everybody reading the letters knows Stepsure is a fictional creation, his complaints are ironic and the irony contributes to the distance McCulloch maintains between himself and Stepsure. At the same time it adds to the readers' enjoyment.

In an understated way Stepsure is as much a conceited braggart as Sam Slick, but his conceit is masked by his piety and his acceptance of his humble place in society. He vows, for example, that he has no ambition to be a



gentleman. As a small landowner in rural Nova Scotia, he sees no advantage in aspiring to the gentry, concluding that most of the "manners" associated with gentility are hypocritical or nonsensical: "I do not know how it is in Halifax, but, in the country, it is really a great hardship to be a respectable gentleman. Such a person, for the sake of character, must do a great many things which he would otherwise avoid" (SL 31). Stepsure is naive; he does not recognize that in setting himself up as the moral exemplum of the community, he demonstrates his own flawed nature--he is a low character who has himself become overly proud of his own success.

McCulloch creates comic anecdotes for humorous purposes and to clarify ideas in the Stepsure letters much as Haliburton would do fourteen years later. These anecdotes are often risqué in an ironic understated way. Frye notes that "McCulloch, in striking contrast to Haliburton specializes in the throwaway line" (SL viii) citing as evidence the anecdote about the progress of Job Grumble's courting:

Job was a sober lad too. Instead of running about taverns, he used frequently to visit old Whinge, to hear him talk of religion. Whether his present wife had taken a fancy for him, I cannot say; but when some mischievous boy slipt a hornets' nest into Job's trousers, there was no end to her dissatisfaction that Providence would allow such a thing" (SL 89)

Stepsure's frequent use of slang, puns, colloquial expressions and such homely comparisons as might befit a self-educated farmer contribute to the humour of these sketches for McCulloch himself would not have used such "low" expressions. But as Stepsure, a self-educated man from the lower classes who knew no better, McCulloch was free to be "vulgar." He uses colourful analogies and colloquial expressions of a kind more frequently associated with Haliburton, such as "breachy cattle", "eyes like collops" (32), "a squab little fellow" (112), and "to make a long tale short" (36). He occasionally indulges in the kind of barnyard imagery that Haliburton delights in--referring to "folks who have as many legs as a spider" (in reference to debtors) (41), and saying "our townspeople and Snout's pigs resemble each other very much" (107)--to mention just two examples. Such similes and metaphors in the mouths of British citizens might not have been welcome in British drawing rooms in this period of increasing refinement, but they are natural analogies for a low-born, self-educated Nova Scotian farmer to make, regardless of his admirable moral qualities.

McCulloch's wit includes numerous word plays and puns which extend to his choice of names for his characters. In addition to Stepsure, there are the Grumbles, the Cribbage family (all of whom are mathematically inclined), Parson

Drone, Captain Hector Shootem, and Mr Ledger (the storekeeper), to mention but a few. Puns also include such apparently naive "groaners" as the comment that "working upon the highways in summer is a scorching employment." At times McCulloch makes quite elaborate and deliberate plays on words, as in the description of Pat O'Rafferty's attempt to placate his father after he decided not to become a priest: "Pat said he did not like to be a Holy Father; because he liked Judy O'Flanagon; but if his father wished him to be a spiritual man, he had no objection to be clerk to Mr. Wort at the whiskey distillery" (39). His frequent juxtaposition of formal language and homespun analogy is a source of the ludicrous, as in his description of Mr. Grumble's face: "Mrs Grumble's husband, Joe, who is a quiet inoffensive little man, assumed a length of visage, which, had he been standing by her coffin, I am sure, would not have been any greater."

In addition to the humour in his satire of the foolish actions of the get-rich-quick schemers, McCulloch creates various comic incidents in which "low" characters try unsuccessfully to imitate the manners and activities of the middle class. Such humour is sometimes more like vulgar slapstick than most twentieth century commentaries on The Stepsure Letters indicate.<sup>5</sup> To give the reader a sense of such slapstick, I have quoted almost in its entirety

Stepsure's naive description of the misfortunes of Hodge, the country lad who aspires to rise in society, when he attends Miss Sippit's genteel tea party:

Hodge . . . was determined to present [the fried pork to the ladies] with an elegant bow, which in our town, consists in pushing out the right foot and then bringing it back with a scrape upon the ground, at the same time bending the body forward with suitable solemnity. Now, it unfortunately happened that the young gentleman's shoes, which he had sent to the mending, were not ready in time; but in order to be at the frolic he had put on a new pair of his father's, which the old man had carefully fortified with an abundant supply of hobnails and scarcely had the poor fellow entered upon his bow, when a shriek from Miss Sippit admonished him that he had begun his scrape at her shin, and was subjecting her satin slipper to an unmerciful visitation. In such a case it was natural for him to draw back his foot as fast and as far as possible; but, in his haste, it escaped him that where the head goes one way and the feet another, there is always violation of the order of nature, and before he was aware, he had placed the fried pork, melted and unmelted in the young lady's lap and was himself fast following . . . He who is falling forward does not consider that there may be danger behind. Hodge . . . in his haste to retreat, forgetting to take his legs with him . . . unfortunately overturned the teatable and its contents upon Mrs. M'Crackle's new poplin. Whether this unusual combination of accidents had produced a sudden convulsion of nature, or whether Hodge had been dining upon cabbage, which, you know, are a windysome kind of food, I cannot tell; but the poor fellow in falling made a lengthy apology, which scandalized the ladies amazingly, and, indeed, no wonder; for such a speaker was never introduced into any genteel company, and much less allowed to lift up his voice (SL 125-26).

Stepsure's earnest determination to get his facts straight, and to find suitable euphemisms for the final humiliation of

Hodge, shows McCulloch's mastery of ironic understatement and the strength of his characterization at the same time. Both Stepsure and the unfortunate Hodge emerge as quite believable characters.

McCulloch does have a vision of society, but his society is clearly a North American one in which class lines fluctuate, people move away from the land to pursue riches in the city, and democratic ideas are spreading. Such ideas do not appear to alarm McCulloch as much as they do Haliburton, perhaps owing to McCulloch's Scottish background. He laughs at the ludicrous results of these first steps in upward mobility and cautions against false values which will ultimately bring the individual lower than he was by class at birth.

In the newspaper sketches in the Maritimes between 1815 and 1840 humour was frequently used to "sugarcoat the pill" of satire which, for the most part, policed social, moral and political values. As one reads the various sketches that appeared in newspapers such as the Acadian Recorder and The NovaScotian in this period, one is struck by the fact that while, on one level, the vision of society which such sketches set out appears to lean towards a British model; on another, the view that they inculcate is not purely aristocratic and Tory. Nor is it American. A humorous anecdote published in The Novascotian on June 18, 1825,

entitled "A Gentlemanly Trick" suggests that nobility and high position are no guarantee of moral superiority.

The anecdote relates how "the governor of one of our colonies" tried to trick one of the residents of his domain into buying his old hunting hounds while he kept the new hounds just imported from England. The governor decides to cheat by substituting his old dogs for the new ones being brought in from England. Using "yellow ochre and other paint" he daubed his dogs "in such a manner that their mothers would not have known them." He then put his dogs on the ship and took the new ones, then "ordered the ship up to the town to unload her cargo". At the sale of goods from the ship, he acted the part of an eager buyer, eventually losing to another gentleman. he had no doubt that the scam would eventually be discovered, but

little thought he would be supposed to be concerned in the trick as the Captain was to sail immediately... But, the purchaser took the hounds out to hunt, as he was returning homewards, when he saw his newly purchased pack making for the Governor's premises between which and the place they had been running there was a great stream... They plunged one and all into the water; and to the astonishment of their new owner, presented, upon reaching the other side, an appearance quite different from that in which he had purchased them. Supposing they were seized of some desperate English distemper, he went after them no further but the next day he wrote the Governor, who happened to be at home when all his old hounds entered in their old clothes.

The writer provokes mirth through the consternation of the

new owner when the dogs emerged transformed from the stream and through his use of ironic understatement to describe their transformation as their having "entered their old clothes." Furthermore he generates a certain amount of moral satisfaction and delight on the part of his readers that the person in such a high place has been caught out in his deceit. The Governor was forced to return the money, "particularly as the captain had not yet sailed," and before too close an inquiry could well result in a scandal. Although the governor is not identified as the governor of Nova Scotia, the fact that such a sketch appeared in the paper at all denotes irreverence towards high officials.

Writers found subjects for humour in challenges to the established order from members of the lower classes. A sketch entitled "High Life Below Stairs" by "Custodia Moria," which appeared on the front page of the NovaScotian on March 19, 1825, uses dramatic form and realistic dialogue to depict the increasing effrontery of servants. This dramatic sketch begins with a short frame tale as a distancing device to separate the story from its creator. The narrator meets an acquaintance who appears to be quite distraught--"ready to burst and fairly glowing at the gills like a turkey cock with anger". He explains in colloquial language--at least in its epithets--that he is very disturbed by his recent discoveries of the boldness of his

servants and those of his acquaintances. His speech is recorded as the vernacular of a local gentleman in much the same way as dialect was recorded in reporting incidents in descriptive travel sketches. Modern readers may be surprised by the appearance of that by now distinctively Canadian "eh" at the tag end of various remarks: "He'll have the dance, eh!" and "I'm to pay the piper--hey?"

This sketch reveals the shock that democratic tendencies have invaded the houses of the privileged and infected the servants, who not only ape the manners of their betters but do so openly and brazenly to the extent that they entertain their fellow servants when their employers are out. In an indignant tone he compiles anecdotal evidence of this untoward behaviour, including the incident in which a gentleman of his acquaintance returned home to find his servant and his friends "playing at cards in his own parlour, gulping his Madeira as if it had been Adam's, laughing, roaring and playing the-devil-to-do with the mightiest good humour imaginable." His reaction is intriguing; he is quite alarmed, not that servants would do such a thing, but that ordinary, colonial servants would do so: "Such affairs may do very well among the nobility servants of London -- but in Halifax --pshaw -- tut --tut". In England, the servant's place in the social hierarchy is a reflection of his master's. North American servants, as



servants of colonials, should be a cut below English ones. What upsets this gentleman is his realization that North American servants have no appreciation for this fine distinction. "High Life below Stairs" is no doubt humour which may be considered a "wisecrack on a single theme" (to quote Frye), but, it is also part of the larger picture which Nova Scotia humorists were painting of subtle changes in traditional British social mores taking place in the developing society.

As the above sketch indicates, humour which deals with the lower classes is more often told about them than by them, and continues this way until the appearance of Sam Slick. On the other hand, as has already been noted, in the Maritimes farmers seem to occupy an anomalous position somewhere in the middle--after all, they are landowners. Indications that writers in Nova Scotia are developing techniques for depicting life in the colony are found in The Novascotian in the various fictional stories published in the "Scenes in Real Life" columns in 1825, which tell tales about settlers living in rural areas. The humour in these is incidental and sparse; these sketches are mentioned here because they confirm the willingness of Maritime writers to treat rural society as a respectable and significant component of the social fabric in a way that writers in Ontario did not.

Four other series of sketches that appeared in the Novascotian in the 1820s and early 30s contributed to the development of the sketch as a major vehicle for Canadian humour and prepare the way for Haliburton. These are the "Patty Pry letters", the "Nova Scotian Farming" sketches (1825), "The 'Club' Papers" (1828-30), and Joseph Howe's "Rambles" (1828-31).

The "Nova Scotian Farming" letters are the first sketches to depend for humorous effect on the readers' acquaintance with Canadian texts which previously appeared in local newspapers. If intertextuality and interconnectedness are the basis of a literary tradition, these sketches establish the reality of a tradition of humorous newspaper sketches in Nova Scotia. James Willison's eight letters which appeared in 1825,<sup>6</sup> form a comic response to the social vision of "Agricola", whose Letters were published in the Acadian Recorder six years earlier. In these letters, Agricola offered practical advice on how to develop Nova Scotia into an agrarian utopia. Willison's "Nova Scotian Farming" sketches describe the personal misadventures of a Halifax businessman who, having read "Agricola," becomes infected with the farming bug. In first person narrative he describes how he sold his store and bought a farm in the Annapolis Valley. Using a breezy colloquial language, his account of his year as a

farmer proves that farming is not for every one, and that Agricola's advice does not always work as perfectly as the great esteem in which it is held seems to indicate.

In the first letter John, a Halifax businessman for twenty-two years, reveals that he "did one of the most foolish things that a man with three grains of sense in his noodle ever could." Using colloquialisms similar to those Haliburton's Sam Slick would popularize ten years later, he explains how he was persuaded to try farming. He "allowed as how" his wife, who had been a farmer's daughter, had always wanted to be back on the farm, and this coupled with the encouragement he received from reading the letters of Agricola convinces him to sell his shop and purchase a farm. Unlike Agricola, he himself had "always believed Nova Scotia was not a great country for farming." He believed Agricola, even though many others did not: "Many's the long argument I have had with some of the obstinate folks, ay, even some of the bluenoses<sup>7</sup> over my own shop stove . . . I always stuck up for Agricola." He realizes that there are ominous signs--great numbers of farms for sale--that farming might not be what Agricola indicates it is: "if it's so very good, why the devil do they all seem so anxious to leave it?" But he convinces himself that "they are fools and too self-sufficient to read Agricola."

In the second letter he recounts his misfortunes as he

and his wife leave Halifax. Guided only by his thriftiness, he gets bargains by buying at auction, and acquires a horse for debts owed, but his ignorance in such matters renders his actions foolish. At the first hill, for example, he discovers the horse is "broken-winded and would no more carry me on a journey than fly to the moon". The items he got at auction or purchased prove as worthless as the horse. Among the latter is "a new-fangled weeding thing that I got on Agricola's recommendation in one of his letters," but this item is "snapped in the beam" during the transport. Not an auspicious start.

Letter three describes settling in to the life of a farmer. First, he acquires a skill needed by a farmer--he learns to ride a horse:

My legs are gathered up in this way, something, in truth, like an L turned upside down. Everytime the beast trots, I am twigged up and down, up and down, hough-pech, hough-pech, at least a foot from the saddle every move. And when the horse gallops, which you may rest assured is not oftener than I can help it, I hold on by the mane, and my chief endeavour is to keep my tongue from being checked by my teeth from my chin coming dunch [sic] against either of my knees.

He hires two men, a "gawcey [sic] looking sawney [Scot] to take the management like; and the other a long blue-nose to do the odd jobs." Both turn up late the first day; the Scotsman--"whistling impudently"--at seven o'clock; but

Johnny Blue-nose came about ten o'clock; I thought I might give him a fire, but I had just said one

or two words to him, when he spoke up, and told me to my beard that if I didn't like him, I might leave him, for places were plenty and he would be d----d if he would stop any where if the master was uncivil and Kantankerous.

Throughout these letters, Willison adopts the tone of a self-deprecating narrator who recognizes his own foolishness. Notwithstanding his ignorance of farming and his disillusionment with Agricola, whose advice often turns out to be impractical or just plain wrong, he does not lose heart. He perseveres until, on his own terms at least, he somehow wins. Like Leacock's little-man narrators eighty years later, our Nova Scotian businessman-turned-farmer refuses to be beaten. Even though his victory needs to be defined in his, rather than society's, terms, he farms for a year before he returns to the city and possibly another business. These letters provide an early manifestation of the use of understatement for ironic counterpointing of gullibility, illusion and reality that continues to be a favourite technique of modern Canadian humorists.

A new series of letters signed "Patty Pry" appeared in the NovaScotian in the summer of 1826.<sup>8</sup> Not all the material in these sketches is humorous. Their significance for humour lies in their frame story. This device which permits multiple narrators bridges the gap between the realism inherent in writing about the local situation and the demands of fictional conventions for elegance.

The frame story introduces Patty Pry and her family who live in contemporary Nova Scotia. Patty's curiosity about Aunt Tab prompts her father to tell his daughter all about Tab's secret and tragic romance, which forms the main story of the sketches. Aunt Tab had remained faithful for fifty years to her true love from whom she had been forcibly parted in Ireland. Her story is serious and tragic. The humour in these sketches comes from the frame story. It lies in the freshness and wit revealed in the character of Patty, the narrator of the frame tale, who emerges as the first depiction in Canadian literature of a clever, articulate woman.

The anonymous author of these sketches has created in Patty Pry a clever but self-deprecating narrator who relies on irony for humorous effect. Patty's speech is lively, literate and colloquial, and she offers readers an exciting glimpse into the character of a young lady of standing in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. She is an avid and opinionated reader of newspapers, quite unlike the more delicate-minded young women created by such writers as Agatha Armour later in the century who eschewed such "masculine" reading material. In the sketch published on June 29, 1825, Patty's comments about the newspaper she is reading are provocative and funny, designed, no doubt, to elicit smiles, if not outright chuckles, from readers of

discriminating taste. At the same time, the writer conveys a clear impression of a young, well-educated but artless young woman speaking colloquially and naturally to a confidante:

Turning to the paper, or rather making the paper turn to me, I glanced my eyes down the columns and found three scraps of poetry standing in order, but with titles not very attractive to the lovelorn eye. First --"Stepsure in Town" -- a kind of would-be funny, serio-comic ditty according to my mind; but the point of which although it has reached a thirteenth canto, is quite too deep for me -- silly simpleton that I am, being but a young lady and in my teens. Next a scrap upon "Misery" --Some old-fashioned prig of a fellow, thought I, writing to his dissipated comrades about the gout, and preaching patience and water gruel. I was ready to exclaim with Sangrade, "It cometh not, within my practice, therefore let it pass." ... And third "An Address to Caledonia" -- a country and its race for which I cherish a mortal abhorrence, ever since I knew they feed their children upon oatmeal to give them a complexion, dance to the tune of the bagpipes and suffer Gentlemen to go to a drawing room in kilts -- as memo the King's levee at Holyrood House. However, in running my eye down the second time, a couplet of the first order purporting to be an effusion from an "Acadian Bard", caught my attention.

Oh, youth do not an idiot be  
And live for love in slavery.  
My eyeballs were stretched . . .

One wishes that the writer had continued to develop the character of Patty Pry. She delights in word play and witticisms and her descriptions of herself as "a silly simpleton" and "but a young lady and in my teens" are ironic understatements which work to highlight her liveliness and

intelligence and lend weight to her naive, off-hand literary criticism.

Following Joseph Howe's purchase of the NovaScotian in 1827, a new kind of sketch appears and makes a contribution to Canadian humour. Between May, 1828, and October, 1832, at frequent but sometimes irregular intervals, Howe published the series of fifty-two sketches which comprise "The 'Club' Papers." The individual sketches vary in format--some being printed in the form of dialogues, some as dramas, some containing poetry--but they all feature at least four members of "the Club". "The Club" is a group of gentlemen who meet in an unidentified location in Halifax: "Oh! there's not in this wide world so snug a retreat/ As the little back room where the merry Club meet." Here they eat, drink, and enjoy each others company, "bound by no rules except those of courtesy and good fellowship, and have no object save amusement" (May 8, 1828). Theirs is a convivial group, as Haliday's song from January 13, 1830 indicates:

Oh! it is not that Nature has spread o'er the  
scene  
Her fairest Havannahs, and choicest Poteen;  
Oh! it is not the wine cup we frequently fill,  
Oh! no, it is something more exquisite still

'Tis the spirit of friends whom our bosoms hold  
dear --  
The jokes which we crack and the songs that we hear:  
And which show how the charms of the table improve  
When by wit they're reflected from spirits we love.



There are more than eleven members of the "Club", but six appear to be regular members, at least for the first year: Major Metheglin of the British army, Ned Barrington, a lovesick poet, Frank Haliday, an idealistic young lawyer, Dr. Febres, a caustic medical doctor, Mr. Editor, a newspaper editor, and Mr. Merlin.

Usually the sketches take the form of lively witty conversation between members of "the Club" who meet to discuss the latest events affecting Nova Scotian society. They are written in a manner similar to the "Noctes Ambrosianae" columns that appeared in Blackwood's magazine during these years.' The tone of most of the Club papers indicates that they are being written for a sophisticated, well-informed audience. Gwen Davies says that "In spite of the Club's dedication to folly and fun, it was obvious from the very beginning of the series that the Club's humour was to be as socially relevant as it was enjoyable. (MLH 89)

She speculates that

it is with the Club that Thomas Chandler Haliburton learned the effectiveness of many of the techniques (and addressed many of the subjects) that were to be refined in the "Recollections of Nova Scotia" (The Clockmaker) a few years later. To meet the conversational demands of the Club sessions, Haliburton and the other writers in the series gained practical experience in learning how to write colloquially, in discovering how to develop a personal and intimate relationship with the reader, and in

recognizing the possibilities that dialect afforded them in developing humorous and satirical effects (MLH 105).

In the sketch published on January 28, 1830, for example, the Club members welcome a new member, Mr. Merlin, a Scot who has arrived bearing a letter of recommendation for membership from the Major:

Haliday,--Will you drink Wine or Punch, Mr. Merlin?

Merlin,--Punch, Sir, if that is Whiskey.

Hal.--It is, and excellent too, a present to the Club from a friend at Greenock. Ponsosby carry a goblet to Mr. Merlin

Merlin, \_\_Eh, man, that's mountain dew, an' there's nae kind o' life that winna thrive under that, its just like sap to every bane an' drap o' bluid i' the body.

Editor,--You appear to understand the nature of that dew, Mr. Merlin, and are no doubt a Scotch plant.

Merlin,--True, true, but I'm neither a settle or a thistle, but just a wee bit spink on the humble walk o' life.

In "The Club" for January 1, 1829, the Major, a significant character in these early sketches, addresses his fellows in what Haliday refers to as "a kind of prologue to our medley meetings of Comedy, Tragedy and Farce." The following extract suggests the quality of wit, seriousness and satire with which he reminds the members that

No part of the duty which devolves upon you is, in my opinion, of more vital consequence to the interests of your fellow men, than that you should be convened at or about the same period of time with the other great Bodies to whom are committed the guidance and government of the world; because should any delay take place on your part, in counteracting the effects of either or all of

their measures, evils more dire and afflictive than

"Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrachs, Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs, Demonic phrenzy, moaping melancholy, And moon struck madness, pining atrophy, Marasmus, and wide wasting pestilence, Dropsies and asthmas, and joint racking rheume," might be inflicted on a harmless and confiding world.

In her article on "the Club" papers, Carrie MacMillan suggests that

Howe and the friends he gathered around him saw 'the Club' as an opportunity to provide a model of literary activity and to illustrate the potential of the local scene for literature. Their idea of Nova Scotia was not that it be a hollow echo of the mother country, but that it combine the best of British tradition and New World vitality (53).

Sometimes overlapping "The 'Club' Papers", Howe's own "Western Rambles" (published between July and October, 1828) and "Eastern Rambles" (between December, 1829, and October, 1831) appeared in The Novascotian. These sketches "combine description and reflection while holding to the framework of a journey that is itself composed of selected elements of many actual journeys" (Parks, Recollections 32). They are the first travel sketches written by a native Canadian for his fellow colonists.

Although much of the material in these sketches follows the usual pattern of travel literature, describing the means of travel and the places visited, recording the traveller's responses to specific scenes or incidents, and

recording his musings and reflections--they also demonstrate Howe's ability as a humorist. Parks says,

'The laughing' is often what raises these sketches above the commonplace. Howe has the useful gift of perceiving varieties of human folly without falling victim to humourless self-unction; his normal tone is lightly ironic, whether he is saying that far too many women degrade themselves in the gossiping round of social chatter, that the Legislature is inept in its allocation of funds for public works, that the fierce party spirit in Pictou is the curse of the place (Parks, Recollections).

Howe's description of a stagecoach ride illustrates the astute observation and economy of language that characterize these sketches. He is laughing at the speed with which one completes one's "toilette" after an overnight stay during a journey by stage, and at the democracy of the stagecoach which carries--in very close proximity--a cross section of Nova Scotian humanity:

Perhaps, my friend, you have been accustomed to spend a few hours at your toilette--to linger away your life eradicating a freckle from your chin -- in curling a whisker or coaxing a moustache; or mayhap, you have been reading the recent French work, and practice diurnally the five and twenty ties upon your cravat, but these will not do this morning--leap into your trousers and boots, and gather your upper garments about you, and leap into the coach; and, for the first time in your life, reflect on the folly of wasting so much time in performing an operation that can be done so quickly. Crack goes Peter's whip, and you roll away on your journey, . . . and after having reconciled yourself to the idea that there is no danger of your neck being broken, you begin to examine your fellow passengers; and a goodly collection there are. First, your attention is drawn to a fat lady by whom you are flanked on the

right, and who utters sundry murmurings about the folly of hurrying into a coach at the expense of people's corns, and as you protrude your elbow between her ribs in order to button your waistcoat, adds by way of accompanymment [sic], a small 'piece of her mind' about the indelicacy of gentlemen dressing in the Stage (August 7, 1828).

Howe's "Rambles" are comic and satiric by turns. The images of Nova Scotia they provide are concrete, their language is formal but forthright, and their dominant tone is tolerant, affable and patriotic.

Howe also achieved a reputation as a humorist for some of his poetry. Parks notes that humorous poetry offered Howe an opportunity to write in the vernacular about things of immediate concern. For Howe

serious poetry presents universal themes and feelings in an elevated manner by means of elevated or 'poetic' diction.; it is morally edifying and emotionally affective. Conversely it does not concern itself, except incidently with the specific, the particular, the local; it shuns the common and vulgar in subject and language. . . . Naturally Howe excludes light verse, whether humorous or satiric, from these austere requirements" (Poems and Essays xxi).

In such poems as "The Lord of the Bedchamber", "Canada Butter", "A New Member", "The Blue Nose", "The Fancy Ball", and the "Toast to Thomas Haliburton" he writes about specific individuals and occasions, the commonplace, and the vulgar, and does so with wit and a sense of fun. "A New Member" which he published in The NovaScotian on February 28, 1828, for example, marks the occasion on which a large

dog entered the House of Assembly during a discussion. The first two stanzas indicate the light bantering tone he adopts throughout the poem:

Why, Rover, by what wily art  
 Did you get entrance here?  
 By playing well a patriot's part,  
 And wasting bread and beer?

By kissing each Elector's wife,  
 And flirting with his sister,  
 And swearing that upon your life,  
 Your heart could ne'er resist her?

Howe's language is formal, and the old fashioned wit in his "light" comic and satiric poetry makes it readable, if somewhat trite. In "To Mary", for example, the narrator glances at an attractive woman during a sermon when he should be contemplating higher things. He then demonstrates that he is, in fact, doing exactly what the preacher suggests:

Oh! Blame me not, Mary, for gazing at you,  
 Nor suppose that my thoughts from thee ~~were~~ <sup>preaching</sup> ~~preaching~~ <sup>aying</sup>.  
 Tho' I stole a few glances -- believe me 'tis true --  
 They were sweet illustrations of what he wasaying.

For, when he observed that Perfection was not  
 To be found upon Earth -- for a moment I bent  
 A look upon you -- and could swear on the spot,  
 That perfection in Beauty was not what he meant.

And when, with emotion, the worthy Divine  
 On the doctrine of loving our neighbors insisted,  
 I felt if their forms were as faultless as thine,  
 I could love every soul of them while I existed.

And, Mary, I'm sure 'twas The fault of those eyes --  
 'Twas the lustre of them to the error gave birth --  
 That while he spoke of Angels that dwelt in the Skies,  
 I was gazing with rapture at one upon Earth  
 (Poems and Essays 124).

In the late 1820s and throughout the 1830s, the NovaScotian "was so comprehensive in its contents, so ably written, so widely circulated that it pushed off the market the two ambitious magazines that struggled for place and fame between 1826 and 1835--the Acadian and the Halifax Monthly" (Harvey 19). Designed to appeal to a wide audience of readers, newspapers such as the NovaScotian were less self-consciously literary than the periodicals of the day, which gave a certain freedom from literary convention to their writers. One Canadian critic believes their stories and poems are more representative of actual developments in Canadian literature than those in the literary periodicals. Arnason says:

The stories and poems that appeared by Canadians in these early periodicals [the Halifax Monthly, (1830-32), the Colonial Pearl (1837-40), and the New Brunswick Religious and Literary Repository (1829-32)] are not a fair indication of the literary life of early Canada. They are conscious of what their writers took to be "real literature," which was, of course, English literature" (vi).

In Montreal in the 1820s a periodical appeared that appears to be little influenced by such restrictive literary ideals, possibly because The Scribbler (1821-27) is the

first Canadian publication specifically dedicated to satire and humour. At a time when two years were a considerable life span for a literary journal, it survived for six years. It is also the first central Canadian periodical whose numbers were collected and published as volumes.<sup>10</sup> On the title page of Volume II (1822) Wilcocke describes The Scribbler as "A Series of Weekly Essays on Literary, Critical, Moral and Local Subjects, Interspersed with Pieces of Poetry." The number of contributions it publishes seem to indicate a healthy subscription list, although the preface to Volume IV (1823) refers to a resumption of publication following a three month hiatus. In the same volume, a mock advertisement gives hints that the paper may have been experiencing financial difficulties: "WANTED: A rich and liberal patron to dedicate the Scribbler to. Dedications ready made to suit all persons, as good as bespoke" (July 10, 1823).

The Scribbler, edited throughout its life by Lewis Luke Macculloch, the pseudonym of Samuel Hull Wilcocke of Burlington, Vermont, was regarded as disreputable by the literary community of Montreal. In his edition of the poems of "Ereius" (Adam Hood Burwell), many of which appeared in The Scribbler, Klinck refers to Wilcocke as "notorious" ("Burwell" iv). As The Scribbler may have begun



publication while Wilcocke was in jail,<sup>11</sup> the adoption of a pseudonym had certain practical purposes. In much the same way as one hundred and twenty years later Robertson Davies would delight readers with fictitious encounters between his alter ego, Samuel Marchbanks, and himself, Wilcocke often engages in encounters between his fictitious self and his real one. On September 16, 1821, for example, Macculloch offers Wilcocke a position on his paper:

A brother of the quill (S.H.Wilcocke,) has advertised for employment in various branches, and offers to write for a moderate compensation, / letters, memorials, petitions, Representations &c./Pamphlets, Sermons, Paragraphs, Verses, Mottos, &c./In English, French, German, Dutch and Latin. From the eccentricity of the advertisement, it was supposed that it was not meant to be taken seriously...but I have reason to believe he will do all that he professes. I think I shall give the poor devil the title page, prefaces, and index of the Scribbler to prepare, when the first volume is completed. (September 16, 1821 95).

Klinck refers to The Scribbler as "the first important literary magazine in the Canadas [Quebec and Ontario]" ("Burwell" v); and in the Literary History of Canada says Wilcocke's "maturity and shrewdness . . . were coupled with the audacity to descend into the blackest depths of gossip and vilification. The weekly Scribbler (1821-27), his 'blasted blue book' had the notoriety of a scandal sheet in its own time; it was fated for oblivion after that for a century and a half" (LHC I 148). However, even as he

condemns it as "low" Klinck admits that The Scribbler outlived more cultivated contemporary journals, and recognizes that Wilcocke

could claim to be 'the first that regularly assumed the critic's chair in Canada' [Quebec] and the first to acquire 'the dignity of appearing in bound volumes on the shelves of a library'. Chisholme and Christie (the editors of The Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository (1823-5) and The Canadian Review and Literary and Historical (1824-6) gambled on the existence of a cultivated reading public; Wilcocke scratched the surface of what he found" (LHC I 148).

(Note the presence of the synecdochic fallacy in the preceding quotation--The Nova Scotia Magazine had appeared in bound volumes in the 1790s.) Klinck's suggestion that Wilcocke "scratched the surface of what he found" echoes the nineteenth-century elitist attitude toward writing which was not serious, morally sound and intellectual.

The Scribbler is resurrected here because notwithstanding all of its crudity, gossip and vilification, it provided an outlet for original Canadian humour for more than six years. Wilcocke is conscientious in attributing pieces and informs his readers in the first volume that "whatever appears in The Scribbler without the mark of quotation (sic), may be considered as original, and where not attributed to another pen, as the inspiration of my favourite muse" (September 27, 1821 111). Furthermore, in the preface to Volume IV, he expresses some misgivings about

the local and ephemeral nature of the contents of the paper, indicating his affinity with contemporary concepts of the literary:

With regard to the present volume, I cannot but be sensible that the Scribbler still contains too much of a mere temporary local and personal nature; but the public in Canada will not be satisfied without such Bon-Bons; and probably for that very reason it may be said to continue to present a faithful mirror of the times. My work, as it were . . . applies to the people in their undress; it visits them in their bedrooms, and at their firesides, at their amusements and their debaucheries.

Wilcocke speaks the truth in these comments. Much of the material in The Scribbler is indeed local and ephemeral and, as he says elsewhere in this preface, "not choice in its language [or] smooth in its delineations." But, as he noted, it is also the nature of humour and satire to "present a faithful mirror of the times" and this includes matters which are fleeting or scandalous. Each issue contains as a rule an essay or a review by Wilcocke, followed by letters to the editor and poetry--frequently poor, almost always satiric or parodic and usually of local origin. This mixture gives an interesting insight into what shocked and delighted readers in the Montreal of the early 1820s. Frequent references to opposition, indicate that the whole undertaking was considered disreputable by the more conservative inhabitants of the city. It continues to have much the same reputation today for literary scholars.

The Scribbler is uninhibited in its satiric attacks on Montreal officialdom, business and society in general. Through fictitious letters to the editor and satiric columns such as "Domestic Intelligencer," Montreal's prominent citizens, disguised by such revealing pseudonyms as "Lord Goddamnhim" or "McRavish, McKilliway & Co.," are depicted in ludicrous, embarrassing and even compromising situations. Such columns are ephemeral and of interest mainly for their liveliness.

In addition to such satiric columns, The Scribbler contains some of Canada's earliest examples of dialect humour and humour based on "bad spelling" (cacography). These forms would dominate North American humour in the 1850s and 1860s. The vogue of cacography was relatively short-lived, but it achieved a popularity in North America far greater than it ever achieved in Britain. Cacography had appeared in Britain in the eighteenth century in publications as diverse as the Spectator Papers and Humphry Clinker. But it made its first appearance in Canada in The Scribbler. It continued to be used for humour in other papers although, for reasons we will explore later, it never became as popular as it did in the United States. Allen Walter Read suggests that in America, "good spelling was a symbol of cultural achievement... [and] the strong pressure in mid-century toward uniformitarianism in spelling was

bound to produce some kind of rebellion, and the humour of bad spelling was the result" (qtd. in Blair and Hill 276). Speaking of American humour, Leacock suggested in Humour: Its Theory and Practice that "the very eminence of spelling in America rendered it all the better mark for artful degradation" (24).

In Canada, cacography makes its first appearance in the July 13, 1822 issue of The Scribbler, in a letter which combines "Yankeeisms" with bad spelling. The letter, to "Johnny" from his "Ant Peg," begins: "I rit to you some time ago jist to inform you I was keeping a tavern a little ways from Montreal and I raly beleave the letter cood not a bin gone a week before I sea it full length in a little divilish kind of a newspaper called the Scribbler."

Cacography remains relatively rare, but dialect humour appears frequently throughout the course of The Scribbler. Letters written in a variety of "visual" dialects: Irish, Scots, German, Yankee and American Negro appear more frequently than those featuring "bad spelling". Some, such as the one from "Sawney Bean" (Volume II, 68), purport to come from emigrants who are as yet unused to the ways of the new country:

Ye maun ken I ha' just come fra' the land o'  
cakes, and an queet a stranger in these foreign  
parts, ... I left my ain country an her bannocks an  
kail, to be a gentleman, or sie like in this, as  
many a score o' ma countrymen ha'dune afore me,

some o' whilk wha had scarce a tatter'd breeken to  
 their hurdies, or a plack in their pouch when they  
 landed, but now fashmagary about the streets like  
 so many lairds. . . Now, my dear fren', gin ye  
 cude direc' mein[sic] the precees gait these  
 chiels tuke to be great men, ye wad confer a favor  
 on Yours till command,

SAWNEY BEAN

While they evoke derisive laughter at the homely expressions and lack of education of their fictitious authors, such letters also give insight into the optimism of lower-class immigrants to Canada.

The Scribbler provided an outlet for some of Canada's earliest literary criticism. Wilcocke regularly published reviews of Canadian publications, including periodicals. In this, he was well ahead of his time, as it is only in the last twenty years that Canadian periodicals are once more being examined as significant sources of literature. He was quite aware of his venturing on new ground in his decision to review periodical publications, but, in his review of The Canadian Magazine he explains:

I may be regarded as overstepping the usual line of reviewers, by extending my remarks to periodical works, which are almost universally entirely disregarded by the literary reviewers at home. . . I conceive that in a country like Canada [Quebec], the paucity in number and barrenness of literature, that prevails as to publications are sufficient pleas for taking up periodical works as well as others, in my occasional strictures upon the merits and demerits of what proceeds from the press. And being the first that regularly assumed the critics chair in Canada, the founder, as it were, of a court for the judgment of literary efforts, I conceive I am entitled to frame the

laws and practices of that court according to my own opinions (March 4 1924 363-4).

His reviews of humorous and satiric productions are of interest to this study. He reviewed George Longmore's The Charivari<sup>12</sup> which was published in May, 1824. His review praises Longmore's poem for both its humour and its satire, and quotes liberally from it, thereby increasing its reach. Wilcocke praises the poet for introducing a

laudatory digression on lord [sic] Byron's poetry, and particularly Don Juan, displaying an independence of mind, and an unwillingness to bow down before the Baal of pretended sanctity, that cankers, not only fair England, but diffuses its venom to its most distant possessions, which is highly creditable to the author who says he still has to learn

"Why he who speake Truth boldly, should do ill"  
(June 1824 165).

Wilcocke, like Longmore and (later) Haliburton, regards slavish imitation of the increasingly genteel social and literary mannerisms of the mother country as counterproductive for North American society and literature. This view becomes less and less tenable following the massive influx of British settlers into Quebec and Ontario in the 1820s and '30s.

Most of the essays, reviews, plays and satires of The Scribbler explore the potential for humour in the local scene and characters. Some longer contributions, such as "Excursion Along Lake Champlain" in Vol. IV, "The Charrivarri: A Farrago" in Vols. III and IV, "The Story of

Caroline Summer" in Vols. III and IV, and the drama, "The Slip: A Farce" in Vols. V and VI were published in instalments. In the instalment of "Excursion Along Lake Champlain" which appeared on March 4, 1824, for example, the writer pokes fun at Americans by differentiating them from other nationalities according to their attitude to their meals and to chairs:

The great defect, in our eyes, in American meals is their seeming to consider them necessary evils, a disagreeable, but indispensable, thing which is to be got over as soon as possible. Hence, their meals are silent, unsocial, short and uncomfortable . . . As for chairs, they do not seem ever to be used in the States to sit upon at any other time than meals, at all other times they are used for lolling machines, placed in every kind of unseemly posture and oftener used two at a time than one alone (372).

Comments such as these have the ring of astute observation, and their humour resides not only in making the Americans look foolish but also in the implied Canadian alliance with the forces of civilization, i.e., Britain and Europe. The English and European practice of sitting on chairs and conversing at meals is clearly the preferred one and the implication is that only in the U.S. is such practice violated. The image of Americans lolling in "unseemly posture" on several chairs at once is an early instance of Canadian ridicule of Americans as inelegant, uncivilized ruffians.

The Scribbler contains many poems, but not all of them



are humorous and satiric. The poems of Adam Hood Burwell, for example, are usually serious. Many of the humorous poems, such as "Parody on Alonzo and Imogine" (III, 20) are parodic, and Wilcocke occasionally reprints humorous poetry from other Canadian papers. In Vol. IV he publishes "A Verse For the Sleigh", a nonsense poem from the Acadian Recorder:

"How cold it is!" "Indeed, sir, cold?"  
 "Yes, cold in every part."  
 "I can't agree, enough I see  
 At least to warm the heart."

Warm? I see nothing here to warm!"  
 Oh, how the story tells!  
 "And can you see and still be cold,  
 A city full of belles?"

"I hate a pun! and I have done  
 Leave frowning, why that wrinkle?  
 "The bells of metal, sir I mean  
 Those in our ears that tingle."

"Oh shut your senses if you will  
 To all but bells that jingle;  
 But belles of mettle still there are,  
 Those in our breasts that tingle."

"Zounds! with such fools I never meet  
 As punsters in my days!  
 I mean the sleigh-bells." "So do I  
 The Belles, sir of the sleighs." (56-7)

This poem confirms the popularity of punning as a source of humour in Quebec as well as in the Maritimes, and may also show that the by now quite well established custom of making fun of local literary effusions is widespread.

Few things are sacred in The Scribbler, not even Sunday churchgoing, as a mock advertisement for "a number of spruce young men, to stand at church-doors, for the devout purpose of staring the ladies out of countenance" demonstrates (July 19 1821 32). The poetry published in The Scribbler rarely rises above doggerel, but it is valuable for its demonstration of Canadian humorists' interest in such local conditions as the Canadian winter, the social mix and the conditions of life in the new country, and the encroachments of American democratic ideas. Sometimes material printed in The Scribbler sheds light on other Canadian writings of the same period. "The Charrivarri: A Mixto-poetico-proso-comico-tragico-melo-dramatico-farrago," printed over several issues in Vols. III and IV, describes the same incident in Montreal that inspired Longmore's poem.

The Charivari; or Canadian Poetics: a tale after the manner of Beppo (Montreal, 1824) is the first long comic poem to be separately published in Canada. The word charivari itself refers to an old French folk custom which, according to a note at the end of the poem "began from a respectful feeling, among the friends of any couple who entered a second time on the state of matrimony; and who took this method of testifying their regard for the parties, by assembling with horns, pots, pans, and other kitchen utensils, and serenading the newly married pair, with the

discordant noise" (57). This poem is written against the background of the misuse in Montreal of the old French custom of charivari, which was banned and then continued, reputedly by Irish ruffians, even in opposition to the police (8-9). The particular charivari which had occasioned this poem occurred in Montreal in 1823, at which time "a passerby had been shot, a house destroyed and participants on both sides forced to flee the country" (MacDonald, OC 470). Longmore's charivari is not a riotous one, but a resurrection of the more innocent ones of older days. Here, for example, is his description of one person in the crowd taking part in the lighthearted charivari held for Baptisto, the old bachelor, and Annette, the young widow he marries:

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Within the centre, on some quadruped,  
 For whether horse or poney, mule, or ass,  
 Would be most difficult to say,--as spread  
 Over its hide were things of every class  
 Which Folly could procure, or Fancy's head  
 In ridicule or satire so amass,--  
 But on this animal of some queer genus  
 There sat a youth,--though not the boy of Venus,

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But one whose raiment mimic'd all the dyes  
 Of the bright iris, with its varied hue,  
 Bepatch'd and harlequin'd,--with paunch whose size  
 Surpass'd sir Hudibras, or Falstaff's too;--  
 And visage cas'd within a mask's disguise,  
 To which vile Caliban, in every view  
 (Nor yet comparison, more closely follow)  
 Had seem'd Antinous, or Apol [sic]

Ware suggests that Baptisto, an aging lover who strikes a

ridiculous figure, is "high burlesque inflated to absurdity by classical allusions" (7).

In her introduction to The Charivari, MacDonald draws our attention to the narrative perspective Longmore brings to his subject matter:

The Canadian-born author, returning briefly to his native land after military service in England and Europe, looked with worldly eyes upon the country and its inhabitants. His description, at once that of an insider and a visiting observer is both an urbane comment on colonial life and a carefully detailed painting that captures for posterity the essence of a particular time and place (10).

But this dual perspective is also one that later Canadian humorists, including Haliburton and Leacock, would employ with increasing skill and irony. The narrator of Leacock's Sunshine Sketches, for example, appears to be visiting the small town he once lived in, and while he obviously loves the little town is not blinded to its flaws by this love.

The Charivari consists of 179 ottava rima stanzas modelled on Byron's Beppo, and is one of the first significant Canadian poems to show a direct influence of the British Romantic poets. Guy Steffan tells us that in Beppo Byron had "fused some of the rhetorical techniques of the earlier formal satires with the pleasant trivia, jocose frivolity, colloquial jest, double rhymes and lighter and more rapid rhythms of such jeux d'esprit as ... 'Lines to Mr. Hodgson, Written on Board the Lisbon Packet,' and the

'Farewell to Malta'" (West 65). There is much *jeux d'esprit* in The Charivari, but it is not slavishly imitative (Ware 4). Longmore adapts Byron's technique to his Canadian subject matter and purposes. He combines "associational elaboration" (the type of digression Byron perfected in Childe Harold), with "colloquial irreverence and incongruity" (West 66). The digressions or "associational elaborations" by which The Charivari proceeds spring artlessly, it would appear, from the main narrative; and the tone throughout is ironic, informal, and conversational:

But, pardon, gentle reader, that before ye,  
 This long digression's laid, and I have stopp'd  
 From the straight forward sequel to my story,  
 And amongst Cupid's darts, and mazes popp'd  
 But as some people like the amatory,  
 And time of some few moments may be lopp'd,  
 I fain would tell ye this, and having done,  
 Plead for your grace -- take breath, and so go on.  
(Stanza 23)

On the whole the Canadian reviewers praised the poem, Wilcocke for its humour, and A. J. Christie for its "laughable story well told and abounding in touches which display a mind of no small poetic powers" (MacDonald The Charivari 6-7). Christie was not overly impressed by Longmore's humour, however, saying "we are of the opinion the writer would be a more successful imitator of Byron in the gloomy, than in the light description of poetry" (Ware 1). In The Canadian Review Chisholm emphasized the importance of this new poem, approving both Longmore's

subject matter and his style:

He has as it were, constructed a mirror in which the generations of the future may behold a glowing feature in the manners of the past; and done it at the very moment in which it ought to be done--when strangers and foreigners, originally unaccustomed to such recreations, mingled in the pastimes of the natives--snatched from them the implements of their most innocent pleasures--and terminated in riot and crime what had been begun under feelings the most virtuous, if not religious endearments! (MacDonald, The Charivari 7)

Chisholm is eager to "encourage . . . that species of poetry which assumes for its subject a delineation of those more obscure, though not less interesting features of civilized society, that are left in the shade by the majority of our great prose historians" (7). In his article "George Longmore's The Charivari: A Poem 'After the Manner of Beppo'" (1982), Tracy Ware notes that "Like Byron, Longmore extends his satire to all, including himself" (3).

Ware also suggests that The Charivari is, on one level, an allegorical poem about Canadian literature, (8) and that "Longmore blasts his Canadian contemporaries as derivative, not because their models are European--he unabashedly declares his own indebtedness to Byron--but because, in their work, 'fancy's slow'" (15). If this is so--and Ware presents his case well--The Charivari should occupy a very significant place in the history of Canadian literature as well as Canadian humour.

In 1825, Jean Baptiste: A Poetic Olio and II Cantos, a

humorous poem by Levi Adams, appeared as a small book in Montreal. This poem is another attempt by a Canadian humorist to present Canadian material in popular British poetic form. Like Longmore's The Charivari, it is strongly influenced by Byron, and employs the ottava rima verse form of Beppo. It too describes a wedding of an anti-hero. Both Longmore's Baptisto and Adams' Baptiste are uncourtly and unromantic bachelors who marry at an advanced age, and both poets use the flexibility and freedom established by the Byronic forms to comment on social activities and life in Canada. In Jean Baptiste, for the first time in a poem, one meets the mix of nationalities affecting Canadians. Jean Baptiste and his lady love, Rosalie, are French, and in a digression on nicknames, which continues for five stanzas, Adams draws caricature portraits of the American, the Englishman, the Irishman, and the Scotsman, using among other attributes selected dialect words. The first of these portraits is of the American:

And first there's Jonathan,  
 A fellow cunning and "curious" as "tarnation;"--  
 Is seldom certain -- but to guess, swear, van,  
 And hit the mark, in "spec." or "calculation!"  
 Which he will do as well as any can,  
 Considering his "home-made education!"  
 Although 'tis thought, by those who ape their betters,  
 He'll soon become a "real man of letters!"  
 (II, XXIII 30)

At this time nickname for the U.S. was "Jonathan" or "Brother Jonathan", not "Uncle Sam." This caricature

confirms that by the 1820s the Canadian stereotype of the comic American was quite well established. The way was being well prepared for Haliburton's Sam Slick.

The manifestations of humour in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries indicate that Canadian humour has had from its beginnings at least three visions of society to draw on: the British vision, the American vision and the pre-Revolutionary colonial vision. We should be wary of assuming, as critics of English literature so often do, that a single coherent vision of society underlies all or even most Canadian literature--let alone Canadian humour. The humour produced by Canadians during the nineteenth century certainly does not offer a single coherent and unifying notion of Canadian society that comes close to the vision of Canada offered by the canonical literature of this period. It offers an interesting mix of outsider and insider views of the idiosyncrasies of life in Canada as it evokes laughter, not only at how Canadians view their place, but also at how people from other places see Canada. It makes us laugh at the incongruities of living in a country culturally or socially caught between the opposing systems of its two great mentors--Great Britain and the United States.

If any single pattern emerges, it is that Canadian humorists have quite definite views about what they do not



want even though they are unlikely to be unanimous about or even able to clearly articulate what they believe Canadian society is or should be. There are indications of pride in the new society, but no unified visions of the Canadian, or even regional, identity. This characteristic can be discerned in humour produced in region after region, province after province, and even from city to city. It is a characteristic that should be kept in mind when one reads Haliburton's The Clockmaker.

## Notes

1. There are several editions of this text available through CIHM. In each edition the title varies somewhat. The earliest edition in the 1817 edition published in New Haven, Connecticut, which includes a Preface written in 1816 by Walter Bates in which he explains his reasons for writing this work and attests to its veracity. The full title of the work is The Mysterious Stranger or Memoirs of Henry More Smith; alias Henry Frederick Moon alias William Newman who is now confined in Simsbury Mines in Connecticut for the crime of burglary on account of his extraordinary conduct during his confinement in the gaol of King's County, Province of New Brunswick, where he was under sentence of death; with a statement of his succeeding conduct before and after his confinement in Newgate by Walter Bates. Second Edition New Haven, Connecticut, 1817. CIHM 1982. There is also an edition published in 1866 (CIHM 1980) which has the title The Mysterious Stranger or memoirs of the Noted Henry More Smith containing a correct account of his extraordinary conduct during the Thirteen Months of his confinement in the Jail of King's County, Province of New Brunswick where he was convicted of horse stealing and under sentence of death. Also A Sketch of His Life and Character from his first appearance at Windsor, N.S. in the year 1812 to the time of his apprehension and confinement. To which is added A History of his Career up to 1841; embracing an Account of his Imprisonment and Escapes. Selected from the most authentic Sources, public and private by Walter Bates, Esq. Saint John, N.B.: George W. Day, 1866. A newspaper clipping photocopied with this edition mentions that the first edition of the work had been printed in 1816 "in this province."

2. Walter Blair in America's Humor (New York, 1978) quotes the following definition of the tall tale by Norris Yates:

Event is piled on event and detail on detail, each taller than the last, until the apex, the tallest incident of all is reached (30).

3. For a brief, lucid account of McCulloch's involvement in religion, education and politics in Nova Scotia see Marjory Whitelaw, Thomas McCulloch His Life and Times Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum, 1985. This pamphlet has very little to add to criticism of the Stepsure Letters beyond mentioning "in 1821 he became an author as a means of increasing his income" (28).

4. The New Canadian Library edition of The Stepsure Letters, (Toronto: 1960) is based on the Blackador edition of 1862 in which only sixteen of the twenty-five letters were republished. Gwen

Davies has recently edited a complete edition of all twenty-five letters: The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure. (Ottawa: 1990). This edition contains the Scottish dialect letters signed "Sanders Scranatoscreech" which are not in the New Canadian Library edition.

5. Some critics allude to this aspect of McCulloch's humour. Davies refers to his "Swittian humour" in her article on McCulloch in the Dictionary of Literary Biography. Whiteclaw says simply "on every page there are lively observed comments and observations often blossoming into good humour, earthy and devoid of primness" (144) and "Stepsure was a bit of a prig, which McCulloch was not" ("Thomas McCulloch" (1976) 141). Others such as Mathews, Baird, and Stanley McMullen ignore this aspect of McCulloch.

6. The letters appear in The Novascotian or Colonial Herald on 20 and 27 April, 4 and 18 May, 8 and 22 June, and 4 and 18 July, 1825. They are originally signed P--W--, although the narrator refers to himself as "John" throughout the sketches. In the sixth letter, he reveals that he is actually James Willison.

7. The term "bluenose" used in these sketches refers to poor farmers in the Annapolis Valley-Windsor area of Nova Scotia, and the bluenoses are clearly differentiated from the Scots. This designation is consistent with Haliburton's use of the term ten years later in The Clockmaker, as the circuit Sam Slick rides extends from the Valley towards Amherst. This is the area of Nova Scotia settled by Americans following the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755, and by the Loyalists after the American Revolution. Haliburton makes clear in The Clockmaker, that the Scots further east are not bluenoses: "Did you ever see an English stage-driver make a bow? . . . Well, that's how I pass them, ere bare-breeched Scotchmen" (69). The "Nova Scotian Farming Letters" seem to offer an opportunity to clarify Haliburton's original meaning for the term, bluenose.

In Sketches and Tales Illustrative of Life in the Backwoods of New Brunswick, North America (1845), Mrs Frances Beavan identifies the Loyalists as "Bluenoses". She says: "Of the other original settlers, [not Indians or French Acadians] or, as they are more particularly termed "blue noses," they are composed of the refugees and their descendants, being those persons who, at the separation of England from America, preferring the British government, sought her protection and came, another band of pilgrims, and swore fealty to that land from whence their fathers had fled -- they are certainly a most indescribable genus those blue noses -- the traces of descent from the Dutch and the French blood of the United States, being mingled with the independent spirit of the American and the staunch firmness of the "Britisher", as they delight to call themselves, showing their determined hatred of the Yankees, whose language and features they yet retain" (3-4).

The "NovaScotian Farming" sketches and Mrs. Beavan's sketches offer corroboration for the suggestion that in The Clockmaker Series I, Haliburton used the term "bluenoses" to refer specifically to the descendants of pre-Loyalist and Loyalist farmers in the Annapolis Valley-Minas Basin area of Nova Scotia. It would certainly explain Sam's contempt for them; as the descendent of one who expelled the Loyalists, he feels himself vastly superior. Sam provides virtually all the information we get on the Bluenoses.

Given Haliburton's stand on the Pictou Academy and his work for reform in other Colonial matters, it is not unreasonable that he should satirize these descendants of the Loyalists. He himself is a second-generation Nova Scotian, a member of the governing class whose privileged position had, by the 1820s and 1830s, been usurped by the newcomers, the Loyalists of the Nova Scotia family compact. Such a speculation may be further buoyed by such comments as Sam's remark about the pride of the Bluenoses: "I guess work don't come kind o' natural to the people of this Province, no more than it does to a full-bred horse. I expect they think they have a little too much blood in 'em for work, for they are near about as proud as they are lazy" (14), and his report of a political discussion between two Bluenoses: "'I wonder,' says one, 'what they'll do for us this winter in the House of Assembly?' 'Nothin' says the other, 'they never do nothin' but what the great people at Halifax tell 'em" (100).

Critics have speculated on the absence of Loyalists from Haliburton's writing in these sketches. I believe they are very much present in the persons known as Bluenoses.

8. These letters are found in The NovaScotian on June 29, July 6, July 13, August 3, and September 7, 1826. They do not appear under a consistent heading or title, sometimes being found under the heading "For the Novascotian", and other times as "Aunt Tab" followed by "For the Novascotian". They have been collected and published as "The Letters of Patty Pry" by David Arnason in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Stories (Toronto: 1976) 33-51.

9. Gwen Davies says:

there seems little doubt that Howe and his colleagues worked with certain proven conventions from the literary sketch tradition and from Blackwood's Edinburgh series in making their comments on Nova Scotian society and politics (MLH 94).

10. The first volume appeared in 1822. The full title of this first volume is given as The Scribbler, A Series of Weekly Essays Published in Montreal on Literary, Critical, Satirical, Moral and Local Subjects By Lewis Luke Macculloch, Esq. Nos 1 to 52 From

28th June, 1821, to 20th June, 1822 forming Volume 1. Montreal: James Lane, 1822.

11. In the preface to the first volume of The Scribbler, readers are informed that

The Miscellany of which the first volume is now completed, was originally undertaken while its projector, author and conductor, was in a state of imprisonment in Montreal. Not imprisonment for debt, gentle reader, but imprisonment as a felon, upon numerous criminal accusations, some of which affected his life, hatched, and prosecuted by a clan of the most profligate, unprincipled and vindictive men, that ever disgraced a British community. . .

12. George Longmore's identity as the author of The Charivari was established by Mary Lu MacDonald in her edition of this poem in 1977. Before that, The Charivari had been attributed to Levi Adams by Carl Klinck.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Haliburton

Haliburton's work presents unique problems to the critic of Canadian humour. Interpretation of the meaning and significance of his early humour has been distorted through the conflation of his identity with that of his literary creation Sam Slick and the concomitant lack of emphasis on his satire of the Americans. His work, other than The Clockmaker (Series I) is not easily accessible in modern editions. The definitive critical biography is still the one written in 1923 by an American who is biased against Haliburton's Tory values and the idea that he may have had a significant influence on American humour.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Canadian critics have been ambivalent about his "nationality" because (another demonstration of the synecdochic fallacy) he regarded himself as a Nova Scotian and a British gentleman.<sup>2</sup> His opposition to responsible government is seen as "unCanadian." Because so much of the

criticism of his humour focuses on the American dialect that he created for Sam Slick, critics continue to question whether his humour is part of the Canadian literary tradition at all. Mathews notes, that

Canadian critics could not see the difference between the synthesis that Haliburton had created and the unadulterated American slick humour south of the border. As a result, Canadian writers and critics drew back in well bred horror from the distasteful crudities of the frontier, and looked more resolutely than ever, eastward across the Atlantic to the source of all good things (40).

The result is that Haliburton is frequently regarded as a "lone genius", a humorist without literary influence or heirs.

But Haliburton does deserve to be honoured as a "Father of Canadian Humour." In "Recollections of Nova Scotia" (The Clockmaker [First Series]) he uses the comic dialect of Sam Slick and the soft-spoken Squire to raise those perennial questions about the relationship between government and the people, about the government's social and industrial responsibilities, and about the relationship between Canada and the U.S. that continue to preoccupy Canadian writers. The sketches are written in a form that had already proven itself in the Maritime newspapers and which has continued to be employed as a major form for humour. They assume a community of shared values and the presence of an established society with both rural and urban settlements of

considerable history. Furthermore, in Sam Slick Haliburton created a new comic character type--a North American alazon or braggart and buffoon. In this creation he merged the comic figure of the buffoon long familiar on the English stage with the comic American popular in American newspaper humour and on the American stage.

A man of low degree blind to his limitations, Sam Slick is a true alazon in The Clockmaker (First Series) as he naively creates an inflated image of himself and his country, and pompously attempts to reconstruct Nova Scotia in that image. He is an exaggerated Americanized version of Mephibosheth Stepsure at his most arrogant and conceited. Even Chittick recognizes that in the first series Sam Slick serves as

a continuous lampoon of his fellow citizens [and that] the irony of the oft repeated references to the 'free and enlightened' state of his country . . . indicate Haliburton's doubt of the boasted blessings of political liberty" (195).

The presentation of Sam Slick in these sketches is complex and although it is possible to read The Clockmaker (First Series) as McDougall suggests, "at the ground floor level of an attack upon pride and laziness and greed and the special vagaries of women" (xii) such a reading does not even begin to do justice to Haliburton's skill as a humorist.

The problematic relationship between Haliburton and Sam Slick was complicated by the immense and immediate



popularity of Sam Slick, especially with British and European readers. The publication of the sketches in England in 1837, and the demand for more and more material about Sam Slick, who emerged from Haliburton's sketches as a larger than life "Yankee," brought international fame to "the Judge", but it also lifted the sketches out of the context for which they has been written, and rendered that context irrelevant. As a result the focus of the sketches shifted away from Canadian/American differences and became focused on Sam Slick and his Americanisms. In the process, Haliburton's name became synonymous with Slick's.<sup>3</sup> After the First Series, Haliburton increasingly played along. There is little doubt that the focus of the sketches changed. In a letter to Robert Parker in 1838, Haliburton wrote:

I have another volume ready for the press, which is not so local as the other, and I think better suited for English readers. We are no judges of these things ourselves but I think it better than the first (Richard A. Davies Letters 94).

In the Second and Third Series of The Clockmaker (1838;1840); in the First and Second Series of The Attache (1843;1844); in Sam Slick's Wise Saws (1853) and in Nature and Human Nature (1858), Sam Slick's role changes from being the opponent of views espoused by Haliburton, to being more of a mouthpiece to educate the British and to lash both the Americans and the Nova Scotians. To quote Sam's opinions as

Haliburton's without first clarifying this significant change in Sam's role, distorts Haliburton's work and leads to an underestimation of his skill. His reputation as an innovative humorist stems from The Clockmaker (First Series); later works follow the formula for Sam Slick that he established in this series. Therefore, this work will be given priority in this chapter.

In 1924, Chittick argued so convincingly that Sam Slick is the mouthpiece for the ideas of Haliburton that, even though not all critics agree,<sup>4</sup> his interpretation continues to influence Haliburton criticism. Without drawing attention to the difference between Series I and the other books, Chittick asserts that

apart from their emphatic phrasing, the greater proportion of Sam Slick's avowed opinions on his favourite and most frequently recurring theme, 'things in general and men and women in particular' were neither typically Yankee nor typically Western, but like the majority of his conclusions on purely political matters, they were without doubt intended to be taken as accurate reflections of his originator's personal feelings and convictions. To believe otherwise is to turn Haliburton's reiterated assertions of the Clockmaker's wisdom into the merest nonsense (342).

Chittick suggests here that Sam is wise; he does not even remotely imply that his opinions should be read ironically. Furthermore, Chittick's emphasis on the Clockmaker's wisdom detracts from analysis of his role as alazon. In Chittick's influential interpretation, Sam Slick becomes an eccentric,

but wise, American.

Chittick's influence is discernible nearly forty years later, in Robert McDougall's introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of The Clockmaker. McDougall reiterates Chittick's conflation of Haliburton and Sam Slick and praises the First Series for Haliburton's "realistic insight into the American experiment." Although he acknowledges Haliburton's "fear that the United States might take over Nova Scotia" (xiv), and mentions his "admiration for Edmund Burke" (xii), he describes Sam Slick as primarily the mouthpiece for Haliburton. Following Chittick's lead, he denies that Sam is a figure of ridicule on the grounds that "ridicule of Sam . . . could quickly damage his authority as the homespun prosecutor of the case against the Nova Scotians" (xv).

Similarly, when Frye addressed the problem of the relationship between Haliburton and Sam Slick in "Mask and Ego" (1962) he concluded that Sam is meant to be taken as a complimentary portrait of Americans and that the real objective of Haliburton's satire was his fellow Nova Scotians. He recognizes that Sam must be a kind of alter ego for Haliburton, but denies that he represents an anti-American outlook:

Yeats has a theory that a writer's personality is the exact opposite of his normal personality. It would certainly be hard to find anything much

further from the political Haliburton than a breezy, shrewd, detached and realistic Yankee pedlar. Anyone who knew anything about Haliburton's background would probably expect him to make fun of Americans, and to dump on Sam Slick all the cheap, stale sneers about American brag and vulgarity and dollar snatching. Anyone who expects this will get the shock of his life when he opens The Clockmaker. The more we read about Sam Slick, the better we like him. He brags about himself, but nearly everything he says he can do he can do.... He's kindly, humane and courteous; he puts himself out a great deal for people; he's dangerous in a fight but he never starts one; he's a sharp operator but he's right when he says that he never really cheats anyone; he just doesn't interfere with people who are determined to cheat themselves. It's clear that Haliburton himself despises anti-American prejudice and he makes fun of people who write books on the States after a two week visit.... Haliburton's real aim was not to make fun of Americans but to make fun of his own people, the Bluenoses. Nova Scotia, he felt had nothing to learn politically from the States but it had a lot to learn economically (On T. C. H. 211-214).

Haliburton may "despise Anti-American prejudice" as Frye suggests, but Sam is neither a "detached" nor a "realistic" American. Sam is an alazon--an anti-hero, a figure of ridicule--and to overlook this distorts Haliburton's humour to such an extent that it virtually reverses its thrust. Haliburton is using him to publicly lampoon American social and political philosophy, and to overlook haliburton's own philosophy does him--and his skill as a humorist--a disservice.

In his article, "Carnival and Violence: A Meditation" (1989), Robert Kroetsch suggests that the relationship

between Haliburton and Sam Slick, is a "symbiotic reversal". Kroetsch concludes that in The Clockmaker, Haliburton had created a North American version of Bakhtin's "carnival" in which Sam is Haliburton's "carnavalesque double" (Lovely Treachery of Words 99-101). "Sam," says Kroetsch, "is a master of the oral tradition that is basic to carnival" (100) and through him, as through all such carnivalesque doubles,

the binaries of the love-hate, friend-enemy, peace-war were temporarily collapsed. The king put on the clown's mask, the clown the king's. And the mask is essential to carnival. The mask enabled Haliburton to do violence to his own identity, personal and national; carnival rejoices not in our completeness but in our incompleteness; the mask allows us to partake of several possibilities; we are allowed to cross boundaries; we can at once be serious and mocking, be ourselves and caricature others, be others and mock ourselves (101).

Through Sam Slick in this First Series, Haliburton reverses and parodies the customary social and political beliefs of both Nova Scotians (including Bluenoses) and Americans.

The portrait of lazy Bluenoses, which Haliburton presents through Sam Slick was not new to the Nova Scotians. The Bluenoses were a specific group of Nova Scotia farmers, descendants of the Loyalists and pre-Revolutionary American settlers who emigrated to Nova Scotia in the eighteenth

century (See Note 7, Chap 4 above). Willison's remarks about Bluenoses in the "Nova Scotia Farming" letters give an early indication of their reputation for laziness, and lack of initiative. The description of Nova Scotian farmers in this same area of Nova Scotia recorded in Howe's "Western Rambles" (1828) confirms Willison's opinion and prepares the way for Haliburton:

There is many a drone in the province and I wish [my vision of Coila] would sometimes appear to, and rouse him from his lethargic slumber--and fright from his back and his board the miserable trappings which his pride substitutes for the lasting and substantial elements of independence. Idleness cannot be charged on our whole population--this would be unjust, but certain it is that in our western counties, it is far too general. Men own farms . . . but few labour as assiduously as they could, or derive from their land as much as it might be made to yield. And then, with some few exceptions, almost all expend more for importations, either for personal or household decoration, or to administer to the profusion of their tables, than is consistent with the dignity and character of the Farmer.

(The Novascotian, August 28, 1828)

Far from being evidence of his wisdom, most of the opinions about the Bluenoses advanced by Sam Slick were already held by many Nova Scotians before The Clockmaker (First Series) was published. For this reason such opinions should not be taken as the locus of Haliburton's satire. The emphasis on Sam's wise criticism of the Bluenose complacency, and of the lack of vigour that prevents their society from acting in its own best interests deflects attention from Haliburton's

devastatingly funny satire of the end product of American republicanism represented by Sam Slick himself. Sam Slick's observations about Bluenose laziness are banal rather original. Haliburton's dependence on an established and well-known reputation for the lack of initiative in the people from Western area of the province supplies the opportunity to expose the shallowness of American opportunism, and sting the Bluenoses at the same time.

Sam's outlook towards the Nova Scotians is very like the Loyalist outlook towards the United States in the 1780s and 1790s. Just as they reported avidly and with satisfaction every failure of the republic to thrive, Sam points out the failure of the Bluenoses to achieve prosperity. This specific group are the foolish few who rejected the benefits of the Revolution. As far as Sam is concerned they, and all their descendants, are losers. Ironically, his bragging about the superiority of the American material prosperity also reveals the extent of American moral and ethical deterioration.

Unlike his European literary ancestors, Sam Slick has a brand new political and economic philosophy behind him to convince him and others that he is what he believes himself to be. Herein lies the joke. When he focuses on empirical matters such as the conditions of the external world, Sam is

capable of reaching a valid assessment based on what he sees, but the faulty logic in his abstract reasoning reveals his educational, rational and moral inadequacies. Sam frequently draws astute conclusions on matters involving observation of physical phenomena, but on matters involving questions of ethics or morality, his conclusions are invariably wrong. Sam can "calculat'", but he usually can't evaluate. Furthermore, he does not know the difference between when his judgments are sound and when they are not, because underlying Sam's wisdom there is always his conceit and his blindness to moral virtue and metaphysical values. Throughout the sketches, Haliburton makes fun of the inadequacies of the American Johnny-come-lately political and social philosophy based on individualism, empiricism and contingency.

In The Clockmaker (First Series) Haliburton is concerned that the complacency of ordinary Nova Scotians and their admiration of American energy and success will blind them to the threat of American takeover. Sam is convinced that Nova Scotia would be better off as a part of the United States. This opinion is implied throughout, and clearly articulated several times. In "The Preacher that Wandered" (November 12, 1835), Professor Everett tells Sam even though the province of Nova Scotia is in the way of the Americans, they should not destroy it because "we shall want the



Province someday, and I guess we'll buy it off King William... we'll buy it as we did Florida" (30). A more direct articulation of the American threat is found in the sketch, "The American Eagle" (December 9, 1835). In response to the Squire's dispirited "How can these people be awakened out of their ignorant slothfulness into active exertion?", Sam responds:

The remedy is at hand; it is already working its own cure. They must recede before our free and enlightened citizens like the Indians; our folks will buy them out, and they must give place to a more intelligent and active people. They must go to the lands of Labrador, or be located back of Canada; they can hold on there for a few years until the wave of civilization reaches them and then they must move again as the savages do. It is decreed; I hear the bugle of destiny a-soundin' of their retreat, as plain as anything" (51).

Critics have only recently begun to pay adequate attention to the role of the Squire in The Clockmaker. One of the first modern critics to recognize the role of the squire in revealing Haliburton's double irony is R.E. Watters. In his introduction to The Sam Slick Anthology (1969) he directs attention to how the Squire's makes visible the inadequacies of Sam's philosophy and wisdom:

While Sam exposes the faults and follies of the Bluenoses and Englishmen for his own amusement and their improvement, he occasionally--and quite unconsciously--exposes himself. More often, however, it is the other principal character in the Sam Slick books, Squire Thomas Poker, whom Haliburton uses to help us see Sam more clearly. The Squire is too often dismissed as a colourless, almost invisible, character; but he deserves

closer attention than he has received. He is endowed with a rich variety of opinions, proposals, and prejudices, but since many of them coincide with Sam's he chose to provide Sam's flamboyant expression of such ideas rather than his own more sober wording, we tend to forget this very significant part of the Squire's make-up. But he doesn't fail to let us know his many points of difference with Sam--in opinion, action, and moral standards (192).

Community is very much the focus of The Clockmaker, but it is community on the larger scale--society as a whole, rather than any one community. The dialogues between Sam Slick and the Squire (which often appear more like Sam's monologues) focus on social reform. The Squire is a complex character; he "is shown as one who can view himself both from within and without--as he appears to others, including Sam, and as he knows himself from the outside, recognizing with ironic self-amusement the differences and likenesses" (Watters, 194). The opening sketch, "The Trotting Horse", establishes both his superiority in possessing true self-knowledge and his role as Sam's opposite. Beverly Rasporich builds on Watters' analysis of the Squire to place him in an evolutionary chain with the kind of narrator-as- "fifth-business" that is frequently found in modern Canadian humour. She says:

Watters uncovers the quiet double-edged ironic mode of humour which is typical of the Canadian as "fifth business", of Haliburton and later of Stephen Leacock. . . . For Haliburton, Squire Poker expressed the Canadian's final ironic self-knowledge of being caught between two parent

cultures and of not so easily shaking off [or even wanting to shake off] the influence of aggressive America (232).

In the creation of these two characters, the one quiet and self-aware, the other dominant, bombastic and one-dimensional, Haliburton created a level of sophisticated narrative distancing unequalled in nineteenth-century Canadian humour.

The humour in The Clockmaker stems from the relationship between Sam and the Squire as each competes from a conviction of his own superiority; from the dialect that Haliburton creates for Sam, which the Squire reports but never uses himself; from the outrageous observations and analogies which Haliburton creates for Sam, whom the Squire provokes but rarely refutes; and from both characters' responses to the situations in which they find themselves. Haliburton's political beliefs, in large part derived from the political and social ideals of Burke, provide an ironic counterpoint to Slick's self-interested republicanism. Sam Slick's bragging offers thoughtful Nova Scotians images of the weaknesses of the American system in contrast to the British. As with the role of the Squire, the humour is ironic, subtle and sophisticated.

The Squire, recognizing quickly that Sam is as much a product of his social milieu as an English stagecoach driver is of his, decides to use Sam to find out all about the U.S.

Although the Squire's attitude to Sam as an individual may be ambivalent, his attitude to the forces that produced him is clear: he abhors republicanism and views with a mixture of amusement and distaste Sam's belief in the superiority of his country's levelling democratic tendencies. He seems to be amused by Sam's overconfidence, but he dislikes what Sam reveals of the materialism, the pragmatic relativism and the crudeness of the United States, even though he admires the raw energy released by overconfidence and cupidity.

In his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Edmund Burke asks: "But what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue?" Through the character and actions of Sam, Haliburton demonstrates that as Burke predicted, such liberty "is the greatest of all possible evils for it is folly, vice and madness without tuition and without restraint" (559). Sam is the first humorous literary representation of the empirical man, the product of a nation founded on a "paper constitution" and a mechanistic rather than organic vision of society. He is the end product of the refraction that idealistic concepts of the rights of man advanced by such rationalist philosophers as Voltaire, Rousseau, Paine and Jefferson undergo in the hands of the uneducated. Burke said: "These metaphysic views, entering into the common life, like rays of light which pierce into a dense medium, are, by the laws of nature, refracted from

their straight line" (312). Sam is just such a "crooked line." He could not have been created by an American humorist; he is the product of an outside, rather sceptical, view of the United States.

A pragmatist, Sam prides himself on having discovered certain unalterable laws of "human natur'", which he can manipulate through such mechanistic techniques as the use of "soft sawder". When he launches into a tirade against the English, the Squire is astonished, because "he treated it as one of those self-evident truths that need neither proof nor apology, but as a thing known and admitted by all mankind" (70). While he advises the Bluenoses to practice what to him are the American virtues of thrift, industry, shrewdness and practicality, in almost every instance of his own practice of these virtues, or in his anecdotes exemplifying their application, he demonstrates the extent to which, in the United States, these ideals, so well articulated for Nova Scotians fifteen years earlier by Thomas McCulloch, have been distorted and transmogrified into little more than opportunism and materialism. Sam's optimism stems from his complete faith in an equally transmogrified theory of progress.

As a typical working class citizen of the United States, Sam becomes, through Haliburton's hyperbolic ironic humour, proof positive that Burke was right in believing

eighteenth-century rationalist ideas of progress would bring about the denial of continuity, and lead to a self-centredness which would not be bound by the old moral convictions. Burke believed that

the State ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico and tobacco . . . it is to be looked on with reverence, because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature (qtd. in Bredvold 143).

Sam Slick's political philosophy demonstrates how far the American system has deteriorated from the ideal. Sam Slick believes that the state is a partnership agreement, and in contrast to Burke, that "politics makes a man as crooked as a pack does a pedlar" (62).

For Sam the key to progress and independence is wealth: "line the pocket well...make thet [sic] independent, and then the spirit will be like a horse turned out to grass in the spring for the first time" (68). His egalitarian sentiments are based on the science of calculatin' and cipherin', which is synonymous for the self-interested application of reason governed by utilitarian and capitalistic considerations, not moral ones. He believes with his whole heart, contrary to Burke (and Haliburton) that "Your great men are nothin' but rich men, and I can tell you for your comfort there's nothing to hinder you from bein' rich too, if you will take the same means they did"

(101) .

The lowering of values which he believed would be concomitant with republicanism led Burke to lament the loss of past greatness:

The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded . . . On this scheme of things, a king is but a man, a queen is but a woman, a woman is but an animal-and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex in general as such, and without distinct views is to be regarded as romance and folly (331; 333).

Sam's speech throughout The Clockmaker is characterized by its lack of chivalry and respect. His system of analogies is based on barnyard analogies, on his perception of the likenesses between the human and the animal worlds, particularly the animals of the barnyard. He is especially vulgar in his analogies between women and animals. He frequently indicates that as far as he is concerned a woman is little better than a horse or a heifer. Such comparisons are not a reflection of Haliburton's misogyny, but a representation of the degeneration of the courtly ideal. Sam offends both the rules of propriety and the traditional metaphysical concept of man when he describes Marm Pugwash as having "good points - good eye, good foot- neat pastern - fine chest - a clean set of limbs" (39), and when he concludes that "any man . . . that understands horses, has a pretty fir knowledge of women for they are just alike and

require the very identical same treatment" (40).

Sam Slick's transmogrified enlightenment ideals are so couched in the language of homely truths and amusing anecdote and so mixed with observations--especially about the lack of development in Nova Scotia--that they could be made by any reasonably intelligent man, and he is such a lively, proud American, that the extent to which he is a figure of ridicule has been largely lost sight of. Not only do critics have difficulty determining when Sam Slick is speaking for Haliburton, but his creation of this larger-than-life American speaking a distinctly American dialect appears to separate Haliburton from the "aristocratic" tradition which dominates nineteenth-century Canadian writing.

There had been precedent for the use of dialect in British literature, in the poetry of Robert Burns, for example, and, in Nova Scotia, McCulloch had created written Scottish dialect for Sanders Scantosreech. Baker points out that "The 'Club'" with its Scottish twang soon created a taste for literary sketches in dialect" (59). Sketches and poems using dialect continue to appear throughout the century in the popular periodicals and in the newspapers. But in the creation of Sam Slick's Yankee dialect Haliburton was on his own; he used his knowledge of American humour and his own innovative mind to create a patois with no



linguistic pedigree. His anthologies of American humour<sup>5</sup> demonstrate that even though Haliburton was an avid reader and collector of American dialect humour, Sam's speech is Haliburton's creation--a combination of dialects rather than any single "pure dialect." This is confirmed by Walter Avis, who concludes that: "Exaggerated Sam's speech undoubtedly is, for the essence of comedy lies in exaggeration and distortion, and Mr. Slick of Onion County was never intended to be anything but a comic figure" ("Speech", 7). Haliburton's use of dialect has frequently been cited as evidence that he had no successors in Canadian humour, but this is true only for the literature which met the criteria of the literati in the latter half of the century. Dialect humour remained popular in the humorous and satiric papers, and achieved great popularity late in the nineteenth century in the writing of such as Alexander McLachlan and W. H. Drummond. Furthermore, in Between Europe and America MacLulich maintains that although Haliburton employed colloquial speech and dialect in his sketches, he is, nevertheless, operating within the conventions of [British] aristocratic literature (26). In making this determination, MacLulich affirms that Sam is not, and cannot be, the spokesman for Haliburton:

In the Clockmaker Haliburton distances himself from Nova Scotian society by viewing it through the eyes of . . . Sam Slick. Moreover, Haliburton

makes his fellow citizens the butt of his humour, as he portrays them being victimized, outwitted, and lectured by the calculating Yankee pedlar. When Sam berates the Bluenoses for their lack of drive and ambition, while Squire Poker listens with amiable amusement, we may be pardoned for thinking that Haliburton endorses Sam's scorn for the unenterprising Nova Scotians. But Haliburton's private sentiments are actually quite different from Sam's outlook (28).

Further evidence of Haliburton's ingenuity as a humorist appears in the late 1840s. Haliburton tried to get away from his identification with Sam Slick by publishing The Letter Bag of the Great Western in 1840. But the British critics and readers would have none of it. Following the publication of the three series of The Clockmaker and the two series of The Attache (1843-44), "Sam Slick" was firmly entrenched both as Haliburton's nom de plume and as the character his readers wished to know about. The Letter Bag of the Great Western (1840) met with a very cool reception. He tried again in 1846-7. Even more unfortunately, his second attempt to write humour without the presence of Sam Slick was equally unpopular. When the Old Judge: or, Life in a Colony (1849) appeared, "only a few new editions and printings followed the first edition . . . and British book reviewers, who had greeted each new appearance of Sam Slick with delight or at least genuine interest, almost to a man put aside this new production of Judge Haliburton without a word" (Parks The Old Judge i).

Both these books deserve more attention than they have been given. The Old Judge, which is the superior work, has "seldom been given its just due in Canada, where one would assume it would be seen as the minor masterpiece it undoubtedly is" (Parks, OJ, ii). Only three of the major critics of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century even mention it. These are Archibald MacMechan, Logan and Chittick, all of whom praise the book as one of Haliburton's finest achievements. It is significant that the first two of these critics are from Nova Scotia and the third is an American, all living and working outside the "Canadian" (Ontario and Quebec) mainstream--factors that doubtless made possible their independent outlook.

In 1978 Parks commented that "from the 1940s to the present the critical history of The Old Judge repeats much the same pattern--that of general indifference relieved infrequently by recognition of the true quality of the work" (OJ iv). Since then, I can report, nothing has changed. Although in the latter half of this century, The Old Judge has been cited by most of the critics who examined it as the work in which Haliburton most clearly demonstrates his significance to the Canadian humorous tradition, it is not readily available. In his introduction to the abridged (and first Canadian) edition of The Old Judge (1968), R. E. Watters says:

If we can venture to [examine Haliburton's works without being dominated by external assessments] I believe that The Old Judge will be raised to a new position in the canon of his works. We may even discover that we have withheld from Haliburton his rightful title of "father of Canadian humour (Essays 172).

In The Old Judge Haliburton creates humour that more truly-- and positively--reflects life in Nova Scotia than the Clockmaker books. He sets up a framework of four narrators, each with a different personality, and different actions. An English traveller is the principal narrator of the book, recording everything he sees and hears, but saying little himself, preferring to encourage the more gregarious North Americans he meets to speak. He records the words of three other narrators: his travelling companion, Lawyer Barclay; the old judge, Judge Sanford; and Stephen Richardson. Watters says "all three at one time or another reveal a detached self-observation . . . [and that] the trait serves a humorous function" (178). Once Stephen Richardson appears on the scene, he dominates everyone and everything in much the same way as Sam Slick dominates The Clockmaker. Watters points out that it is not true that

in Stephen Richardson, Haliburton merely resurrected Sam Slick under a different name, gave him a different accent and dressed him in Nova Scotian homespun. The similarities can certainly be found, but they are far outnumbered by the differences (Essays 184).

Unlike Sam Slick, Richardson is a Bluenose and proud of

it. His speech is very like Sam's, but more subdued. He has a number of idiosyncrasies and is frequently comic, but on the whole he is a man to respect, not ridicule. He is Haliburton's response to Sam Slick, showing just how ridiculous and one dimensional Sam is. This is especially evident if one reads the books side by side. Watters concludes that in The Old Judge, "the beginnings of certain characteristics which are now prevalent in the Canadian humorous tradition" (175) are to be found. These include the role of "the ironic or self-deprecating narrator" (181), the use of "dual and alternating perspectives" and the creation of "characters [presented] primarily as human beings rather than as regional caricatures" (177). The humour in The Old Judge, belongs in the category of humour that Leacock calls "sublime" humour, "born in perplexity, in contemplation of the insoluble riddle of existence . . . in which laughter mingles with tears, as it voices sorrow with our human lot and reconciliation with it" (Humour and Humanity 232). But very few people in Canada have heard of this book, let alone read it.

Is Haliburton's humour Canadian? Emphatically, Yes! To a great extent the problem with his being "Canadian" stems from what I have called the synecdochic fallacy. At the same time as Haliburton was continuing to achieve great recognition as a humorist throughout the English-speaking

world,<sup>6</sup> the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec) were becoming influential on the Canadian literary and political scene. The Maritimes presented an established society several generations old, and, unlike the majority of immigrants pouring into Central Canada, Maritimers were not unfamiliar with American ways. The culture of Upper (and to some extent, Lower) Canada quickly came to be dominated by the literary ambitions and class consciousness of the educated British emigrants who settled there. Determined to raise the literary productions of the new province--or country, as they sometimes called it--to acceptable British standards, their imposition of certain "literary" (i.e., British) standards of diction, attitude, content, and form had the immediate effect of improving the sophistication of literary expression in Ontario, but ultimately had deleterious effects upon indigenous literary developments.<sup>7</sup>

This does not mean that Canadian writers ceased to write humorously about their environment and their society; it means that within the Canadian literary circles such writing was disregarded in the search for a national literature.<sup>8</sup> Depiction of local people, places and society in realistic detail characteristic of satiric humour that writers such as Haliburton were producing, was discouraged. It should come as no surprise that such humour would not be accorded literary status in Canada in the 1840s or for some

considerable time after.

As has been noted previously, even after Confederation the search for a national literature continued to concentrate on the literature produced in Quebec and Ontario. Writers such as Haliburton were rejected as national writers because they were regional or provincial. Haliburton, a Nova Scotian, was obviously not "Canadian." The synecdochic fallacy dictated that Haliburton's writing about Nova Scotia would not be seen as helping to define the new "Canadian" nation. In the years immediately after Confederation, his stand against responsible government made his writing unpopular. The lack of enthusiasm of British book reviewers for The Letter Bag of the Great Western (1840) and The Old Judge (1849), works which were clearly closer to British traditions of satire and humour than his works featuring Sam Slick were perceived to be, contributed to the slighting of his humour. That no Canadian edition of The Old Judge was published before 1968 is evidence of its neglect.<sup>9</sup> Although between 1836 and 1880 the British--and the Americans--could not seem to get enough of the Sam Slick books, their "low" characters, "crude" analogies and American dialect and slang appear to have been too "American,"<sup>10</sup> for Canadian taste, just as The Old Judge too regional to merit consideration.

Following Confederation, the tradition of satiric

humour that Haliburton represents appears to have been dismissed from literary consideration, and he--impossible to ignore--was viewed as an almost embarrassing aberration instead of being honoured as a patriarch of Canadian humour. Crofton notes in 1899 that he does not get the appreciation he deserves from the Canadian critics.

Estimation of Haliburton's place in Canadian literature ranges from J. D. Logan's extravagant praise, "he was the first systematic satiric humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples," (Highways 63) to indifference. In Under Eastern Eyes, Keefer discusses only Haliburton's The Old Judge because she believes that The Clockmaker does not fit into the sense of community that she detects as a dominant theme in the literature of the Maritimes (12-13), saying:

Though both books, [The Old Judge and The Clockmaker], are disguised as travel narratives so as to avoid the 'prolixity of a journal . . . and the egotism of an author, by making others speak for themselves in their own way' (OJ xix), the predominant voice in The Clockmaker is, of course, that of Sam Slick, a carefully chosen outsider (45).

That Sam's comments are to be read ironically does not appear to redeem his "outsider" status; presumably for Keefer, only "insiders" can discuss Maritime society.

Haliburton's The Clockmaker (First Series) belongs to the tradition of satiric newspaper sketches more than it belongs to the American tradition of humour. When



"Recollections of Nova Scotia" appeared weekly in The Novascotian in the fall of 1835, they were initially one more manifestation, albeit a superior one, of a tradition which had already been well established in the Maritime newspapers since the eighteenth century. Like many of the other sketches they are directly concerned with the form and direction of their society. The eighteenth-century verse satires had been written in the atmosphere of a society torn apart by revolution or in response to official abuse of power. McCulloch's Stepsure Letters extol the citizens of Nova Scotia to avoid false materialistic values and get-rich-quick schemes, indirectly cautioning them against American values. The 'Club' papers include many reactions to local political affairs, and the "Nova Scotia Farming" sketches mock the agrarian myth. The first series of Haliburton's sketches have their roots in an atmosphere of dissatisfaction with the colonial administration. Haliburton shares with his predecessors essentially British values, and, like them, both Reform and Tory, holds up to ridicule those elements which appear to threaten the stability of established social, political, religious and moral values. But in Haliburton's work these values and assumptions are counterpointed by the American vision of society, conveyed through the personality and in the dialect of Sam Slick. Slick and everything he holds dear represent

a great threat to established Nova Scotian society, and must be exposed as ridiculous. Baker suggests that "The satiric tendency of the Loyalist tradition finds supreme expression in Haliburton" (76).

By 1835 the satiric and humorous sketch had been well established in the newspapers of the Maritimes at the hands of such writers as Thomas McCulloch, John Willison, Joseph Howe and the members of "the Club." The significant characteristics of this satiric humour include their use of ironic distancing devices which contain both naive and self-aware narrators, their use of realism in their descriptions of people, places and events; their use of colloquial language, usually by secondary narrators; the rather broad scope of their humour which is designed to appeal to various levels of readers simultaneously--to a relatively unsophisticated audience as well as a sophisticated one; and their genuine love of and concern for their North American home. All of these humorous techniques are used to advantage in both The Clockmaker (Series I) and The Old Judge.

After Haliburton these qualities of Canadian humour do not disappear from the field of Canadian writing. They continue and change and develop, but without any great encouragement from the literary establishment. Humour is pushed aside and relegated to the newspapers and the

"popular" magazines by critics of the romantic nationalist school,<sup>11</sup> critics and writers whose ideas dominate the nineteenth century after the 1840s. In Tradition in Exile, John Matthews says: "It was for Mark Twain to follow on and create the type of character that Haliburton had created" (39). Matthews is only partially correct in this assessment, as an examination of the satiric and humorous papers and the humorous publications by Canada's little known popular writers will show. In their writing, the spirit of Canadian humour remained alive and continued, using a whole new caste of characters, to refine use of ironic understatement and self-aware narrators.

## Notes

1. V. L. O. Chittick, Thomas Chandler Haliburton ("Sam Slick"): A Study in Provincial Toryism. (New York: AMS Press, 1966).

2. See, for example, Frye's comment in "Haliburton: Mask and Ego" that "Haliburton would never have called himself a Canadian. He was a Nova Scotian, a Bluenose who died two years before Confederation" (qtd. in On Thomas Chandler Haliburton 211).

3. In Haliburton, the Man and the Writer (Windsor, N. S., 1889) Frances Blake Crofton expresses his indignation that this conflation of identity has reached such proportions that "in Allibone's Dictionary of English Literature . . . Judge Haliburton . . . in 1842 visited England as an attache of the American Legation (!) [sic] and in the next year embodied the results of his observations in his amusing work "The Attache: or Sam Slick in England." This curious mistake had previously been made by the British "Annual Register" for 1865, in its obituary of the Judge.

4. See, for example, the articles by MacLulich, Kroetsch and Watters referred to later in this chapter.

5. Traits of American Humour (1852) and The Americans at Home (1854). In distinguishing American humour from other kinds of humour, Haliburton says American humour resides in the incongruity of language used by the Americans and the feeling of superiority gained by the reader as he examines their uncouth manners. In the Introduction to Traits of American Humour he focuses attention on the remarkable nature of American language usage as a source of the comic:

Wholly unconstrained at first by conventional usages, and almost beyond the reach of the law, the inhabitants of the West indulged, to the fullest extent, their propensity for fun, frolic and the wild and exciting sports of the chase. Emigrants from the border states, they engrafted on the dialects of their native places exaggerations and peculiarities of their own, until they had acquired almost a new language, the most remarkable feature of which is its amplification (xii).

In The Americans at Home he indicates that he also finds humour in the American ignorance of social restrictions and propriety:

In the country, especially that portion situated on the confines of the forest, man . . . is under no . . . constraint. He is almost beyond the reach of the law,

and altogether exempt from the control, or utterly ignorant or regardless of those observances which public opinion demands and enforces (vii).

While there is no doubt that Haliburton enjoys the tales he has collected and is introducing, there is also no doubt that he rejoices in his own superiority to the uncouth Americans, and is inviting his readers to respond similarly.

6. Haliburton can with some justification claim the title of most popular North American writer of the nineteenth century. Although there is as yet no definitive scholarly bibliography of his works and subsequent criticism, the bibliographies of nineteenth-century editions and reprints of his works in studies by Chittick (655-60) and Ray Palmer Baker (414-5) give a good indication of his immense popularity. The number of editions and reprints Chittick and Baker record is summarized as follows:

<u>The Clockmaker</u> , Series I	(C) 23	(B) 25
Series II	(C) 13	(B) 14
Series III	(C) 7	(B) 7
Combined	(C) 30	(B) 41

<u>The Letter Bag</u>	(C) 17	(B) 18
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<u>The Attache</u> Series I	(C) 5	(B) 6
Series II	(C) 4	(B) 9
Combined	(C) 15	(B) 13

<u>The Old Judge</u> *	(C) 12	(B) 13
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(\*none in Canada, one edition in France and one in Germany in translation)

<u>Sam Slick's Wise Saws</u>	(C) 8	(B) 9
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<u>Nature and Human Nature</u>	(C) 6	(B) 6
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<u>The Season Ticket</u>	(C) 4	(B) 4
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Note: these figures do not take into account the selections that appeared in newspapers and periodicals. The discrepancies in numbers of editions and reprints demonstrate the need for a scholarly Haliburton bibliography.

7. See Matthews, Tradition in Exile, especially Chapters 3 and 4 for an exploration of these deleterious effects. He contrasts the Canadian dependence on British literary forms with the Australian, concluding that while this aided the development of poetry of a high literary calibre in Canada in the nineteenth-century, it

retarded the development of a national poetry (28-66).

8. For further indications of these ideas see such anthologies of nineteenth-century criticism as Ballstadt, Daymond and Monkman, and Dudek and Gnarowski. For analysis of nineteenth-century Canadian critical theory see Fee and MacLulich.

9. See M. G. Parks' introduction to The Old Judge (1978) for a detailed examination of the reception of this book by critics in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

10. Investigations of the precedents for Haliburton's Clockmaker have concentrated more on American influences in Haliburton's humour than on the newspaper milieu in which the original sketches appeared or on the political or philosophical background of the sketches. See, for example, Ruth K. Wood, "The Creator of the First Yankee in Literature" (1915); Chittick's chapters, "The Genuine Yankee" and "The Father of American Humour" in Thomas Chandler Haliburton ("Sam Slick"): A Study in Provincial Toryism (1924), reprinted by Richard A. Davies in On Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1979) and his "The Hybrid Comic: The Origins of Sam Slick" (1962); Claude Bissell, "Haliburton, Leacock and the American Tradition" (1969); and Daniel Royot, "Sam Slick and Popular American Humour" (1985). I have yet, for example, to locate a thorough examination of the Burkean influences in Haliburton's humour or an explanation of Haliburton's relationship to the Canadian newspaper tradition.

11. See Marjory Fee "English-Canadian Literary Criticism, 1890-1950. Diss. U of T 1981 for a full discussion of the impact of romantic nationalistic critical ideas on the Canadian canon.

## Chapter Six

### Humour in Selected Literary Periodicals (1840-1912)

In the nineteenth century, especially in Ontario, the split between the popular press and the literary press became more pronounced as a result of the belief of the dominant literary elite that they alone were qualified to create, foster and encourage the formation of a national literature. They published literary writing, that is, polite sophisticated writing which reflected refined taste and informed opinion. Such serious and refined literature was unsuited to the newspapers and American-style periodicals which pandered to popular taste. It appeared in the literary periodicals which were esteemed for their rigorous standards.

The shift in attention of the young intellectuals away from newspaper publication to the fostering of literary periodicals marks a change from developments in the

Maritimes before 1840. There had been several attempts to publish literary periodicals in the Maritimes and Quebec, but none had succeeded for more than a few years. In contrast, newspapers such as the Novascotian and the Acadian Recorder, and popular weeklies such as The Scribbler had succeeded, and had met the literary needs of the general population as well as supplying them with humour which reflected their lives and concerns. As has already been mentioned, Gwen Davies noted that writers in the Maritimes during this period generally wrote for either the newspapers or the literary periodicals but not both. After 1840, especially in Ontario, newspapers were increasingly regarded as non-literary, popular, second-class media unsuitable for the publication of serious literature.

An ambivalent, but not yet condemning, attitude towards Canadian newspapers was recorded by Anna Jameson in Winter Studies and Summer Rambles (1838):

Apropos to newspapers -- my table is covered with them. In the absence or scarcity of books, they are the principal medium of knowledge and communication in Upper Canada. There is no stamp-act here--no duty on paper; and I have sometimes thought that the great number of local newspapers which do not circulate beyond their own little town or district, must, from the vulgar, narrow tone of many of them do mischief; but on the whole, perhaps, they do more good. Paragraphs printed from English or American papers, on subjects of general interest, the summary of political events, extracts from books or magazines, are copied from one paper into another until they have travelled round the country. It



is true that a great deal of base, vulgar, inflammatory party feeling is also circulated by the same means, but, on the whole, I should not like to see the number of the district papers checked . . . In some of these provincial papers I have seen articles written with considerable talent (I:272-3).

Even though she recognized the importance of these "vulgar" newspapers in pioneer communities, Mrs Jameson was repelled by them. Over the next few decades, the educated elite continued to hold out against what they saw as the vulgar American influences which pervade the Canadian papers. In all their writing about literature, their distaste for this popular medium is so pronounced that regardless of the quality of the material, the fact that it was published in a newspaper or a popular magazine rendered it "unliterary." Newspapers could not be the means of conveying any literature of significance, nor would individuals of quality and education publish their polite, refined literary endeavors in them.

Significantly, most Canadian humour in the years after 1840 continued to be published as "popular" fiction, and in ordinary newspapers as well as the humorous and satiric papers--none of which met "aristocratic" criteria for literature. In his report to the Royal Society, "The Present State of Literature in Canada, and the Intellectual Progress of its People during the Last Fifty Years," (1874), James Douglas expressed his regret that, "our own [Canadian

newspapers] have imitated the American rather than the English style." He gave a detailed description of the flaws of the American-style newspaper, which contained

column after column . . . filled with foreign and home telegraphic news . . . but the editorial page instead of being occupied with calm and dignified discussions on leading questions, contains, besides some longer articles, a number of isolated paragraphs, criticising current events and prominent men with an utter disregard for the feelings of individuals. These comments, though often striking, are too flippant in tone to be consistent with the responsibilities of journalism. But even more repulsive to taste are the facetiae, consisting of diluted wit and stale jokes, with which even leading American newspapers fill the gaps in their columns; and the interviewer's reports of conversations with crowned heads and condemned felons, who, through some strange fascination, are induced to unburden their secrets more fully to the correspondents than the one class do to their ministers or the other to their attorneys. The reports of courts are told in language travestied from Dickens, and the most ordinary incidents are narrated in a grandiloquent style. . . . in pandering to the low tastes of the multitude for horrors, in their inquisitorial prying into domestic affairs and the prominence and sensational colouring they give to every revelation of vice, they generally speaking, diffuse harm not good among their readers; while the English language is suffering from the slang and exaggeration which characterize their style of writing (77).

From Douglas' description, one of the flaws of the American, and by association the Canadian, newspapers is clearly their satire and humour. This opinion probably reflects the colonial inflation of the British product as least as much as it reflects the actual calibre of the materials to be found in Canadian papers. Mary Lu MacDonald, who examined

virtually all the newspapers printed in Ontario between 1830 and 1850, reports that

while the publication of literature was not the primary objective of newspaper proprietors, the quantity published was nonetheless considerable and for potential readers, literature was cheapest and most accessible in this medium ("Literature and Society," 82).

As in the Maritimes before 1840, newspapers in Central Canada and the West continued to publish poetry and prose for their readers.

In Ontario, then in all of Canada, the literary periodicals, which, on the whole, were only marginally more successful than they had been in the Maritimes before 1840,<sup>1</sup> came to be regarded as the only significant vehicles for literature. After the early 1840s, because of its levity and "low" subject matter, little humour appeared in these literary periodicals. This may be related to the fact that among the thousands upon thousands of British settlers who emigrated into Ontario between 1823 and 1840 many were well educated, including "half-pay officers, gentlewomen, officials, younger sons, clergymen, lawyers, and especially young journalists" (Klinck LHC I:155). Unfamiliar with the Canadian tradition of humorous newspaper satire which had reached its zenith with the publication of the Clockmaker sketches, these new well-educated settlers had no interest

in developing the newspaper as a North American literary vehicle.

They brought with them a desire to recreate the society they had left, and to transplant, as it were, all that was best in British literary practice to their new country. The suitable vehicle for literature is a literary periodical, and accordingly they set out to emulate the British literary periodicals. They were, as well, highly suspicious of humour and satire of any kind, except, perhaps, that which ridiculed the uncouth Americans, whose influences they eschewed.

For them, a Canadian literature would define and dignify the "nation." "Literature" meant poetry, essays, and historical romances like those written by Sir Walter Scott. They preferred the kind of poetry which John Matthews calls "Academic," that is, poetry "based directly upon sophisticated English models of the central tradition" (Tradition in Exile 113). In contrast, they dismissed "popular" poetry--that is, the poetry of folk literature and literary adaptations of it based upon less sophisticated models of the central tradition" (113). It was not regarded as being of any value, nor, for the most part, were prose sketches such as those which continued to be popular in the newspapers and magazines. MacLulich suggests that in Canada the dominance of what he calls the "aristocratic" model of

literature which gained strength in the second half of the nineteenth century was detrimental to the development of a native tradition:

The slow development of a Canadian literary tradition is explained by the adherence of nineteenth-century Canadian writers to a class-conscious or aristocratic notion of literature that was poorly matched to the actual conditions of society in North America. Only towards the end of the century did our writers adopt a view of literature that was more in keeping with the egalitarian outlook that actually prevails in North American society (Between Europe and America 22).

There were literati in all the provinces of Canada who believed in this vision of literature, and were often in positions to dominate the cultural milieu. Canadian literary periodicals reflect the ideals of this educated elite and the little humour they do contain emulates British models, especially in using formal rather than colloquial language. This humour is even more restrained--perhaps refined would be a better word--than similar humour in Britain and it is apolitical regarding Canadian party politics (except insofar as it inculcates Tory values).

Nevertheless, this humour has a few characteristics in common with the popular or "unliterary" humour of the newspapers. These include Canadian attitudes of moral superiority, especially towards the Americans; depictions of a growing consciousness of Canada's superior place among the British colonies; gradual acceptance of Canadian subject

matter--other than rural life; the continued use of frame tales and other distancing devices, and an increasing use of parodic techniques, perhaps as a way of getting around the rigidities of prescribed literary forms.

The lack of recognition given to humour by the late nineteenth-century literati and the often stilted or parodic nature of the humour that is found in Canadian literary periodicals fuel the myth that there is no Canadian humour of any significance between Haliburton and Leacock. The seriousness with which these periodicals approach literature is a clear indication that they refused to be "popular" in the way that periodicals did in two other new nations--the United States and Australia. In her examination of nineteenth-century Canadian and Australian periodicals, Gillian Whitelock (1983) observes that the disjunction of humour and literature in significant Canadian periodicals is quite different from their relationship in the periodicals in Australia in this period:

In Australia the longest lived journals tended to be humorous: the Sydney and Melbourne Punch... The Bulletin [the Australian equivalent of The Literary Garland], therefore, developed upon a tradition already proven viable in the Australian context; it owed much to the English Punch and the humorous and satirical magazine tradition of cartoon, lampoon, satire and epigrammatic wit (31).

Canadian literary periodicals were pretentious, and few tried to appeal to any but a sophisticated audience. Their

cost alone would have guaranteed an upper-class readership. MacDonald (1984) suggests that the failure of so many periodicals in the middle decades of the nineteenth century was directly related to their cost: "[it] was not because Canadians [i.e., the people of Quebec and Ontario] were illiterate or uninterested, the problem was to produce the literary materials they sought at a price they could afford" (78).

Nevertheless, these relatively short-lived literary periodicals which represent the literary taste of a minority are the only Canadian periodicals of the period which have received any significant attention from modern literary critics--and only a minimal amount at that. Canadian literary historians accept the statements of their editors and other nineteenth-century critics that they are the primary means of stimulating the writing of literature in Canada. In his article "Literary Taste in Central Canada During the Late Nineteenth Century" (1950) Claude T. Bissell says:

The student of literary taste must ... search out the direct comment made by writers who have either a professional or a personal interest in literature and who are addressing themselves to an audience that clearly shares their interest. He will find that audience most clearly therefore in periodicals that have an obvious literary bias. Admittedly here we are dealing with a coterie; but I think we may take it for granted that the very existence of colonial or Dominion literature depends upon the activities of a coterie (237-8).

Bissell's acceptance of the necessity of a "coterie", together with his emphasis on critical theory and his implicit rejection of "popular" writing and the "folk", exemplifies the extent to which the aristocratic notion of literature and the denial that the reading interests of ordinary Canadians would have any bearing on the "literary" continued to influence Canadian criticism well into the twentieth century.

Many of these studies, which include dissertations by R.E.McDougall (1950), Allan Smith (1972), Margery Fee (1981), Gillian L. Whitelock (1983), Mary Lu MacDonald (1984), and Gwen Davies (1984), have not been published.<sup>2</sup> Indices have been compiled for such periodicals as The Nova Scotia Magazine (Vincent and La Brash, 1982), The Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository (Vincent, 1982), The Acadian Magazine (Vincent and La Brash, 1982), The Literary Garland (Brown, 1962), and The Week (Bentley and Wickins, 1978) among others. Like other studies, such as the dissertations, they do not focus on humour and often do not identify humorous material.

As has already been mentioned, among the published studies of developments in this period, the most significant are Matthews' Tradition in Exile: A Comparative Study of Social Influences on the Development of Australian and Canadian Poetry in the Nineteenth Century (1962);



MacLulich's Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction (1988) and Gerson's A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in Nineteenth Century Canada (1989). The first investigates the evolution of a tradition of native poetry in Canada and Australia and explains the dominance of "aristocratic" literature in Canada; the second examines influences on the development of Canadian fiction and the third examines the context, including the periodical publications, within which Canadians wrote, published, and read fiction. None focuses on humour, except incidentally. Two more recent publications contain information about nineteenth-century periodicals but focus mainly on twentieth-century publications: Mary Vipond's The Mass Media in Canada (1989) and Fraser Sutherland's The Monthly Epic. A History of Canadian Magazines 1789-1989 (1990). The latter is significant for this study because in addition to brief comments on several nineteenth-century periodicals, it contains short chapters on the New Dominion Monthly, the Canadian Illustrated News, the Canadian Monthly and National Review, Grip and Saturday Night. On the whole, criticism of materials in Canadian periodicals generally focuses on serious literature rather than humour.

In some cases the periodicals are singularly humourless; in others there is sometimes more humour than expected. The humour in these major Canadian nineteenth-

century "literary" periodicals has received incidental notice in a few studies of their literary content. There is, for example, a fair amount of humour in three of the five major periodicals examined by R.E. McDougall in "A Study of Canadian Periodical Literature" (1950).<sup>3</sup> By contrast, except for the sketches of Susanna Moodie, the Literary Garland and the Canadian Journal have little or none.

The editors of such periodicals as The Literary Garland were not much interested in publishing poetry or fiction about the frontier or about the experiences of pioneer settlers, nor did they attempt to gain readers from among the poorer or semi-literate settlers. Whitelock notes that in The Literary Garland, which "makes no reference to the colonial situation, Canada is conspicuous by its absence" (174). Ordinary readers, especially rural readers and those born in North America, must have been alienated by such periodicals that did not reflect them, their lifestyle or their environment. Studies such as Allan Smith's<sup>4</sup> reveal that they continued to find their reading pleasure in newspapers, American magazines and American popular fiction. By the 1840s the Canadian market was virtually flooded by American publications. Smith notes that

much of this writing was light and insubstantial. Even before mid-century the rise of American popular culture had begun. The literature which

formed so central a part of it depended on the impact it could make on the emotions. In this sense it grew out of the romantic movement. But where the emotionalism of the romantics played upon sensitivity and intelligence, the new popular writers played upon pathos and sentimentality (72).

The educated elite abhorred this popular writing and became, if anything, more determined to cultivate in Canadians a taste for more serious, emotionally restrained and intellectually challenging literature. In this task, they, like their periodicals, failed.

In the meantime, Canadians continued to write and publish their material in newspapers, American, and occasionally, British magazines. Mary Lu MacDonald notes that "literary Canadians were most active at the bottom of the [social] scale. They may not have been able to publish their own books, but they could see their work in print in the local newspaper" (111). She has identified no less than ninety-four Ontario and Quebec writers who published in the newspapers and periodicals of the Canadas between 1830 and 1850, and points out that "most pages of fiction were more devoted to plain amusement than morality." She concludes that perhaps "our forebears protested their seriousness so often and so vehemently in order to downplay their human enjoyment of much of what they had read" (182). From the 1840s on, an increasingly wide chasm developed between the aristocratic productions of the dominant coterie and the

literary efforts, especially humorous ones, of ordinary Canadians.

In Canada, humour seems to disappear during this period, a period which in the United States saw the development of a distinctive American humour. But, humour critics and historians have traced connections between the oral humour of the "folk" and developments in written forms of "popular" humour in the U.S. Boatright in Folk Laughter on the American Frontier (1942), and Blair and Hill in America's Humor (1978), recognize the importance for American humour of the collaboration of talkers and writers. Boatright traces the tall-tale, the hyperbolic story often thought of as characteristic of American humour, to

the westward moving men of action, [who] unhampered by any highfalutin theories of art, created their own literature ... Since they were essentially realists, their heroic literature took a comic turn; and in keeping with nineteenth century ideals, their comedy was the comedy of exaggeration (Folk Laughter 96-97).

No such acceptance of folk humour took place in Ontario, and through Ontario's dominance of Canada's literary climate after mid-century, in Canada. Instead, in the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the emergence in print of the colloquial voice was actively discouraged and, far from being seen as contributing to a national humorous literature, was dismissed as "regional" or as an adjunct of "local colour" writing and relegated to a

secondary, nonliterary status. Whitelock concludes that in part this denial was a reaction to the need of the educated elite to distinguish Canadians from Americans: "A defence of the English language against the encroachments of the vernacular became another means by which the "Canadian" could be distinguished from the "Yankee," for the "Yankee" speech pattern had become characteristic of American independence" (114).

McDougall concludes that although the material in the Canadian literary periodicals generally claims to emulate the writing of the mother country, it exhibits subtle differences which arise from their self-conscious gentility. He says, for example, that the Literary Garland is

careful at all times of its gentility. [It has a] policy forbidding polemic and partisan discussion, [and is] too well bred to engage in facetious dispute. The more important British periodicals such as Blackwoods, Fraser's, London Magazine, were committed to partisan discussion (16-17).

Such restrictions guaranteed that little of the less-than-genteel experiences of Canadian (Quebec and Ontario) pioneers and settlers would turn up in the fiction or poetry of the Literary Garland which exudes Canada's version of British gentility. Klinck says:

The life portrayed [in the Literary Garland] was obviously foreign to most Canadian readers, who had shared in these things neither before nor after emigration. ... The settlers were too literate and practical to be content with condescension or escapism; ... As an aid to the

development of a national literature, it taught certain skills, but it was only a parlour game. It encouraged amenable native talent, but it made only feeble attempts to discover a native norm in content, treatment, or quality (LHC I: 160).

There is a little humour in the Garland, primarily in the "Canadian" (Ontario) sketches by Susanna Moodie and in William "Tiger" Dunlop's "Recollections of the War of 1812," but this humour occurs in material which is not fiction or poetry.

Susanna Moodie, whose "amenable" talent met the genteel standards of the Garland, was a regular contributor. Her six sketches describing life in the Canadian (Ontario) bush are the most significant of the few pieces about life in Ontario published in the Garland and are, at the same time, the most humorous of the Garland's offerings. These sketches, with others published in The Victoria Magazine, were revised and later incorporated into Roughing It in the Bush (1852). Moodie's humour emulates the humour of the travel sketches which were popular in England in the 1820s and '30s (Ballstadt 36). In choosing to employ such a mode to describe her Canadian experiences, Moodie had many models to consider:

Among the dozens of works written to satisfy the British market for books about North America, the most suitable models were narratives by literary English women about their experiences in the new world. The prototypical work is Frances Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans . . . As a critique of American society and manners

written in a satirical vein, [it] may have served as a model for the satirical quality of Susanna's book (Ballstadt, Roughing It xxiii).

Like Trollope, Moodie created comic portraits of the colourful characters she met, and recalled her confrontations with the primitive conditions of pioneer life in realistic detail. Peterman suggests that the sketch was particularly useful because "it held her to no particular narrative unity other than that of personal voice and values" ("Susanna Moodie" 81). Haliburton had also taken advantage of the flexibility offered by the travel sketch in his The Clockmaker volumes, and newspaper contributors used it as a favoured method of commenting ironically on Canadian society.

Moodie's sketches in the Garland disclose her opinion of her readers. Peterman notices that she revised the sketches before publishing them in England in Roughing It in the Bush (1852) and that in the English versions "the language [becomes] more high-toned and poetic" (84) and certain potentially upsetting details are omitted, possibly because she believed that such subject matter was "inappropriate for an English audience" (85). She obviously expected that North Americans, having shared similar experiences, would be less genteel, and could appreciate the incongruity of such situations without being shocked by them. In Roughing It, for example, she omits the details

about Woodruff's early marriages that she includes in the Canadian sketch "Old Woodruff and his Three Wives"-- possibly, Peterman suggests, "because it was a kind of realistic subject matter she thought inappropriate for an English audience [and possibly because] it dealt with an Englishman behaving indulgently and inhumanely" (85). Moodie expects a coarsening as a result of living in North America. She saw even the educated elite for whom she wrote in the Garland as less genteel than her compatriots back home.

Moodie had even less regard for the education and social status of her fellow pioneers. In the late 1840s, she and her husband, Dunbar Moodie, tried their hand at publishing a "literary" magazine for ordinary Canadian (Ontario) readers. The Victoria Magazine, published in Belleville, Ontario (1848) was the first magazine in Ontario to try to reach a rural audience. The Moodies condescendingly subtitled it "A Cheap Periodical for the Canadian (Ontario) People," saying in their opening remarks, "To The Public,"

We trust by the cheapness of the Magazine to assist in forming a much more numerous class of readers throughout the Colony from a class whose reading has hitherto been, almost necessarily confined to the perusal of the local newspapers. We hope by our humble exertions to contribute in some considerable degree to the extension of the taste for general literature among that most numerous and not least respected class of our



fellow Colonists -- the rural population of our Province" (I.1, 1848).

Their desire to educate and improve the rural settlers was a significant departure from the prevalent attitude towards the rural population expressed by a member of the Family Compact (the ruling elite of Ontario) a few years earlier. In response to complaints about the quality of the common schools, he had said: "What do you need schools for? There will always be enough well educated Old Countrymen to transact all public business, and we can leave Canadians to clean up the bush" (Graham 143).

There is little humour in the Victoria Magazine, but the Moodies did appear to recognize the importance of local colour in attracting a rural readership. They published exact descriptions of their society, including two of Susanna's sketches about their own experiences as pioneers in the Canadian bush. But they considered themselves vastly superior to the ordinary settlers and identified with the better class of British immigrant, not the hoi polloi. In The Victoria Magazine they offer the inferior colonials an opportunity to emulate their betters, i.e. the Moodies and people like them. They attempt, without possessing the necessary popular flair, to disseminate literature among the general population, hoping for the kind of success of newspapers such as the Novascotian and the American

magazines which were coming into the province in increasing numbers. The Victoria Magazine lasted less than a year.

Moodie's humour in the sketches published in the Literary Garland and the Victoria Magazine is the humour of an onlooker who is not really a part of the society being described. She remained aloof from, and considered herself superior to, the strange beliefs, customs and daily occurrences that characterized life in the backwoods as well as the comic characters she met and described. She recorded the idiosyncrasies of their speech--Old World Scottish and Irish dialects and New World "Yankee"--and the peculiarities of their beliefs with an air of superior amusement at their ignorance and uncouthness. When she assembled her sketches and poems for publication in England, she expressed her hope that reading them would "deter [even] one family from sinking their property and shipwrecking all their hopes by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada" (Roughing It (1988) 515). Perhaps her excessive gentility was a kind of bulwark against the coarsening that she felt was inevitably a result of the pioneering experience.

By the 1850s there is a change in Moodie's humour. In the latter half of Roughing It in the Bush, as she begins to accommodate the new way of life, her humour becomes more self-reflexive, with the result that Roughing It, not only depicts her growth as an emigrant, but also the growth of

her humour as she reveals her ability to step aside and see herself and her naive expectations and actions from a changed perspective. Ultimately, her younger self becomes another of her series of comic portraits. The change can be detected in the sketches entitled "Our First Settlement and the Borrowing System" and "The Fire". In the latter, Moodie describes a comic encounter with a bear. The incident takes place in Moodie's own household, and one of the comic figures is her husband:

Half asleep, Moodie sprang from his bed, seized his gun, and ran out. I threw my large cloak round me, struck a light, and followed him to the door. The moment the latter was unclosed, some calves that we were rearing rushed into the kitchen, followed by the larger beasts, who came bellowing headlong down the hill, pursued by the bear.

It was a laughable scene, as shown by the paltry tallow candle. Moodie in his nightshirt, taking aim at something in the darkness, surrounded by the terrified animals; old Jenny [their servant] with a large knife in her hand, holding on to the skirts of her master's garment, making outcry loud enough to frighten away all the wild beasts in the bush--herself almost in a state of nudity (428).

Moodie herself is an active participant in the event, and her perception of the "laughable" in this otherwise frightening, rather indecorous, experience replaces the horror with which she would have recorded such an event earlier.

Eleven years before the release of Roughing It in the Bush, Amaranth (1841-43) began publication in Saint John, N.

B. Like The Victoria Magazine, Amaranth set out to bring the people of New Brunswick suitably elevating and conservative literature. It too turned to Britain for its ideals and its language, and early on expressed the hope that it would be able to stop the spread of American democratic ideas among the youth of the province:

The time will shortly arrive when the literati of New Brunswick will furnish to its inhabitants a large supply of periodical literature, and equal to the increasing demand for it, and in unison with the taste which creates that demand. American magazines are now flooding the country and many of them, it is to be regretted, convey principles of a levelling tendency, odious certainly in the estimation of every true Briton - -it is a fact that upon the sensible man, the only effect of such principles is on the risible faculties; but, as all readers are not proof against an antagonist impression, and as the minds of the rising generation are susceptible of receiving those which are erroneous, some substitute of home manufacture should be placed as a barrier in the way of the too free circulation of American publications, containing articles of a tendency wholly anti-British (I.1:1).

Notwithstanding its serious purpose, this magazine published humorous material, including "Sporting Sketches of New Brunswick" by M. H. Perley, a New Brunswick writer,<sup>5</sup> which had originally appeared in the British periodical, the London Sporting Review.

Perley's "Sporting Sketches" are significant for Canadian humour because, although they were non-fiction and written for a British audience, their perspective is North American. The initial sketch (Vol I. 3: 1841) established

this North American perspective on hunting. While he is certainly not anti-British in his sentiments, Perley points out that British sportsmen who come to Canada and "complain of the lack of field sports," do so because they are ignorant of North American ways of doing things: "They had expected to indulge their sporting propensities in the same style, and with the like appliances, as on the other side of the Atlantic" (85). The sketches which follow clarify the North American ways through a combination of description and anecdote.

In "The Lawyer and the Black Duck" (I.1: 1841) the first person narrator, a lawyer, is humiliated by his own refusal to obey the instructions of his Indian guide, Tomah:

Growing impatient, and forgetting the strict caution I had received to keep perfectly quiet until the birds were on the wing, and sufficiently near for a shot, I gradually edged the canoe from amongst the tall rushes and flags which concealed it toward the flock, but the instant they had view of my suspicious proceedings the whole body went off instantly and far out of reach. Shortly after the Indian appeared on the bank, and I paddled up to him; he stood leaning on his gun lost in thought, and although he strove to conceal it, evidently vexed. On my inquiring what had happened, he asked if I had heard what the ducks said, to which I answered that I had not been so fortunate. --He then told me, very gravely, that as he was creeping down upon the flock and very nearly within range, a duckling, who was on the outskirts, first noticed my movements, and cried out to the father of the flock: "Meta-hassim!" (black duck!) "Who is that coming?" The old duck looked attentively for an instant, and replied, "It is Potosuin!" (the lawyer) "He is a very dangerous man! Always beware of a



And a course with an icy bed --  
 I'll laugh at the wind,  
 And leave it behind,  
 Enquiring with sighs where I've sped. ...

(I.5, 1841 143)

Without arguing the poetic merit of such lighthearted poems, one must acknowledge that they are valuable indicators of a growing corpus of Canadian works which depart from conventional British treatments of various subjects. In this poem the language may be conventional, even outdated in such phrases as "briny deep" and "fleeting roe," but the joyous exhilaration in the winter season and the desire to speed over icy roads in a sleigh are Canadian, and mark a departure from the conventional British treatment of winter as dreary.

Of the literary periodicals published in Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century the Anglo-American Magazine (Toronto, 1852-55) was most amenable to publishing materials that are light and humorous. This more positive attitude to humour may have reflected its borderline position between literary and popular magazines, although it is generally regarded as a literary periodical. Klinck says the Anglo-American "may be reckoned among the folksy rather than the genteel forces" (LHC I: 165). It was the first of the significant Ontario periodicals to reject the belletristic approach; its models were Chamber's Journal, Eliza Cook's Journal and

Hogg's Instructor. McDougall remarks that these "three periodicals from which the Anglo-American habitually draws material are periodicals which may properly be described as light weight publications of a popular cast" (167). Subsequently he adds, "Of the chief contributions in original fiction in the Anglo-American, it might be said that they are light in tone, humorous (in some respects almost Dickensian), most commonly episodic or anecdotal in form, high spirited, sometimes a little ribald, and occasionally satiric" (183).

Nevertheless, for all its lightness of tone, this magazine still assumes its readers belong to the middle or upper classes, and it reflects rural life in Ontario very little. The major characters in the fiction and in such regular features as the sketches and book reviews that form "The Editor's Shanty" are from the professional and educated classes. In "The Editor's Shanty," for example, humour occurs in the interactions and witty comments of the characters who provide the framework for the literary discussions and book reviews in this feature. All of the participants are educated gentlemen, and their discussions fall within the bounds of the aristocratic view of literature in much the same way as many of the discussions in the sketches of "The Club" papers in The NovaScotian had twenty-five years earlier.



Two of the fictional series that appear regularly in this periodical, "The Chronicles of Dreepdaily" and "The Purser's Cabin" provide significant insight into the kind of humour enjoyed by readers of the Anglo-American. The former is a series of related light-hearted narrative sketches depicting the lives of characters who live in the fictional settlement of Dreepdaily in Scotland. These sketches employ a broad range of humorous devices from witticisms and jokes to the presentation of eccentric characters and comic situations. Dreepdaily is not in Canada, so these sketches also serve as indications of the cosmopolitanism of Canadian writers who feel no obligation to write mainly about their own country. But, for this reason, they are also apt to be passed over by modern readers looking for those which feature a Canadian setting.

Unlike "The Chronicles of Dreepdaily" the series of sketches called "The Purser's Cabin" are set in Canada. Most of the events take place on a mail steamer travelling between the head of Lake Ontario and Kingston. The purser of the steamer provides the frame tale and is the primary narrator of these sketches. He introduces a variety of narratives about Canadian characters whom he has met as passengers on the boat. This series which continued for nearly a year--from July 1854 to June 1855--was the work of

the editor of the Anglo-American, the Rev. Robert Jackson McGeorge.

Each sketch is called a "Yarn", including the opening one which introduces Denis Lynch Stobo, the purser, and sets up an elaborate frame tale which clarifies both the position of the purser in relation to the colonials and his reliability as a reporter. He is an Englishman, whose attitudes are not unlike those of Susanna Moodie: he is an outsider observing these peculiar North Americans who are inferior to the British, being deficient in both culture and education, and being prone to American mannerisms. As a purser he is in a position to meet many people. Here again one discovers a Canadian humorist depending on the conventions of the travel sketch and frame tale to provide the form for introducing North American characters, customs and language.

In many ways Stobo is a precursor of the remittance man who will become a popular comic figure in the humour of the West. Although he is a poverty-stricken upper-class immigrant from Great Britain who now pursues a lowly occupation, being a mere purser on the steamship, he retains the standards of the British gentleman: "In this employment my hours glide away, if not in a very aristocratic, at least in a comparatively happy manner" (I:32). When he first arrived in Canada, Stobo had been sold a worthless farm by

"Squire Wood Nutmeg" (I July, 1854 31), but he has since gained sufficient self-knowledge that he can look with wry humour upon his ignorance in those early days. He nobly accepts responsibility for being ignorant about North American ways and, therefore, for being easy prey to shysters, and he demonstrates his moral superiority by his refusal to classify all Canadians as unscrupulous cheats:

[Instead of] breaking into a series of maledictions against this 'abominable country' [he puts] a per contra case: An honest Esquesing farmer takes it into his head to emigrate to England and pitches his tent in the metropolis thereof. Though as ignorant of the mysteries of shopkeeping as I was of ploughing and chopping, he sets up as a dealer in muscovado, blacking, green tea and brown soup. What would be the almost inevitable result? Why, ere the world had become six years more ancient, the name of poor Mush Maple would swell the muster roll of insolvency . . . . Now, what estimate would people form of the fairness of Mr. Maple if he should put forth a history of his mercantile mis-adventures so as to convey the impression that they formed a fair sample of the huxtering capabilities of London?  
(I: 32)

He has agreed to tell these stories at the request of the editor of the Anglo-American. As a self-conscious narrator, he explains that he is able to introduce a colloquial Canadian voice in these tales because he has full editorial control over the tales he chooses to tell. He frequently opts, as narrators had done in the newspaper sketches in Nova Scotia, to relay some of the "interesting confessions or legends detailed to me by my guests, and, as a general

rule, [to do so] in the ipissima verba of the narrators" (I: 32). However, if he personally uses a colloquial word or phrase, he draws attention to this departure from standard English by using quotation marks.

The most humorous of the stories narrated within this frame, are the series of sketches, Yarns IV-VI, which were re-published as "Count or Counterfeit" in McGeorge's Tales, Sketches and Lyrics (1858). In these sketches McGeorge "develops the comic side to the ... [nineteenth-century] self-reflexive convention of including within a novel characters whose vision has been distorted by their reading habits" (Gerson 26). In his introduction to this collection, McGeorge explains his serious moral purpose for "Count or Counterfeit" saying:

The author would simply crave licence to observe in reference to the tale "Count or Counterfeit" that its object is to ridicule the inordinate lust for the perusal of slip-shod romances, which signally prevails at present in "this Canada." [Quebec and Ontario] Truly alarming is the extent of the epidemic, and unless checked it cannot fail to visit the rising generation with psychologic emasculation and discrepitness [sic]" (vii-viii).

This series of sketches in "The Purser's Cabin" depicts the pernicious effect of such popular, usually American, literature upon a well brought up young lady and a romantic old one by filling their heads so full of romantic nonsense that they can not distinguish true worth from false

appearance of worth. To a degree these sketches have at their base a covert anti-Americanism.

Although McGeorge creates comic caricatures rather than developed characters in these sketches, Miss Laura Matilda Applegarth, "a dedicated member of the sisterhood of novel-readers, and, as such, profoundly tinctured with the oil of romance" (65) is nevertheless memorable. The sister-in-law of Nicholas Newlove, she had undertaken to raise his motherless daughter Fanny from infancy, and has brought her up in her own image: "For everything in the shape of the common place or prosaic she entertained a generous contempt" (65). They are travelling to Montreal to visit Newlove's friend Crooks, during which visit Newlove hopes Fanny will look favourably on Crooks' son Cornelius and a suitable marriage will ensue. Fanny had already rejected the suit of Cornelius Crooks because she believes he is neither romantic nor heroic enough to meet her ideal. He is merely, in the women's eyes,

a fellow who could boast of no better lance than a grey goose quill, no more heroic shield than a fusty brief, or a musty title-deed! Who ever heard of the Lady Blanche, or the Countess Slip-slopina, or any other heroine worth touching with a pair of tongs, wedding with such an abomination?" (335)

Newlove is convinced that Fanny has overly romantic ideas because her aunt has "guided the not-unwilling nymph into the flowery paths of poetry and indoctrinated her with the

love of the romantic and the sublime" (334). Auntie wants her niece to marry a Knight, or a Lord or a Baron--most of whom are in short supply in Canada. Mr. Newlove is terrified that the unworldly Fanny will fall in love with "some crafty and designing scamp who knows how to take the measure of her silly foot" (336), and Auntie's choice, their shipmate, Count Blitzen Von Hoaxenstein, justifies his fears.

The humour in these sketches is didactic, and, as the names of the characters indicate, not subtle. McGeorge employs the conventions of the popular, highly romantic literature of the time to ridicule it. At the same time he suggests that it is the lack of rigorous mental training and discipline which encourages virtually all segments of the female population to read this worthless fiction. Fanny's foolish search for her ideal hero and her Aunt's equally foolish promotion of the counterfeit Count make for a clever parodic comic romance.

By the time The Canadian Magazine was published in the 1870s, there seems to have been some realization that forcing exaggerated ideas of British literary gentility on Canadian readers was not going to educate them to become more sophisticated readers or turn a profit for the magazine editors. The "Address on Literature" with which The Canadian Magazine begins promises "integrity" in the fiction

it will print--it will not print the kind of fiction that "neglects to inculcate the great practical duties of life." It does not envision its role as educating the public to higher standards of literature and morality and accordingly sees nothing reprehensible about printing fiction of the lighter sort. The editor, Robert Ridgeway, says:

As regards attacks upon pure magazine literature, it matters but little, if it give writers or speakers a certain kind of satisfaction, let them enjoy it, the world will please itself as to what it reads. Public opinion, in the present age, has given its verdict in favour of a cheap, general literature, one which, while it conveys useful information, will interest and amuse (I.1 1871 2).

Articles, poems and stories in this magazine actually reflect various current social and political developments in Canada. One poem, "To Clorinda, Who Attends the Ladies Lecture," though little better than doggerel, provides readers with a comic insight into the insecurity males might feel as a result of the higher education of women. This debate preoccupied Canadians in the 1870s and 80s. "To Clorinda" is an early appearance of this debate, appearing more than a decade earlier than Sarah Anne Curzon's play "The Sweet Girl Graduate" (1882), a comedy arguing for higher education for women. "To Clorinda" is a complaint, in which a male narrator solicits sympathy because he is afraid that his educated girl friend, Clorinda, is getting smarter than he. He bewails the loss of the good old days

before higher education for women:

You once (and would you did so still!)  
 Thought Wisdom much the same as Folly,  
 Before you worshipped J. S. Mill  
 And voted Logic 'awful jolly.'

Then he explains some of the difficulties he is experiencing  
 now Clorinda is studying philosophy:

But now you argue this and that,  
 In terms obscure and cabalistic;  
 And prove me ignorant and flat,  
 By rules severely syllogistic.

He is threatened by her enjoyment of mathematics:

But now you feed your tender mind  
 On Cubic Roots; you try Quadratics:  
 With secret pleasure, too, you find  
 I'm shaky in my Mathematics.

Even though he had already bought the wedding ring, her education has destroyed their relationship, because he simply cannot believe that with all her newly acquired knowledge she can still love, "one, who you declare,/ Is but a civilized gorilla" (I.3, 1871, 153-54). This final insult is also one of the first comic references in Canadian writing to Darwin's theory of evolution.

The Canadian Magazine contains humour which appears to stem from Canadians' awareness of their position as the oldest colony in the British Empire. By the 1870s Canadians, especially those of the educated class and British birth, saw themselves as the superior colony in the British Empire. Unlike in the United States, where



humorists looked inward, focusing almost exclusively on the country and its regions, in Canada, humorists often looked outward, first to Britain and the United States, later to Europe and other colonies in the Empire. An early manifestation of humour associated with membership in the British Empire is the wonderfully comic parody of a handbook or guidebook for Imperial administrators, "Eastern Official Life" by "Ramsawmy Sivajee, Esquire" which appeared in instalments in 1871.

The creator of "Eastern Official Life" assumes that Canadian readers will be interested in and amused by the customs of India, and by native Indians attempts to meet British cultural expectations. The narrator, Ramsawmy Sivajee, Esq., a native of India, is creating this handbook to explain the "amenities of official life in that far-off land, so little known to the people of other continents" (I.3, 1871, 222). He is eager to show his conversion to and understanding of the "significant" life of his country, which in India means the life of the British government officials. Sivajee is a naive narrator; he does not fully recognize the extent of the gulf between his native culture and that of the British colonial administration. Much of the humour in "Official Life" arises from his pretentious use of language as he attempts to produce what he believes to be suitably elevated and aristocratic prose.

In the following passage, which is typical of the narrative style of "Official Life," Sivajee describes his discovery, once the downpour of the "tropical"--i.e., the tropical rainstorm--has begun, that the room he has been assigned by the two young English gentlemen with whom he shares a bungalow has certain disadvantages:

The roof had been converted into an enlarged version of a dairy-sieve. Through innumerable ventilators which had been formed and perforated by last years "tropicals" that precious roof admitted into my sanctum a series of brooks and rivulets, converging into a central stream or flood which thus received the waters of a thousand slender but faithful tributaries.

Unhappily I was not alone in my misery, for I perceived a mighty multitude of ants moving down the walls in seven separate columns from a point d'appui placed beyond the ceiling. Proceeding en echellon they bivouacked on the bed-posts, curtains, and mattress, and they quietly located themselves in, under, around, above, below, every habitable square of that luckless cot and its appurtenances!

Nor was this all. An exodus of rats, accompanied by their respective families, then flew past in search of happier homes...

Sivajee eagerly demonstrates his mastery of French ("en echellon"), of scientific observation ("a series of brooks or rivulets converging in a central stream") and British military terminology ("bivouacked") and elegant Latinate English (sanctum, multitude, exodus, appurtenances), without appearing to notice how ridiculous such inflated language is when it is used to describe a leaky roof.

Through Sivajee's fascination with creating an impressive and appropriate language to dignify his subject matter, the chapters of "Eastern Official Life" indicate the persistence of the ironic, subtle humour that had been developing in the years before Haliburton. Sivajee is as blind to his own shortcomings as ever Sam Slick or Mephibosheth Stepsure had been, but, unlike Sam, he is a member of a colonized country in which the native culture is experienced as inferior. In his eagerness to absorb British culture and to impress his readers with his learning and his mastery of upper class English, Sivajee provides Canadians with an opportunity to laugh, sometimes dismissively, at the peculiarities of a far-off colony and at the same time to reflect upon similar attitudes in their own country. "Eastern Official Life" anticipates Sara Jeannette Duncan's comic novels of the Empire by nearly thirty years.

"Official Life" also contains early examples of Canadian mock scholarship used for humorous purposes. It contains a number of "footnotes" complete with explanatory notes. The information contained here offers direct comparisons of Canadian and Indian practices which indicate that "Official Life" has been written specifically for Canadian readers familiar with settling and governing in a strange country.

In 1883, The Week, which is widely acknowledged to be Canada's most influential nineteenth century periodical, began publication. Subtitled the "Canadian Journal of Politics, Society and Literature," The Week was founded by Goldwin Smith for the purpose of "stimulating our national sentiment, guarding our national morality and strengthening our national growth." It lasted for nearly thirteen years (ceasing publication on November 20, 1896). This periodical epitomizes the best of the literary ambitions of the educated elite in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and its long life indicates that it appealed to readers outside the coterie. Claude Bissell points out that

in spite of the wide dispersion of its contributors through central Canada, the general literary tone of The Week was remarkably uniform. The main reason for this was that the central corps of writers were born in the United Kingdom and received their education there; it is only natural to assume that they owed to their early training many of the qualities that they displayed when they entered upon the Canadian literary scene ("Literary Taste" 241).

Even those writers whose early training had been in Canada emulated British writing, for, as Mark Orkin has shown, "that part of Canadian education which concerns itself with syntax, grammar, and spelling has for a hundred years and more been based almost exclusively on British models" (qtd. in MacLulich 201). Furthermore, MacLulich observes that "although Canadian popular culture is dominated by American

influences, Canada's educated culture has turned away from the United States and instead looked toward Britain" (202).

The Week has received some critical attention in recent years. In 1978, D.M. R. Bentley published A Checklist of Literary Materials in THE WEEK, and in 1980 an edition of Duncan's columns became the subject of a Master's thesis: "An Annotated Edition of Sara Jeannette Duncan's Contributions to The Week," by Catherine Adams. In the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1983), Lorraine McMullen says

The Week conveys an accurate impression of intellectual currents and cultural taste of its day. Leading writers, and intellectuals contributed stories, poems, essays, commentary on current issues, and reviews of literature, drama, and music (826).

She draws attention to the debates on Darwinism, on realism and naturalism in fiction and on copyright which may be found in its pages. That it also contained significant Canadian humour seems less relevant to her.

The Week contains numerous witty, light, satiric, and otherwise humorous poems and essays written in the style variously referred to as "Tory," "Aristocratic," and "Academic." Although, as Bissell notes, The Week "manifested a discreet interest, both through its reviews and comments and its selections from contemporary American fiction and poetry, in the work of New York writers,

particularly in light society verse" ("Literary Taste" 243), it showed little interest in "popular" literature or in rural Canada. Its main allegiance was to the British (and European) cultural and literary paradigms.

In a discussion of "Society Slang", for example, F. Blake Crofton confines his remarks to the slang of the British society journals, noting that "it seems that one of the vagaries of fashion is to use incorrect forms and expressions in sporting matters . . . [possibly] through swells jocularly imitating the rusticities of their grooms and gamekeepers" (May 13, 1886). He does not mention American or Canadian slang.

British influence notwithstanding, many of the poems and essays indicate The Week's nationalist bias. In light verse and sketches, local and particular matters have become sufficiently acceptable to be fitting subjects. In "Lacrosse", for example, William F. Clarke adopts the patriotic stance of the Canada First Movement, challenges the view that this Canadian game is uncivilized, and suggests it is the equal of British and American sports:

Cricket is England's favourite game;  
Baseball no less of Yankee fame,  
Lacrosse is wholly ours;  
Born on Canadian soil, and played  
Hard by the maple's tempting shade,  
In pleasure's gladsome hours.

.....



curiosity and disrepute to be met on travels.

In the periodical press of Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century, the "academic" or "aristocratic" stream prevailed, and in that stream there is little of the concrete, popular satiric humour of the kind which developed in the first half of the century. Much of the humour that was published is far removed from the concerns of ordinary Canadians, and is of an urban and "literary" rather than a "folk" origin. Rural or pioneer Canadians are depicted as crude, suitable to be laughed at. There is virtually no anti-British sentiment.

The humour of the Canadian literary periodicals was in many respects quite different from that of the humour which appeared in the newspapers and humorous and satiric magazines of the same period. In these more popular media, humour turned increasingly to parody, and political and social satire as its most significant forms. Although much of this prose and verse responded to their readers' desire for humorous material that reflected the local scene, it remained more "literary" than had American humour. Its popularity came from its subject matter, its irony, and its depiction of the idiosyncrasies of the mix of cultures that by the late nineteenth century were a part of the Canadian social spectrum.



## Notes

1. Of eleven literary periodicals published in Ontario between 1840 and 1880, seven ran for one year or less. These include Barker's Canadian Magazine (1846), The Canadian Gem and Family Visitor (1846-47), The Victoria Magazine (1847), The Magic Lantern (1848), The British Colonial Magazine (1852-53), The British American Magazine (1863-64), The Canadian Literary Journal (1871-72), and The Canadian Literary Magazine (1871-72). The longest-lived periodical in this period in Ontario was The Canadian Journal (1852-78), but as its subtitle, A Repertory of Industry, Science and Art, indicates, this journal did not publish creative work. The Anglo-American Magazine ran for three years, from 1852 to 1855, and The Canadian Monthly and National Review, renamed Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly in 1878, had a ten year run. Literary periodicals published in provinces other than Ontario fared a little better: in Saint John, N. B., Stewart's Literary Quarterly survived for five years from 1867 to 1872, and The New Dominion Monthly ran from 1867 to 1879. Longest lived of all were magazines with a more popular orientation. The Canadian Illustrated News (1869-83) and The Family Herald and Weekly Star (1869-1967) of Montreal both published popular materials and appealed to a wide readership.

2. Mary Lu MacDonald's dissertation has just been published (1994) under the same title.

3. The five periodicals in McDougall's study are: The Literary Garland 1838-51; The Canadian Journal 1852-54; The Anglo-American Magazine 1852-55; The British American Magazine 1863-64, and The Canadian Monthly and National Review 1872-82.

4. Allan C. Smith, "The Imported Image: American Publications and American Ideas in the Evolution of the English Canadian Mind 1820-1900." Diss. University of Toronto, 1972.

5. For further information on Perley see "Moses Henry Perley" in Alison Mitcham, Three Remarkable Maritimers (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot, 1985) 19-65.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Satiric and Humorous Papers (1848-1912)

In contrast to the literary periodicals, the satiric and humorous papers which were published between 1848 and 1912 in Canada are a rich source of Canadian humour. Most were published weekly (although Punch in Canada was published initially every two weeks). Most of these papers such as Punch in Canada, Diogenes, Grinchuckle, the Grumbler, the Satirist, Nonsense, the Jester, the Gridiron, Sprite, and the Humorist were short-lived, having a life span of from one to three years. Others, notably Grip (Toronto, 1873-94), and the Eye Opener (Calgary and Winnipeg,<sup>1</sup> 1902-22) were each published weekly for more than twenty years. Although Grip, for example, was as long-lived as The Literary Garland, and longer-lived than The Week, its impact on and relationship to developments in Canadian humour have not been examined. All these papers provided an outlet for original Canadian humour--including political

satire--and all, without exception, continue to be so little regarded by literary critics that they are not mentioned in such a standard Canadian literary reference work as the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1983). Five papers, Punch in Canada, Diogenes, Grinchuckle, Grip, and the Eye-Opener (to 1912), will be examined here in order to gain insight in the nature of the humour they printed.

These papers were usually associated with the "Grit" side of politics, if not in the strictly partisan sense, at least in their disposition towards reform and in their irreverent attitude to the pretentiousness of the colonial Canadian social and literary world. They were not so much anti-British as pro-Canadian. While they were influenced by American literary practices, they were not pro-American, and the earlier ones in particular strongly opposed ideas of annexation to the United States. They reveal a radically different Canada from that depicted in the pages of such periodicals as the Literary Garland or The Week. Unlike such literary periodicals, for which the newness and the heterogeneous nature of Canadian society were repugnant, the satiric and humorous papers depicted a raw society in which people of many classes and nationalities were adapting to new physical, social and political conditions.

There is little information about these humorous and satiric weekly papers in Canadian literary histories. As

has already been indicated, most Canadian literary critics and historians support the myth that there was no Canadian humour of any significance between Haliburton and Leacock, and ignore the many poems, jokes, songs, parodies, sketches, anecdotes, cartoons and political satires that are to be found in Canada's nineteenth-century humorous papers. This humour may not be universal and cosmopolitan enough to be considered great literature or even great humour, but it is significant. It was read by large numbers of Canadians, made its readers laugh, and provided them with a view of themselves and their society that was missing from the literary periodicals. It reveals a Canadian propensity for irony, understatement and parody. Because the papers in which this propensity is found were not particularly influenced by the nineteenth-century literary and romantic ideals of nationalism--whose concepts of a national literature were conditional on the existence of a unified nation<sup>2</sup>--their humour was unaffected by many of the restrictions on manner and subject matter that influenced writers who set out to be "literary."

Just about anything was grist for the comic and satiric mills of the humorous papers. They hold politics and politicians up to ridicule; poke fun at the pretensions and weaknesses of social institutions; depict the impact of Canada on new immigrants, and vice versa; provide a forum

for jokes and anecdotes, many of which are sexist, racist, ribald and morally suspect; subvert the high calling of poetry by publishing comic verse; ridicule the pretensions of the literati; and, only occasionally, even turn their satire on religious figures and institutions. They try to steer a middle course between American democracy and the British class system, and take as much delight in exposing the pretensions of the rising lower and middle classes as in ridiculing those of the upper classes. Although they frequently published dialect humour, they did not always do so to ridicule the speakers of such dialects. Except in the dialect pieces in which they present a Canadian backwoods dialect they give little evidence of the emergence of a "Canadian" vernacular. Like the literary periodicals, they are urban in content and outlook and, except for the Eye Opener, do not reflect the predominantly rural nature of Canadian society.

These papers were political, although they deny being aligned to parties, and much of their popularity derived from their outspoken comments on the political affairs of the country, the province, and the city. In fact, political satire dominates all the papers. Although, for example, Grip declared that it was not politically biased but simply acting as a commentator on the foibles of politicians and the ludicrous nature of their actions, its favourite targets

were the Tory party and Sir John A. Macdonald.<sup>3</sup> Beginning with Punch in Canada (1848) the humorous papers regularly published political and social cartoons; these cartoons have received some recent modern critical attention. This examination will concentrate on the general humour as well as the social humour and humorous satire found in these five papers, noting the emergence of a humour characterized by a new point of view which shares much with both British and American perspectives, but is unlike either.

This humour is frequently ironic, and expects that its readers will recognize when the ironic reversals come into play. It presumes that Canadian readers share a point of view which stems from their possessing information, and being party to, or in agreement with, ideas not shared by the narrator. Through ironic jokes, essays, satires, sketches, parodies, comic anecdotes and humorous verses about life in this country, these papers suggest the growth of Canadian pride in the country's physical and cultural differences from both the United States and Great Britain. Often Canada receives greatest praise through revelation of its shortcomings by biased and naive narrators. Two of the most common prose devices for enabling writers to make such comments were the "Visitor's Guide" and "letters" written by tourists or new immigrants. Although the letters are sometimes crudely phrased, they are worth examining because

they not only provoke laughter at the idiosyncrasies of specific people, places or events, but also because of the ways in which they use irony to ridicule the opinions of the narrator. This technique is much the same as that employed by Haliburton in The Clockmaker and McCulloch in The Stepsure Letters, although it is usually less sophisticated. What is new is that much of the irony is directed against acceptance of British superiority in social and cultural matters. This appears to be indicative of an emerging colonial self-assertion beneath the jester's mask. However, even allowing for the presence of irony, these prose sketches and letters do not always present Canadians with the positive image of themselves they might wish for. Just as Nova Scotians were stung by many of Sam Slick's observations, so must the readers of these papers have been upset by the revelations of Canadian bigotry and small-mindedness.

There is more dialect prose and poetry in these papers than might be expected, considering how rarely such writing shows up in the established canon. Canadian dialect writers communicate the sound and other speech peculiarities of the Scots, the Irish, the Germans, the American Negroes, "Yankees" and upper and lower class Englishmen. They make little effort to reproduce the speech of "Canadians"--either English or French--although in the 1880s and 1890s a dialect

one could call "Canadian backwoods" begins to appear quite frequently in the pages of Grip. Lower class Englishmen, the Scots, Irish and French often are portrayed affectionately in contrast to the lisping upper class Englishmen and women who are always depicted as ridiculous. There are far fewer appearances of American dialect in Canadian dialect writing than might be expected, but as much of the humour is directly related to everyday life and politics in the colony, this is not unreasonable. This scarcity of American dialect humour is probably one of the reasons Haliburton has so often been regarded as having no Canadian successors.

Except for Sam Slick's dialect in The Clockmaker and possibly the dialect of W. H. Drummond's habitants, there is little dialect humour in the nineteenth-century Canadian canon. In "Literary Activity in Canada East and West. 1841-1880", Klinck dismisses Canadian dialect poetry as nostalgic homesickness:

[In the 1880s] the dialect versifiers had long been active, with the help of fraternal societies and the local newspaper editors, in strengthening real or mystic bonds of nostalgia for either Scotland or Ireland and in fostering a rather deliberate literature of exile which can be mistakenly interpreted as indicating dissatisfaction with Canada (LHC I: 166).

Referring to these writers as "versifiers"--he refuses to dignify them by calling them "poets"--Klinck implies that



all Canadian dialect poems are without significance. He implies that all such verse is serious and nostalgic--as, in fact, it often is. But, he totally disregards the extensive presence of dialect verse (and prose) for comic and satiric purposes.

Canadian humorists writing for these papers frequently used misspelling (cacography) and poor grammar in their prose sketches and letters in much the same ways as these techniques were used in the American newspapers of mid-century. Combined with dialect, such techniques enabled them to delineate and poke fun at the range of voices making themselves heard in a pluralistic society composed of varying levels of educated and uneducated individuals of mixed nationalities and uncertain mastery of English. In literary circles, such writing was considered "low" and far removed from the elevated, grammatically correct English of the literary periodicals. Needless to say, it offended the sensibilities of the literati for whom an elevated and aristocratic aesthetic was implicit in the term "literature." Illiteracy, no matter how funny, would do nothing to dignify the new Canadian nation, and in the romantic nationalist literary theory that dominated Canadian criticism in the nineteenth century "'nation' referred to 'elite,' on the grounds that, it was, after all, a leisure class that provided the higher culture so necessary for the

production of poetry" (Fee, 69). Such a cultured leisure class simply would never make the egregious errors that characterize cacography and bad grammar.

Furthermore, all the satiric and humorous papers mock the pretentiousness of efforts to found and foster a Canadian literature which would, according to The Week,

pour forth in burning words the regnant aspirations of the mass of society--put in tangible and glowing form the distinctive qualities and attributes of the national mind, so that all can grasp them, and form their hopes and aspirations in accordance therewith (July 3, 1884: 485).

In fact, they attack pretentiousness in all its manifestations, including expectations of superiority based on class. Grinchuckle is typical in its promise to

keep a sharp look out for snobs, political and corporation jobs, and similar delightful family compacts, or rather contracts. My best endeavors will be made to furnish you with plenty of fun, in the shape of genuine nonsense, roaring burlesque and sometimes sober truths (September 23, 1869).

This sentiment is obviously far removed from the "tangible and glowing qualities" of the cosmopolitanism sought by romantic nationalist critics, who continued to be influential until the 1950s (Fee, 2-3).

The extent to which these papers relied on parody and burlesque as major techniques for producing laughter may well furnish another reason for their neglect, for parody and burlesque have been held in disrepute by literary

critics since the early nineteenth century. In A Theory of Parody (1985), Linda Hutcheon notes that "parody has been called parasitic and derivative" (3) and suggests that the "denigration of a form that is pervasive in our century . . . [can be attributed to] the continuing strength of a Romantic aesthetic that values genius, originality, and individuality. In such a context, parody must needs be regarded at best as a very minor form" (4). She proposes that

parody is one mode of coming to terms with the texts of that 'rich and intimidating legacy of the past'. . . . Modern artists seem to have recognized that change entails continuity, and have offered us a model for the process of transfer and reorganization of that past. Their double-voiced parodic forms play on the tensions created by this historical awareness (4).

Hutcheon informs us that "parody is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text." Many of the characteristics of modern parody such as its "range of intent--from the ironic and playful to the scornful and ridiculing" (6) that Hutcheon identifies in Theory of Parody can be found, albeit often in embryonic and emerging forms, in the parodic poems, sketches and fiction in the Canadian satiric and humorous papers. In his study, Parody, Joseph Bane reminds us that knowing a work is parodic changes the way we look at it:

The cynical text, the banal text, the clumsy text are all changed when they are labelled "parodic." They become virtuosic displays in recognizable types of literature, sometimes generic types (lyrics, etc), sometimes evaluative (bad) . . . Parody is both a critical concept and something in literature to which that concept refers. Thus parody can have a variety of literary and critical functions: how is literature transformed when it is associated with the label parody? (3).

Investigation reveals that Canadian writers of the nineteenth century, used parody in complex and innovative ways, as a major humorous technique.

Punch in Canada (Montreal) 1849-50

The first issue of Punch in Canada [i.e., Quebec and Ontario] appeared in Montreal on January 1, 1849. It was the first Canadian paper to publish political and social cartoons as a regular feature. Following the success of this periodical, such cartoons began to appear with increasing frequency in other nineteenth-century Canadian newspapers and periodicals. The humour of the cartoons in this and the other satiric papers deserves further study.

In his 1989 history of Canadian magazines, The Monthly Epic, Fraser Sutherland describes Punch in Canada as a "patently derivative comic paper . . . founded in 1849 by an eighteen year old Montrealer" (49). In calling the paper, "patently derivative," and pointing out the youth of the editor, Sutherland discourages serious exploration of the

contribution this paper made to the development of Canadian humour. In this he is not alone, as this paper is not listed in such standard Canadian reference works as Klinck's Literary History or The Oxford Companion To Canadian Literature, or in most standard histories of Canadian literature.

As its name implies, the form of the paper was derived from the British Punch, but the content of Punch in Canada is Canadian (i.e., it is concerned with events and people in the province of Canada). It was the first Canadian publication to attempt to emulate the British periodical which had become increasingly popular since 1841.<sup>4</sup> Like its British parent, Punch in Canada published contributions from a number of different writers and much of what it published was political satire. It regarded itself as the humorous and satiric tool of the educated classes, and actively ridiculed the aspirations of the working and rural classes. It relied extensively on parody and jokes for humour and many of these jokes, which were usually question-and-answer jokes rely on puns.

Many of these puns are political, as in the following question and answer joke, "Why is Lord Elgin like a dilapidated wharf? Because he's a used up peer (Pier)" (Feb. 23, 1850 42). Sometimes the puns are forced, as in the following joke which takes a pot shot at lower-class

English dialect: "Why does the Hon. Robert Baldwin look like a printer's Devil? Because he is darkened from having been so long connected with (H)inks" (Jan. 8, 1849 15). The "Notice to Agriculturists" (Nov. 28, 1849 192) relies on a forced pun and typifies the kind of short commentary frequently used in Punch in Canada to set up a witticism or to poke fun at individuals: "Punch has been favoured with a sight of a newly discovered sort of bean, called the 'has-been.' It is rather a seedy specimen and Punch thinks it not nutritious."

Social jokes are usually about quite ordinary aspects of life: "The Toronto Post office should be a stationer's shop, for certainly the letters contained therein are stationary" (Feb. 1, 1850 24). Some of them are quite racy, as for example: "'Why do the ladies of Canada prefer the Winter season? Because their lips are often chapped.' Punch seized the chap who uttered this vulgar pun and sent him to Gross(e) Isle" (Jan. 8, 1849 15).

More innovative are those pieces in which Punch in Canada combines the visual humour of cartoons with prose which contains puns and irony of prose to produce a comic illustrated sketch. A piece called "Green House Dissertation", which appeared on Mar. 3, 1849, for example, begins with a series of what appear to be seasonal observations and becomes more obviously a political satire

as it proceeds. This sketch relies for much of its humour on puns (with political undertones) on the names of flowers. Midway through, one discovers the following description of the passion flower: "The Passion flower grows [in the Legislative buildings] to admiration; not that it produces any flowers, but it grows high, and sometimes threatens to come to a blow" (40). In this sketch, some of the puns depend for comic effect on accompanying cartoon illustrations: "the cowslip" is the caption given to a cartoon of a startled cow sliding backwards down a snow-covered slope (40).

Throughout the two years of its existence Punch in Canada published cartoons, skits, comic poems, satiric editorials, essays, and parodies expressing Montrealers' rejection of American expansionist ambition and the desire of some Canadians for annexation to the republic. One series of anti-annexationist sketches which appeared at irregular intervals forms a parody of the diary of Samuel Pepys in which that resurrected seventeenth-century worthy takes the readers into the future and records a visit to "the Canadas, USA" in 1867. Underlying each entry is the assumption that by 1867 the province of Canada has been annexed to the United States and has become a slave state. The entry published on Oct. 13, 1849, indicates, for example, that joining the United States has not been

positive for Canada, for even though the day of the entry is the Fourth of July, the dominant look on the faces of the people is sadness:

4th July 1867. -- Did goe with my wife to-day to see the celebration of the fourth of July, kept on the old french square, what they doe now call Holmes' park in honor of that grate [sic] patriot, as some do consider him, but not me, ... Did also notice many melancholy faces ... Afterwards went to the slave sale in the old Bonsecour market, where I did see John Dougall buy a female slave, at which there was great laughter (150).

The Canadian Punch relies on parody for humour, much like its British parent. In Punch in Canada, however, the source text of the parody is as frequently of Canadian and/or American origin as of British. The following verse and chorus from a satiric poem entitled "Songs of the Session!, No.1 -- Air, -- Yankee Doodle" parodies of "Yankee Doodle" and, like its source text, is racist. It reveals the English prejudice against the French that belies the easy co-existence of English and French in Quebec:

You member all who parley french,  
 (And never wash your faces,)  
 'Twere better if you staid at home  
 In your Pork and Whiskey places.  
 When to parliament you come,  
 All your wrongs to tell it,  
 Learn at least to write your name,  
 And afterwards to spell it.  
 Hurrah! for humbug everywhere  
 May chiselling reach perfection,  
 Send fighting men to Parliament,  
 Nor care for fair election.  
 (Jan. 8, 1849 20)



The racist humour of the excerpt reveals an apparently widely accepted English stereotyping of the French as uneducated, uncultured and unfit to govern the country. It assumes that the readers are sympathetic to the English perspective, and that they too feel that they are being betrayed by a political system which permits such unqualified people to be elected.

There is some evidence in Punch in Canada that Canadian humorists were engaged in the search for a distinctive Canadian voice or speech pattern. In the sketch, "Meteorological Observations," the narrator complains about the heat of Montreal in July. The humour in the sketch derives from the incongruity of language which combines of an erudite and elevated British vocabulary with the slang and hyperbole more frequently found in the American tall tale:

I haven't shaved for a fortnight --and why not? -- because my razors have been constantly red hot since the setting in of this torrid season; and the depilatory process is converted into one of cauterizing or singeing. There is a smoke and a whizz, as of distant battle, whilst I steer my razor, like a red hot fire ship through an archipelago of carbuncles upon my billowy chin. The present lurid state of the atmosphere is said to be caused by the burning forests in the next country. Don't believe it, but rest satisfied with the conviction that it arises from the diurnal singeing of the bristles of the million (July 28, 1849 115).

Such a peculiar linguistic style is not yet representative of a distinctive Canadian voice, but it does appear to mock the North American who apes the formality of formal English, but is more comfortable with colloquial speech.

In Punch in Canada the tone of most parodies and witty commentaries is supercilious, especially in those pieces which focus on local newspapers and periodicals. Adopting the outlook of the sophisticated lover of literature, Punch burlesques the publications likely to be found in the "literary" sections of the popular (and parochial) newspapers in Canadian small towns. In the following excerpt the writer makes fun of the inflated language of the poetry found in a provincial newspaper. The rural poet under scrutiny has turned to his rural environment and popular romances for images to convey his romantic emotions. The result is a (sometimes) bewildering but quite funny mix of nonsense:

Punch has noticed, in the corners of some of the provincial newspapers in this "Wooden Country" verses under the title of select poetry; and, by way of exciting the interest and drawing the attention of the readers, the word "Original" is added . . . he has resolved to publish all the nonsense verses he receives, and thus inflict on their perpetrators the only punishment equal to their offense --the world's ridicule.

SPECIMENS OF CONTRIBUTIONS

No 1.

From a Love-sick Youth, age 17.

The airy heifers lightsome skip  
 Along the moonlight breeze;  
 But softer still is Julia's lip,  
 Wild whispering "that's the cheese."

The gentle dun smiles like the morn;  
 The piper puts his kilt on;  
 The rubies in my Julia's nose,  
 Proclaim that "she's the Stilton."

The moon comes dancing out at night,  
 Envious to glance at she;  
 The stars blaze out their tiny light,  
 And wink their eyes at me.

But what care I for moon or stars,  
 Or Julia's nose or eye;  
 I knows my Julia frowns on me,  
 And in despair I die.

(Jan. 26 1850 14)

This travesty of a love poem continues for another three stanzas. In addition to disdain for such effusions from the rural "poets" who obviously lack mastery of poetic conventions (and grammar), it exhibits contempt for rural newspapers which uncritically print such poorly written love poetry.

Such contempt for rural and small-town Canadian newspapers is evident as well in the many short commentaries about them. Punch in Canada usually ridicules the informality and lack of sophistication of the language they used, regarding their use of slang and colloquialisms as evidence of their catering to the taste of the illiterate. Underlying such ridicule is the belief that were such papers less subject to American influences, they would be more

conscious of the need to set standards and publish English that is more formal and elevated. One of the ways in which Punch makes fun of such papers is through a comic device known as "literalizing the metaphor."

Punch had an idea that the golden days of wood-nymphs and river-gods chronicled by one Ovid had passed away, but he has just read in an Upper Canada paper, that in this very month of February cows have been turned into fields. The paragraph did not mention whether into pasture or arable land, or whether the fields were barren or blessed with growing crops (Feb. 16 1850 36).

Such a refusal to accept the figurative meaning of the colloquial expression "turning the cows to pasture," may make the humour appear thin and forced to a modern reader, but it is an early manifestation of an attitude that continued to gain strength throughout the century as the power of the literati increased. However, the literati do not escape unscathed. Punch in Canada also published parodies which poke fun at excesses in the genteel poetry such as was found in of the Literary Garland. One such poem entitled, "Punch's 'Garland' Poetry. After George Frederick Augustus Stevens," inverts the traditions of heroic chivalry by placing the chivalrous hero in a context in which the conventions which govern his conduct are not recognized. This has the effect of reducing his chivalric responses to nonsense:



there and shiver." High chivalry, it appears, depends on a European context in order to be a useful code of conduct.

Punch in Canada occasionally published prose in which cacography is the main technique for humour. Cacography never became as popular in Canada as it did in the United States in the 1850s-60s, and there are only a few instances of its use in this paper. Perhaps this is because the pun continued to be popular in Canada and England while in the United States, as Leacock suggests, bad spelling replaced it:

In America puns never assumed the place which they occupied in England. American humour ran in its own democratic channels . . . The new America [of the West] found its own luxuriant riot in the humour of bad spelling (Humour and Humanity 45).

In Canada puns continued to be a very popular form of humour in addition to cacography. On Oct. 20, 1849, for example, in "Punch's Intercepted Correspondence," the writer of a fictitious letter by "Mary Jones" of Montreal combines bad spelling and grammar with colloquial speech and unintentional puns--all apparently stemming from her inadequate vocabulary, political ignorance and an earnest naivety:

Dear Jane, -- I rites to inform you as there is a new conwulshun bust forth. Sum says it is rebelliun, sum say not. Measter says it is all the fault of the Bill, but whether it is Bill the coachman or sum other Bill, I can't say. Our

baker is up in arms, getting more crusty every day  
(Oct. 20, 1849).

The humour may be condescending, but the working classes of Canada are tentatively showing up in print.

Although Punch in Canada was short-lived, it offers critics some insight into the process of determining subject matter and techniques which would ensure an audience for Canadian humour. Two characteristics of the humour that appeared in Quebec and Ontario in mid-century are its reliance on puns and its rejection of the "folk" or oral culture as a source of inspiration in favour of literary parodies and burlesque. This rejection of the "folk" indicates that Canadian humour at mid-century is clearly following a different developmental pattern than American. Colloquial language continues to be used, as it was by both Haliburton and McCulloch, but it is clearly not an accepted or even acceptable mode of speech, except as a subject for mockery.

Diogenes and Grinchuckle (Montreal, 1868-9; 1869-70).

Diogenes, which began publication in Montreal on November 13, 1868, notified the public in its first issue that it would "satirize all classes whether rich or poor, when satire is needed . . . Diogenes has no party politics, beyond those involved in wishing 'Success to the Dominion,'

and 'God save the Queen'." Moreover, lest the public think a comic paper a waste of time and money, Diogenes clarified the seriousness that underlined its humour, saying:

Diogenes has a much higher aim than the mere production of mirth. His objects are essentially serious, and much serious matter will frequently appear in these pages ... Diogenes will try to avoid what Douglas Jerrold so well termed "that perpetual heartless guffaw at everything" (Nov. 13, 1868 3).

Though short-lived, it is Canada's first significant post-Confederation humorous paper.<sup>5</sup>

Extensive use of letters to the editor and "intercepted" letters to both identified and unidentified correspondents (usually family members) to convey humorous satire sets Diogenes apart from Punch in Canada (in which this was not a major device) and brings it more in line with The Scribbler and the North American newspaper tradition generally. In Diogenes, the letters to the editor purport to be written by a cross section of the population, and are clearly meant to convey views of Canadian politics and social customs from many perspectives. This is unlike Punch in Canada, in which the perspective is almost uniformly that of the sophisticated well-educated middle and upper classes. Furthermore, as in the American papers, many of these letters convey the astute observations and wit of these lower classes in such a way that although the reader may laugh at the grammatical and spelling errors and the



peculiar analogies, they also have some respect for the basic intelligence of the individual who writes them. To this extent, at least, the humour in Diogenes is as much influenced by American humour as by British.

The paper featured a column from a roving correspondent named Peleg Plug, entitled "Essay on Social Subjects," which depends for comic effect on cacography as well as the personality of the narrator. Cacography was not a new humorous device; there had been a few instances in Punch in Canada; it had been used in England in The Spectator Papers and by Smollett in Humphrey Clinker and it had turned up occasionally in sketches and in newspapers for years. But in the 1860s, as the primary vehicle for the humour of Artemus Ward, Bill Arp, Josh Billings and Petroleum Naseby, cacography had become the most popular form of humour in the periodical literature of the United States. Walter Blair explains that the humour of the "Phunny Phellows" shared a way of "dressing the pieces they wrote in what one critic has called 'a quaint eccentric, fantastic or extravagant... lingual garb'" (Blair and Hill, 291). Canadian writers had used dialect as a device of humour, but the appearance of the columns of Peleg Plug in Diogenes mark the first regular appearance of something resembling the American "Phunny Phellows" humour in a Canadian publication.

Typical of the Peleg Plug columns is "No 3 -- French 'Paris'" (December 4, 1868) in which Plug describes his impressions of the European metropolis:

Wunce I went to Paris to the Expositiiong. I went Express and might have gone Expresser with advantage. Paris is a big place-French Paris I mean. The Lumproor's paliss is called the Tooraloorals, and is a fine thing. The gardens is laid out in fine style with Stoopids and Screenuses fizzin' and squirtin' all round (32).

While these sketches are very like American cacography in style, they differ significantly in subject matter. Peleg Plug is a North American traveller in Europe sending home his impressions of the older culture; his letters reverse and burlesque the travel sketches by British travellers in America. American cacography is more frequently concerned with American matters. The travel report by a North American abroad had already proven popular in Nova Scotia when Joseph Howe published his sketches "The Nova Scotian Afloat" and "The Nova Scotian Abroad" in The NovaScotian in 1839. From the 1860s on European settings begin to appear frequently in all forms of Canadian writing. They appear to be popular as "backdrops for historical and suspense novels, and for fictionalized travelogues, not only because these settings offered escapist entertainment, but also because they had a direct or indirect bearing on Canada's own growing culture" (Kroller 2).

The letters of another working class correspondent named "Zeke Trimble" form a second regular feature of Diogenes. Trimble, an immigrant from England, is now a paper collar salesman living in Canada. Like many immigrants of his class, he has become sufficiently Americanized to believe himself the equal of any man, and has no hesitation about making his opinions known to people in high places. His reports on public affairs and the higher echelons of society in a self-important but naive way make him resemble an odd combination of Sam Slick in England and Artemus Ward in Washington. In theory, he provides an everyman's view of the conduct of the country's politics and "Society".

The six letters of "The Simpkins Correspondence", published between January 8 and February 19, 1869 offered Canadian readers more fully developed and sympathetic humorous characterization, reminiscent of the satiric sketches published in the Maritimes newspapers a generation earlier. An exchange between a young medical student in Montreal and his family in the country, these letters depict the moral decay of a rural middle-class youth. Under the spell of the city, Jeremiah Simpkins ignores his studies and deceives his parents, who are not well educated and know nothing of college expenses, into sending him more money to support his increasingly elegant--and indolent--life style.

The various personalities involved are clearly delineated. Young Jerry is thwarted in his schemes by a fellow boarder and medical student, a former farm worker who had once been a patient of Jerry's uncle, Dr. John Simpkins. The medical student's letter is succinct:

My dear Doctor:

Five years ago you set a leg of mine that was broken by a threshing machine in Smartville. I have been very grateful to you ever since. Your nephew, here, is making a most prodigious donkey of himself in more respects than one. I recommend you to come down here and see after him.

Yours truly,

Simon Cuteboy, Medical Student  
(Feb. 5, 1869 130)

The language in all these letters is literate but informal, like that of the letter just quoted. Occasionally these letters contain colloquialisms and come closer to depicting the vernacular of middle class Canadians than is usually the case in humorous letters and sketches of this period. Also notable is the social viewpoint of the writer: the rural parents and uncle receive the sympathy of the readers, who condemn the boy's foolishness in aping an aristocratic lifestyle.

Occasionally in mid-nineteenth century Canadian humour, one finds jokes which are based upon confluations of the English and French languages, but these are quite rare. One of these rare mixed-language jokes appears in the pages of Diogenes in the form of a question-and-answer joke which

depends for its humour on the pun that occurs when one confuses the sound of a French word for an English one with an entirely different meaning:

Inquirer,-- Is the coon found in Canada?  
 Naturalist,-- Yes, I may also mention that the loon is indigenous to the Dominion. Inquirer,--  
 Ah! l'une is; then I suppose l'autre is too?  
 (December 18, 1868 47)

But, there is not much evidence of the French presence in Canada in the humour of these mid-century papers; this has to wait until the 1880s and 1890s.

However, other problems associated with English as a second language provide opportunities for laughter in the pages of Diogenes. This humour relies on word play and puns derived from the speaker's attempts to master an unfamiliar language, and from visual phonetic spellings which attempt to reproduce a particular foreign accent. Here, for example, is one stanza of a six-stanza poem supposedly written by a German immigrant to Canada who does not appear to have enjoyed his first experience of North American cocktails:

Oh! ven I leave mein Vater-land  
 And to dis goontry coom,  
 I thought dat I droonk avery-ding  
 Exceptin' Anglish room;  
 But soon I vind de gog dails  
 Dey make mine head feel queer;  
 So now I only puts mine drust  
 In "Liebe and Lager bier."  
 (March 12, 1869 194)

In Diogenes one also finds humour based on the comments made about Canada by an uneducated visitor to the country, in much the same way that Sam Slick comments on Nova Scotia. The letters from Mrs. Brown to her husband in England introduce readers to an ironic humour in which the more the visitor complains about whatever seems unfamiliar, the more Canadians laugh at her and identify with their own country. In this case, Mrs. Brown, a working-class English woman is more literate than the writers of "phunny phellows" sketches; her lack of education is shown through the dialect words, colloquialisms, grammatical errors and occasional misspellings which visually represent her speech. Her husband has sent her out to

the Kullonies...to go and see what kind of a country Kanniday is, and then come back and give your experience to the young folks eer, as will be valuable, and from age and personal appearance you is safe to be treated well, and no attempts at kissin,' as used to wus in days gone by (April 16, 1869).

Mrs. Brown is a naive narrator who believes that her opinions are the correct ones. As she criticizes Canada, she exposes her own prejudices and weaknesses which subvert the criticism. This technique of using a naive narrator to produce ironic humour was popular in the Maritimes in the verse satires of the late eighteenth century and has continued to be popular throughout Canadian literary history. The skill with which the characters, their speech

patterns and writing skills are delineated varies greatly, but the naivety of the narrators and their unwitting revelations of their own shortcomings have remained much the same for close to two hundred years. Canadians, it appears, recognize the finer aspects of their country by having some foolish foreigner disparage it!

The "Mrs. Brown in Kannidy" letters are important because they provide one of the first ironic depictions of an English character, other than a servant, for humorous purposes since Haliburton's The Old Judge. Before Mrs. Brown's appearance, most English characters other than servants belonged to the educated middle or upper classes, and they were generally respected-- almost revered. Before the end of the nineteenth century several different kinds of comic Englishmen would become fixtures in Canadian humour.

Like the Maritime newspapers, The Scribbler, and Punch in Canada, Diogenes ridiculed the excesses of current literary fads, the awkward efforts of unskilled local writers and the pretentious gentility of the literati. On January 29, 1869, in a column entitled "'Wrinkles' for a Reviewer" the excessively negative stance of Canadian literati is held up to ridicule under the guise of giving advise to a would-be reviewer. Diogenes suggests that

the first great maxim, which you must never for one instant forget, is that the critic, both in the tone and the language of his articles, must

assume to be infinitely superior to the writer whom he is reviewing. . . . The second maxim may be easily remembered [he says after explaining the first in detail]. Never praise a book,-- except ironically, or when you have received a bona fide sum of money for doing so (104).

Diogenes is the first Canadian publication to rely extensively on parody as a humorous device. Parody had been used in Canadian publications as a device for humour, especially for satire and ridicule, since the eighteenth century, but never to the extent that it was used in Diogenes. In addition to the general popularity of parody in North America in the nineteenth century, its emergence here as the dominant device for humour may have been influenced by the excessive demands for "literary" writing by the educated elite. The various forms of parody, all of which permitted "low" images and even language, enabled Canadian humorists to operate within known literary forms while still being able to comment on the contemporary milieu.

Both verse and prose parodies were frequent, although prose parody eventually became the dominant form. In the verse parodies, traditional and familiar English poetry were the background texts, and such parodies often depended for effect on the substitution of "low" subject matter, mundane actions and homely concerns for the elevated and/or familiar material of the original. Increasingly this low material



referred to ordinary life in Canada. The prose parodies, which were sometimes quite extended, ridiculed the conventions of particular forms of prose rather than specific prose pieces. This kind of parody continued to be popular as a major humorous device in Canada well into the twentieth century.

Stephen Leacock, Canada's foremost literary humorist in the early twentieth century, continued to use parody as a significant humorous technique throughout his writing career. In his biography of Leacock, Ralph Curry remarks that "since Bret Harte and Mark Twain, parody had formed an important part of the repertoire of the North American humorist" (94), and Leacock's Nonsense Novels (1911) indicates both his respect for this form of humour and his skill in using it. Nonsense novels of a kind later written by Leacock form a staple item in the pages of Diogenes; "The Brainless Footmen Not by the Author of the Headless Horseman," and "Eva Head. A Naughtical Romance of Beauty, Blood and Booty" are two typical burlesques of popular romances published in Diogenes. They retain the form and to a recognizable extent the vocabulary of such romances, while they ridicule them through a content which is a nonsensical or comic version of the type. Often such parodies make use of meta-fictive techniques. In "Eva Head," an intrusive narrator continually draws attention to how events and

characters in the story being told conform to or depart from the norm for that particular kind of story. On August 10, 1869, for example, in Chapter X of "Eva Head", the narrator makes the following observation:

In writing a veracious history, it is necessary to be particular, even in small details, and therefore a la Anthony Trollope, I would call your attention to the fact that, in the thirteenth house,--a building remarkable for its combination of wealth and bad taste,--lived a family noted for their bank account and position in the city.

In a later chapter, which appeared on August 13, 1869, the narrator elicits the readers' laughter as he invokes the conventions within which he is writing:

I . . . forbear to wound the feelings of my readers with a description of the vicissitudes and dangers through which my hero and heroine passed, before they discovered that island which, in all stories such as this, turns up at the proper time.

He makes a joke of his ignoring convention by refusing to describe the emotional and physical turmoil of his hero and heroine, by accepting his obligation to the same convention to rescue them in the expected way.

During the last months of Diogenes, a new humorous paper, Grinchuckle, appeared in Montreal. It lasted only from September, 1869 to February, 1870, and in many ways closely copied Diogenes, but its humour presents evidence of significant changes in technique and attitudes. More obviously "Academic" than Diogenes, Grinchuckle deals humorously with class mobility in a series of letters,

signed by "Samuelina Johnson Scraggs." It also sports with politics through cacography and dialect humour in, for example, letters in Negro dialect by "John White", and in "Cockney" by "Ilyza Pelykan." In one of the John White letters, Grinchuckle openly acknowledges its debt to American humour when White says he has decided to "rite fur anudder papah, ... [because] dese highly kullered 'pistles am like de kullered man in de United States, dey am in high faber" (September 23, 1869). Grinchuckle contains more verse parody than Diogenes, and it pokes fun at the visual arts in addition to literature.

Grinchuckle makes more use of the dramatic skit than the earlier papers had. A "skit", according to Cuddon, "aims to 'shoot' or caricature a person or a style of writing or a mode of performance and interpretation. It is thus very closely related to, if not actually synonymous with, parody and burlesque." (884) The skits in Grinchuckle are short comic dramas between two or three characters in which at least one character is a caricature. Skits such as the series "Scenes in Court," for example, focus on problems of communication between the uneducated and the educated. In "The Difficulties of being a Witness" (September 23, 1869), of which a short excerpt is given below, Mrs. Bridget McRavety has been summoned as a witness in the case of Mrs. Murphy McPhail against Ann O'Rourke--charged with "throwing

a cup of 'bilin' wather' over her person." Speaking in Irish dialect, she answers the questions as honestly as she can, but because she does not understand the words he uses in the questions, the result is what Nash calls a "the wayward factor: the waywardness of words missing their mark in ordinary conversational interactions" (113). Her answers, while perfectly logical to her are nonsensical to him:

Clerk--You are the relict of Michael Ravety?

Witness--No, Sir; I am a widdy three years gone last May, and a dacent-----

Clerk--No doubt of it. You have heard the deposition read to you?

Witness (vacantly)--No, Sir; he never read to me in all his life, a dacent-----

Mrs. McRavety, is a caricature of the Irish immigrant, but, although the point of view of the skit is that of the educated class, the reader sympathizes with her confusion more than scorning her ignorance. Skits such as this are usually very short, generally occupying less than half a page.

Grinchuckle also contains some of the earliest extended mock criticism of Canadian poetry. The column "Canadian Pastorals", published on December 8, 1869 uses parody to ridicule the incongruity that results from the juxtaposition

of Canadian ideas and language and slavish imitation of British models:

We have in our own times, more or less of poetry of this description [pastorall], such as the "Ode to an Expiring Frog," a "Poem Written for the occasion of the Oecumenical Council" but none of these comes up to the standard we would like to see introduced among us.

It is because we consider it especially adapted to this "Canada of ours" -- adapted to the native genius of the land, -- that like some modest youth who essays to lead a round of applause in the audience, by a hesitating stamp of the foot, or clap of the hands, we put forth a few specimens of this kind of poetry, hoping that others, more gifted, may take up the strain and enrich the too barren literature of our country by productions of this nature, which shall be read wherever poetry is appreciated.

The author at first labours under a sense of the inappropriateness of the subject to the season of the year, but as the imagination travels as fast as the scenes in a play, faster by far than the "winged flight of time," he hopes shortly, pastorally speaking, to "ketch up."

#### Scenes in the Country

Where springs the daisy from its lowly bed,  
 There let our wandering footsteps idly stray;  
 By lovely nymphs and kindly dryads led,  
 Who work for love and honour--not for pay.

What time the sun with thirsting fiery tongues,  
 From blade and petal laps the glittering dew;  
 And morning air reanimates our lungs,  
 And quicks our steps and makes our noses  
 blue.

Spring, gentle Spring has come, and o'er the land  
 Diffuses wide a sense of liberty:  
 Each crackling frosty chain, and wintry band  
 Around these diggings you may see no more.

(72)

The seven additional stanzas include images of the ploughman "resting now, his clagging share to clean" and the "kine" which "scratch their backs on every post or sill." The poet ironically juxtaposes the realities of Canadian weather and rural speech against the historical conventions of pastoral poetry to produce ludicrous overlaps of the vulgar and the ideal.

Both Diogenes and Grinchuckle were short-lived, but their humour, in subject matter if not in form, is clearly different from either British humour or American. The American influence is felt through the presence of cacography and dialect humour, as well as parody and burlesque. The British influence is clear in their frequent use of puns and humorous satire. The emerging Canadian humour we see in them is ironic. It is also, anti-colonial in its recognition of the incongruities that result when Canada is seen through British cultural institutions. This type of humour is already a kind of "gallows humour," humour in which, Freud suggested, "the ego of the sufferer refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality . . . [which] insists that it cannot be compelled to suffer, that traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure" ("Humour" (1927) 163). Through such humour the ability of the colonial power--and those who enforce such power--to wound Canadians pride in their country is sublimated through

ridicule of their pretentiousness in social conduct, cultural attitudes and literary sensibilities. Early indications of an emerging pride in Canada's differences from Great Britain and the distinct aspirations of her citizens emerges in the increasing number of cartoons and jokes about the Canadian seasons. Unlike American humour in which hyperbole became a major technique for describing the indescribable, in Canada understatement and ironic inversion begin in the 1860s to provide the means of countering unwanted British and American attitudes of superiority. The misunderstanding of or outright rejection of Canadian ways, especially by the British and their sycophants, becomes the subject of ironic or gallows humour which turns the tables on them and through mocking laughter asserts the rights of Canadians as masters in their own house, so to speak.

Grip (Toronto, 1873-1894)

Grip was published weekly from 1873 to 1894--forty-two volumes, two annually for twenty-one years for a total of about one thousand and ninety-two weekly papers. It began as a four-page paper, but by 1883--half way through its span--it had expanded to ten pages, and eventually reached fourteen, not including the cover. Throughout its life, Grip devoted a large portion of each issue to political satire, making fun of both national and local politicians

through cartoons, real and mock letters to the editor, sketches, anecdotes, jokes, and parodies, and verse satires. Much of this political satire has a literary basis, in that it relies on parody, burlesque and allusions to such great classics of Western literature as Aesop's fables, Greek and Roman mythology, the Mother Goose nursery rhymes, Shakespeare's plays, and to the work of such contemporary writers as Dickens, in addition to popular songs and the poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, Tennyson, Swinburne and Browning--to name but a few. It is probably safe to assume that these allusions and parodic forms serve to provide the satire with a familiar and recognizable framework and, for more sophisticated readers, to increase the wit of the mockery.

Grip has a number of regular features; each issue of all forty-two volumes contains a leading full-page political cartoon and other less prominent ones, and the section entitled "Cartoon Comments," which elaborates on the allusions or explains the satire in the leading cartoon and, occasionally, one or more of the lesser ones. Douglas Fetherling points out that "Unlike most modern cartoonists, Bengough felt it was necessary to label anything that might be unfamiliar to his less informed readers, or to use wordy cutlines and titles" (Caricature History vii). Over the years a number of other columns appear regularly. These



include: "The Joker Club," which contains a mix of original jokes and selections of jokes from other papers; "Literature and Art," which includes announcements of forthcoming plays, novels, periodicals, and works of non-fiction intermingled with short gossipy information (later called "croaks") about writers, painters, musicians, and publishers, scientists and editors, in short anybody involved in creating new publications or theatrical productions. The snippets of information in this column are not only about Canadians, but include American and British artists as well. Like most Canadian periodicals, Grip contains a "To Correspondents" column, in which the editor writes short responses to real and imaginary letters to the editor; and a column called "Our Gripsack," which consists of witty one- or two-sentence comments, jokes and riddles. There are other columns as well, but these are present in every issue. The remainder of the paper is devoted to social and literary humour in various forms ranging from jokes, illustrated sketches (like those that earlier appeared in Punch in Canada, but more sophisticated), anecdotes, riddles, correspondence--often from fictitious correspondents--, parodies, burlesques, mock criticism, sketches--singly and in series--, skits, songs, poems, and on and on. In a short study such as this, the most that can be accomplished is to search out any patterns

that might emerge and to give the reader a taste of some of this humour.

In many ways Grip is the mother lode of late nineteenth-century Canadian humour. In 1891, anthologist James Barr observed:

Of Canadian papers, the only one entirely devoted to humour is Grip, published in Toronto. Grip was edited by the famous cartoonist J. W. Bengough, and for humorous literature it is one of the cleverest papers in North America (American Humorous Verse xxiii).

The extensive list of North American periodicals from which Barr selected humorous verse for his anthology gives weight to his assessment of the importance of Grip as a humorous paper. Barr (the younger brother of Robert Barr, whose work will be discussed in Chapter Eight) is not the only critic who recognizes Grip's significance in the development of Canadian humour. In his preface to John W. Bengough's A Caricature History of Canadian Politics (1886), George W. Grant, at that time a noted Canadian scholar and principal of the University of Queen's College, Kingston, emphasized that Bengough's humour has a distinctive quality of its own, saying: "Grip's humour is his own. It has a flavour of the soil. It is neither English nor American. It is Canadian" (x) ..

The name of John W. Bengough is practically synonymous with Grip. He not only also edited Grip for most of its

existence, he also drew most of the cartoons and wrote many of the poems, skits, riddles, sketches, and parodies. In the introduction to his 1974 abridgment of Bengough's Caricature History, Fetherling drew attention to the irreverence that characterizes Bengough's humour: "He treated all current views with healthy disrespect except for those he himself championed--the Single Tax, women's suffrage, laissez-faire economics, antivivisectionism and the prohibition of alcohol and tobacco" (vi). Both Fetherling and Grant's remarks refer primarily to Bengough's humour as a cartoonist, but they do have a wider application. In his examination of Grip in the Monthly Epic, Fraser Sutherland (1989) praised Bengough's ability saying: "As a cartoonist [Bengough] had many capable successors, but as an editor of a Canadian humorous magazine, none with his versatility and talent" (79).

Given such praise over the course of nearly one hundred years, one would expect to find major studies of the humour of both Bengough and Grip, but this is not the case. They are often not even given space in standard Canadian reference works. Neither Bengough nor Grip is given an individual entry in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, although entries exist for such literary periodicals as the Literary Garland, the Week, the Canadian Literary Magazine and Rose Belford's Canadian Magazine and

National Review. Neither Bengough nor Grip is mentioned in the article, "Humour and Satire in English" by Vincent Sharman in the same publication. In the three volumes of The Literary History of Canada, the only mention of Bengough is his name as one of many writers who benefited from the publishing skill of William Briggs:

No other Canadian publisher in the closing decades of the last century did as much as William Briggs to stimulate literary talent and promote Canadian literature from coast to coast. Year after year, for the forty years he was in office (he retired in 1918), literary works by Canadian writers, especially poets appeared under the Briggs imprint, William Kirby . . . J.W.Bengough . . . (201).

Grip is mentioned several times in The Literary History of Canada, but never as a significant contributor to the history of Canadian humour. It is mentioned once as "Canada's equivalent of Punch," (I: 206) and (two volumes later), as the source of a quotation in Desmond Pacey's article "The Course of Canadian Criticism" (III: 16-17). A very recent history of Canadian literature, W. H. New's A History of Canadian Literature (1989), omits any mention of Grip or Bengough.

Although he has not received attention as a humorist, Bengough has received some critical attention as a political cartoonist and reformer. Such studies include two unpublished Master's theses<sup>6</sup> and chapters in longer works such as Ramsay Cook's The Regenerators: Social Criticism in

Late Victorian English Canada (1985) and Peter Desbarats' and Terry Mosher's The Hecklers: A History of Political Cartooning in Canada (1979). In 1988 Carl Spadoni published a bibliographical article "Grip and the Bengoughs as Publishers and Printers" on the Grip Publishing Co. There has been little written about the general significance of Grip or Bengough in the development of Canadian humour.

Spadoni's information about the circulation of Grip during its lifespan indicates its tremendous popularity and points to the possible impact its humour may have had on developments in central Canadian humour:

The weekly circulation of Grip increased from 2,000 readers in 1881 to between 7,000 and 10,000 with an average weekly increase of 100 in April 1883. The paper boasted that it was 'perused by fully 50,000 readers every week' [April 28, 1883] (20).

He confirms that in Ontario, as was the case years earlier in Nova Scotia, it was not unusual for a single paper to be shared by anywhere from two to ten readers, so he suggests it is not unreasonable to believe Grip's boast that it reached 50,000 readers.

When Grant said, in his preface to Bengough's Caricature History, that the humour in Grip has a "flavour of the soil" and that "it is Canadian," he was undoubtedly referring to its style and subject matter rather than its presentation in unique forms. To some extent to refer to

the humour in Grip as "Canadian" is to participate in the synecdochic fallacy, for although it also published reports and columns about the Maritime provinces, Newfoundland, and the Canadian Northwest, it focuses primarily on Ontario. Nevertheless, because central Canada, especially Ontario, "more than any other [region] determined the outlines of English Canadian thought in the nineteenth century" (Smith 16), the humour in Grip impacts elsewhere in the country. Why, then, has it received so little critical attention?

Perhaps its irreverent attitude to Canadian officialdom and British cultural pretentiousness combined with its frankly American tendencies account for much of this neglect. In an early issue, the editor says that "like Artemus Ward, our politics agree with those of any person with whom we come in contact; neither fearing nor currying favour, we intend to use the lash of ridicule in whatever direction abuses call for it" (July 13, 1873). British satirists had used such a lash for generations without being relegated to non-status, but then again, they were not being iconoclastic in Ontario! Another possibility for its neglect lies in the disrepute in which parodic forms were regarded. S. M. Beckow presents the lack of respect for such forms as Axiom 6 in the 1974 article "From the Watch-towers of Patriotism: Theories of Literary Growth in English Canada, 1864-1914": "No nation whose citizens showed a

derivative, imitative, or colonial mentality could produce a national literature" (11). Fortunately, the study of parodic forms is becoming more respectable of late, as critics begin to realize the complex roles parody plays in formulating subversive responses to social, political and cultural pressures.

Grip deserves serious study. Because it was a successful commercial enterprise, supporting itself from revenues gained through advertisements, Grip was able to pay contributors for their work--most likely making it the first humorous paper in Canada to do so. Unlike the earlier humorous papers which depended almost entirely on a small number of contributors to fill their weekly editions, Grip had many writers who were prepared to provide a wide variety of cartoons, sketches, skits, satire, jokes, prose and verse parodies, and humorous and satiric occasional poems.

Many of these writers are very clever and innovative humorists. Although many of the columns and poems in Grip are unsigned, or signed with such pen names as "T. McTuff", "Bozeni", and "Titus A. Drum", little effort has been made to identify these sometimes very able humorists or to collect their work. Some of the writers whose columns and poems have been identified include: Bengough, R. W. Phipps, Tom Boylan, Edward Edwards, Mrs J. K. Lawson (Hugh Airlie), R. K. Kernigan (The Khan), George Orran, Phillips Thompson,

and Fred Swire (Swiz), but even these known writers have not received much recognition, although they deserve attention. Furthermore, well-known Canadian writers also contributed to this paper: Charles G. D. Roberts contributed several poems, and Peter McArthur "began his career as a satirist of sorts in the late 1880s in Toronto when he earned \$2.50 for a weekly page of jokes for John Wilson Bengough's Grip" (Lucas, 104-5). Spadoni notes that

the Canadian author Grip lionized above all other literary contenders was Alexander McLachlan . . . [who] McLachlan contributed more than sixty pieces to Grip from 15 May, 1886 to 22 December, 1888, and two more poems in 10 September 1892 and 10 June 1893 (21).

Stephen Leacock made one of his earliest appearances in print in the pages of Grip (Spadoni 33). Grip also published extracts from other papers in Canada and the United States; although such reprints are usually unattributed short anecdotes, poems or jokes, they also include sketches attributed to such major American humorists as Bill Nye.

Grip contains poems and prose about the weather, seasons, social activities and fashions, Canadian-American relationships, education, women's rights, male/female relationships, city, provincial and federal governments, interprovincial relations, animals, farming, city life, social customs, and sports. On the whole, it depicts a



society that is still largely an immigrant society in which many people speak non-standard English. Many of the selections in Grip use variant spellings to present visibly the accents and dialects of the Irishmen, Yankees, French-Canadians, Germans, Scots, American Negroes, Yankees and Canadian backwoodsmen or farmers who, in addition to the Englishmen of all classes, together made up the Canadian population. The writers often use cacography and/or poor grammar to poke fun at the struggle of the working class for upward mobility and to add to the comic and satiric effect of their writing.

In addition to this variety of material, Grip also devotes much space to depicting in prose, verse, and cartoons the relationship between the Canadians as colonials and the English as colonizers. But Canada was not a typical colony, in that the colonists were also mainly English--especially in Ontario. Michael Harris notes that in other colonial cultures, "writers reflect the colonizer perspective on the clash of cultures . . . [and] the subject peoples and their homeland typically perform the role of exotic background" (3). This is not what happened in Canada. In the pages of Grip although the English are always depicted regarding themselves and their country as superior to Canada, it is usually patently obvious that they are wrong to do so. As a corollary to this is Grip's

irreverent attitude to the literary axioms established by the literati. In their cultural colonialism, English literature is venerated, American literature barely tolerated and Canadian literature coerced into an artificial gentility and sophistication by stringent restrictions on form, subject matter and diction.<sup>7</sup> Grip publishes numerous pieces designed to subvert and ridicule this position.

In one of its first issues Grip established that it would not be "colonial"; its perspective would be Canadian, not British--which meant it would certainly not revere the attitude of the Ontario literati. In "The Man Who Knows How to Run A Comic Paper" (August 16, 1873), the writer depicts a fictitious encounter between himself as editor and an upstart Englishman determined to advise a mere colonial on how best to conduct his paper:

The man who knows how to run a comic paper is mostly an Englishman. He don't think much of Canadian journals; but then, as he despises everything else Canadian, this is not to be wondered at. "They can't make good beeah in this country, yah know; and the beef is tough and 'asn't got the flavour of Hinglish beef; . . .and the tone of the press is fearfully low to a Hinglish gentleman haccustomed to the 'igh standard of the Times." That is his style of conversation. But altogether despicable as the country is, he somehow persists in staying here, and is determined to benefit the benighted inhabitants, by improving the tone of the press. He freezes to us. "Ah Briggs<sup>a</sup>, my deah fellah, yah know I rather appreciate your style, although, as a general thing, I don't like these blawsted Canadians. Hi 'ope yowll be able to make Grip a success. I do, upon my soul. Why last week there

were one or two good things in it that were really not much inferior to some of the articles in Punch. He paused, and looked at me as though we ought to feel immensely flattered. We didn't, but calmly replied that if we couldn't write any better than some of Punch's contributors, we would eat our shirt. The fixed stare of Hamlet, when he beholds his father's spirit, wasn't a circumstance to the look of aghastitude on that Englishman's countenance. He was speechless with amazement at our audacity for about half a minute, and then observed, "Well, by Jove!" "Punch is too tame. It hasn't got half snap and vim enough to suit a Canadian public." "Oh," he replied, "of course, it isn't so low and personal, if that's what you mean. The Hinglish press, sir, is 'igh toned. It don't descent to the low scurrilous abuse and vituperation such as you see in the Canadian papers, yah know. You want to himitate the superior style of the Hinglish press, hand raise the popular taste, sir, so as to obtain the approval of cultivated hintellects." We tell him we think the English press, written with the fear of libel suits continually before their eyes is the dullest, tamest, prosiest reading imaginable; that the editorials in the Times are insufferably stupid and long-winded; that we infinitely prefer the Globe and Mail to any of the English dailies, and a lot of similar blasphemies; whereat he leaves in disgust, which is just what we wanted...

(August 16, 1873).

In rejecting the "superior style" of the English papers as "the dullest, tamest, prosiest reading imaginable," the editor of Grip aligns his publication with North American popular journalism and refuses to be patronized by the pseudo-aristocratic Englishman before him. The Englishman's speech--aspirated h's combined with an aristocratic lisp--reveals that he is a pseudo-aristocrat, a fraud, an upstart--obviously not a member of the cultured class to which he aspires. But he is English, hence, in his own opinion,

possesses superior judgment in literary matters. Canadians are free to laugh at his pretentiousness as they perceive his "wisdom" being invalidated by his fraudulent status.

British assumptions of superiority based on birth and class violate Grip's North American orientation. Images and portraits of snobbish Englishmen and Anglophile Canadians continue to turn up in all forty-two volumes. From the outset, Grip established its unwillingness to kowtow to Englishmen of any class or background who adopted a patronizing attitude to Canada and Canadians. Increasingly it also poked fun at Canadians who revered the British, caricaturing them through a "genteel" speech characterized by its elevated, but usually inappropriate, diction and frequent malapropisms. Such irreverent depictions of the relationship between Canada and England, Canadians and Englishmen form one of the staple "Canadian" characteristics of the humour in Grip.

Pretentious "gentlemen"--British, Canadians, and assorted upstarts, ranging from incompetent colonial officials to tourists--are frequently found in the jokes, anecdotes, sketches, narrative poems and parodies in Grip. In addition to their class consciousness and snobbishness, they also display a lack of knowledge about Canada and insensitivity to North American ways. Ridicule is directed at their rigidity in clinging to the social habits and

beliefs of the old country even though such ideas are clearly out of place in Canada. They are invariably revealed to be shallow fools, either through their own actions or through the astute observations of "ordinary" Canadians. Some, such as "Lady Maude McMuffin" and "Lord Lawdedaw," write letters in which they reveal their shallowness as they explain how life in Canada offends them.

In the sketch "Ursa the Bear Hunter" (October 8, 1881), an English officer, Major Ursa, entertains his friends with his account of Canada's failure to meet his expectations. He had travelled to Canada to hunt "beahs," believing they were to be found everywhere. Far from being the wilderness he imagined, Canada was quite civilized and Ursa had to leave without his "beah," owing to their scarcity in the tennis courts and cities of Canada that he visited. As he tells it, he spent most of his trip enjoying the social life in Canada:

[Having no luck in Quebec,] we then made up our minds to try the Uppah pwovinces and made our way to Towonto, wheah we passed a vevy jolly time indeed. More lawn tennis, gawden pawties, and all that sawt of thing. This was awfully pleasant to be suah, enjoying the society of the vevy pwetty gyuls of the place, but it was not what we came to the countwy for, beahs, ye know, being our object.

In such sketches, ironic inversion is the main humorous technique, for not only is the Englishman laughable in his ignorance and indolence, but the very things which he is

shocked to discover about life in the British conclave in Canada, are equally inadequate as a true image of life in the country. His report of Canadian realities shows him to be as ignorant after his visit as he had been before he arrived.

In another sketch, "He Wanted to Learn Farming" (June 15, 1889), quite the opposite occurs. Here a young English gentleman discovers that Canada is not civilized at all, by British standards. This sketch introduces a character who will become more familiar in the humorous writing of the Northwest--the aristocratic farm-pupil. Well educated but lacking any knowledge of Canada, the farm-pupil's class consciousness and rejection of manual labour make him appear a snob and a fool. In this early portrait, the young man, Augustus Swellsby, arrives at John Mcgrubber's farm near Eramosa township in Ontario with eighteen trunks, and a large number of guns, hunting rifles, fishing rods and flies. He has come to learn farming, but is completely astonished to discover that he is expected to undertake physical labour and not merely to observe: "Augustus nearly fainted, 'But really, you know, I--I--nevah milked a cow in my life. I don't intend to do--aw--rough manual labor. Just to--aw--get an insight into the principles of farming, you know'." He had assumed learning farming in Canada would be the same as learning to supervise an estate in England,

and cannot believe that Canadians have so little respect for his birth that they would expect him to work--to actually undertake physical labour! He hurries back to England--where he is not expected to undertake the work of a common laborer, where the duties attached to his elevated station are more suited to a man of education and culture, unlike those of even a wealthy farmer in Canada.

Not all portraits of Englishmen are negative. In keeping with its reform leanings, Grip is more sympathetic to the lower or working classes, who are often depicted as bewildered by the unfamiliarity of the Canadian landscape, weather and society. In " 'Arry in Canada," from which three stanzas are quoted below, 'Arry may complain about Canada, but he sounds more homesick than condescending:

This is a bloomin kentry, there is no two ways  
 Hif you 'ere to see yourself I'm sure you wouldn't  
 The sun comes down as 'ot as 'ot in daytime on our  
 And at night hits 'ard to keep ourselves from  
 freezin' in our beds. . . .

And oh! the beer and hale they 'ave, I shudder  
 Hit halmost turns my stummack hup venefer that I  
 There's heven not a single ground to 'ave a game  
 So I'll go to the public 'ouse and take some  
 liscenced vittles in.

Now fare you well my bloomin' boy, hand stay hat  
 Henjoy youself there while you may, for 'ere  
 'ome hin London,





backwoods Tory Canadian farmers such as Slashbush. Of these, the letters of the Scotsman, Hugh Airlie, are the most developed as Hugh emerges from them a complex, changing character.

These letters, created by Jessie Lawson, prove her without doubt a most skilful comic dialect writer. Bengough thought highly enough of them that three years after the letters first appeared in Grip he issued them as a book: The epistles o' Hugh Airlie (formerly o' Scotland, presently conneckit wi' Tam Tamson's warehooose in Toronto) [sic] (1888). The letters written in Scottish dialect, are addressed initially to Hugh's brother, Willie in Scotland, and later to "Maister Grip." They describe Hugh's experiences as he adjusts to his adopted country. He encounters difficulty understanding the language and customs, as well as its political and social environment. Together Lawson's Letters form a kind of comic immigration narrative as Hugh settles in Canada, gets a new job, courts his lady and becomes a family man. The following excerpt, from a letter called, "Hugh Airlie Mounts a Bicycle," written shortly after Hugh arrived in Canada, should give something of the flavour of these sketches when they indulge in slapstick humour. In order to win government preference, Hugh Airlie has decided to ride a bicycle in the Mowat demonstration. He has never ridden a bicycle before, and

the bicycle he describes attempting to ride is a pennyfarthing.

A bicycle is ae solitary muckle wheel, a' silvereeged round the rim; an' ye get astride this wheel an' it rins awa wi' ye the minniy ye begin tae pa' yer feet up an' doon time aboot; an then there's a little wheel that comes riunin' ahint ye like a little collie doggie. The great deeficulty is tae get up on the wheel and tae bide there when ye are up. Weel, I got mae bicycle oot intae the back yard, an' after I got mysel drest in my new kilt, I gets out a chair an' proceeds to mount the machine. I canna' understan' to this day hoo it came aboot, but the first thing I kent was a fearful pain in ma' nose a' the stars o' yht farmament dancin' afore ma een an' mysel spreed oot on ma face, an' the bicycle ridin' on top o' me instead o' me on top o' it. This was very humilatin' till a respectable man like me . . . after hoppin' aboot wi' ane leg up an' anither doon, for a while, I boldly threw my ither leg over the wheel, and sat doon--on the sidewalk (October 11, 1884).

Characteristically Hugh draws his analogies from the Bible and everyday life, as his reference to the "little collie doggie" and the expression "the stars o'yht farmament dancin' afore ma een" indicate. The incident is pure slapstick, made funnier by Hugh's inability to see the ridiculous side of the incident, by his wounded pride and by his determination to get every detail exactly right.

There are frequent representations of Scottish, Irish, North American and various English voices in Grip in its first ten years, and these voices serve a number of purposes. Some, like Scottie Airlie, appear regularly and serve purposes which are more comical than satiric. Others

such as the voices Terry Tierney, an Irish immigrant and Schwackelhammer, from Germany which are heard regularly in Volumes Ten, Eleven and Twelve (1878-9) are used to comment more explicitly on the political affairs of the country. In addition, we hear from correspondents who comment on social matters as individuals. Two such are John Plowman, a backwoods farmer, and Mrs. Sapseeling, a pretentious "lady" of limited intelligence, vocabulary and understanding. Columns, sketches and letters to the editor are attributed to literally dozens of different characters who write and speak in various dialects and accents. Through Grip they present their opinions on everything from teaching Canadians how to behave in the presence of the Princess Louise to the latest political scandle.

But among all these voices, there is little representation of the voices of French Canadians. Jokes, anecdotes, and dialect poems and sketches featuring French Canadians begin to appear with increasing frequency in the 1880s during and after the NorthWest Rebellion, but, on the whole, "habitant" dialect humour remains scarce throughout the history of the paper. Most of the jokes and anecdotes refer to the Rebellion and its aftermath, and are rarely kind to the French. Occasionally one discovers a witty quip--often about the accommodation of the French language in prose sketches about life in the NorthWest. One such

quip occurs in an otherwise unremarkable article describing a formal event at the fort entitled, "Anglo-Franco at Regina" which appeared on December 8, 1888. In the midst of the description of events, there appears this dry, ironic comment: "I forgot to mention that during these ceremonies the band had been playing outside in both French and English" which takes the reader up short as she realizes that bilingualism does not apply to musical notation. That this wisecrack is slipped into a rather dull account which continues thereafter in its prosaic way tickles the funny bone of even late twentieth century Canadians. The French presence in Canada is sometimes depicted humorously through anecdotes and jokes focusing on the difficulty English speakers have pronouncing French words, especially place names. The following anecdote makes fun of English speakers discussing the events at Batoche during the Rebellion:

"Fine affair that at Batoak, wasn't it?" says No 1.

"You mean the charge at Batoach, I suppose; ..."

"Ah! I see you fellows are talking about recent scrimmage in the Nor'West ... well I must say the Batoshay charge ..."

"... How do you call it Jimp?"

"I call it Batoky, and I guess I'm right ..."

Nearly thirty-five years later, in Rilla Of Ingleside (1920), L. M. Montgomery would use a similar technique to make her readers laugh at the consternation of villagers in Prince Edward Island struggling to pronounce European place

names as they follow the events of the First World War.

One of the few pieces in Grip to employ habitant dialect, is a poem called "Au Revoir, Ontar-eo" by George C. Rankin, which appeared in the July 27, 1889, issue. This poem depicts Ontario from the perspective of a Canadian habitant who has gone there to find work and to

See eef 'tees true or eef eet ain't  
Dat a Frenchman's got no show  
in Ontar-eo.

He concludes that the people of Ontario have such foolish prejudices against the French that he no longer wants to be there:

All dees fuss about de Jaseweet  
Our language an' relejohn,  
Was wan ansulte to mah Provance...

If this poem generates laughter, it does so only through the peculiarities of the dialect it uses, and the fact that it subverts the morally superior attitude usually assumed by Ontario. From the perspective of a habitant, a man of low social rank struggling to express himself in English, this great province presents itself as bigotted both racially and religiously. None of the habitant dialect pieces in Grip approaches the humanity, the depth of understanding and the skill of those of W. H. Drummond.

The humorists whose work was published in Grip frequently depended upon the reality of the Canadian milieu-- seasons, landscape and customs--to provide a humorous

contrast to the British milieu--especially as this milieu is presented in British literature. They wrote numerous sketches and comic poems about the peculiarities of the Canadian seasons, landscape, sports and social events. They frequently employed parodic techniques, and for most of these pieces, established British and European literary conventions or cultural patterns provide an intertext that highlights the incongruity of the Canadian experience. The more incongruous the difference between what is basically an imported set of expectations and the Canadian reality, the funnier the poem or prose piece. This is a form of ironic bragging which reveals even as it ostensibly conceals pride in the Canadian milieu.

At times expression of such pride takes the form of ironic hyperbole, as in the opening statement of an essay entitled "The Canadian Climate" by Bruce M. Munro which appeared on September 1, 1888:

If the attempt had been made in Canada to establish our present system of seasons and allotment of 365 1/4 days to the year, the work would have proved a superhuman one, and would have resulted in the complete demoralization of every mathematician and astronomer undertaking it.

In January 1890, a short poem appeared which through editorial changes--reproduced in Grip as hand written emendations--even takes issue with the developing North American conventional presentation of the Christmas season.

This poem entitled "A Canadian Christmas (A Poem Amended to Accord with the Facts) is quoted in full below.

*mud* The ~~snow~~ lay like a blanket  
 On field and lane and street  
 And still the ~~flakes~~ were falling *showers*  
 Like noiseless fairy feet.  
*damp* The air was ~~clear~~ and ~~frosty~~ *foggy*  
*carts* As ~~sleighs~~ dashed to and fro  
 'Twas Christmas--such as only  
 Canadians can know.

Upon the ~~ice so glarey~~ *crossings murky*  
*gamins* The ~~skaters~~ swept in glee,  
 With ~~joy in voice and gesture~~ *brooms they*  
 So buoyant, bright and free *made*  
 And shouted to each other  
 'Tis Christmas tide, yo ho!  
 And Christmas such as only  
 Canadians can know!

The vicissitudes of the Canadian climate prove intractable to literary convention, even when that convention is indigenous.

There are not too many purely nonsense poems such as "The Rain on the Roof, A New Song for Tenors" (Sept. 11, 1880). This lighthearted poem echoes various English traditional songs in its rhythm and use of repetition, but its subject matter ostensibly is a Canadian rainstorm. More significantly it is a song about taking a bath--Canadian style. This song suggests that young fellows should be wary when they decide to take a bath on the roof during a rainstorm, because, as the second stanza suggests, they could slide off the roof:

We both climbed out, and O 'twas gay.  
 Upon the shingles there we lay,  
 A-lolling in the rain and spray,  
     Without the least regard, O  
 When all at once--but O, I can't  
 Tell how it happened--down we went--  
 That roof, I think, had too much slant--  
     We both lay in the yard, O,  
         Yard O, Yard O.  
 Down from that roof we slipped and slid,  
     And both lay in the yard, O!

It is conceivable that, considering the lack of proper bathing facilities in the backwoods, perhaps the notion of bathing on the roof during a rainstorm is not nonsensical after all, but, the tone and rollicking rhythm of this poem suggest otherwise. By the way, they were not injured by their slide.

English poetic conventions generally praise summer, the season of sunshine, and beauty. Not so depictions of summer in Grip. Here, summer is the season of extreme heat, blackflies, mosquitos and rugged activities such as camping out, as Canadian humorists use a wide variety of techniques to make Canadians laugh at the discomforts of a Canadian summer. In the following excerpt from "Essay on the Mosquito", the writer creates humour through the use of cacography and a naive narrator who, with no formal instruction in scientific writing, struggles to define and clarify the habits of Canada's summer pest--the mosquito:

The skeeter is a giddy bird. You can't just allers egzactly place him till he gits down to biz. Then probably you kin. He's cunnin; he allers buzzes



in one spot and bites in another. And then you hit the wrong spot. The first time you hit him you generally miss him. You most allers misses him every time. I have hit at several million skeeters since I woz born. I have hit seven and two of them got away. I 'spect to kill two or three more before I die. Skeeters ain't rigged like most other birds, 'specially bees. Bees has their tooth aft, skeeters hasn't. Skeeters has only one tooth, but he is a sokdolliger. Folks say as how they squirt poison through that tooth; I guess they do. The skeeter is a greedy broot; he thirsts for goar, bukkets of goar. He generally gits all he wants too. He prefers some kinds of goar to other kinds. My goar is of the first kind . . . "Scranton" (July 16, 1881).

This short essay, with its mispronunciations, misspellings, poor grammar, slang, and unlikely (and inaccurate) analogies is more like American newspaper humour than British. The speaker appears to be an unsophisticated backwoodsman, whose accent and way of speaking are very like that of a Yankee. This depiction of a Canadian backwoodsman is in keeping with the practice established in the early nineteenth century in the Maritimes (by writers such as Willison and Haliburton) as well as in Ontario (by writers such as Moodie) of depicting rural Canadians--often of Loyalist or American stock--as virtually indistinguishable in speech (and thought) patterns from the Yankees. Throughout its run, Grip depicts the vernacular of the Canadian farmers and backwoodsmen as a modified Yankee dialect and while it shows them to be uncultured and uneducated, it also shows that they are democratic, shrewd and honest.

The Canadian seasons form a staple topic for humour in Grip. Winter is a season of courtship and fun--as it had been in poetry and prose written in Canada since the eighteenth century. Sometimes, as in the following nonsense poem in spondaic dimeter from January 19, 1884, winter sports such as public skating offer the ladies, even married ones, opportunities for illicit flirting:

On ice,  
How nice.  
Skate slips,  
She trips.

Don't fear  
He's near.  
Up takes,  
"Mash" makes  
Gets bold,  
Story told.  
Gloves off,  
Both cough.  
Each sneeze,  
Hands Squeeze.  
Boys laugh -  
Cry, "Caugh!" [sic]  
A shout,  
"Lights out."  
Home flee,  
He, she.  
Reach gate,  
Don't wait.  
In hall,  
Quiet all.  
"Be mine?"  
"Me thine?"  
"Wouldn't dare -"  
"Husband sware!!"

Many of these comic poems on the Canadian seasons, courtship, and sports such as ice skating, roller skating, curling, bicycling, lacrosse, and tobaggoning are parodic.

Most are not hostile parodies; that is, they do not ridicule their source, but are parodies which take "a form of positive criticism, of stylistic analysis, and ultimately of tribute" (Nash 82). Frequently using parody enables the writer to address subjects--often low or mundane--that would not have been acceptable in a "serious" or non-parodic form. The subject matter and style of the original legitimize the subject matter and style of the parody. Robert Burns' "To A Mouse", for example, provides the source text for "Address to a July Mosquito" (both being written about pests) < but the Canadian poem neither inflates nor diminishes Burns' poem. Canadian readers are expected to enjoy not only the images generated in the parody, but also the different attitude in the parody from the original, as the first stanza illustrates:

Froward [sic], unfeelin', restless pest  
 By Satan's spirit sair possessed--  
 Nor night, nor day, will ye gie rest  
     Tae man or beast:  
 But oon their bluid, the vera best  
     Ye'll hae a feast.  
                     (July 28, 1883)

Hutcheon points out that parody "works to distance and at the same time to involve the reader in a participatory hermeneutic activity" (Parody 92). The prose sketch "A Trip Through England" (January 13, 1883) presents a parody of "accounts in the English papers and divers "Notes of Travels" in this supposed hyperborean realm." The writer is

disturbed by the numerous accounts of the dreadful extremes of Canadian climate, especially coming from people whose own climate leaves a lot to be desired. The entries in this mock travel diary record form of an account of the unexpected harshness of the English winter weather:

Dec 20th--Arrived in Liverpool, weather extremely stormy and cold. Glad I brought furs. Am not favourably impressed with first experience of English weather.

Dec 21st--Take train for London. Locked up in compartment of coach. Don't like it. Horribly cold. Still snowing.

Dec 22nd--Still snowing. Can hardly hold pencil to write. Sigh for my far away Canada! Oh Canada, why did I leave thee? Mem.--Won't again in a hurry.

Dec 22nd--Snowing harder than ever. Guard says 20 feet deep. Train stuck fast. Shall we freeze? or starve? Horror!! Oh what a country! What a climate! I can almost hate poor Pa! Why did he so deceive me?

The complaints she directs at "poor Pa" for deceiving her serve as a reminder of all the stories Canadians have endured about the agreeableness of the English climate, especially in contrast to their own. Perhaps the winter of 1883 was unusually harsh for England; Canadians would take note, and slyly laugh up their sleeves.

Parody of period styles is another technique by which Canadian humorists in Grip create humour. Some of these parodies are complex, especially when they attempt to give a North American flavour to their subjects. The following poem describes the joys of curling, in what is identified in

its title as a parody of Spenser, but its archaic English includes echoes of Scottish dialect laced with American slang. The "sweete melodye" in this celebratory winter poem stems from the poet's joy at hearing curling stones whirring over the ice, rather than from hearing the traditional sounds of spring. In language and sentiments, this is a complex and quite sophisticated kind of parody:

My trothe! thys winterre itte is somethynge likee  
 Whatte wynterre shoulde bee - yea ye o.k. thynge!  
 With joye I heare ye whyrrynge stones which strike  
 Delicious music inne ye scorynge rynges -  
 Whiles inne my answeringe hearte sweete melodye  
 dothe sprynge!

Offe flowerres and bowerres, ande alle thatte  
 kinde of fluffe,  
 'Bout whych ye poets dafte doe rhapsodyse,  
 I holde such talke is addle-pated stuffe,  
 Duste throwne by fooles into ye peoples eyes,  
 With curlerre's awfulle funne who nee'r didde  
 sympathisie

Oh ! wha woulde bee a puire stove-hugginge slave,  
 Withe caitiffe coward, a catarrh-running nose?  
 Oh! wha woulde bee a shyverynge losel knave  
 With chilblaines sore upon hys traitorre toes?  
 Base wretch! Ilke pawkye chiel shall spurne him  
 as he goes.

But wha briske laddies! inne ye roaringe game,  
 'Mid zero zeyherres blowynge faire and free,  
 As though hys very soul were inne ye stave  
 Bigge-pushe and standynge grende doth make with  
 mee -  
 Ye proper Callante is - and evermore shall bee!  
 (January 4, 1879)

The presence of so many varieties and levels of sophistication of the parodic forms in Grip is perhaps an indicator of the accommodation Canadian humorists make to

gain a degree of respectability in the literary community of central Canada. If nothing else, it helps to sell the periodical to well-educated, sophisticated urban readers and, at the same time, reach a wide less well educated audience. Parody may be read at the most basic level with some degree of enjoyment, although the full humour of the parodic echoes and irony is not easy to recognize and savour. Hutcheon points out that

in the optimal situation, the sophisticated subject would know the backgrounded work(s) well and would bring about a superimposition of texts by the mediation of that parodied work upon the act of reading or viewing.... It is this sharing of codes or coincidence of intention and recognition in parody, as well as in irony, which creates what Booth has called "amicable communities" (Booth 1974, 28) between encoders and decoders. . . . This . . . leaves both parody and irony open to accusations of elitism (Parody 94).

A short piece, called simply "The Poem" which appeared on March 10, 1883 has a very wide appeal. It makes fun of the cold Canadian spring which is so unlike the "ethereal" English spring while laughing at the plight of the Canadian poet so entrapped by the conventions of English poetic diction that he continues to describe spring in English poetic language. The poem is even funnier because it is written in a form of spelling that is meant to reproduce the pronunciation of a person with a very bad head cold--proof positive of the non-ethereal nature of Canadian spring.

Tude up by Buse, for I ab faid to sig  
 A welcub paead to the dew-bord Sprig  
 All Hail! Oh Sprig, I welcob you at last  
 With such rejoicig that the widter's past  
 Ah-tish--oo-oo!

All hail! odce bore; ye verdal breezes blow,  
 Drive hedce all bebories of the frost and snow,  
 Ye feathered sogsters, tude your joyous throats,  
 Ad rig out blithly all your sweetest dotes  
 All hai-atishoo!

(two stanzas omitted)

Brig be a tub of water, let its heat  
 Be boilig, for I would bberse by feet  
 Wrsp fladdel all around be, dridk hot rub  
 Ad water, for at last ethereal Sprig has cub  
 I'be goig to bed.

Such nonsense notwithstanding, the humour in Grip is elitist in many ways. Although it contains many pieces written in lower class emigrant and North American backwoods dialects, it is clear that this humour is directed at, not to, readers of the lower ranks. Much of its humour is topical and filled with literary and political allusions which demand a certain degree of sophistication. On the other hand, as the excerpts should have indicated, Grip was making more effort to accommodate various levels of society than its predecessors had done, and it was well ahead of the literary periodicals in making such accommodations. Although many of the parodies and much of the political and literary satire may have been above the heads of middle and lower class readers, the jokes, riddles, cartoons and comic poems and sketches were not. Canadian humorists tried to balance the

demands of a disparate readership by relying on source texts from a wide range--nursery rhymes, fables, old ballads and traditional songs. They also relied upon popular novels such as those of Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens as well as texts taken from more traditional literary publications to provide source texts for parodies and burlesques in comic prose.

The term burlesque is frequently used to describe parodies of literary form (Holman, 1980, 63) although for many critics this term is usually associated with stage entertainment. (Cuddon, 1992, 107) The word has frequently been used to describe prose parodies which poke fun at source texts. Grip contains many burlesques of fables, novels, travel books, speeches and public lectures, as well as frequent skits adapted from popular operettas such as those of Gilbert and Sullivan.

There are numerous burlesques of popular fiction in Grip, usually with titles which indicate what they are mocking. Some of these burlesques have such titles as "'Who Killed poor Billy' by a disciple of Cilkie Wollins" (1885), a short parody of the fiction of Wilkie Collins; and "Under the Rod. A novelette written for Girls by May Agonies Flaming. In three parts" which mocks the romances of such a popular Canadian writer as May Agnes Fleming. They tend to be longer than those most modern Canadians are more familiar



with in Leacock's Nonsense Novels, but the humour works in much the same way. Grip also periodically runs retellings of famous stories and legends which produce laughter through the incongruity achieved by changing the setting of the original to North America, and by degrading the language and events of the original through having the characters speak in a North American backwoods dialect and by reducing the romantic elements of the original to the rural mundane. One series, "Grips 'Old Stories Retold'" includes North Americanization of such famous old legends as the story of "Petrarch and Laura." In a similar vein are the many fables in which the form of Aesop's fables is used to satirize Canadian and American political and social customs. Such "modern fables" (loosely based on Aesop), were particularly popular and generally served political ends. "The Eagle and the Beaver," for example, reveals the incongruity of import duties between Canada and the United States:

An American Eagle lived near a Canadian Beaver.  
 "My duty is to my own," said the Eagle,  
 "therefore, I will discourage trade with this  
 foreign animal." So she put a high tax on all the  
 good things the beaver brought her, and as she  
 still continued to take the good things the tax  
 only increased the cost to herself. "This Eagle  
 is a wise bird," mused the beaver, "and if she  
 will not have my goods at the low price I offer,  
 neither will I have hers." So the Beaver also put  
 on a tax and thereafter paid higher prices for all  
 he purchased from the Eagle. And both were happy  
 (July 14, 1888).

Some of the jokes are quite elaborate, and depend on assumptions about Canadians that are related to Canada's membership in the British Empire. On October 6, 1883, for example, a sketch entitled "An Adventure in Ceylon" is a travesty of the travel adventure which turns out to be an elaborate joke on Toronto. In this sketch the narrator, a world traveller, recalls his visit to a particular ancient temple in Ceylon. There he encountered a most disgusting smell, and upon investigation, discovered it emanated from thousands of decomposing and festering corpses abandoned in the ruin. As he recoiled in horror, he met a fellow Canadian who did not appear to be at all affected by the vile stench. Naturally his curiosity was piqued, and he asked the stranger why he was not repulsed by the stink? The man explained that the stink didn't bother him because for the past ten years he had worked as a lawyer in the police courts in Toronto! This elaborate joke depends, in part, on accepting the possibility of meeting a Canadian anywhere in the world, otherwise meeting a Torontonion in such a setting would be too unlikely. The fact that Canadians regarded themselves as citizens of the Empire and did travel within it helps to prepare the way for the joke. It also works on another level, in that it travesties travel adventure by reducing it to the trivial.

North Americans of little education or sophistication

who are trying to rise in society come in for some ridicule in Grip. Over the years a number of series are devoted to travesties of the records of and speeches made to the cultural and literary societies and clubs that flourished in many small Canadian (and American) towns in the 1880s and 1890s. Formed for the promotion of literature, the arts and science, and to improve the cultural level of the citizenry, these societies often degenerated into self-important little conclaves whose members aped the educated and cultural elite of the cities. Grip's travesties of the proceedings of such societies form a frequent source of humour, especially in the papers of the mid 1880s, perhaps indicating Grip's increasing allegiance to an urban, upper class perspective. In 1883, for example, the report of "The First Meeting of the Froggleton Association of Learned Longheads" (December 10 and 17, 1883) appears, followed by further reports from this society, and in 1885 by a new series of reports, "Reminiscences of the Howton Literary Sassiety" by Jay Kayelle, ex-president. These reports remind the reader of "Old Stories Retold," as the members of the Howton Literary Sassiety report their reading of classic literary works in oversimplified plot summaries in North American colloquial language and slang. The reports on such well-known literary works as the Greek myths and the Odyssey are comic reductio ad absurdum-- showing that the pompous ignoramuses who

present the reports do not really understand what they are talking about. Grip's readers, being more sophisticated, would know the true versions of these classics, while they could laugh at the way in which the romantic aura of these ancient classics is trivialized and diminished, they are also laughing at, not with, the naive efforts of those attempting to acquire improved knowledge.

The problems of defining Canada culturally and socially as a separate nation provide Grip with many opportunities for humour, for Grip humorists clearly recognize that in attitudes to England and the United States Canada is culturally a colony (at least insofar as it regards itself as inferior or lagging behind) while at the same time it is striving to create an image of itself which is distinctively different from either. The Canadian literati looked exclusively to England for their literary ideals, while many Canadian writers were forced to publish their material almost exclusively in the American popular literature market. Much of the humour in Grip mocks both Canadian literary criticism and Canadian literature. The former quite often appears as ironic "advice" to aspiring writers or as mock critical essays on current practices. The latter includes such items as parodies of "literary" pieces from such Canadian literary periodicals as The Week, poems and sketches written in the nationalistic cliches and the trite,

forced diction of poetry written to order. Often the language of the mockery is rustic, adding another level of irony to the ideas contained in the piece. Grip responds on many levels to "certain sap-hea--sapiant literary critics [who] assure us that we have no Canadian literature worth shucks" (Sept 15, 1888). In, for example, "Sulphurous Literature" (December 23, 1882), a column offering advice to aspiring writers of popular romance or adventure, the novice writer is advised to post a copy of the Ten Commandments over his desk and to study them well, for

to be successful you must model your heroine as a gentle, noble, heroine and lovable woman, who, in the sweetest and most engaging way, manages to be irresistible from the rising to the falling of the curtain while breaking and trampling on every one of these rules; in short, you must make vice lovely and crime captivating.

A short poem "'Something Like a National Song' not by a distinguished author" (March 20, 1880) makes fun of North American pronunciation and forced rhyme as well as the triteness of nationalistic sentiment at the hands of an unskilled poet:

Oh, "poet" well intentioned,  
     Thy verses we've perused,  
 And now it may be mentioned,  
     We're decently amused.  
 "Dominion" rhymed with "union,"  
     "Terrors" with "Mirrors" matched --  
 Euphonious communion  
     As scribbler ever scratched !  
     Oh! bless our wide Dominion,  
     True freedom's fairest land,  
     Where "union", "onion", "minion"

Rhymed may hereafter stand.

"Nurture" with "hurt her" rhyming,  
 "Forest" with "sorest" found,  
 "Glory" with "o'er ye" chiming,  
 "Order" with "border" bound;  
 When we have known death's slumbers  
 Our poets shall prolong  
 Such "ground and lofty" numbers  
 As fill the "nation's song."  
 O , bless our wide Dominion,  
 And give us common sense  
 To squelch with one opinion  
 Flapdoodle and pretence.

Many such poems, sketches, letters, speeches and columns mock or parody the problems of producing and criticising "Canadian" literature. The August 31, 1890 issue contains the poem, "Manufacturing Native Literature" a parody of the song "He is an Englishman," from a popular Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, which makes fun of Canadian writers whose grasp of literature is so poor that they mistake a mechanical vocabulary and artificial nationalistic sentiment for literature :

I am a literary man  
 I'm anxious all should know it,  
 Can I write verse? I think I can--  
 Why, then, I'll be a poet.  
 I'll get me out a book of rhymes  
 Like this--or even neater,  
 On subjects suited to the times,  
 In easy flowing metres.  
 I rather think I know the trick,  
 The patriotic racket,  
 I'll plaster "loyalty" on thick,  
 There's no one dare attack it.  
 I'll work Canadian spirit in,  
 'Twill be appreciated,  
 And though the thing's a trifle thin,  
 My fame will be created.

Nevertheless, Grip is nationalist, and its humour turns into angry and biting satire against those who cast aspersions on Canadian capabilities. They include Canadians who defer unquestioningly to assumptions of British superiority. On July 17, 1880, Grip published a song ridiculing the decision of Ontario's Minister of Education to appoint a young inexperienced British scholar to be vice-president of the University of Toronto instead of an equally qualified, more experienced Canadian professor. The song satirizing Mr. Crooks, the Minister of Education, is called "Songs for the Education Department. No. 1 Air - Tiddle a wink."

Whenever in the Varsity is a vacant situation,  
 No "mere Canadians" need apply for any such high station,  
 Crookedy Crooks, crookedy Crooks presides o'er education.

Of swell young men from Oxford let us make the importation,  
 And snub Canadian scholarship with all humiliation,  
 For crookedy Crooks, crookedy Crooks presides o'ereducation.

Canadian professors, all send in your resignation!  
 Since of this great young English gent, you have not the  
 approbation,  
 As crookedy Crooks, crookedy Crooks presides o'er education.

So let each caloot great Crooks extol and shout with  
 exultation,  
 Who has sent this gent "culchaw" to teach to this poor  
 Canadian nation,  
 Where crookedly Crooks, crookedly Crooks presides o'er  
 education.

Education is also a subject for much of Grip's humour and satire. In the 1870s and 1880s, higher education for women was the subject of much public debate, and this debate is reflected in the pages of Grip. One of Canada's first comedies by a woman

dramatist was given a wide exposure when it appeared in the Grip-sack (an experimental off-shoot of Grip published monthly). In a note in Laura Secord, the Heroine of 1812 and Other Poems [sic] (1887), the dramatist, Laura Anne Curzon says, "This little comedy appeared in Gripsack for 1882, and was written at the request of the editor of Grip who was, and is, in full sympathy with all the efforts to secure the rights of women" (Canada's Lost Plays: Women Pioneers 154). This comedy "The Sweet Girl Graduate" is the only play to appear in the Grip publications. In a combination of verse and prose, it refutes the idea that women do not belong in a university.

The play depends upon the conventional comic device of the heroine disguising herself as a man in order to gain access to otherwise forbidden territory and information. In this comedy, the heroine, Kate Bloggs, has been refused admission to university, because women "wear The Petticoat," but she refuses to accept either the verdict of the men who run the university or her mother. Mrs. Bloggs believed that "women do not need so much education as men . . . such stuff unfits a woman for her place and makes her as ignorant of household work . . . as the greenhorns that some people take from the immigrant sheds" (144). Disguised as a young man, Kate attends university and achieves top honours in the traditionally male subjects of mathematics, natural science and the classics. At graduation, she reveals her identity and forces the men who refused to admit her to admit



they were wrong. In summary the play does not sound terribly funny, but neither do plot summaries of most comedies. Anton Wagner, who edited the play for inclusion in Canada's Lost Plays, Vol I, says: "The play satirizes the stereotyped roles of both sexes, but has brought about an enlargement of the rights of women to a greater degree of equality with men" (141).

Although the play is quite short, it has many clever and witty lines, and Kate Bloggs emerges as a very early version of the intelligent, independent woman whom later critics refer to as the "new heroine", and who is a significant figure in the novels of Sara Jeannette Duncan a decade later. She is a clever, likeable and energetic woman who cheerfully uses her wits to outsmart those who would deprive her rather than allowing herself to accept their decision and force herself to become a victim of their ill-founded prejudice.

On the whole, Grip was sympathetic to higher education for women. The problems faced by women who desired an education or who had already had one provided an opportunity for numerous comic poems and letters in Grip in the 1880s. For instance, "A Woman's Want," a poem by "Bozeni" is sympathetic towards educated women who want to discuss intellectual matters. Bozeni ironically reveals such a woman's displacement and loneliness:

How sweet it were, if man and maid  
 Could meet together to discuss  
 Great questions, wholly unafraid  
 Of getting into any muss -  
 Society's mere fume and fuss!

Astronomy is there tabooed,  
 Anatomy is little known;  
 One could not, without seeming rude,  
 Converse of the coccygeal bone  
 When sitting with a man alone.

Full dearly do I love to trace  
 Each page of philologic lore  
 But what's the use in this dull place  
 On Sanskrit roots for one to pore,  
 Philology is thought a bore!.

The other eve, while whirled the dance,  
 To one who Talked to me I said -  
 Thinking his pleasure to enhance -  
 "Have you Fors Clavigera read?"  
 He muttered audibly, "Good ged!"

Another night - 'twas bright and still  
 With one who pleased me well I went,  
 Softened, I spoke of Stuart Mill,  
 Smith and the theory of rent -  
 He yawned and asked me what I meant!

Charmed with the intellectual face  
 Of one who sat next me at whist,  
 I broached man's ancestry and race,  
 "Come we from apes?" I asked - he hissed  
 My stock is U.E. Loyalist!

Oh for some place where one could meet  
 Men of a much profounder kind,  
 Deep subjects who would wisely treat  
 And recognize my force of mind:  
 Instead of social noodles blind!

Primordial atoms, Matter, Force,  
 Geology and fossils rare,  
 Dawn animals, and nature's course,  
 Together we would talk of there,  
 All scientific labors share.

In common we would vivisect,  
 Discourse of protoplasm and soul,  
 All foolish social forms reject,  
 Escape conventions and control,  
 And go the porcine creature whole.

(January 24, 1880)

There are many unconventional women like the one in the poem above in the pages of Grip. Undoubtedly many women writers are amongst the writers who use pennames. The perspective of these women is not always as serious as it seems to be in the many of the literary works of the nineteenth century. Bengough appears to have disregarded the American idea that "women don't have a sense of humour" (Habegger 158). Martha Bruere and Mary Beard suggest this idea arose in the first half of the nineteenth century when, "[American] men appear to have assumed that they alone enjoyed a sense of humor; that even theirs was derived from the frontier spring, and that was all the humour possible" (vii). Although this myth was dispelled by 1885 (Bruere and Beard vii), humorous works by women and the depiction of women at all as witty, satiric and laughing were rare in books written for adult readers. Habegger reminds us that the three main portrayals of women in American literature, the genteel lady, the aspiring woman and the mother were often seen as humourless (142) and that in an 1895 interview, Mark Twain was reported as remembering only one woman humorist in America" (160). Bozeni's poem, Curzon's The Sweet Girl Graduate, Lawson's Scottie Airlie letters and many of the earlier sketches, letters to the editor, and poems in Grip avoid these categorizations (although Lawson does write exclusively from a male perspective), and show women in Canada to be witty and to possess a sense of humour, regardless of class and education.

Grip also places itself on the leading edge in its publication of poems, sketches, cartoons and letters to the editor which find humour in the new ideas being introduced as a result of scientific discoveries and advances. Among such new ideas, the most difficult to accept was probably Darwin's theory of evolution. From the numerous poems and prose pieces in Grip which encourage laughter about scientific discoveries, the following poem, "Evolution Made Plain" seems to illustrate best both the accuracy of the scientific knowledge and the kind of intellectual wrestling displayed for readers' amusement.

Once upon a time  
 There was a little bit of slime  
     In the deep bottom of the sea;  
 And it commenced to breathe,  
 Without anybody's leave,  
     And that was the beginning of you and me.

It sucked the green sea water, --  
 It was neither son nor daughter,  
     But a little bit of both done up in one,  
 And from it soon evolved,  
 While the old world still revolved  
     A being which we'll nominate its son.

The son the father hated,.  
 And so "differentiated";  
     Its son in course of time just followed suit,--  
 So it grew by many stages  
 Through fifty million ages,  
     Till in the course of time it reached the newt.

The newt was awful gritty,  
 And knew't would be a pity  
     To leave the world no better than his pater  
 So he turned him inside out,  
 Knowing what he was about,  
     And lo! became an animal much greater.

He, too, went on evolving,

The riddle ever solving  
 Of his destiny, and bound to solve it soon;  
 So he taller grew and fatter,  
 And one day commenced to chatter,  
 And found himself a bounding big baboon.

While his tail was long and growing,  
 He wore it quite off rowing  
A la Hanlon on a patent sliding seat;  
 Then he went and killed his brothers,  
 Made soup of some, and others  
 Served up with roast potatoes and some beet.

The "survival of the fittest"  
 See, reader, as thou sitest,  
 Is the proper and most scientific plan --  
 This ape surprised the others,  
 Both his sisters and his brothers  
 And in course of time became a gentleman.  
 (March 13, 1880)

Bengough also published Grip's Comic Almanac annually from 1880-93.<sup>9</sup> The first volume of this almanac begins with this boast: "Zadkiel and Josh Billings and Ayer and Vennor and all the other dealers in pills, prognostications and pleasantries shall hide their diminished heads." The writer adds that although "Prefaces are usually apologetic, Mr. Grip feels far from apologizing for this spread of original wit and humour, profusely illustrated" (Grip's Almanac, 1880).

The 1880 almanac is a sort of meta-almanac, for its humour springs from the assumption that its readers will all be very familiar with the conventions of "Almanacery" and will therefore laugh at the references this almanac will make to them. The comments in the prognostications for each month are frequently nonsensical, and in this ironic understated way show up the

unreliability of such predictions in Almanacs:

This year there will be two eclipses of the Moon, one total and the other partial. Both will be invisible in America. This continent is totally ignored, the Moon being partial to the eastern hemisphere. But no matter! The time will come! (4)

This almanac also contains a series of "Cosmopolitan Essays" which attempt to distinguish visually between the speech habits of individuals from a wide range of places and classes. As is not unusual in Canada, the focus is on people in other places, rather than in Canada itself. The essays include sample speeches in phonetic spelling from individuals (all men) representing "England--Aristocratic" (12), "England -- Plebian" (16), "Scotland -- North" (20), and "Scotland -- South" (24)--as well as "The Mennonite" (48), "Germany" (40) and "China" (52).

Some of the humour in the volume for 1883 springs from plays on words and puns such as renaming the months of the year to reflect the weather characteristic of each month. The almanac entry for July renames the month "Hotuary" and listing the days and dates of the month vertically on the left of the page, devotes the rest of the space to mock diary entries, one for each day of the month, by a fictitious humorist. "The Humorist's Diary" is not at all humorous, and therein lies the joke. Most of the comments show the writing of humour to be just another kind of work:

Sun	1	<u>Engaged as funny editor of Sunday Buster</u>
Mon	2	Determined to get out special number on 30th.
Tues	3	News-dealers double their orders in anticipation.

Wed	4	Excitement rising among printers and office boys.
Thurs	5	Took trip on bat as an inspiration.
Fri	6	Conceived idea for capital comic verse.
Sat	7	Verse partly done. Want rhyme for "pop-gun."
Sun	8	<u>Thought of funny things for paper (33).</u>

On the whole, the Almanacs contain materials which are much like the materials in Grip. There are cartoons galore, poems and stories, skits, sketches and essays. One of the most significant contributions to Canadian humour found in these almanacs is a very short story by E. W. Thomson which is found in the almanac for 1886. "Mr Dabson's Little Deal in Manitoba A True Story" is a comic land scam story reported largely as a dialogue between a man from Winnipeg who urgently wants to acquire some land "out near Pelican Creek" and Mr. Dabson, the Ontario farmer who owns it. Both speak the colloquial language of their respective regions. After being awakened late at night Dabson finally remembers that he owns the land, as he "minded of a half section I had scripped in Manitoby the time Wolseby's volunteers come back from the Red River Expedition. It cost me ten cents an acre, thirty-two dollars in all. I most forgot all about it." The man from Winnipeg offers to trade him for a farm he owns in Ontario, worth at least twelve hundred dollars. Dabson is shocked: "Well! it most took my breath away. I dassnt look at him. But most gin'llly I don't give myself away very bad." Finally after he talks Dabson into the trade, the Westerner admits that he cheated Dabson but says doing so is "perfectly square game, . . . I made you an offer I knew you dassn't refuse--that's business, the way

we do it in Winnipeg!" But he was wrong and Dabson came out the winner. The story is not especially innovative, except perhaps in its reliance on dialogue rather than narrative, but it is important as an early comic story in the Canadian vernacular by a writer who was later regarded as a significant writer and humorist. Furthermore, it is one of the first stories to present the Canadian vernacular unapologetically as the norm without disparagement.

By the time Grip ceased publication in 1894, what later became recognized as the characteristic patterns and tone of modern Canadian humour were well established--even if this humour still had no place in "official" Canadian literature. Grip revealed, among other things, that Canadians in all walks of life were developing a healthy sense of their own worth, and of their distinctiveness from the Americans and the British. In the pages of Grip, although Canadians laughed at the extremities of the Canadian climate and landscape, recorded their frustrations at living with such pests as the mosquito, satirized the actions of their politicians, and poked fun at their own foolishness in domestic and foreign matters, they were also increasingly aware of themselves as a strong and vital northern people, less democratic than the Americans, but less conservative than the British. Grip depicted the increasing discomfort many Canadians feel about colonial attitudes of British superiority and the Anglophilia which dominated much of Canada.



Within the pages of Grip, as in the pages of the earlier papers, Canadian writers created humour which combined realistic detail and astute observations. They used understatement and irony to poke fun at the changing political and social attitudes of a very mixed population and revealed some of the difficulties of acquiring a distinct Canadian identity. They used such American humour techniques as slang, cacography, dialect, and bad grammar, to offer readers insight into the opinions of people of various classes and nationalities and to develop forthright satire on politicians and political matters. In these ways, and in its rejection of pretentiousness and British class structure, Canadian humour was influenced by popular North American humour. But it was also strongly influenced by British humour, as the punning, parody--especially ironic literary parody--, the concern for moral and social order and accommodation, the sense of belonging to a larger political and social unity than the province and even the nation, and the interest in classical education, and English, Indian, European and other cultures indicate. Distinctly Canadian was the acceptance of a modified class structure--a flexible one based on a combination of culture and merit, rather than purely capitalistic values. Even in as popular a paper as Grip, Canadian humour never became truly democratic, and, especially in the early issues, most of the voices of the "folk" were being laughed at, not with. This began slowly to change after the mid 1880s. Overall a tone of

ironic self-awareness emerged as Canadians laughed at themselves and others with almost equal intensity.

Grip offers a superabundance of humour, so much that to discuss the importance of this periodical in a short space has been very difficult. The earlier humorous papers experimented with various techniques in an effort to locate an appropriate tone and form in which to speak, but the materials in these papers were often strident rather than ironic, and harsh or clumsy rather than witty and funny. In the pages of Grip one finds evidence of the re-emergence of the kind of self-mocking humour that had been developing in the years before Haliburton, and of numerous writers who possess the skill to handle it and other forms of humour.

The Eye Opener (Calgary and Winnipeg, 1902-1922)

At the turn of the century, years after Grip ceased publication in Ontario, a new humorous and satiric paper, The Eye Opener, owned, edited and largely written by Robert "Bob" Edwards, made its appearance in the Canadian West. Although it was not the tour de force of humour and satire that Grip was, both it and Bob Edwards have received more critical attention than have Bengough and Grip. A full length biography of Edwards, Eye Opener Bob The Story of Bob Edwards (1957) has appeared and in the 1970s two collections of Edwards' writings, The Best of Bob Edwards (1975) and The Wit and Wisdom of Bob Edwards (1976),

both edited by Hugh Dempsey were published. A number of articles, one of which examines Edwards' connection to the Reform movement in the early twentieth century,<sup>10</sup> have also been printed.

The first issue of The Eye Opener, was published in High River, Alberta, on March 4, 1902. Unlike Grip, Diogenes or Punch in Canada the Eye Opener began as a community weekly newspaper which published news as well as advertisements for local merchants. In its later years, Edwards avoided the use of real news. The Eye Opener was Edwards' fifth attempt to publish a newspaper (McEwan 61). Of these the most important was the small weekly newspaper he published in Wetaskiwin, Alberta, a town, according to Edwards, "with a population of 287 souls and three abstainers" (23 October 1902). He began publishing The Eye Opener in High River, Alberta, in 1902, and when its humour became too uncomfortable for the people of High River, Edwards moved it to Calgary in 1904.

Edwards is the first of our Canadian humorists to honour the small independent farmer, even as he makes him a figure of fun. One of the earliest examples of his ability to turn the tables on himself in his humour occurs in the Wetaskiwin Breeze of June 20, 1901:

I have sometimes while following my vocation of rustic joshier found myself poking feeble jokes at the honest farmer and his calling. Qui rit mieux rit le dernier. The farmer has the laugh on his side in the long run. What I chiefly envy him for is he does not have to

solicit patronage from anybody. ... He doesn't have to wrangle and play foxy for a living like a lawyer whose bread and butter comes out of the misfortunes of others, and doesn't have to depend on collections doled out as country editors do (Dempsey Best of Bob 223).

This attitude is typical of Edwards' general antagonism to all forms of sham, and to the inequities and duplicities of Canadian society as he saw it.

The front page of each issue of The Eye Opener carried the column headed "Eye Openers." These eye openers are a mixture of short anecdotal narratives (rarely more than three or four paragraphs long), jokes, social notes, aphorisms, cartoons, and poems. By 1905 the "Eye Openers" occasionally extended to a second page, and in 1907 there were times when they extended over three pages. Throughout its life, The Eye Opener was addressed to ordinary farmers and townspeople; it never exhibits the elitist bias that is present in much of Grip.

In The Wit and Wisdom of Bob Edwards, Dempsey refers to the aphorisms, jokes and social notes as forming "three distinct parts to his writing" and says that "each had a highly specialized role to play in the twenty year life of the Eye Opener" (8). As a rule, the humour of the eye openers has a cut and thrust effect, and it is rare for any single topic to be developed beyond a few paragraphs or even sentences in any given issue. However, Edwards did create a number of memorable characters who turn up repeatedly in the eye openers, and he returned over and over again to such topics as politics, social

justice, religion, equality of opportunity, drinking and pretentiousness. In this latter, he was at one with Grip.

One of Edwards' special contributions to Canadian humour is his creation of a number of western characters. The two best known of these are Bertie, the remittance man, and Peter J. McGonigle, the fictitious editor of the equally fictitious Midnapore Gazette. Reports about the latter and the various members of his family appeared regularly for many years. McGonigle reports the local news from Midnapore and Edwards reports the exploits of McGonigle, who drinks hard, chases women, once stole a horse and went to prison, was banqueted on his release and six months after he was buried in a vegetable patch was disinterred and resurrected by his wife with a bottle of rye whiskey. In places outside Calgary, readers often believed that McGonigle was a real person. MacEwan reports, for example, :

Peter J. McGonigle was the favourite across the West. Many people thought he was real and wrote to commend or condemn his conduct. The editor of the London (England) Morning Leader [sic] wrote a column of criticism contending that McGonigle deserves a better treatment than he was receiving from the Eye Opener, adding that the brutal frankness with which a brother journalist was treated was shameful and "this sort of thing would not be tolerated in England for a minute" (107).

The second named character whose exploits provided laughter to the Westerners is Bertie, the remittance man. From 1902 to 1904 the "Eye Openers" include at irregular intervals a series of letters from "A Badly made son to his father in England." Like

other remittance men, Bertie is a younger son whose parents "found it more convenient to ship him off to some remote space in the colonies and maintain him there than attempt to curb his perverse ways at home" (MacEwan 446). Many of his letters give details of Bertie's inventiveness in finding ways to get money from his father. In the fall of 1903, for example, Bertie, whose full name was Albert Buzzard-Cholomondeley of Skookingham, Leicestershire, England, wrote to his father as usual for money. But in this letter he revealed that this time he had a little surprise in store:

I am married to a half-breed and have three ornery-looking copper coloured brats. We are all coming over to visit you at Christmas when you will be having the usual big house party at Skookingham Hall. I shall so like to see the dear place again and my wife is most anxious to become acquainted with her darling husband's people and obtain a glimpse of English society. The hall will be quite a change for her from the log huts and teepees she has been used to all her life.

If I only had a thousand pounds just now with which to start afresh, I would invest it in cattle right away, settle down to business and forgo the pleasure of a trip home and remain right here . . . (October 24, 1903).

Needless to say Bertie gets his money. In subsequent letters he announces that his wife is dying (II. 74); then is dead (II. 76); that he is sentenced to be hanged as a murderer (January 2, 1904); and that he has decided to run for parliament on the prohibition ticket (March 17, 1904)--each time requesting money. MacEwan points out that nobody knows whether or not he was elected because

the next chapter was never written... It almost seemed that the plunge into politics had finished Bertie... but it hadn't... [His name appears later as a delegate to a Rotary convention] and presumably he re-married, because the Eye-Opener reports on September 5, 1912 that Mrs. Buzzard Cholomondeley astonished her friends by giving birth to quadruplets. The attending physician said it reminded him of shelling peas" (MacEwan 58).

The penniless but unpredictable Bertie enjoyed immense popularity with the people of Alberta, and his fame "spread throughout the Chinook Belt" (MacEwan 45), and possibly spawned a number of other remittance men in Canadian humour, the most significant of which, W. H. P. Jarvis' Reginald Brown, will be discussed later.

A third Western character that turns up on the pages of the Calgary Eye-Opener is the English farm-pupil who is not unlike the one that appeared occasionally in the pages of Grip. Often well educated by English standards, but quite helpless when it came to knowledge of life in the Canadian west, the farm-pupil is usually both a snob and a fool. The following story of a farm-pupil, like many of the stories that Edwards published, gives evidence of an anecdotal folk story becoming folk-journalism, in much the same way that such folk stories appeared in the American newspapers of the nineteenth century. Edwards introduces the story as an oral folk story or "yarn" told him by an acquaintance:

Apropos of the young English student-farmer we were talking about last week, here is a yarn that Fred Stimson, former manager of the Bar U ranch near High River, used to tell. Fred at one time kept quite a line of pupil-ranchers. There arrived one day a young Englishman whose parents had paid his fee in advance,

and the next day Fred put him to work. He asked what he would like to do for a starter. The newcomer, who was a fine athletic chap, fresh from Eton, said he would prefer herding until he got more used to the cattle and horses. Fred had six sheep in the pasture, so he put him to herding them inside the fence.

When dinner time came, the young fellow had not shown up, nor did he appear at supper. As they were turning into bed the youth entered the bunkhouse, puffing and blowing, and threw himself into a chair. "Well, what luck? How did you pan out with the sheep?"

"Oh, pretty well. But I had a deuce of a time catching the lambs,"

"The lambs? What lambs?"

"Oh, I've got them out in the shed tied up. I could only catch five though."

So they all went out to the shed and found five live jack-rabbits which this athletic Etonian had run down, thinking they belonged to the sheep (June 24, 1905).

Edwards was unique among Canadian humorists in the way in which he devised "social notes" to ridicule the pretensions of the elite. These "social notes" began as entirely fictitious anecdotes and reports of social events and prominent individuals in the "Eye Openers", and gradually became a blend of fact and fiction. They appeared in the early years of the paper, but became steadily more prominent after 1912. Dempsey says "the social notes reveal a fascinating blend of fact, fiction and sexual suggestiveness which made the items one of his most popular features" (10). From the beginning it is obvious that Edwards is using them to poke fun at the pomposity of the social columns in the English papers. In an early issue of The Eye Opener he says:

The orthodox manner for a paragraphist starting off the first page in the English society paper is to give the



latest movements of royalty and the aristocracy. This is eagerly read and greedily swallowed by the middle classes who form the bulk of subscribers to these really amusing and clever weeklies. For the moment the humble "polloi" are worked into a state of exultation. Poor Brutes! (August 8, 1902)

In a social note (entirely fictitious) in the same issue he describes the musical evening of Imogene McGonigle, daughter of "Old Man McGonigle" and sister of Peter J., the newspaper editor:

Miss Imogene McGonigle, daughter of the eminent cowman, "old man McGonigle," who sold his steers last week at top figure, gave a Soiree Musicale at the magnificent family residence which they got for a song from Bill Moran who went broke last year paying lawyers to get him acquitted of his last cattle-rustling charge. Herr Von Valcheri gave a violin senato in F minor and was heartily encored, responding with imitations of the barnyard. The quacking of ducks was rendered with delightful inconstance (sic) . . . Miss McGonigle, who apologized for her father having rather a skate on gave two piano solos . . . Miss McGonigle intends pursuing her musical studies at the conservatory of the Blackfoot reserve which is famous for imparting a certain swing to tunes ancient and modern.

This note spills secrets that a respectable family would prefer to keep hidden, such as the cost of the family residence and the reason it was so cheap, and in so doing depicts the local gentry as somewhat less than honest. Through the comments on the musicians, and the quality of the music it also reveals that their quest for culture is superior in theory to what it is in practice. Edwards pokes fun by diminishing the musical experience to a concert of "Barnyard imitations" and through deliberate misspellings and references to "the conservatory of the Blackfoot reserve."

No account of The Eye Opener would give a valid indication of its humour without a fair sampling of the jokes. Edwards had the reputation for being somewhat racy in his humour as the following sampling will show:

(1) "So you deceived your husband,' said the judge gravely.  
"On the contrary, my lord, he deceived me. He said he was going out of town and he didn't."

(2) A Buxom young maid charged an aged doctor before a magistrate with having assaulted her.  
"But how was it," said the magistrate "That being strong and vigorous, as you happen to be, you could not successfully resist a feeble old man like the accused? Had you not the strength enough to defend yourself?"  
"Oh, sir!" said the girl, "I' have plenty of strength when I'm angry, but when I'm laughing I'm weak as a cat!" (September 5, 1908)

Some of the jokes are even more elaborate than the latter, others take the form of witty "one-liners" such as "No man particularly admires a woman who is so good that all her woman acquaintances like her" (Feb. 25, 1905). In later years Edwards also published many jokes that can be called "ethnic humour," and he seems to have been particularly fond of those featuring Scots, Irish, and Germans. One example should suffice to indicate the flavour of this kind of joke:

A small Scotch boy on returning home from school in Aberdeen proudly exhibited a book which he triumphantly declared he had won for natural history.  
"Natural history, laddie? Losh, you're far ower young for natural history. Hoo did it happen?" asked his mother.  
"Well, the teacher asked hoo mony legs an ostrich had, and I said three."  
"But an ostrich only 'as twa legs," said the mother.

"I ken," said the urchin, "but a' the rest o' the chaps said four" (September 27, 1910).

Dempsey notes that although many of his jokes "reflected his writing style" (Wit 14), not all were original; many "were probably adapted from British and American newspapers, sporting magazines and other publications to which Edwards subscribed" (13).

Unlike the jokes, most of the aphorisms appear to have originated with Edwards. Dempsey notes that the first steady stream of aphorisms began to appear in The Eye Opener after 1910 (Wit 9) and that "an examination of the standard books of quotations does not reveal any body of sources which appear to have given him a ready made pool of raw materials" (Wit 9). Edwards' aphorisms addressed many topics from male/female relationships to politics--especially the relationship between Canada and the U.S.:

(1) The man who hesitates is lost. So is the woman who doesn't (15 February, 1908).

(2) There are a great many things that drive a man to drink--but the principal one is thirst (March 31, 1911).

(3) Canadians want to be good friends with the Americans, but not to be a square meal for them (September 16, 1911).

(4) The world doesn't care if a man is short of brains provided he is long on money (August 26, 1911).

Because this dissertation examines humour to 1912, the final ten years of the Calgary Eye Opener fall outside its parameters. Suffice it to say that in publishing his paper, Edwards created something entirely new. MacEwan, Edwards' biographer, says:

The paper's journalistic status was strange to the point of appearing ridiculous. It had no subscription list, no printing plant, and, according to critics, not much conscience. It classified [sic] as a newspaper, yet carried little or no news. A 'Journalistic Hermaphrodite' was what fellow-editor Dan McGillicuddy called it (9).

One thing is certain: it brought a breath of the West into the often stuffy realm of Canadian journalism and provided a host of new characters and situations for future humorists. In 1907 it even became the object of a lawsuit launched in England by Lord Strathcona. This occurred as a result of one of Edwards' social notes about McGonigle and is "almost legendary in the realm of Alberta folklore" (Dempsey, Best of Bob 19). On October 6, 1906, The Eye Opener carried a story about a banquet held in Calgary to celebrate the release of that mythical editor, Peter McGonigle, from jail after serving time on a horse stealing charge. The story included the information that during the banquet the master of ceremonies read a letter, purportedly from Lord Strathcona, praising McGonigle. Calgarians laughed, but the British papers which picked up the story published the account and the letter as fact. Lord Strathcona launched a lawsuit for defamation of character and was only persuaded to withdraw it after delicate negotiations. The accounts of this and other lawsuits launched against Edwards and The Eye Opener are, if nothing else, indicative of the widespread popularity of the Eye Opener which was read across Canada, in the United States and even in Great Britain. Given such popularity there can be little doubt that

its breezy colloquial humour had an impact on Canadian humour generally.

### Conclusion

Examination of the humorous periodicals and newspapers of the nineteenth century, indicates that fondness for distancing devices, for puns, and for various forms of parody continue to be major techniques of Canadian humorists throughout the century. Distancing devices such as frame tales and letters enable writers to introduce materials supposedly representing the ideas and literary efforts of the lower classes. This, in turn, allows the introduction of cacography, poor grammar and dialect forms, all of which bring the form of Canadian humour closer to the popular forms of American humour and serve as the basis of the realistic humorous sketch. Throughout the period, much of the humour is characterized by a tone which is both ironic and self-deprecating. There are frequent appearances of traveller-narrators who both laugh at what they do not understand, and are laughed at in turn in much the same way as Haliburton's Sam Slick. Among these a number of character types emerge, including caricatures of members of various English social classes. In a large step away from the humour of the early decades of the century, there is little assumption that Canadians are Englishmen who just happen to be living in North America. Canadian depictions of the English people increasingly reject rigid class

structures and make fun of cultural snobbishness. At the opposite end of the scale, it also ridicules the naivety and limited comprehension of the lower classes in Canada.

Canadian interest in the adventures and misadventures of travellers includes humorous reports of Canadians in Europe, England, and more exotic parts of the Empire. Such Canadians are usually good-hearted but naive, and apt to be taken in by the natives.

There is a humorous immigrant literature stemming from the large number of English, Scots, Irish and Germans, who turn up as fictional characters adjusting to the vagaries of the Canadian milieu in the Canadian papers. Some of these immigrants become quite well developed characters whose adventures delight and amuse the reader. Others remain comic--sometimes racist--caricatures. Of all the emigrants, those from the English middle and upper classes appear to have the most difficulty adapting to the Canadian way of life.

Two new character types appear in the newspapers of the North West, the remittance man and the farm-pupil. The former is frequently depicted through his letters home as a despicable, none too honest, lay-about snob whose main value lies in the money he spends in the local bar. The latter turns up in various tales and yarns as naive and foolish. But there are also more sympathetic images as well. Although few of the inconveniences and joys of real Canadian life appear in the "literary"

periodicals of the nineteenth century, they provide the material for many comic and witty selections in the humorous papers. Comic poetry on all facets of Canadian life, from camping and courting to politics appears, and verse parody emerges as a major device of humour--usually though not always used for political satire.

These verse parodies create humour through reversals of expectation which usually work in one of two ways: either the subject of the original is diminished by the use of low and mundane language or by using the ideas in a completely opposite--and unsuitable--context. Much of this poetry is ironic. Burlesque which pokes fun at the style of the original turns up frequently, especially as a way of deflating pretentious literary productions and making fun of popular novels. Such parodic forms become more sophisticated and subtle in the latter half of the century.

American humorous influence is very strong throughout the period. There is some evidence of folk humour becoming transformed into written humour, but this is much less obvious than it is in the U.S. in the same period. On the other hand, American influence is particularly evident in the frequent Canadian use of cacography, bad grammar and dialect. There are a few instances of the humour of exaggeration, and an occasional tall-tale, mainly in the West, but on the whole, even when the primary technique being used is American, the humour is more

ironic and understated than would be found in similar pieces in the U.S.

Two distinct ideologies underlie Canadian humour in the period after 1840. Both stem from the British tradition, but one, the Tory or ultra-conservative ideology, is becoming increasingly rigid in its opposition to the North American tendencies toward class flexibility, mass education and popular culture. Much of the humour in the papers and periodicals mocks this ideology. The second ideology is reform-minded and, while it retains allegiance to the British parliamentary system, is more democratic and operates in opposition to the British class system and slavish emulation of the English, but this ideology receives little favour in Ontario, especially in intellectual and cultural circles.



## Notes

1. Bob Edwards published the first issue of his paper, the Eye Opener in High River, Alberta on March 4, 1902. He moved the paper to Calgary in 1904. In 1909 he left Calgary and published the paper in Port Hope, Ontario, and later in Winnipeg. He returned to Calgary in 1911 and continued to publish the Eye Opener, sometimes intermittently, until his death in 1922.
2. Once again I remind readers that for a detailed explanation of the impact of romantic nationalism on Canadian literary theory and criticism they should see Margery Fee, "English Canadian Literary Criticism, 1890-1930. Establishing a national Literature." Diss. University of Toronto, 1981.
3. In "Grip and the Bengoughs" Spadoni says, for example, that "Grip had built its reputation on Macdonald's foibles. In spite of the fact that Bengough turned out wonderful cartoons of political figures such as Mowat, MacKenzie and Edward Blake, Macdonald was Bengough's chief object of satire" (23). In The Monthly Epic Sutherland remarks that "John A Macdonald's distress would be Bengough's glee" (71).
4. The first North American periodical to emulate Punch was probably the Jester printed in Boston in 1845. It was followed by Yankee Doodle and Judy (both New York, 1846).
5. The New Dominion and True Humorist also began publication in 1867 (it had been published as The True Humorist in 1866) but it is not wholly a satiric and humorous paper in the way in which Diogenes and Grinchuckle are.
6. Stanley Paul Krutcher, "John Wilson Bengough: Artist of Righteousness" M.A. McMaster, 1975 and Dennis Edward Blake, "J. W. Bengough and Grip: The Canadian Editorial Cartoon Comes of Age" M.A. Wilfred Laurier, 1985.
7. See, for example, the studies by Matthews, MacLulich, Fee, and Beckow already mentioned.
8. During its first year the name of the editor of Grip was given as Jimmuel Briggs, the pen name of Phillips Thompson, who may only have edited a single issue of the paper (Sutherland 76).
9. This was known as Grip's Almanac in 1880 and 1881.

10. A five page article entitled "Bob Edwards and Social Reform" by Max Foran appeared in the Alberta Historical Review in the summer of 1973.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Humorous Fiction and Poetry, 1840-1912

More humorous books by Canadians were published in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain between 1840 and 1912 than most histories of Canadian literature indicate. Many of these books are collections of short stories, sketches, poems and essays which had previously been published in periodicals or newspapers; others are local colour and comic novels, and satiric romances. Very few meet the criteria for inclusion in the Canadian canon. Although many of these writers were highly regarded by their contemporaries and by early twentieth-century critics, most have since received little recognition. In their reliance on parody, satire and irony as major humorous devices their works form a continuity with the newspaper and periodical humour of nineteenth-century Canada. Some British literary influences can be discerned in the diction and form of a number of these books, especially in those which are

parodic. However, the liveliest, most colloquial, and unselfconscious humour is found in popular local colour fiction--works not usually considered as humour in Canada.

As has been the case throughout this study, selection is necessary. I have chosen to discuss less known writers in more detail than those who are better known and I deal with only one or two works of these writers. I have chosen writers whose works I believe to be representative of developments in Canadian humour. There are undoubtedly others whose work also deserves attention.

Although some of these humorists, such as Duncan and DeMille, have received critical attention for their serious works, they have usually received almost as little critical attention for their humour as have the periodical and newspaper humorists. As the preceding chapters have shown, the discomfort of Canadian critics with works which are not serious or which challenge and mock the reactionary values of the upper classes and the literati has virtually forced humour off the Canadian literary map. In his History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation (1923) the American critic, Ray Palmer Baker, notes: "In the Canadas, the writers who count are mainly the Reactionaries" (98), i.e., the Tories. Most Canadian humour is iconoclastic, realistic, irreverent, politically oriented, reform-minded, colloquial, and clearly influenced by popular American

humour. It is not surprising, therefore, that few Canadian humorists have been numbered among the "writers who count."

Many Canadian humorists wrote for readers and about subjects that are not Canadian. Some of Canada's finest humorists, such as Robert Barr, Thomas Lanigan, George Allen and Duncan, published outside the country, or left Canada in order to pursue writing careers in England or the U.S.-- sometimes in both. Others, especially romance and travel writers such as May Agnes Fleming and DeMille continued to live in Canada, but wrote about people and places that are not Canadian. "From its beginnings in the nineteenth century Canadian literary criticism has been organized around the extra-literary concept of the 'nation' and has structured itself through the use of various metaphor-systems of organic growth or natural process" (McCarthy 32). Such concepts of literary nationalism engendered a reluctance to accept such works as Canadian.

The ethos by which "writers knew they had to write literature that gave Canada the historic halo, the nobility, the glorious deeds found in European literature, while at the same time making this literature distinctively Canadian" (Fee 42) governed Canadian criticism until well into this century. As a result works such as DeMille's The Lady of the Ice (1870), Duncan's Cousin Cinderella (1908), and Barr's In the Midst of Alarms (1894)--all works of humour

with Canadian settings or characters--are regarded as insignificant because they do not appear to contribute to elevating the Canadian literary sensibility or defining the unique nature of Canada.

Light or humorous poetry, by its very nature, affronted nineteenth-century Canadian opinions about the nature and role of a national literature. As creators of the highest form of literature, Canadian poets had serious social obligations. According to one early twentieth-century critic, they "were expected to write ceremonial odes for the visits of great and noble persons, for example, and were expected to give utterance to the great religious and political truths" (Newton 44). Poems which poke fun at literary conventions, provoke laughter at the incongruities of life in Canada or recall the experiences of ordinary folk in dialect and/or colloquial language do not meet these obligations.

Like those who wrote for newspapers and periodicals, the Canadian humorists who wrote longer works often deliberately mock high-minded aspirations either by choosing subjects that do not give "Canada the historic halo [or] nobility" (Fee 42), or by creating parodies that reveal the inherent artificiality of Canada's elevated literary ideals. Many nineteenth-century Canadian humorists were working journalists (as opposed to editors of major papers and

periodicals) and employed forms more suited to journalism than "literary" writing. The books of Kernigan, McArthur, Lawson and Jarvis were published because of the support of the newspapers and periodicals for which they worked and which had previously published their sketches and poems.<sup>1</sup> This too was a disadvantage, for the "reactionary" element in central Canada studiously rejected writing associated with these media as too popular or too "American."

The rather stuffy literary atmosphere of late-Victorian Canada did little to encourage the publication of full length humorous works. Few Canadian writers, let alone humorists, could support themselves as professional writers; most had to earn their living at something else. So many found employment in various branches of the civil service that one critic observed: "It is a curious fact that in nineteenth-century Canada literature became connected to the civil service in a way it has never been, one is inclined to think, in any other country outside Tsarist Russia" (Newton, 44).

Furthermore, like critics elsewhere, Canadian critics have been reluctant to pay attention to popular works. They appear to be affected by an "all-or-nothing" attitude which makes selectivity suspect--all the work of a writer must meet their stringent critical standards or the writer is regarded as second-rate. Such attitudes and practices have

adversely affected critical recognition of such significant Canadian humour as the comic verse of Robert Service, the parodic romances of DeMille and Fleming, the comic regional idylls of Montgomery and McClung, and the comic novels of Duncan and Barr, to name but a few.

In the present brief survey, the work of writers who through birth or adoption regard Canada as their home will be discussed without regard to whether these works are set geographically in Canada, whether the writer lived in Canada when he or she wrote a particular work, or whether the work was published in Canada. This allows the inclusion of works often excluded from literary consideration, and suggests that the discussion of Canadian humorists proceed in two broad categories: those who wrote about Canada and those who did not. The former usually published their works in Canada, but most have not continued to be recognized as significant humorists. These writers are considered first. The discussion then turns to selected works of those humorists whose works are not primarily about Canada or who did not continue to live and publish in Canada.

Among humorists in the first category are a number of writers such as Drummond, Service, Montgomery, and Leacock (who was at least as renowned for his parodies as for his writings about Canada). All lived in Canada and achieved international recognition. They are the exceptions. Most of



the humorists who wrote about Canada achieved only regional or provincial reputations and many are scarcely known today. This group includes such writers as McArthur, Kernighan, McClung, Thompson, John Hunter Duvar, Jarvis, G. M. Fairchild, Kate Simpson Hayes (Mary Markwell), DeMille and Barr (the last two wrote some novels with a Canadian setting). For most of these writers, recognition was limited even in their own time, but their humour deserves more critical attention than it has received. This group also includes writers who are known for their more serious writing but who occasionally published humorous works. These writers include Alexander McLachlan, Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts and Crawford, among others. Furthermore, books by such writers as Ralph Connor and Alexander Begg often contain humorous passages which should be considered a part of Canadian humour. Not all of this humour is local colour humour; it also includes parody, puns and word plays, and comic incident or slapstick.

The second major category of Canadian humorists--those whose works are not primarily about Canada or who did not continue to live or publish in Canada--includes such writers as Allen, Frances Blake Crofton, Duncan, Lanigan, De Mille, Fleming and Barr. The tone and techniques of these writers is often similar in many ways to that of other Canadian

humorists except that they employ quite different settings and subject matter.

There is a small third category of Canadian humorists-- those who wrote humorous works for children. These include De Mille, whose humorous children's works were mainly local colour works, and Crofton who wrote "tall tales" of the Munchausen variety. Agnes Maule Machar's stories about Quebec often include incidental humour. Humour for children is mentioned, but not considered in any detail in this thesis.

Many of the humorous works written about Canada in the late nineteenth century fall into a category called "local colour" and have usually been dismissed as "journalistic", "regional" or "popular" by Canadian critics. Not all local colour writing is humorous, but much of it is and, on the whole, Canadian local colour writers, like those in the U.S., made significant contributions to the development of a national humour. In Native American Humour Blair asserts that "some consideration of the part of the vast mass of local colour writing is needful in a study of native American humour in the nineteenth century because much of the fiction of the local colourists is humorous" (125). This comment is true for Canada as well, although local colour writing in Canada developed about twenty years later than it did in the U.S.. This has been problematic for

Canada because Canadian local colour appeared at about the same time as realism was becoming fashionable in Europe. This new literary climate which put a priority on serious realistic fiction, further detracted from appreciation of the popular, humorous, often idealistic character of Canadian local colour writing.

The concrete and specific character of local colour writing with its detailed depictions of life in particular areas of the country, frequently led critics to consider it regional rather than national in scope. This in turn shifted critical focus away the possible merits of such writing, as critics sought national works. It is also true that outside Canada literary critics have usually relegated works of "local colour" to a non-literary, secondary, popular status.

British and American criticism of local colour writing continues to influence Canadian criticism. The British critic, J. A. Cuddon (1992), describes "local colour" as:

the use of detail peculiar to a particular region and environment to add interest and authenticity to a narrative . . . for the most part decorative. When it becomes an essential and intrinsic part of the work then it is more properly called regionalism. A number of American authors have used local colour successfully (509).

It should be noted that Cuddon's use of "regionalism" is not as disparaging as Canadian use of the term. The American

critic C. H. Holman (1980) adds a historical American twist to Cuddon's explanation, saying:

local color writing exists primarily for the portrayal of the people and life of a geographical setting. About 1880 this interest became dominant in American literature; what was called a "local color movement" developed. The various sectional divisions of America were "discovered."

Holman asserts that the humour associated with local colour writing diminishes its literary value:

a subdivision of realism, local colour lacked the basic seriousness of true realism; by and large it was content to be entertainingly informative about the surface peculiarities of special regions (249).

According to both these critics, the difference between significant humour and local colour humour lies in the depth (i.e., universality) of the humour. When the detail is merely quaint or sentimental, or not an essential and intrinsic part of the work, it is considered shallow (local colour); when it is essential it is, of course, significant.

The problem for the critic of a national literature is to determine when the nature of the humour in a work centred on a particular region or group of people is intrinsic and when it is not. This becomes especially difficult in a culture in which the dominant colonial outlook directs writers and critics to look outside their own culture for "universal" and "cosmopolitan" values. By the time local colour writing became popular in Canada in the 1890s and early twentieth century, the colonial nature of Canadian

society meant that the Canadians were "constantly turning their heads toward Britain and Europe to see if 'teacher' approved" (Hardy 499). Canada was mostly a rural society, in which the majority of people were poorly educated, unsophisticated and unacquainted with high culture. Depictions of the regions and the working class offered little to satisfy the rigorous standards of the literati.

Not surprisingly, in Canada, the terms "regional" and "local colour" are usually used pejoratively to classify works which focus on the rural and/or provincial (i.e. outside of central Ontario) areas of the country. In "Local Colour in Canadian Fiction," William H. Magee condemns Canadian local colour writing as a form of navel-gazing that had a negative impact on the development of Canadian literature:

The local colourists, self-sufficient and self-satisfied, developed beyond a literature of regional settings to a literature of regional prides for quite different reasons, some rushed into print to defend their order from the impinging turbulence outside; some set out to evangelize the hapless turbulent outsiders; some just glowed in admiration of their own perfection. Storytellers with each of these three attitudes, emulating their English and American predecessors, took over the Canadian novel for more than a quarter of a century (82).

Like Holman, he regards such humour as a weakness; his comment that "only three Canadian storytellers succeeded at all in centring their local atmosphere on a solemn or a

tragic mode instead of on description, teaching or humour" (88), points to his belief that much of the literary merit of a work is determined by its seriousness. Magee concludes that Canadian local colour falls into the category of "quaint" literature rather than serious depictions of "essential humanity," and that such works contribute little of significance to the national literature of the country. MacMillan (1986) is more convinced than Magee of the significance of local colour writing but in her survey of Maritime local colour writing, she omits any mention of humour or of L. M. Montgomery's works.

In Creative Writing in Canada (1952) Desmond Pacey approved of the appearance of Canadian local colour writing. He refers to such works as "a healthy symptom" of a new stage in aesthetic development: "Canadians in large numbers were becoming aware of the artistic possibilities of their own place" (95). Nevertheless, he found such writing too nostalgic and sentimental to be of significant literary status. Its rural flavour gave evidence of its lack of depth:

It is when we look deeper that the weaknesses of this regionalist movement become apparent. Instead of challenging the values of the new industrial society these writers ignored its existence. Instead of seeking to show how the old ideals could be adapted to the needs of a new generation, they merely sought to turn the clock back (95).

Categorizing works as local colour writing has been a way of legitimizing literary rejection of Canadian rural and small town values and society.

Are humorous Canadian local colour works really as shallow and insignificant as such criticism suggests? According to the criteria of cosmopolitanism employed by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics<sup>2</sup> these works are hopelessly provincial and unsophisticated. But the lack of sophistication, even the (somewhat) outmoded social, political, and religious philosophy that motivates many of the actions may well be accurate reflections of the beliefs and aspirations of rural Canada. Many of these works produce memorable characters and provide valuable glimpses into life in the provinces and territories. The humour in these stories may well be significantly Canadian.

Granted, many are characterized by a moral earnestness and religious didacticism which detract from their humour, but recently critics have begun to reassess this as a reflection of the times. Pamela Slaughter (1989), for example, suggests that "perhaps one of the reasons that McClung's work is now marginalized is that we have grown away from the church. We are simply not willing to consider the articulation of lessons of life in language that finds its roots in the pulpit" (68). Sabbatarianism in such fiction is a case in point. By 1900 no cosmopolitan society

was likely to uphold Sabbatarianism (strict observation of the Sabbath as a holy day), yet such observance was widespread in the conservative society of rural Canada. When Sabbatarianism, and the humour which derives from it, occur in Canadian fiction, can its presence be dismissed as merely "quaint" detail or should it be considered an essential aspect of Canadian society? Roome (1976) points out that "with the clever use of dialect, description and homespun humor, [Nellie] McClung created a strong image of rural Manitoba" (30).

But much of McClung's fiction involves temperance indoctrination. On the other hand, in the Canadian West, drunkenness was a serious, social problem, and opposition to it made the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) a powerful political as well as social organization. The temperance movement was an integral part of Western Canadian society and frequently plays a significant role in fiction about Western Canada. How can this be dismissed as merely quaint detail? or are humorous depictions of Western intemperance and/or the actions of the W.C.T.U. insignificant?

If the true worth of many of these works is to be recognized, we have to begin to look at them differently than what we now do. First, they have to be recognized as humorous works in which ordinary Canadians are being



depicted in all their imperfections; and, second, the requirement of sophistication that has barred so many of these works from consideration has to be reassessed in the light of humour.

Critical tenets are changing. Within the past twenty years, Canadian critics examining the techniques of regional idyll and local colour writing have returned to Pacey's suggestion that such writing may provide valuable insight into Canadian literary developments.<sup>3</sup> Referring to local colour writing as a Canadian branch of the Scottish "kailyard school" Elizabeth Waterston (1973) suggests,

like Sara Jeannette Duncan, we would do better to explore them, enjoy them and learn from them. There is a good deal of kailyard still in our best writers, Laurence, Munro and Mitchell and Ross and Buckler (101).

MacLulich (1990) also says that such writing deserves study, because "the importance of the regional idyll in the development of Canadian fiction has never been adequately acknowledged" (64). Its importance to Canadian humour has yet to be noticed! Still, critics are beginning to recognize that writers such as Montgomery and McClung often employ more subtle and sophisticated techniques than previously suspected. Elizabeth Epperley (1992), draws attention to the fact that

in even the most predictable scenes in [L. M. Montgomery's] novels, we find the twist of irony or humour that transforms the expected into the

surprising. And, more importantly, what Montgomery often did exploit was the archetype rather than the mere formula--the fundamental themes of life rather than just social interchanges (6).

Since the late eighteenth century, Canadian humorists regaled readers through poems, sketches, anecdotes and jokes providing details of the disjunction and heterodoxy that underlie the apparent order and orthodoxy of Canadian society. Frequently, they did this from places and positions outside the cultural and literary elite of the centre--many humorists were Maritimers or Westerners, rural or small town dwellers. Prose humorists, writing largely for local readers, continued to prefer forms which permitted discontinuous, episodic and anecdotal narrative, somewhat reminiscent of the sketches of the earlier nineteenth century. Their language was informal and colloquial and frequently included slang. Their humour often relied on depictions of life in a Canadian community measured against an ideal, usually of British or American origin, and found wanting. But, in a peculiar Canadian twist, the flawed Canadian actuality was often the preferred state. Just as perception of irony depends on the reader's recognition of the gap between what is said and what is meant, perception of Canadian humour frequently depended on recognition of this gap between the ideal and the actual, with the understanding that in Canada the ideal might not represent

perfection after all. Irony thus continued to be an essential component of Canadian humour, although this humour was usually not the humour of ridicule. More often than not, the writer depicted the departures from the (usually imported) ideal with realistic detail and something approaching admiration for the doggedness with which the characters resisted the temptation to abandon their values.

These humorous fictions, essays, and poems which are often set in rural Canada were not necessarily always sentimental and/or nostalgic. Their characteristic anti-sentimental ironic humour shows up, for example, in the many portraits of the Canadian small towns and their inhabitants. The best-known of these fictional communities, Connor's Glengarry, Montgomery's Avonlea, Four Winds, and other small towns on Prince Edward Island, McClung's Millford and Black Creek, and Leacock's Mariposa, together with such lesser-known communities as Fleming's Speckport, Jarvis and Begg's Winnipeg, Agatha Armour's Saint John, and Barr's The Corners, form a collage of a nation ironically defining itself by negatives. This is a far cry from merely depicting Canadian self-satisfaction and complacency. In this regard, these small towns emerge as the true literary ancestors of such twentieth-century communities as Robertson Davies' Salterton and Deptford, and Laurence's Manawaka.

Much of the humour in these small town portraits derives from comic images of people covertly resisting the stern Canadian moral and social codes, of small town one-upmanship as people inflate their importance through petty snobberies, and of a North American defiance of many of the prejudices and class attitudes inherited from the Old Country.

In Canada social humour often stems from the incongruities that arise when, in a changing society, one group clings to a social system quite opposite to that idealized by the others. Such humour is iconoclastic, as it explodes myths and highlights the incongruities of social values stemming simultaneously from British Toryism and American capitalism. Class exists, but Canadian concepts of class lie in neither of the two opposing views. In Canada, membership in the upper class is quite restricted and includes the British-leaning older, wealthier families. It is based on birth, old country connections, land, and inherited wealth. It may even include impoverished descendants of the original families. The middle class, more attuned to American capitalism and republican ideas, is more fluid and accessible to everybody. What seems in Canada to be most desirable is an upper class in which membership is based on education, character, and merit (including wealth). Unlike the idealized British class

structure, Canadians accept upward mobility from capitalistic enterprise, but expect a moral and community obligation absent in American capitalism.

In reality, wealth alone is often the source of self-perceived social ranking. Many of the comic incidents occur when the two class structures meet and clash, or when an individual having one or more of the requisites for a particular class assumes erroneously that he or she has them all. In the satiric works, British-leaning men and women are depicted as too rigid and naive to realize how little relevance their snobbish beliefs have in the North Americanized Canadian society. Armour's Marguerite Verne or Scenes from Canadian life (1886), for example, is a local colour romance which satirizes the idea that the best possible match for a wealthy young Canadian girl is an English aristocrat. In other novels, such as Fleming's A Changed Heart, those who believe they have achieved a high station because of their great wealth but who lack education and wisdom are mocked for their foolishness. Such pretentiousness is often rendered more incongruous by the introduction of one or more characters who are "the genuine article," or more sophisticated pretenders.

In others, for comic purposes, the North American ideals of middle and working class Canadians are depicted under attack by members of the upper classes, by

Anglophiles, and by new emigrants. Such comic collisions with British traditions of order and decorum often occur as small town Canadians, often recent immigrants themselves, are shown caught between the "uncultured" United States and "cultured" Great Britain. They may feel envious of American ideas and institutions, but, for many, American practices are also too extreme, too free for their British-leaning ideals.

The favourite device of many Canadian humorists is similar to that used frequently in short sketches and letters to the editor. They provoke laughter at Canadian shortcomings by bringing into the small town a British relative or friend who looks askance at Canadian democracy in action, or an American who is horrified by adherence to outmoded ideas. At least as much laughter is generated by the British newcomer's inability to recognize that although Canada is a British colony, it is not, nor does it wish to be, a British clone, as it is by the American's inability to recognize that Canadian is not an American clone either. Haliburton's Sam Slick is the first comic portrait of this kind of American in Canada. Less well known is the comic interaction between a Canadian and an American in Robert Barr's In the Midst of Alarms (1894).

More often the newcomer is an Englishman or woman. Although it is not regarded as a regional idyll, much of the

humour in Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist stems from her introduction of the British visitor, Alfred Hesketh, into the social and political affairs of Elgin. The humour so generated in this and other instances is often ironic and understated. In Ralph Connor's Man from Glengarry (1901), a work not usually regarded as humorous, Canadian laughter at British social rigidity is articulated indirectly by young Harry's (and the reader's) rejection of his Aunt, Miss St. Clair's, attitude to his friendship with the local shopkeeper's son. Miss St. Clair has recently come over from England to see to the upbringing of her brother's motherless children, and she has little awareness of the reality of North American schoolyard democracy:

Miss St. Clair thanked heaven that she had the advantages of an English upbringing, and she lamented the stubborn democratic opinions of her brother, who insisted Harry should attend the public school. She was not surprised, though greatly grieved, that Harry chose his friends in school with a fine disregard for "their people." It was with surprise amounting to pain that she found herself one day introduced . . . to Billie Barclay, who turned out to be the son of Harry's favourite confectioner. To his Aunt's remonstrance it seemed to Harry a sufficient reply that Billy was "a brick" and a shining "quarter" on the school rugby team. "But, Harry, think of his people!" urged his Aunt. "Oh rot!" said her irreverent nephew. "I don't play with his people." "But Harry, . . . Why can't you make friends in your own set? There is Hubert Evans and the Langford boys."

"Evans!" snorted Harry with contempt; "beastly snob, and the Langfords are regular Mollies!" Whereupon Miss St. Clair gave up her nephew as impossible (53).

In the West, Englishmen appeared frequently in the comic fiction, usually as gentleman visitors or as remittance men. Both cut rather ridiculous figures. In the early 1900s, the remittance man gained notoriety as a significant comic figure in Canadian writing when "Bob" Edwards published the letters of Bertie (Albert Buzzard-Cholomodely) in the Calgary Eye Opener. In 1909 the first remittance man to appear as the central character of a humorous book appeared in The Letters of a Remittance Man to his Mother by W. H. P. Jarvis.

This book is a literary oddity: a collection of nineteen fictitious letters from a young remittance man, Reginald Brown, to his mother in England, it is hardly long enough or complex enough to be called a novel<sup>4</sup>. But this short work makes a significant contribution to the history of Canadian humour, for in it Jarvis attempts to find appropriate literary expression for the folk humour of the Canadian West.

In using Reginald Brown to narrate his adventures to his mother in England, Jarvis is employing the familiar comic technique of reporting an outsider's observations about an unfamiliar society to someone from his own



society.<sup>5</sup> Since the one thing of which he is certain in this strange place is his mother's sympathy, his letters are full of his confusion about the difficulty of maintaining his role as an English gentleman and finding a respected place in Manitoba. His belief that all aspects of Canadian life, including all Canadians, are his inferiors provides Jarvis with the opportunity for ironic humour. Like the remittance men of Canadian jokes and lore, Brown does not realize that he must adjust to the new society, not it to him. But owing perhaps to his youth, his basic good humour, his falling in love with a Westerner, and a little bit of luck, unlike most remittance men Brown succeeds in changing his attitude to become a successful farmer on the Canadian prairies.

Irony is Jarvis' main humorous device in this epistolary record of Brown's odyssey from supercilious Englishman to successful Canadian rancher. Brown's accounts of his life in Canada reflect both his fascination with the prairie landscape and his initial revulsion towards Canadians whom he regards as uncultured, low class louts. He reports his adventures and misadventures with devastating honesty and a total inability to see anybody's perspective but his own. He is as naive in his inability to understand his father's refusal to send him more money as he is in his inability to recognize the unsavoury character of the other

remittance men with whom he associates. He repeats, in a combination of bewilderment and outrage, the anecdotes and jokes about remittance men which he hears frequently, but he has no real grasp of the rationale for them. His belief in the inherent superiority of Englishmen of his class and his disregard for Canadians provide plenty of opportunities for comic incident. In one such incident, he encounters a peculiar looking piebald horse, which he was warned is "mean", and about which he was told "he'll buck!" Typically, he decides that he is merely being "chaffed" by his host. His pride is affronted: "[nobody could] mean to say that this horse can throw a man taught to ride by an English riding master" (25). So he mounts the horse and gives him his heel. In his own words:

Just what happened next I do not know. I felt the horse go several times into the air, and at each descent my head jolted horribly, my jaws came together, and an awful shock ran up my spinal column.

The next thing Carlisle [his host] was lifting me to my feet and brushing the dust from my clothes, while the horrid horse stood with the same vacant, innocent expression in his eyes, though vaguely watching me, and the crowd was convulsed with laughter (26-7).

In this incident, as in many others, Brown neither understood, nor cared to find out what the strange Canadian words "mean" and "buck" meant. That incident signifies the beginning, at one level of Canadian society, of the post-colonial outlook that was emerging in the West.

In his depiction of the democratic West in contrast to the more colonial-minded East, Jarvis relies on local colour and popular lore. One of the ranchers refers to the people of Ontario who revere the British as "Anglomaniacs." In contrast, underlying the Letters is a lack of reverence towards the British which permits Jarvis to make Brown the butt of jokes and the victim of his own foolishness. The reader is put in the position of being an insider, ranged against Brown, the undesirable outsider, and is entertained by the jokes, anecdotes and tall tales that Brown finds so confusing. As insider, the reader is doubly amused by Brown's bewildered reactions to them, to the colloquial languages of Westerners and to the situations in which he finds himself. Some readers may feel that Jarvis has weakened this work by permitting Brown to integrate into Canadian society, but such movement towards integration is the essence of comedy, and from the outset, this work has clearly been a comedy.

Like the remittance man, the British gentleman who plans to settle in Canada, or comes for an extended visit offers Western humorists plenty of material for humour. One such gentleman is comically depicted in Kate Simpson Hayes' (Mary Markwell) Prairie Pot-pourri (1895). In "The La-de-dah from London", Hayes entertains her readers by creating a character who believes he alone is doing things correctly in

relation to everyone else he meets in the Canadian West. D. G. Periwinkle-Brown has been sent out to Canada by his "Aunt Toe", whose heir he is, because "she wanted me to lawn the difficulties that adinawry people have to--well, your know, have to contend with." As in Jarvis' Letters, this story depicts the eventual and eventful integration of the Londoner into the Canadian prairie community, but not before he has wasted thousands of pounds and made ridiculous mistakes by refusing either to take the advice offered him by his Canadian friends or to compromise his own ideas by observing the Canadian reality. Integration into community appears to be essential to works (including poetry) of local colour humour in Canada. Failure to integrate is reserved for tragic and melodramatic "serious" stories and poems.

In McClung's small town of Millford, Manitoba, no "foreigners" are introduced and the most important characters are lower class. Humour stems partly from the gap between the upper and lower class which is so wide as to be virtually unbridgeable, especially when even the kindest, wealthiest, most educated, helpful people are naive and unsophisticated. In Sowing Seeds in Danny (1908) McClung depicts the involvement of Mrs. Francis, a wealthy lady, in the life of the Watsons, a poor family of Irish descent in whom she has become interested. Initially McClung highlights Mrs. Francis' well-meaning but foolish naivety about the

reality of poverty. Having read the "wonderful" book Motherhood by Dr. Ernestus Parker, Mrs Francis, who has no children and plenty of money, is convinced Parker's advice on child rearing would be of great benefit to her washerwoman, Mrs. Watson, the mother of nine children:

"You must be puzzled many times in the training of so many little minds, and Dr. Parker really does throw wonderful light on all the problems that confront mothers. And I am sure the mother of nine must have a great many perplexities." Yes, Mrs Watson had a great many perplexities--how to make trousers for four boys out of the one old pair the minister's wife had given her . . . Yes, Mrs. Watson had her problems; but they were not the kind that Dr. Ernestus Parker had dealt with in his book (7).

Blissfully unconscious of the inadequacy of her perception of the help Mrs. Watson needs in rearing her children, Mrs. Francis quite proudly records in her little red book later that day:

Dec. 7, 1903. Talked with one woman today re. Beauty of Motherhood. Recommended Dr. Parker's book. Believe good done (8).

Standards of decency and morality are pretty much left to the women and the minister in most Canadian humorous fiction, but the rationale for these standards is sometimes shrouded in mystery, or quite arbitrary. In Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables (1908) Anne is mystified when she inadvertently violates one of Avonlea's standards of decency by decorating her Sunday hat with the wildflowers she picked on her way to church:

"Anne, Mrs Rachel says you went to church last Sunday with your hat rigged out ridiculous with roses and buttercups. What on earth put you up to such a caper? a pretty-looking object you must have been!"

"Oh. I know pink and yellow aren't becoming to me," began Anne.

"Becoming fiddlesticks! It was putting flowers on your hat at all, no matter what color they were, that was ridiculous. You are an aggravating child!"

"I don't see why it's any more ridiculous to wear flowers on your hat than on your dress, " protested Anne. "Lots of little girls there had bouquets pinned on their dresses. What was the difference?"

But Marilla was not to be drawn from the safe concrete into dubious paths of the abstract (84).

The humour lies as much in Marilla's inability to defend her position as in Anne's genuine consternation. Writers such as McClung and Montgomery record the naivety, the colloquial language, everyday habits and the beliefs (including the social myths) of Canadian small town inhabitants in careful detail, giving their readers a revealing but lighthearted glimpse into the day-to-day existence of ordinary people.

Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables and some of her other novels are particularly significant in their depiction of the Canadian colloquial voice. This is especially true of The Story Girl (1911) in which she

not only sets the context but includes the comments of the listeners as the story progresses and the discussions that take place after the story has ended. . . . In this undertaking, Montgomery is utilizing a storyteller-audience pattern, which she knows well (Coldwell 127).

In these books, one laughs in recognition of the characters' apt phrasing and analogies and enjoys their astute homespun philosophy. The scale of life in these books is bounded by the town limits--or those of the nearest community, but like Leacock's Sunshine Sketches they contain much that is universal to small rural Canadian communities.

The novels and stories of the local colour humorists include numerous comic incidents, such as Anne's accidental use of liniment in the cake prepared for the minister's visit or the bringing in of John Thomas Green's elusive vote in The Black Creek Stopping House (1912). But the greatest source of their humour is humour of character. It stems from the depiction of the everyday lives of their unsophisticated characters. Even the receipt of a letter can be a major event for a young man such as Tom Motherwell in Sowing Seeds in Danny:

When Tom Motherwell called at the Millford post office one day he got the surprise of his life. The Englishman has asked him to get his mail, and, of course, there was the Northwest Farmer to get, and there might be catalogues; but the possibilities of a letter addressed Mr. Thos. Motherwell did not occur to him. But it was there.

A square gray envelope with his name written on it. He had never before got a real letter. Once he had a machinery catalogue sent to him with a typewritten letter inside beginning "Dear Sir," but his mother told him it was just money they were after, but what would she say if she saw this?

He did not trust himself to open it in the plain gaze of the people in the post office. The girl

behind the counter noticed his excitement.  
 "Ye needn't glue yer eye on me," Tom thought  
 indignantly. "I'll not open it here for you to  
 watch me. They're awful pryin' in this office.  
 What do you bet she has n't opened it?" (182-3)

The sympathetic portraits of such individuals created in these works makes possible their emergence as complex human beings rather than mere caricatures.

In a somewhat different form of naivety, the inhabitants of Speckport, the Canadian small town setting of Fleming's parodic romance, A Changed Heart, inflate the importance of their town (and their own self-importance) by seeing in it reflections of New York and London: "Speckport has its Fifth Avenue as well as New York. Not that they call it Fifth Avenue, you understand; its name is Golden Row and the abiders therein are made of the porcelain of human clay" (8). Much of the satiric humour of this novel arises from the Speckportian craving for the class, wealth, and sophistication they associate with these great cities, and their blind mistaking of appearance for reality. Miss Laura Blake believes herself to be both a reader and a writer of superior literary works. She spends much of her time writing and when she submits her story (under the penname "Incognita") to the local newspaper, the editor recognizes her style immediately. Having read her story he recognizes its provenance:



[Miss Laura Blake] had just finished reading the Seven Loves of Mammon by George Augustus Lake, hence the title (Ten Daughters of Dives) and quaint style in which the thing was written. So extremely quaint and original was the style that it soared totally beyond the comprehension of all ordinary intellects (135).

In the last decades of the nineteenth century local colour stories about French Canada were especially popular. In their survey of fiction in Canada between 1880 and 1920, Roper, Schneider and Beharriell report that

the French-Canadian scene was widely used by Canadian writers--and others--from 1890-1915. It provided a setting for more than seventy-five volumes of historical romances, of local colour stories, and of tales and legends published during these years, mostly between 1895 and 1902 (300).

Of these collections, two are outstanding, E. W. Thomson's Old Man Savarin and Other Stories (1895) and D. C. Scott's In the Village of Viger (1896). Thomson's is significant for Canadian humour.

Recognition of Thomson's significance as a humorist was immediate. In an article entitled "Mr. Thomson's Old Man Savarin Stories," his friend Archibald Lampman said he was delighted to realize that

a collection of stories with so much wit and humour had been written not by a foreign litterateur, but by a Canadian who has lived in the places the very scent of whose pines and the pure breath of whose atmosphere he brings before us, and worked with the people whose simple humanity and genuine talk lend humour and life to his pages (The Week Aug. 9 1895).

Thomson has since received more recognition as an important pioneer in Canadian realism than as a humorist.<sup>6</sup> In her introduction to the reprint of Old Man Savarin Stories (1974), Linda Sheshko describes him as a "transitional figure between the nineteenth century historical romances, and the realistic trends of the twentieth century, [who kept] alive the humorous strain in Canadian fiction between its initiation by Haliburton and its revival by Leacock.

(xxi) Lorraine McMullen pays more attention to his humour:

Thomson continues in the tradition of Thomas Chandler Haliburton in his presentation of a localized landscape, his frequently anecdotal style, and use of dialect. As a humorist, however, he does not have Haliburton's range; he seldom, for example, uses satire. He is adept at the humour of situation and of character, and at the gently ironic comment. ("Tales" 192)

In her later introduction to his selected stories, she merely notes that "Contributing also in no small measure to the effectiveness of his stories are Thomson's humour and his ability to create sharply memorable characters"

(Selected Stories xvii).

In addition to those stories which are distinctly humorous throughout, Thomson's reputation as a humorist stems from his use of dialect and the liveliness of dialogue and description in stories which are otherwise serious. In "Dour Davie's Ride," for example, there is realistic humour in the reaction of the men to Davie's arrival at the "Widow

Green's rude inn" and in their consternation when they discover why he shouted for someone to "Come out!"

That was insolence in the teamsters code. Come out indeed! The Widow Green bustling about with fried pork, felt outraged. To be called out!--of her own house!--like a dog!--not her!

"Come out here, somebody!" Davie shouted again.

"G'out and break his head one of you," said fighting Moses Frost. "To be shoutin' like a lord!" Moses was too great a personage to go out and wreak vengeance on an unknown.

. . . . .

"What for you shout lak' dat? Call mans hout, hey?" said Narcisse. "I've got good mind for broke your head, me!"

. . . "Some white man come out. My leg's broke."

Oh, then the up-jumping of the men! Moses, striding forth, ruthlessly shoved Narcisse, who lay and cowered with legs up as a dog trying to placate an angry master (Old Man Savarin 130-31).

The best of his humorous stories in Old Man Savarin are, "Old Man Savarin," "The Privilege of the Limits," and "The Red-Headed Windego." Other humorous stories such as "Boss of the World" and "Miss Minnelly's Management" appeared after 1912, outside the period being considered.

In Thomson's humorous stories, each story features one or more characters who stubbornly refuse to bow to what appear to be superior forces. In "Old Man Savarin" Old Ma'ame Paradis proudly tells how she outsmarted the powerful, but mean and greedy old merchant, Old Man Savarin when she was only fifteen years old. Thomson uses the

traditional oral storytelling device of the conversational frame to provide Old Ma'ame Paradis with the opportunity to relate her tale to a narrator, who in turn relates the story to us. In "a cheerful and loquacious humor" and a dialect meant to represent the peculiar English of the French-Canadian habitant, she reveals how her "fader" was deprived of his family's fishing platform on the river and became frustrated when the fines he paid did not restore his fishing rights. She reveals her delight when, following an accident, she ended up fishing Old Man Savarin out of the river in her scoop:

So dere's de old rascal in de scoop, but when I'll get him safe, I hain't able for pull him in one bit. I'll only be able for hold on an' laugh, laugh--he's look ver' queer! All I can do is to hold him dere so he can't go down de culbute. I can't pull him up if I want to.

With the help of her seventeen-year-old cousin, she hauls him in--for a fee. "We hain't big' nuff fool for to let him out of de net till he's take out his purse an' pay de twelve dollare." Although the focus of her story is the actions of men, Ma'ame Paradis also describes her thoughts and actions as she tells this tale. The other two humorous stories, "The Privilege of the Limits" and "The Red-Headed Windego" describe a world in which women have little or no place.

These two stories do not focus on French-Canadian habitants in the same detail, although they are present in

"The Red-Headed Windego." Like "Old Man Savarin", "The Privilege of the Limits" is an oral tale told by an old woman, but in this story the narrator is Scottish. Old Mrs. McTavish relishes the story of the time her grandfather was put in prison for a debt "that never was due till it was paid." She tells how he outwits those who would prevent him from returning home at a time of crisis in his family. Like Old Ma'ame Paradis, she dramatically recreates the dialogue between her grandfather and his opponent, and between her grandfather and his conscience as he solves the problem of how to visit his ailing child and yet keep his word not to go beyond "the limits" of the prison yard. His solution is a trick of logic. He carries the post which formed the "limit" ever before him on his way home, and tied to his back on his return to prison, "so as he [always] would be between it and the jail" (25). The character of the grandfather and his stern code of honour are vividly presented.

Unlike the other two, "The Red-Headed Windego" is a third person narrative which begins in media res. It centres on the effort of a young survey boss to overcome the fear of his survey crew after they discovered Windego tracks, and decided that they cannot proceed any further: "Hain't I just seen de track? I'm go' n' back, me, if I don't get a copper of pay for de whole winter!" (186) Tom,

the young surveyor, "must bring the maker of those tracks promptly to book, or suffer his men to desert the survey, and cost him a whole winter's work, besides making him a laughing-stock in the settlements" (189). Believing that the Windego is a man and not a supernatural creature, he sets out to track and capture him. When he succeeds in outsmarting the trickster, he wins not only the appreciation of his men but also the respect of Red Dick (the "Windego") who, "grinned pleasantly and remarked: . . . "Well you're a smart young feller, Mr. Dunscombe." This story turns on the quickwittedness and stubbornness of the hero, who is otherwise quite ordinary.

Stories such as E. W. Thomson's serve as a benchmark of local colour humorous fiction at the close of the nineteenth century. In them one perceives oral and folk humour assuming new artistic form in Canada. G. M. Fairchild's A Ridiculous Courting and Other Stories of French Canada (1900) also includes humorous stories, but lacks Thomson's skilful merging of folk humour and techniques of literary realism.

The work of Peter McArthur offers us another dimension of Canadian humour--the non-fiction sketch about the comedy of rural life without condescension or the use of dialect. McArthur's sketches include comic incident, literary allusions and fanciful thoughts. In his biography of Peter

McArthur, Alec Lucas quotes from one of McArthur's unpublished manuscripts a sentence which reveals McArthur's philosophy: "The history of Canada has never been written because it is so simple and so wonderful ... the glory of Canada does not rest on the history of soldiers and statesmen ... but on the still unwritten unsung story of the pioneers" (161). Throughout McArthur's prose--and even in his poetry--his reverence for the simple agrarian life, whether that life was lived years ago or was being lived on the farms of the present is evident. Evidently, his objective was to find a suitable literary means to express his beliefs about this life. His humour is fanciful and anecdotal but in his poems, it is parodic and ironic, rather than that of the storyteller.

In 1908, Peter McArthur returned to the old homestead in Ekfrid Township, Ontario after eighteen years in New York and London, and began publishing weekly essays about country life in The Globe and The Farmer's Advocate. In these essays, rural Ontario finally found a humorist who could articulate the delights and incongruities of this way of life, while at the same time express these observations in a manner acceptable to those of discerning literary taste. None of the collected volumes of these farm pieces falls within the dates which have been used to establish the parameters of this dissertation, for the first collection,

In Pastures Green did not appear until 1915. But, because the material was published years before the book appeared, it should be considered here. This collection offers a good introduction to McArthur's humour as well as his serious side.

McArthur himself believed that humour was based primarily on incongruity, that it was

comic eccentricity or absurdity fused with geniality and high spirits [which] aims to provoke laughter, but not at its subject for it does not make comparisons between the subject and accepted social standards in order to deride its weakness (qtd. in Lucas 104).

Such incongruity may stem from the juxtaposition of noble thoughts and homely setting, as it does in the following excerpt from a sketch in which he speculates upon the philosophical disposition of cows:

Fate -- there it is. Fate is undoubtedly the favourite subject of meditative cows. You have only to look at them and notice their awful solemnity and the gravity of their mild and magnificent eyes to know that they are not thinking of any ordinary matter like the beef trust, or the high cost of hay, or anything of that sort. But it is not enough to have a cow see a gate to start her thinking. You must try to drive her through it. In fact, I am not sure that one lone cow would start thinking even in a gate. You must have a herd of them and it usually works out in about this way (In Pastures Green 5).

For the most part McArthur located much of his humour in the happenings on the farm and in his speculations on what the animals might think had they the power of rational thought.



McArthur did not write narrative fiction or make extensive use of dialect for humorous purposes. In addition to his farm pieces, McArthur's prose humour included some burlesque and is frequently satiric, but these works were not written either in Canada or for Canadians. In To Be Taken With Salt. Being An Essay on Teaching One's Grandmother to Suck Eggs (1903) the gently satiric nature of his humour as well as his delight in burlesque is apparent. In the following excerpt he pokes fun at the disparity between the servility of the British workingman and his perceptions of himself as a free, empowered citizen of a great nation:

When [the waiter] finally appeared I said in my most unconcerned manner,  
 'Tell the clerk that I should like to have my bill, please'  
 'Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Yes, sir. Anything else, sir?'  
 'Nothing else,' I replied curtly.  
 'No, sir? Thank you, sir.' And he bowed himself out.  
 'And this,' I thought to myself, 'is a sovereign voter and free citizen of the greatest Empire the world has ever known' (19-20).

This volume contains two essays, "Canada As She is Misunderstood" and "Another 'Great Misunderstood'," which had earlier appeared in Punch. (McArthur is one of the few Canadian humorists to be so honoured.) In the former he offers the prospectus for a rewritten history of Canada that would meet British beliefs about her. His prospectus

includes such chapters as

Chapter IX.--- The imports of Canada, with special reference to younger sons who need a change of venue. Instances will be cited of black sheep pasturing for a few years on the plains of Canada, and then returning to their happy homes with only slight Southdown markings (173).

In this description McArthur reminds the British of one of their less desirable exports to Canada--the "black sheep" of upper level families whom Canadians called "remittance men" and whose lack of preparedness for life in a pioneering country and dandified ways made them the subject of jokes and humorous anecdotes in Canadian newspapers.

Critics of the early twentieth century were quite vocal in praise of McArthur's poetry. The Prodigal and Other Poems (1907) included poems published earlier in Five Sonnets (1899) and most of the poems of Lines (1901). In his criticism of McArthur in the Makers of Canadian Literature series, William Arthur Deacon praised the poems and was reluctant to concede the importance of the essays which "proclaimed the value of the simple life" (Lucas 21). Deacon said:

Nine persons out of ten, if asked to name Peter McArthur's chief title to a place in Canadian literature, would make, unhesitatingly, some reference to the "farm" articles in the Toronto Globe. The tenth would uphold him as a humorist. All would be wrong, though their verdicts would represent accurately the current, popular estimation of his work. After sifting the mass of

his writings, it is his poetry which is found to possess the greatest degree of literary merit (115).

On the whole, Deacon is isolated by his preference for his serious writing, for McArthur has been most recognized for his humour.<sup>7</sup> Some critics such as Alec Lucas value his humour both as a poet and as an essayist. Unlike Deacon whose highest praise was reserved for McArthur's serious poetry, Lucas asserts the best poetry in The Prodigal (1907) is its light verse.<sup>8</sup> He says these poems are "spiced with satire or leavened with good-natured humour [which] acts as a countermeasure of the sobersided poems" (35). These poems, like the best of McArthur's essays, are influenced by his reading of British literature, but are based on images of ordinary events of life, and their humour is communicated through their astute observations, playfulness and jocular tone.

In "To My Fashionable Fiancee," McArthur contrasts "the olden lovers" with modern ones, deciding that he prefers things as they are in the present:

And I am not a woodsman wight,  
 Nor yet a leather-jerkined yeoman,  
 But I am glad I'm not a knight  
 With many a boiler-plated foeman.  
 .....

And I'd not care to gather haws,  
 And sit in thorny shades to chew them,  
 And who would pipe on oaten straws  
 When he might suck mint-juleps through them!  
 (54-5)

In another poem in this collection, "To The Birds," he good-humoursly warns the birds that they should not be so joyous in a world in which the gloom and doom of modern realism are more appreciated than the old ideals of beauty and joy:

How dare you pour from happy throats  
 Such merry songs with raptured haste,  
 While all our poets wail and weep,  
 And readers sob themselves to sleep?

Again:

'Tis clear to me, you've never read  
 The turgid tomes that Ibsen writes,  
 Nor mourned with Tolstoi virtue dead,  
 Nor over Howells pored o' nights:  
 For you are glad with all your power;  
 For shame! Go study Schopenhauer.

In the years following the publication of The Prodigal, McArthur developed the parody ballade as a weapon for satire. Of these poems, Lucas remarked:

they are ephemera, but are good fun with their clever lines and sometimes outrageous rhymes. If the poet fails to follow the French form he excuses himself on the basis of "many precedents for variations" and, to add to their mockery, he addresses almost all to the Prince of Wales (36).

Lucas suggests that nothing in Canadian literature can surpass "A Crane Song" or "The Mockingbird" for sheer good humour and high-spirited poetry. He describes the latter as a "piece of tomfoolery" that illustrates McArthur's amazing ability to quote bits and pieces from almost everyone and fuse them:

Mock, throw away and recapture again!  
 Hark! Hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,

And Phoebus 'gins arise,  
His steeds to water at the springs  
On chaliced flowers that lies.

(Parse it! parse it! Tweedle-dee-dee!  
Silly grammarian, see! see! see!)  
(qtd. in Lucas, 38)

Lucas concludes that if McArthur's humorous verse had been prose, it would undoubtedly have a recognized place in our literature, for "the humorous essay appears to be a more accepted genre than the humorous poem" (38).

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Canadian popular poetry was dominated by the work of W. H. Drummond and Robert Service, both of whom achieved enviable international reputations. Although not all of their poetry is humorous, they were both at their best, their most original, and most accomplished in this mode. They are clearly working in the tradition of the local colour movement, although they have little in common as poets. Jay Johnson (1989) points out that

both writers took specific geographic fragments of the young nation of Canada, still at that time largely unpossessed by hand and mind, and made them their special preserves . . . The specific regions that these writers claimed as their imaginative territories--the pastoral habitant world and the boisterous Klondike--were two of the most colourful fragments that the Canadian mosaic had to offer (15).

Neither poet is looked upon favourably today for a variety of reasons,<sup>9</sup> but their achievement should not be scorned, and they should be afforded an honourable place as

significant Canadian humorists.

Between 1898 and 1907, W. H. Drummond published four volumes of narrative verse in which he introduced readers to an array of French-Canadian habitants speaking in their own dialect. On the whole, contemporary Canadian critics believed that in his sympathetic rendering of great and small events in the lives of these French-Canadian habitants, Drummond was making a significant contribution to Canadian literature as well as contributing to the store of Canadian humour.<sup>10</sup>

Drummond's habitants are ordinary French Canadian farmers who live in or near the small villages of rural Quebec. Their rural lifestyle has protected them from the influences of nineteenth-century "progress," and in their lives which are often difficult and sometimes tragic, they exemplify the virtues of faith in and acceptance of God's Will. In a dialect he devised to simulate the English of native French speakers speaking an unaccustomed language, Drummond delineates their zest for life and their great love of family and place. Some of his poems are nostalgic, some tragic, others funny; all convey powerful emotions. In "De Bell de St. Michel," an unnamed habitant now living in the United States continues to hear the bell of St. Michel his home church ringing in his heart, and reminding him of home

and his childhood. In an inner dialogue he conveys his amazement at the extent and duration of his homesickness:

It's fonny t'ing, for me I'm sure, dat's travel  
 ev'ryw'ere  
 How moche I t'ink of long ago w'en I be leevin'  
 dere;  
 I can't 'splain dat at all, at all, mebbe it's  
 naturel,  
 But I can't help it w'en I hear de bell of St.  
 Michel.

More shocking is his discovery that notwithstanding the material benefits of living in a more prosperous economy he is not happy, and he resolves to return to his native parish:

O! all de monee dat I mak' w'en I be travel roun'  
 Can't kip me long away from home on dis beeg  
 Yankee town,  
 I t'ink I'll settle down again on parish Saint  
 Michel,  
 An' leev an' die more satisfy so long I hear dat  
 bell.

(The Habitant 1911 71)

Drummond's are the first Canadian poems to speak with unabashed love of place and family. But this very fact has rendered them too regional and too sentimental for critics of the cosmopolitan persuasion.

Although some of the humour of Drummond's poetry derives from the peculiarities of the dialect he created, much more stems from the simplicity and warmth and wit of the individual characters who openly reveal their feelings about the people and events in their lives. In "Leetle Bateese," for example, he records the love of family through

a grandfather's sentimental pride as he watches his normally mischievous grandson sleeping:

You bad leetle boy, not moche you care  
 How busy you're kipin' your poor gran'pere  
 Tryin' to stop you ev'ry day  
 Chasin' de hen aroun' de hay--  
 W'y don't you geev' dem a chance to lay?  
 Leetle Bateese!  
 (Johnny Courteau 1901 116)

Drummond's poetry, designed to present the strengths of the habitants, set against the serious poetry of England in the first decade of the twentieth century, appears neither sophisticated nor subtle. Compared to humorous poetry of other nations, it is both sophisticated and subtle. To refer to it as Johnson does, as "not intended for all time" (29), and like Pacey, as belonging to "an age of brass" in Canadian poetry, with no consideration of Drummond's humour does Canada a great disservice.

Drummond is virtually alone as a local colour dialect poet. Other Canadian humorous poets often create humour through parody and the juxtaposition of the Canadian reality with the social and literary conventions inherited from England and Europe. Even when they appear to be giving poetic expression to the simplicity and homeliness of rural Canada, these poems are almost inevitably counterpointed against Old World poetic conventions and poems.

In the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, Canadians were vastly entertained by the



comic poetry of another local colour poet, Robert Kirkland Kernighan (The Khan) who produced a number of very clever parodic poems which also recreate the Canadian rural experience. The anonymous author of the Preface to The Khan's Book of Verse paid Kernighan a high tribute to when he said:

Its texts are everyday happenings, everyday men and women, everyday pictures of Canadian life. Its laughter is wholesome and generous, there is no cynicism in its wrath and its passion [is] for what is beautiful, true, loyal and courageous (viii).

The Khan, as Kernighan always signed his verse, published his poems in Ontario newspapers and periodicals for more than thirty years. His verse was collected and published posthumously in 1925. His poetry is apparently too close to folk poetry to have made any impression on twentieth-century critics for neither he nor his work is mentioned in such standard reference works as The Literary History of Canada and The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature.

Kernighan's poetry is comic verse which moves, at its best, into the realm of pure humour. His subject matter is the ordinary--the frogs that sing in the ponds, hens and cows and flowers, and men and women in ordinary occupations such as farming or running a household. In "The Deprecating Hen," for example, he recounts the difficulty of living with a freedom loving hen who "plunders and she scratches, she



Since Kernighan's work is so little known, one of his poems "Gentle Spring" is here quoted in full in order to clarify his comic technique. This poem presents evidence of Kernighan's ability to generate humour from a playful description of the Canadian reality through what Nash has called pseudoparody. In pseudoparody no specific text is parodied but it "is full of echoes of half-remembered writings" (99). In this poem Kernigan notes the problem that besets both poet and robin because of the lateness of spring in Canada. The narrator-poet feels bound by traditional British (and European) poetic conventions about spring, which, from Chaucer onwards, referred to the gentle breezes of April and the warmth of the days in May. As a result he feels a bond with the robin which has migrated north too early:

I sit with my feet in the oven,  
     My nose close up to the pipe,  
 I'm as jokey as any spring robin,  
     That's fresh and is rather unripe.

I still wear my ear muffs and cap,  
     I still to my overcoat cling,  
 Still feel it my duty to sit  
     And warble of beautiful spring.

But my warble is husky and harsh,  
     And my melody suffers from cracks;  
 For the froglets down there in the marsh  
     Are shivering with humps on their backs.

Of my country I'm awfully proud,  
     So I close to the cooking stove cling,  
 And lilt, like a dog in a shroud  
     Of the beautiful coming of spring.

The neck of old winter's giraffic,  
 It reaches out far into May;  
 O, come with your sonnet seraphic,  
 Sweet robin, come early I pray.

But be sure to put overshoes on,  
 Bring an overcoat over your wing,  
 And a bag full of mufflers and socks,  
 When you herald Ethereal Spring.

But still will I manfully sit,  
 While I close to the cooking stove cling;  
 And sing like a frosted tomtit  
 Of gentle Ethereal Spring.

Contributing to the comic effect of such verse is his use of neologism and colloquialism. Kernighan is one of the first Canadian poets to delineate the Canadian colloquial voice without the aid of dialect. His skill in creating such neologisms as "giraffic" indicate that his work is more sophisticated than is usually the case in either folk poetry or doggerel.

Kernighan's poetry is clearly influenced by British literary conventions. The humorous poetry of Crawford and Service, which continues to be strongly influenced by the British tradition shows major influences of American nineteenth century popular literature as well.

Crawford is studied today mainly for her "mythopoeic" poetry: the celebrated Indian passages in "Malcolm's Katie" and such other "mythic" poems as "Gisli, The Chieftain," "The Camp of Souls," "Said the Canoe," and the more recently discovered "Hugh and Ion."<sup>11</sup> She is less known as the

writer of humorous poems, most of which she wrote in dialect. Crawford's longest humorous poem is "Ol' Spookses Pass," the title poem of the only collection of her poetry published in her lifetime, Ol' Spookses Pass, Malcolm's Katie and Other Poems (1884). Crawford published most of her poetry in various Toronto newspapers. She wrote more humorous poems than any other nineteenth-century Canadian female poet--she could easily be given the title of "mother of Canadian humorous poetry". Garvin's edition of her poetry, The Collected Poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford (1905), which was instrumental in establishing her reputation as a poet of significance, contains such humorous poems as: "The Christmas Baby," "Love in a Dairy," "Bouche Mignon," "Love and Reason," "Ol' Spence," "The Farmer's Daughter Cherry," "The Deacon and His Daughter," "Father Stebbins' Opinions," "I'll Laugh to See the Year In," "My Ain Bonnie Lass o' the Glen," and "Ol' Spookses' Pass." In all of these poems, Crawford's humour stems from her use of dialect, her perceptions of the glorious in the ordinary, everyday details of life, the power of her imagination to soar into the realms of pure fantasy--as it does in "The Christmas Baby" or to recreate the harsh world of the cowboy as in "Ol' Spookses' Pass"--and her depiction of the dry wit and homespun wisdom of her characters, such as Farmer Stebbins and Cherry.

There is virtually no criticism of Crawford as a humorist. Logan characterized her humour as "subtle, veracious and genuinely human but not coarse" (51). Much of its appeal stems from the power with which she incorporates realistic detail to create lively characters. Her female characters are young, spunky and mischievous. Cherry, the heroine of "The Farmer's Daughter Cherry" outwits her father in order to marry the man she loves who does not meet her father's approval. Her father, like Malcolm in "Malcolm's Katie," is a self-made man, perhaps overly proud of his land and his skill as a farmer. He regards his daughter as one of his assets, and wants her to marry a man who will continue to cultivate the land--not a teacher like the man she has chosen:

Ain't got a mind tew give thet land  
 Tew any snip-snap feller  
 Thet don't know loam frum mud or sand,  
 Or if corn's blue or yeller.

He vows that he will only give his permission for them to marry, "when this maple bears/A bouncin' ripe red cherry." The teacher is despondent; his scientific knowledge tells him he'll never marry her because "No maple bears a cherry." But she has a sense of humour and realizes that her name offered a solution to the ultimatum. She simply sits up in the tree!:

"O Pa!"--the farmer pricked his ears:  
 Whence came that voice so merry?

The teacher's thoughtful visage clears--  
 "The maple bears a Cherry!"

The farmer tilted back his hat:  
 "Wal, gal, as I'm a human,  
 I'll allus hold as doctrine that  
 Thar's nuthin' beats a woman!"

In Crawford's comic poems even more clearly than in some of her serious poetry the influence of her reading-- especially the Bible, Dante and the American popular humorists--on her choice of language and imagery is clear. Furthermore, her comic poems reveal her independent opinions, her tendency toward American transcendentalism, and her positive view of North American life and culture. In "Farmer Stebbin's Opinions", Crawford tackles the rigid Puritan doctrine that made Sunday a day of church going, stern reprisals and self-castigation for many Canadians. Farmer Stebbins has obviously been reproached by the parson for inadequate knowledge of the Bible and poor church attendance. The poem is a dramatic monologue in backwoods dialect in which the farmer explains his behaviour:

His [a farmer's] back is stiff frum six day's  
 toil--  
 So God takes hold an' preaches  
 In boughs uv rustlin' maple an'  
 In whisperin' leaves uv beeches.  
 Sez He tew thet thar farmin' chap  
 (Likewise tew the old woman),  
 "I guess I'm built tew comprehend  
 Thet you an' her be's human.

So jest take hold on this here day,  
 Recowperate yer muscle;  
 Let up a mite this day of toil,

Tain't made fur holy bustle.  
 Let them old sorrels jog along  
 With mighty slack-like traces,  
 Half dreamin', ez My sunbeams fleck  
 Their venerable faces.

In this poem and others such as "Old Spense" she challenges some of the religious conventions of her day. The subject matter of Crawford's comic poems is almost always serious, but her challenges to conventional attitudes and beliefs are couched in such insouciant rhythms and language that the reader generally accepts them.

In "Ol' Spookses' Pass," she creates a dialect which sounds more like that usually associated with the American West than with Canada. Logan describes this poem as "a dialect poem possessed of great dramatic force, rugged humour and good character interpretation" (53). Crawford uses a horrifying stampede to direct attention to the reality of God in the life of a cowboy. Logan suggests that

certainly Bret Harte, John Hay and others of their school of dialect writing did no better work than Isabella Valancy Crawford's Ol' Spookses' Pass (52).

Not all of her comic verse is in dialect. In "Love in a Dairy" she plays with the conventions of love poetry to show that on a Canadian farm, the dairy is a most beautiful and suitable location for a young lovers' tryst. The reader is somewhat taken aback by her tongue-in-cheek romanticizing of this everyday environment. She uses the flowery language of



late Victorian love poems to praise its cleanliness and the beauty of its ordinary implements and location:

A rosy bloom pervades the spot;  
 And where the shadows darkle,  
 In glittering rows the shining pans  
 Show many a glittering sparkle.  
 As snowy as my lady's throat'  
 Or classic marble urn,  
 In central floor there proudly stands  
 The scoured white-wood churn.

"The Christmas Baby" presents another dimension of Crawford's humour--her playful fantasy. This poem is a fanciful narrative of the meeting between a busy Santa Claus and a weary overworked stork--both making home deliveries on Christmas Eve.

The poetry of Robert Service has given Canadian critics nightmares since he published Songs of a Sourdough (1907), his first book of verse. This volume was followed by three more collections by 1912: The Spell of the Yukon (1908), Ballads of a Cheechako (1909) and Rhymes of a Rolling Stone (1912). Roy Daniells says "No case can be made for Service as a poet, yet no history of Canadian letters could fail to find him a place. Like the unknown miner in the ballad of Dan McGrew, he achieves effects outside the ordinary canons of performance" (LHC I 440). Perhaps the strongest argument for the significance of his poetry lies in "its attempt to mythologize, to imaginatively recreate" (Johnson 15) a specific region of the country--the Yukon. Johnson adds

that

the unique appeal of Service's Klondike verse was a result of the effective assimilation of two nearly contemporary popular literary modes in zenith at the turn of the century, the English popular balladic tradition as it had been made popular by Kipling, and the American tall tale tradition of Brete Hart and Mark Twain (22).

His two most successful humorous poems, "The Cremation of Sam McGee" and "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" are narratives which create a myth of a vast land where death is near, where life is rough and precarious, and the call of the unknown is so powerful that men leave security and warmth to battle the ice and snow and the fearful darkness. Why should Canadian critics feel they have to say, as Atherton does, that "his talents were inadequate to cope with the challenge [of mythologizing the north] (72) when Service has created two such poems? There are other splendid poems in Service's work, but these two are outstanding.

Service uses the Gold Rush as his point of departure in these poems, and with a deftness of touch combines slang and colloquialism with a rollicking ballad rhythm to create a series of images of men and situations so much larger than life that the unbelievable becomes--just barely--possible. The humour derives in part from the struggle to give voice to experiences of great terror and stubborn courage. In "Cremation," the narrator's pal says he'd "rather live in hell than in the North--and really does end up in flames at

the end of the poem! This humour is dark and sardonic; lines such as "A pal's last need is a thing to heed, so I swore I would not fail" ("Cremation") significantly understate the problem of having to lug a corpse through the Arctic winter looking for something to burn in order to grant a pal his last wish--cremation. At the same time such a line conveys the sacred nature of a man's word--the only law that matters in this wild territory. At his best Service is a very skilful humorous poet; his poetry should be added to the body of Canadian humour.

Many of the other late nineteenth century Canadian poets such as Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and Theodore Roberts wrote humorous poetry in addition to their serious poems. Even Archibald Lampman wrote one humorous poem, "The Dog" sonnet in Among the Millet (1888). Of these poets, Bliss Carman was noted during his lifetime for his sense of humour. H. Pearson Gundy says that

the paradox of Bliss Carman is . . . reflected in the small body of his humorous verse. Here is no sentimentalist, no daisy worshipping aesthete, no faddist, but a man who savours life with gusto, who can laugh at himself, poke gentle fun at his friends, ridicule self-righteousness, yet put in a good word for the Philistine and the outcast with malice toward none (10).

One of his parodies, which was reprinted in Carolyn Wells A Parody Anthology (1904) is a parody of Browning, "A Staccato to O Le Lupe," in which O Le Lupe is Gelett Burgess of



"The Swarthy bee is a buccaneer,  
 A burly velveted rover,  
 Who loves the booming wind in his ear  
 As he sails the sea of clover

A waif of the goblin pirate crew,  
 With not a soul to deplore him.  
 He steers for the open verge of blue  
 With the filmy world before him.

This poem develops this nonsensical image of the pirate bee for another seventeen stanzas before concluding:

He looks like a gentleman, lives like a lord,  
 And works like a Trojan hero;  
 Then loafes all winter upon his hoard,  
 With the mercury at zero.

In "The Urban Pan" Carman plays with specific poetic images and conventions, and in "Spring Song" he presents an image of delight in life for life's sake. In this poem Carman cries out to the force of spring to "make me over," just as it makes new life for the trees and flowers and birds:

Make me even (How do I know?)  
 Like my friend the gargoye there;  
 It may be the heart within him  
 Swells that doltish hands should pin him  
 Fixed forever in mid-air.  
 Make me even sport for swallows,  
 Like the soaring gargoye there!

Humorists in Canada wrote about as many varied subjects and used many of the same techniques as humorists in other countries. What makes them distinctive is their subject matter and diffidence about that subject matter. This is revealed in their awareness of departures from accepted literary convention, and except in the local colour and

popular novelists there is a defensiveness in much of this humour. Canadian humorists seem to thumb their noses at the critics who will reckon their humour of little value in literary circles. At the same time they recognize that the real audience--the average Canadian and American reader--will enjoy its parodic, iconoclastic qualities. Slowly, in the early twentieth century local colour writers discover that the realities of Canadian life and society provide the stuff of laughter, but most of the indigenous humour published in Canada continued to be written in short forms, suitable for newspaper or magazine publication. There are few comic novels. Three of the most significant of the comic novels written using a Canadian setting were written by DeMille and Barr, writers who did not usually employ Canadian settings.

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, a number of Canadian humorists wrote for readers outside Canada, thereby increasing both their potential audience and their income. Many published regularly in American periodicals, which were growing in popularity in Canada during this period.<sup>12</sup> Others lived and wrote abroad. This situation affected both their choice of material and the way in which their work has been regarded by Canadian critics. In 1924, J. D. Logan explained that "because the settings of [James DeMille's] novels are not Canadian, and because they

in nowise express anything of the growing sense of the Canadian national spirit, they are not, on that side, significant in the literary history of Canada."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, in 1900 John G. Bourinot remarked that the humour of DeMille and Duncan provided evidence that the spark of genius that distinguished Haliburton's humour had not died out in Canadian writing:

That [Haliburton's] quality of imagination and humour has still some existence in Canada--though one sees little of these qualities in the Press or in the public speeches or in the Parliamentary debates--we can well believe when we read The Dodge Club Abroad which first appeared in Harper's Monthly by Professor De Mille . . . or A Social Departure by Sara Jeannette Duncan (Mrs Cotes) who as a consequence of a trip around the world has given us not a dry book of travels but a story with touches of genial humour and bright descriptions of life and nature (Short Review, 121).

But his was a minority position; for seventy years, the critical stance encoded by Logan has excluded from consideration many of the works of such humorists as DeMille, Duncan, and Barr. Fortunately, this situation is changing, and her expatriate status and choice of settings for her fiction have not, for instance, affected the Canadian status of Mavis Gallant.

On the whole, Canadian humorists who published in the United States or Great Britain received more recognition outside Canada than inside. Even though they do not write about explicitly Canadian subjects, their work often shares

a mocking, parodic revelation of literary artifice and/or a point of view so different from that of the larger culture that it may be considered implicitly Canadian.

These humorists create a broad range of parodies. Often--Canadian parodists favour this pseudoparody--no particular work is parodied; instead the writer is clearly working to subvert the normal conventions of a particular genre even though he/she ostensibly employs such conventions. Long works such as DeMille's Dodge Club in Italy (1869) and The Lady of the Ice (1870) and Duncan's A Social Departure (1890), and many of the sketches in such collections as Leacock's Literary Lapses (1910) and Nonsense Novels (1911) fall into this category. The more traditional parody of specific writers and works characterizes many of Lanigan's fables and some of his comic verse and a number of the Barr's short stories.

Canadian humorists often convey a point of view that is sufficiently different from the norm for the countries in which they are writing that it may be said to represent a Canadian consciousness in its gently subversive tone. This consciousness, frequently implicit in the narrative stance, is usually North American in its social and political outlook, rejecting alike the rigidities of the British class system and the excesses of American republicanism. Furthermore, this Canadian perspective often conveys the



sense of participation in the larger, political entity--in the nineteenth century, the British Empire.

The imperial perspective is not presented uncritically or directly, however. Writers such as Duncan sometimes implicitly depict Canada as exemplifying a model of the British political system mutated through numerous compromises to become distinctly North American. They also generate laughter at the incongruities of life in the colony that affect both colonizer and colonized. Duncan's comic novels An American Girl in London (1891), Cousin Cinderella (1908), Those Delightful Americans (1902), and Vernon's Aunt (1892) all present a sympathetic colonial perspective which Mieso Dean considers a distinctively Canadian.<sup>14</sup> This perspective is also present in The Imperialist (1904), the only one of her novels to employ a Canadian setting. Duncan is not the only Canadian humorist to convey this attitude. Even when they are writing primarily for an American readership, Canadian humorists often write about imperial concerns, including British colonial attitudes in India. The sense of belonging to the Imperial family underlies the humorous parodic threnody, "Akoond of Swat," the most famous of Lanigan's poems. There does not appear to be very much humorous poetry other than Lanigan's "Akoond of Swat" and the comic scientific poetry of Grant Allen among this group of ex-patriate and cosmopolitan humorists.

Humour directed at North American readers, but which depicts the nationalistic fervour of the United States ironically, is, not surprisingly, distinctively Canadian. Barr's comic novel, In the Midst of Alarms (1894) is just such a work of fiction. In this novel, Barr adopts a perspective which ridicules the myths Americans have about Canada (and vice versa), and explodes both the myths of Fenian threat and the myths Canadian city dwellers have about rural Canada. In Canada, Barr is remembered--rarely--for his satiric romance, The Measure of the Rule (1907), but his significant contribution to Canadian literature is his comic novel. While Canadian long parodies usually mock travel writing and popular romance, one might conjecture, as will be shown later, that Barr's In the Midst of Alarms subverts the historical romance.

James DeMille was one of Canada's most prolific writers in the second half of the nineteenth century. He published most of his work in the United States although he lived all his life in Canada. Altogether he published sixteen adult novels and eleven adventure stories for boys in addition to short stories and one major work of non-fiction. In this work, Elements of Rhetoric (1878), DeMille defines humour generally as "the quality of fancy which gives to things a ridiculous turn and evokes mirthfulness" (406). He then divides humour, which he calls "the ridiculous in

literature," into two main categories: "the ridiculous without a purpose"(410) and "the ridiculous with a purpose" (411). As he includes satire (411) and parody (416) in the latter category, we can, by following his own definition, classify virtually all of his work as humour. DeMille's novels and children's books prove his capability in creating both kinds of humour.

DeMille is probably less well-known in Canada than he deserves to be. Criticism of his work has varied throughout this century, ranging from Rhodenizer's suggestion that "DeMille had a formative influence on American humour" (139), to George Parker's comment in the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature that he was

one of North America's most popular novelists in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His intricate plots, his deft handling of comedy and suspense--the raciest and slangiest since T.C.Haliburton's Clockmaker stories--contributed to this popularity." (183)

The only one of his novels readily available is A Strange Manuscript found in a Copper Cylinder (1888). His biographer, Patrica Monk, says that DeMille wrote four more humorous novels: The American Baron (1871), A Comedy of Terrors (1872), The Babes in the Wood (1875), and A Castle in Spain (1878), and notes that "none of the comedies, except the Dodge Club, has succeeded in attracting critical attention" (211). Cord and Creese: Or, The Brandon Mystery and The Lady of the Ice which she calls "novels of sensation" are also humorous. This study examines aspects of his humour in The Dodge Club and The Lady of the Ice.

DeMille achieved his initial reputation as a humorist following the publication of The Dodge Club in Italy in MDCCCLIX, a work he would have categorized as "the ridiculous without a purpose." It appeared first as a

serial in Harper's New Monthly Magazine from March to October, 1867, and was released as a book in 1869. DeMille is the first Canadian humorist after Haliburton to be recognized internationally.<sup>15</sup> Although an edition of this work with a critical introduction by Gwen Davies was published in 1981, The Dodge Club or Italy in MDCCCLIX (1869) is not readily available.

The central characters in this comic travelogue are four Americans travelling in Europe who band together to "dodge all humbugs and swindles which make travelling in Europe so expensive" (20). As they move throughout Italy, DeMille records their experiences, using such familiar devices of the humorist as dialect, hyperbole, jokes, puns, understatement, comic reversals, pure nonsense and a wide variety of comic incidents. Their observations on the characters they meet are witty and entertaining. The members of the Dodge Club speak an informal, even racy English which does not lack for slang and extravagance, in contrast to the more formal language of the omniscient narrator, who records everything that happens. Gwen Davies, like Bourinot, suggests that DeMille's humour is akin to that of Haliburton, especially in his depiction of one of the Club members, Senator Jones:

The most pronouncedly American of all DeMille's creations in The Dodge Club is Senator Jones of Massachusetts, a literary offspring of Sam Slick .

. . . an exponent of his country's "go-ahead" tendencies . . . [whose] attitudes, combined with his colourful vocabulary, his fanatical loyalty to Yankee-Doodle-ism, and his ring-tailed roarer proclivities, all combine to make [him] a caricature of a "typical" Yankee industrialist and republican (MLH 148).

Much of the humour of this work derives from Sterne's Tristram Shandy. Its consciousness of its own fictionality and its literate allusions and inclusions both remind me of Sterne. He is like Sterne as well in his use throughout the work of a self-aware, intrusive narrator who, from a position outside the narrative, consciously and ironically controls the flow of information. This narrator shows an obvious delight in the artificiality of his construct as he insinuates himself as creator-narrator into the tale he is telling about the members of the Dodge Club. As part of his description of Vesuvius, for example, he decides not to use any punctuation at all in the description of the inside of the crater, and then interrupts the description to discuss his creative ability and authorial authority:

---There--I flatter myself that in the way of description it would not be easy to beat the above. I just throw it off as my friend Titmarsh, poor fellow, once said, to show what I could do if I tried. I have decided not to put punctuation marks there, but rather to let each reader supply them for himself. They are often in the way, particularly to the writer, when he has to stop in the full flow of a description and insert them-- (42-43).

Like Sterne, De Mille parodies the conventional

presentation of fiction and includes in the text what Dane describes as Sterne's concern for the "materiality [i.e.,] the material components, real or imagined of a work of art" (168). Like Sterne, DeMille

absorbs into the text the function generally reserved for the printer's compositor, who ordinarily deals with typeface, printing 'accidentals' and punctuation (169).

DeMille enhances his humour and meaning through the visual effects he achieves by his deliberate manipulation of the typography. He draws attention to the fact that he makes wide use of various type faces using italics, small type, full caps, setting out lists, offsetting songs and poetry. He even divides the page into two columns in order to present parallel, but opposite, texts, as, for example, when, after the members of the Club have fallen into the company of six bandits, Buttons begins to speak Italian pretending to translate what another character, the Senator, is saying:

[What the senator said]

"Boys, Look at these devils, the one on each side of us. They have arranged some signal, and when it is given they will spring at us. Look sharp for your lives, and be ready to do what I say.

[What Buttons said he said]

He says, most noble Captain, and gentlemen, that he is desperately hungry; that he can't get what he wants to eat. He generally eats dried snakes, and the supply he brought ... (47).

Furthermore, De Mille forces the reader to interact with the text by dramatically presenting extended passages of rapid fire dialogue with no need to relay who is speaking. Such an exchange occurs between Dick and Buttons after Buttons discovered that their acquaintances, a Spanish don and his two sisters who had been staying at their hotel in Bologna, had left suddenly:

the door was flung open and Buttons made his appearance, much agitated. What's the matter?"cried Dick. "The Spaniards!" "Well?" "They're off!" "Off?" "Gone!" "Where?" "Away from Venice." When?" "I don't know." "Why?" "I don't know" (126).

De Mille includes letters, lists, an article to the New England Patriot, entries--"retouched"--from the private notebooks of the members, songs, and poems in this parody of American travelogues. In Chapter XXXVII, he even provides a series of detailed chapter headings "of a thoroughly exhaustive character" typical of serious travelogue--and then declines to write the chapter on the grounds that "the chapter had already reached the dimensions of a good sized book before a quarter of it was written" (88).

Virtually all of DeMille's books rely on parodic elements and show similar reliance on such metafictional techniques. In A Strange manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder (1888), for example, Melick's analysis of the truth of the story in the manuscript functions as metafictional



commentary. Almost none of his books have a Canadian setting and Canadian characters, even for part of the time. The Comedy of Terrors begins in Canada when a man risks his life to rescue the chignon of a widow, Mrs. Lovell of Montreal, with whom he falls madly in love, and whose chignon he "kept for months till he loved it like his own" (5). The remainder of the novel takes place in Europe.

DeMille's only novel set entirely in Canada is The Lady of the Ice. This novel is a humorous parody in which he makes fun of the conventions of popular romance, especially romances with a Canadian setting. Monk suggests that "it is ample demonstration . . . that he could find material for fiction in his own country, if only people were interested in reading it" (252). The plot, what there is of it, revolves around what Carole Gerson refers to as "the indigenous Canadian catastrophe which, with a little help from Harriet Beecher Stowe, became a convention in nineteenth century Canadian fiction: the rescue of a character trapped on ice" (49). The Lady of the Ice subverts such conventions as the centrality of the heroine in popular romance. Alfred Habegger points out that in North America by the mid nineteenth century the novel had become something that appealed more to women than to men and that

at the heart of popular American fiction in the 1850s was the figure of the heroine. The fact that many novels were named after the heroine is a sign of her centrality . . . the heroine was the reader's champion in a struggle that was full of risk and in some way exemplary (5-6).

In De Mille's The Lady of the Ice the heroine is central only insofar as she is the love object of the narrator, but her identity remains a mystery throughout the novel, which is told entirely from the male perspective. The narrator, Macrorie, a young officer of the "her Majesty's 129th Bobtails" tells the story of his search for the lady with whom he has fallen in love. She is "the lady of the ice" whom he rescued and whose "white agonized face was all that [he] remembered. . . . What that face might look like in repose, [he] found impossible to conjecture" (31). In addition to the story of his search, Macrorie maintains a running commentary on the complicated love life of his best friend, Jack Randolph, who manages to become engaged to three women at the same time, even though he does not actually love any of them.

The regiment is stationed at Quebec, where, Macrorie says, "one comes in contact with ladies only. Where the male element is I never could imagine. I never saw a civilian" (5). The lives of these two young men are entirely superficial. Macrorie is a self-conscious narrator who, having decided to keep this record, comments on his

narrative and narrative techniques as the spirit moves him, usually as a way of reminding readers of the artificiality of the conventions he is following. He notes, for example: "HEIGHO are the letters which are usually employed to represent a sigh. I use them in accordance with the customs of the literary world" (13). He is well aware of the conventions of romantic behaviour and romantic reporting, but is uncomfortable being so effusive. His ability to describe the depth of emotion he experiences when he finally discovers his mysterious and elusive "Lady of the Ice" is curtailed by his self-conscious concern for appearances:

There!  
 I let the curtain drop.  
 I'm not good at describing love scenes, and all that sort of thing, you know.  
 What's more, I don't want to be either good or great at that.  
 For, if a fellow feels like a fool, you know, when he's talking spooney, how much more like a fool must he feel when he sits down and deliberately writes spooney! You mustn't expect that sort of thing from me at any rate, not from Macrorie. I can feel as much as any fellow, but that's no reason why I should write it all out (144).

DeMille also uses Jack, Macrorie's friend, who falls in and out of love with great rapidity, to burlesque nineteenth century conventions of romantic love. J.D. Logan has described this novel as "exaggerated nonsense or nonsense said with the face of seriousness" (323). The narrator, who says "I'm awfully sympathetic, you know" (139), through naive loyalty to and sympathy for his friend Jack accepts

his versions of his escapades, and thereby exposes his own foolishness and conceit. Both young men are scamps, but the reader is drawn to them as individuals, and what would otherwise be biting satire becomes humour that even as it ridicules their actions and self-delusions enlists the reader's sympathy for them as somewhat foolish human beings. When Jack finally discovers that Louie, the woman he had welcomed as a friend but for whom he held no "romantic" emotion, is in fact the woman he truly loves, he experiences tense moments before he can free himself from all his false "loves."

DeMille uses many of the same humorous techniques in this novel that he employed in The Dodge Club. In addition to the metafictional comments by the narrator he includes lists, poems--in Latin--songs, a burlesque of a duel, an advertisement, and translations of Homer into "Oirish" by a Fenian who believed himself to be a scholar and Irish to be the best language in which to translate Homer: "In [the] neetive Oirish loine we have not only doialectic advantages, but also an ameezing number of others. It's the doirect riprisinteetive of the Homiric loine" (70).

James DeMille called his thirty five novels "potboilers." Today only A Strange Manuscript Found in A Copper Cylinder receives any substantial critical attention. In the climate of criticism that exists in Canada, this

novel (published after DeMille's death) is generally regarded as serious satire, and its humour overlooked. But this work also contains humour--although it is frequently grim or black humour--and would fall into DeMille's category of humour with a purpose.

In addition to his adult novels, DeMille wrote a number of novels for boys. Although there is not space in this dissertation to examine these novels, they are the first comic novels for children written by a Canadian writer. Sheila Egoff refers to his eleven children's books as "gay, insouciant stories for boys, recounted in a staccato conversational style" and points out that his Brethern of the White Cross (1869), The Boys of Grand Pre' School (1870), Picked Up Adrift (1872), and Treasure at Sea (1872), "take a Canadian schoolboy approach before the British school story became a commercial and hugely successful commercialized venture" (245).<sup>16</sup> DeMille, the humorist for children, provides almost as rich--and unknown--a field to explore as DeMille, the creator of humorous parodic novels. One of the most perceptive assessments of the value of DeMille's humorous fiction, the genius of which has yet to be revealed is Archibald MacMechan's remark in Headwaters of Canadian Literature that

criticism may go too far in condemnation, and through ignorance or malice, some of DeMille's critics have certainly gone too far. Only a

gentleman and a scholar possessing something like genius could have written these light and amusing novels (48).

Like DeMille, Sara Jeannette Duncan has received substantial critical acclaim for one work, while the majority of her writing is virtually ignored. Because of its Canadian setting and subject matter, The Imperialist is regarded as her most important novel and her only work of significance to Canadian literature. But Duncan wrote twenty works of fiction before 1912, and two more after that. To study only one novel seriously distorts any comprehensive understanding of her skill and of her place as a major Canadian humorist.

Without a doubt Duncan is Canada's most prolific and outspoken female humorist of the nineteenth century. Unlike her contemporaries such as Agnes Maule Machar and Marshall Saunders, Duncan does not primarily write didactic works to inculcate specific moral virtues in a mainly female audience. When she first began writing, she chose the pen name "Garth" for all her New Orleans copy, because, her biographer Marion Fowler suggests, "of a dread of that instinctive bias in criticism from which a woman's acknowledged literary effort invariably suffered" (Fowler 64). Duncan's early interest in the school of realism, represented by Henry James and William Dean Howells, put her in opposition to most female Canadian writers who were still

committed to the romance form. At the same time, she objected to the loss of idealism in works of realism. Her humour often involves the confrontation between the (imperfect) real and the ideal.

Her most important humorous works to involve North Americans are the four travel tales that she produced between 1890 and 1908. In the first of these, A Social Departure, she brings together in one volume the columns she had written for the Montreal Star detailing her adventures in a trip around the world. She fictionalyses the adventures of two young women, a Canadian and an Englishwoman, and in the process she produces a work which is a precursor of what modern critics now refer to as the non-fiction novel. In the second, An American Girl in London, she takes up a theme already made famous by Henry James' Daisy Miller: that of the impact of the "Old World" culture on a young female from the "New World." Unlike James, however, Duncan does not portray this meeting as tragic. In her third humorous novel Those Delightful Americans (1902), a young English couple journeys to the U.S. and through interactions with several wealthy American families become acquainted with Americans in situ. The fourth of her comic novels is Cousin Cinderella, or A Canadian Girl in London in which she takes a satiric look at the boredom with which the British view Canada and

Canadians, especially in contrast to their fascination for Americans. Vernon's Aunt: Being the oriental Experiences of Miss Lavinia Moffat is a travel novel in which Duncan regales the reader with the hilarious experiences of an English spinster who travels alone to India. She also wrote humorous short stories such as those in The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893) and The Pool in the Desert (1903). In the years after their release, Duncan's humorous novels were highly regarded by both the reading public and the critics.

Her first major publication, A Social Departure is the least fictionalized of her long works, being a lightly disguised account of the trip she had taken around the world in 1888 with her friend Lily Lewis, the "Orthodocia" of the novel. Early critics looked upon this novel with favour,<sup>17</sup> although even then there was some concern that it should not be given undue attention because of its non-Canadian subject matter. In 1983, her biographer, Marion Fowler said:

[A Social Departure] has a consistently racy conversational tone; one can hear Redney's [Duncan's] distinctive voice throughout: here and there slightly weary and sardonic, particularly in the second half, but mainly breathless and animated, with laughter bubbling just under the surface (145).

Carole Gerson praises this work as well. She remarks:

Her flippant dedication of her first novel to Mrs. Grundy signal[s] her willingness to question convention. This defiance was always to remain



cautious; it was hardly extended to sexual matters and in her Canadian fiction remained confined to asserting a woman's right to travel freely and pursue a career, and to maintaining her own characteristically ironic perspective on social platitudes. Of her heroines, the most popular seems to have been the thinly disguised but Americanized persona who narrates A Social Departure (1890), believed to have been her greatest seller (Tausky SJD: Novelist of Empire). This witty travel narrative avoids serious social analysis. The reader who accepts its premise that two young women may travel around the world unchaperoned will encounter few subsequent challenges to the liberal middle class Anglo Saxon point of view (148-49).

Robert Barr, unlike James DeMille and Sara Jeannette Duncan was not born in Canada (he was four years old when he came here) but, like Duncan, he left the country and wrote most of his major work elsewhere. Louis MacKendrick, who provided the critical introduction to the 1974 reprint of The Measure of the Rule, records the ambivalent attitude of the Canadian critical establishment to Robert Barr. Critical attitudes range from outright rejection (for example, Parr records that Barr is not listed in Reginald Watters 'A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials 1628 -1960, (16)) to being too quick, as MacKendrick notes, "to claim his writing as that of a Canadian writer who happened to live in Britain." (xx) Parr notes that Barr's books were published in Canada (Toronto, and branch plants) and that he did maintain connections with Canada, that a number of his novels and short stories are

set in Canada and suggests that neglect of Barr really comes down to either a lack of knowledge on the part of Canadian experts or a rejection on the grounds that "he was merely a "popular" writer of his day whose presence would be a matter of some embarrassment in any serious literary discussion" (17).

Parr also quotes Barr's account of his literary reception in Canada: "A humorous article entitled 'A Dangerous Journey had ...been turned down, according to the author, by every Canadian paper; and furthermore 'Many of the papers not only kept the manuscript but the stamps enclosed for its return as well.' (Parr 13) Barr moved first to the United States (1876) and then later to London, England (1881) where he continued to write under the pseudonym 'Luke Sharp'. In all Barr produced more than fifteen volumes of short stories and twenty novels as well as essays, and travel sketches. In his lifetime, Barr was a very popular writer, highly regarded by his peers in England, who included such writers as Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling and Stephen Crane. One of the black marks against Barr in Canada is his humour which was distinctly unpopular with the literary crowd during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the opening one of the twentieth.

The short stories, detective stories and novels are characterized by his delight in the incongruous and his use

of satire as a mechanism for fairly lighthearted ridicule of social mannerisms and expectations. Parr postulates a Canadian tradition of humour when he refers to the twelve stories in The Selected Stories of Robert Barr as "Twelve comedies of manners that should readily reveal their author as rightly belonging in the company of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, James DeMille, E. W. Thompson and Stephen Leacock." (21) Like both Leacock and DeMille, Barr delights in parody. In "The Great Pegram Mystery" 'Sherlaw Kombes' the great detective uses the same methods of logical deduction as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes to solve the unsolvable mystery - with the one difference: the police use the evidence he contemptuously provides for them to prove his conclusions are incorrect and solve the mystery themselves. Many of Barr's short stories involve surprise endings arising out of the revelation of an elaborate hoax or joke on the part of a major character, although the trickery is rarely malicious.

His 1898 novel Jennie Baxter, Journalist initially appears to be a light adventure romance in which the heroine (an American girl in London, England) employed as a reporter of society news for a London paper impersonates an Austrian princess who is actually an American heiress married to an impecunious prince. The romantic plot is highly improbable, since Jennie spends much of her time assisting the detective

Cadbury Taylor to locate a certain mysterious woman (who just happens to be herself), but Jennie Baxter herself is full of vitality and nothing like the fading violets of Victorian romance. She is a female worthy of the company of such male adventurers as Holmes himself. Barr's first novel In the Midst of Alarms (1893) is a comic novel of the Fenian raids on Canada in the nineteenth century. In this novel, Renmark, a Canadian professor, and his ex-school chum, Yates, who is now a New York journalist and a convert to the American outlook and lifestyle agree to camp out in the Canadian countryside. The "American" is convinced that Canadians are inferior to Americans because they are too slow to adopt the modern outlook. The men compete on all grounds, including courtship. The incursion of the Fenians is depicted as a bumbling mismanaged affair on all sides, and although, because the two heroes become entangled in the raid, it is a necessary part of the plot, is less important in this novel than the competition between the two men:

[Renmark's] few days of intimacy with Yates had shown him how far apart they had managed to get by following paths that diverged more and more widely the further they were trodden.... "I surely have enough self-control," [he thought] "to stand his shallow flippancy for another week, and not let him see what I think of him... [Meanwhile, back in the camp, Yates has a few thoughts of his own.] "That fellow is an exaggerated schoolmaster, with all the faults of the species abnormally developed .... What an unbearable prig he has grown to be." thus thought Yates as he swung in his hammock... (102-3)

The final writer in the cosmopolitan and ex-patriot category to be considered is George Thomas Lanigan, (1846-1886). He is best known for three works: National Ballads of Canada, Imitated and Translated from the Original by "Allio", (1865), Fables of George Washington Aesop Taken "Anywhere, Anywhere Out of The World" (1878) and his famous poem "The Ahkoond of Swat: a Threnody."

It is evident that by the 1950s, he was no longer considered a Canadian humorist or writer, for he is not mentioned in Pacey's Creative Writing in Canada. His name appears in connection with his National Ballads of Canada in The Literary History of Canada (I, 183) and otherwise, he seems to have disappeared, for there is no reference to him in such recent literary histories as W. J. Keith's Canadian Literature in English (1985) and W. H. New's A History of Canadian Literature (1989). It is, therefore, somewhat surprising that his famous poem, the "Ahkoond of Swat" received a separate entry in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature. (6).

"The Akoond of Swat: A Threnody," composed while Lanigan was working for the New York World (Sharman OC 6), is very clever, and deserves to be resurrected. It is a humorous parody of a threnody, and at the same time a comic statement about news reporting. One would not expect the death of a regional leader in an insignificant province of

India to be reported in newspapers all over the world, but it was. One effect of India's colonial status in the British Empire was that deaths of such minor figures often got into the news. Lanigan ridicules what this report conveyed to people to whom even the name of the local leader sounds more like a joke than a dignified title. Two stanzas of his four stanza poem are quoted below:

The Ahkoond of Swat

What, what, what,  
 What's the news from Swat?  
     Sad news,  
     Bad news,  
 Comes by the cable led  
 Through the Indian Ocean's bed,  
 Through the Persian Gulf, the Red  
 Sea and the Med-  
 Iterranean -- he's dead;  
 The Ahkoond is dead!  
 For the Ahkoond I mourn,  
     Who wouldn't?  
 He strove to disregard the message stern,  
     But he Ahkoondn't.

Dead, dead, dead;  
     Sorrow, Swats!  
 Swats wha' hae' wi' Ahkoond bled,  
 Swats whom he had often led  
     Onward to a gory bed  
     Or to victory,  
     As the case might be.  
     Sorrow, Swats!  
 Tears shed,  
     Shed tears like water,  
 Your great Ahkoond is dead!  
     That's Swat's the matter!

Lanigan skilfully weaves facts, allusion, puns and word plays with form to convey the incongruity of the name and of

world reportage of the death of such an insignificant man.  
Of such, he implies, is the might of Empire.

#### Rhodenizer praises

the cleverness with which he cast his humorous material in two recognized literary forms, the ballad and the prose fable . . . [In the latter] he showed his keen and shrewd observation and understanding of the people and events of his time, and his capacity for satirizing human foibles, in a clear crisp and pungent style (140)

Logan also praised the humour of Lanigan's Fables saying that "at the time they were a new and brilliant type of humour" (325) Lanigan's fables were first published in the World and were later published in book form. IN them Lanigan employs the form and style of Aesop to comment on contemporary events. Because he was writing for an American audience, most of the events referred to are American. The fable "The Centipede and the Barbaric Yak" is quoted below to give an indication of Lanigan's skill in this creative form of parody:

While a centipede was painfully toiling over the Libyan Desert he was encountered by a barbaric Yak who scornfully asked him how were his poor Feet. The humble Creature made no reply at the time, but some days later found the barbaric Yak taken in the nets of the Hunter and almost devoured by insects, which fled at the approach of the Centipede. "Help, help, my good friend!" exclaimed the unfortunate Beast. "I cannot move a muscle in these cruel Toils, and the ravenous Insects have devoured my delicate Flesh. "Say you so?" responded the Centipede. "Can you really not defend yourself?" "Alas, how can I?" replied the Yak. "See you not how straitly I am bound?" "And is your flesh then so delicate?" "It is, though I

say it who should not." "Then," said the Centipede, "I guess I'll take a bite myself. Moral. -- The other man's Extremity is often our Opportunity (Fables, 20).

Logan noted that these fables are "satires on the half-truths which constitute popular moral maxims. They are all mere absurdities, and mere nonsense; but they contain a larger truth than the maxims they satirize (324).

Although he wrote altogether more than three dozen works between 1877 and 1906, Grant Allen's reputation as a humorist rests substantially on a collection of verse called The Lower Slopes (1894). Paul Matthew St. Pierre says:

the work of this Canadian expatriate will be remembered not only for its unquestionable entertainment value but for its substantial contribution to the transitional questioning and reevaluating that marked the beginning of the modern age in Canada (DLB 92 9).

Many of the poems in The Lower Slope address scientific issues of the day in creative word play and comic images. The collection includes such poems as "The First Idealist," "A Vindication," and "A Ballade of Evolution," all of which deal with the controversy over evolution. Like other men of his age, Allen is unhappy over the materialism. But he seems more fascinated than disgusted by the theory of evolution which shook the foundations of Christianity. In the following poem both these facets of the man are visible:



## A Ballade of Evolution

In the mud of the Cambrian main  
 Did our earliest ancestors dive:  
 From a shapeless albuminous grain  
 We mortals our being derive.  
 He could split himself up into five,  
 Or roll himself round like a ball,  
 For the fittest will always survive,  
 While the weakest go to the wall.

As an active ascidian again  
 Fresh forms he began to contrive,  
 Till he grew to a fish with a brain,  
 And brought forth a mammal alive.  
 With his rivals he next had to strive  
 To woo him a mate and a thrall,  
 So the handsomest managed to wive,  
 While the ugliest went to the wall.

At length an ape he was fain  
 The nuts of the forest to rive,  
 Till he took to the low-lying plain  
 And proceeded his fellows to knife.  
 Thus did cannibal men first arrive  
 One another to swallow and maul;  
 And the strongest continued to thrive,  
 While the weakest went to the wall.

## ENVOY

Prince, in our civilized hive  
 Now money's the measure of all;  
 And the wealthy in coaches can drive  
 While the needier go to the wall.

The wit in this poem frequently turns satiric and the reader perceives that the light rhymes mask a very great bitterness over the turn society is taking.

In this chapter I have suggested that a number of Canadian local colour writers should be reexamined to determine their contributions to Canadian humour, and that when they are approached in this fashion, one discovers that

they are more sophisticated writers than the apparent simplicity of their work normally suggests. I have also shown that there is a continuity between the kind of humour that was being produced in the newspapers and periodicals and that which appeared in book form. This appears to confirm my contention that much of Canada's humour is journalistic and popular in form but worth examining. Until we pay attention to such writing, we will continue to believe the myth that we are not a humorous people.

## Notes

1. Jessie Lawson's letters of Scottie Airlie were published by the Grip Publishing Company; Kernigan's verse by the Evening Telegram, as discussed in the preceding chapter.
2. See especially the discussions of Canadian canon formation in Lecker, Canadian Canons by Bennett, Surette, Knowles and Scobie.
3. Bennett's discussion of Canadian critics "failure to maintain a distinction between genre-definition and canonical evaluation" in "Conflicted Vision" Canadian Canons 131-149 is particularly relevant here.
4. Roper, Schneider and Beharriell refer to this work as "Jarvis' amusing exemplary" in "The Kinds of Fiction 1880-1929" in Klinck (LHC I 311). Dick Harrison avoids categorizing it, saying simply: "Letters of a Remittance Man to his Mother (1908), set in Winnipeg and on Manitoba farms, sketches with comic hyperbole the practical education of a supercilious young Englishman (OC 393).
5. While I hesitate to suggest any direct connection between the two books, I would like to remind readers that one of the first books to explain living condition in Ontario followed this format. The Backwoods of Canada consists of the series of letters Catherine Parr Traill wrote about her experiences to her mother in England.
6. Notwithstanding their preference for the realism of his work, Canadian critics have usually admired his skill in creating humour: Rhodenizer praises his  
 skill in creating types, British and French, in revealing the comic and the tragic in ordinary life, in vivid portrayal of setting and local colour and in constructing plots strong in suspense and in moral heroism in action, [qualities which] rank him among the few Canadian masters of the short story. (147)  
 Pacey praises his ability as a writer of realism, noting that he had produced  
 a few stories memorable for their humour and their authenticity . . . the image he gives us of Canadian life is refreshingly different from that found in the romantic and sentimental novels of his period. Thompson's farmers get in debt and go to jail; his lumbermen swear and get drunk; his habitants are not idyllic rustics who spend all their time worshipping

God in field or church. But Thompson, like Barr, was a busy journalist who had little leisure for serious writing and too keen a sense of his public to be fully consistent or thoroughgoing in his realism. Even his best stories (the title story and "The Privilege of the Limits" in Old Man Savarin) suffer some confusion of purpose and uncertainty of tone (79).

Years earlier, J. D. Logan had praised the very stories Pacey is dubious about for their humour, saying:

There is near burlesque in "Old Man Savarin", with the incident of the fist fight which lasted for four hours, although the two combatants never reached within striking distance from one another all that time . . . In The Privilege of the Limits . . . the author captures and presents effectively the dry pawky humour of the Scot (259).

Although a more recent critic, Carole Gerson conceded that his stories are "skilfully written" she regards them mainly as "good specimens of magazine fiction" (127), rather than serious literature and suggests that they have little to offer the modern reader: "[his] local colour tales of French Canada . . . strike the modern reader as being condescending, melodramatic and sentimental" (126).

7. Rhodenizer, for example, referred to McArthur's essays as "sprightly humorous vers de societe" and said, "It is as a humorous recorder of the events of life on the farm that he will live in Canadian literature. In this field he is unrivalled" (142). Moreover, in a work which did not usually accord much praise to popular writing, Pacey admitted that McArthur's work still had the power to charm the reader, saying: "His humorous sketches of farm life such as "Why I Stick to the Farm" with its memorable opening, 'As well ask a woodchuck why he sticks to his hole,' can still be read with delight" (Creative Writing 192).

8. The most frequently anthologized of McArthur's poems from this collection is one called "Sugar Weather." I believe it is a shortened, more nostalgic and sentimental version of the "Sugar Weather" which was published in the 1890s in Grip, and which has been quoted in Chapter Three. For the sake of comparison, I will provide here the text of "Sugar Weather" as it is printed in The Prodigal and Other Poems (35-6)

When the snow-balls pack on the horses' hoofs  
 And the wind from the south blows warm,  
 When the cattle stand where the sunbeams beat  
 And the noon has a dreamy charm,  
 When icicles crash from the dripping eaves  
 And the furrows peep black through the snow,

Then I hurry away to the sugar bush,  
For the sap will run, I know.

With auger and axe and spile and trough  
To each tree a visit I pay,  
And every boy in the country-side  
Is eager to help today.  
We roll the backlogs into place,  
And the kettles between them swing,  
Then gather the wood for the roaring fire  
And the sap in pailfuls bring.

A fig for your arches and modern ways,  
A fig for your sheet-iron pan,  
I like the smoky old kettles best  
And I stick to the good old plan;  
We're going to make taffy and sugar tonight  
On the swing pole under the tree,  
And the boys and girls for miles around  
Are all sworn friends to me

The hens are cackling again in the barn,  
And the cattle beginning to bawl,  
And neighbours, who have long been acting cool,  
Now make a forgiving call;  
For there's no love-feast like a taffy pull,  
With its hearty and sticky fun,  
And I know the whole world is at peace with me,  
For the sap has commenced to run.

9. From the 1940s onward, Drummond's work became increasingly unpopular. In Creative Writing in Canada (1952), Desmond Pacey follows the lead established in 1943 by E. K. Brown (Poetry 59-61) in condemning Drummond's work. Pacey suggests that although it may have been acceptable for readers in the more primitive nineteenth century to enjoy Drummond's work, Canadian readers and critics had by mid-twentieth century surely progressed to a more sophisticated level:

The reader of today, however, is not likely to find the poems satisfying on either aesthetic or social grounds. They attempt to mingle humour and pathos, a notoriously difficult combination, and the attempt rarely if ever succeeds. It is only in such poems as "The Wreck of the Julie Plante" where the humour completely overshadows the pathos that a tolerable effect is achieved. Moreover, it may truly be said of Drummond

that "he writ no language". The poems are couched in a peculiar dialect of Drummond's own invention, and this forms a barrier to communication which the inherent triviality of the poems scarce tempts us to surmount. From the social point of view, the poems present us with a patronizing sentimental view of the French-Canadian life. They attracted the early twentieth century generation because they permitted it to chuckle over the quaintness of the habitant and at the same time confirmed it in the belief that the poor habitant was hopelessly backward (85-86).

More recently Johnson (1989) said:

It is not surprising that [Drummond's] verse, so similar in form to the vulgar racism of burlesque immigrant dialect, should have been rejected by the great majority of French-speaking Canadians, and should now have lost all the great popularity it once enjoyed among English-speaking Canadians (17).

10. See, for example, Rhodenizer, p. 244; Bourinot, 204; Logan, 327 and Marquis, 583. on the other hand, the local colour nature of Drummond's poetry had its detractors. Influence of the romantic nationalist ideal is evident in late nineteenth-century distaste for the regional and specific nature of his work. In an editorial in the News and Advocate of St. John, Quebec, the editor hesitates to praise Dr. Drummond's poetry because the habitants he depicts are "a passing type." Drummond should rather present "the abiding type that will stand for the vital feature of a single nationality. How long must we wait for this common type, which, whether limned in prose or verse, shall be instantly and universally recognized as standing for what is essentially Canadian Are we singing localities while awaiting that amalgam which shall create the strong national figure?" (3 February, 1899, quoted in Fee, 57)

11. See, for example, James Reaney's article in Our Living Tradition (series 3 (1959), The Crawford Symposium, Reaney's Introduction to the 1972 reprint of Garvin's Collected Poems, and the Introduction to Malcolm's Katie (1987) by D. M. R. Bentley.

12. See the article and dissertation by Allan Charles Smith for details of the popularity of American publications, and American ideas, in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century. There developed in Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century a continental frame of reference which became

so powerful that "it obscured the sense of Canada as a society with a separate and distinct history" ("Imported Image" 2).

13. J. D. Logan and Daniel French, Highways of Canadian Literature 95.

14. Dean suggests that "Canada is idealized in the novels for its ability to meld respect for British ideals with a unique North American belief in personal freedom," (156) and her novels of empire "show the relationship between countries to be a familial one, in which the feminine virtues of negotiation, connection, and affection are the most important in maintaining peace and harmony" (157).

15. In 1930, V. B. Rhodenizer stated that his work had a formative influence on American humour of the nineteenth century: His chief literary influence is in the field of humour, and it is the humorous element in his work that constitutes his best chance of being remembered. Whether it is a matter of coincidence or of casual connection, Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad was published a few months after De Mille's best comic novel of adventure, The Dodge Club (1869). That de Mille had a formative influence on American humour in general can hardly be doubted. (139)

Regrettably, Rhodenizer did not explain this influence.

16. The Boys' Own Paper which glorified the schoolboy and manly virtues began publication in 1879; Kipling's Stalky and Co. did not appear until 1899.

17. In 1930, V. B. Rhodenizer praised this first novel as a remarkable example of Canadian humour saying:

A Social Departure revealed her literary skill not only in description and narration but also in brilliant humour, ranging from gentle whimsicality to caustic satire. The fame thus acquired was well sustained by a number of other novels published during the next decade and a half. Her native intellectual qualities, her knowledge of literature, her experience as a traveller, and her cosmopolitan outlook, eminently fitted her for writing humour of the high comedy type, and in this respect she has never been surpassed by any Canadian humorist, if indeed she has ever been equalled (141).

In contrast the remarks of Marquis predict the fate of Duncan as a victim of the domination of romantic nationalist criticism. Although he acknowledges Duncan's skill as a

humorist, Marquis dismisses her novels because they are not concerned with Canadian subjects. He says:

[A Social Departure] is vivid in its description, kindly in its humour, delightful in its genial sarcasm. . . Her books have not Canadian themes or Canadian characters: An Imperialist (sic) . . . is her only story with a Canadian setting. She has a place well toward the front rank of modern humorists. [She] is a keen observer of life, with exceptional descriptive powers, and a style that sparkles and scintillates, her pages are bubbling over with incisive wit (564).



## CONCLUSION

In Contexts of Literary Criticism (1971) Eli Mandel

comments that

Canadian literary criticism suffers from a form of national schizophrenia. It tries to find its boundaries outside itself, in some impersonal world of literary tradition beyond national boundaries. And it seeks both in its origins and in its developments for an authentic identity (3).

This suggests that late into the twentieth century Canadian critics still tended to look to other criticisms to determine which Canadian literary works were truly valuable. Others are still trying to establish a home-grown basis for criticism of Canadian literature. Some influential critics have rejected the very notion of a national literary criticism. John Metcalf, for instance, has been quite vehement in his rejection of the principles--past and present--of Canadian literary criticism. He (1988) argues that

most of the theories of our literature are both comic and distasteful. It is not an elevating

spectacle to see the wagons drawn into a circle with the guns blazing inward. The only thing most of our critics have in common is the desire to exclude. Theories about Canadian literature tend to reflect the larger social attitudes and nearly all the visions of our literature are nationalistic, chauvinistic, smug and amazingly white (13).

In my judgment, we need a criticism that is fearless in its assertion that there are national literatures--literatures in which writers are affected by distinctive cultures. But such criticism must also be prepared to consider all aspects of such national literatures, not just winnow out those works that conform to an artificial set of "literary standards" derived in large part from the literature of Western Europe.

In recent years feminist critics have been successful in forcing the reassessment of the place of the work of women writers in national literary canons. Their influence is now being felt in Canada, and new editions of the work of such writers as Lily Dougall are now available. This study has suggested that a similar reassessment of Canadian humour is in order, that many of the works which have been neglected or totally ignored until now should be given serious attention both for their literary skill and the influence they have had in the development of modern Canadian humour.

As has already been noted, in his article "Humour and Satire in English" in the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature Vincent Sharman says:

In the body of Canadian writing many works of humour are interesting documents in the development of a culture rather than significant pieces of literature. With a few exceptions, however, the highlights are modern. But when one considers the frequency of humour in the literature of the past ten decades and the stature of those writers who handle it well (Richler, Kroetsch, Birney et al.) one can conclude that humour is a major element in Canadian literature and perhaps its most impressive achievement" (370).

It seems strange that so little critical attention has been paid to the history of this humour--including those "insignificant" documents in the development of a culture. Canadian humorists who published their work in the nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals are well worth a second and even a third look. The reasons they have not been properly considered have less to do with their skill (or lack thereof) as humorists than with the attitudes of the critics whose principles dominated the Canadian literary establishment. These principles included outright rejection of materials published in such "unliterary" media as newspapers and magazines.

For the better part of the twentieth century, Canadians have identified Stephen Leacock as the first significant Canadian humorist since Haliburton. The publishing history

of his first three books of humour show that far from being hailed a brilliant Canadian humorist in the 1890s when his first sketches appeared in newspapers and such periodicals as Grip in Canada, Leacock was merely another writer. He even had difficulty getting the first series (Literary Lapses) published as a book. His biographer, David Legate, tells us that in 1910, having selected and compiled previously published sketches to make a book, Leacock sought the advice of his friend B. K. Sandwell regarding its publication:

Unhesitatingly Sandwell advised against such folly, arguing that a collection of this kind could only do harm to Leacock's substantial professional reputation (49).

Leacock ignored Sandwell's advice and sent the sketches to Houghton Mifflin who rejected them. Fortunately for us, he then arranged with his brother to publish them at the Gazette Publishing Company, "with [his brother] paying the printers fifty dollars on account" for printing the book (50). In other words, he resorted to what is often called a vanity press. Legate notes that "he even assumed the mantle of his own promotion manager, preparing posters and seeing that they were displayed by the newsdealers who had undertaken to handle his little book" (50). The people of Montreal loved Literary Lapses, and all three thousand

copies sold very quickly, but his reputation remained that of a local popular humorist.

What lifted Leacock out of obscurity was similar to what happened to Haliburton. A major British publisher acquired a copy of his book, found it delightful, and arranged for its publication by a British press of impeccable reputation. David Legate tells us that

in the process of acquiring reading material for his voyage home to England, John Lane picked up a copy of Literary Lapses for shipboard reading. Enraptured by the stylish nonsense, [he] immediately on his arrival in London cabled Leacock an offer to publish an English edition (50).

Like Haliburton's The Clockmaker, Leacock's sketches "took off" after they were published in England. His reputation as a humorist spread throughout England and the United States, and Canada suddenly acquired its second humorist of international acclaim (for international read British--American acclaim meant much less).

Canadian acclaim for Leacock was greatly influenced by his reputation outside Canada. The reviews in both England and America, combined with Leacock's membership in the conservative intellectual elite of Central Canada and the literary, cosmopolitan tone of his humour, have contributed to his acceptance by Canadian critics. McKendrick calls Leacock "the first immortal in the ranks of Canadian humorists" (92).

But such acceptance has not all been uncritical. Canadian critics continued to be diffident about such volumes of "nonsense" as Literary Lapses and Nonsense Novels. Legate says of the former: "to proclaim as a masterpiece this bundle of bright little bits--as has been done by otherwise responsible critics--is to make a travesty of literary values" (52).

Most criticism has been reserved for Sunshine Sketches of A Little Town, the series of connected sketches Leacock created in response to a request from Lord Atholstan, the publisher and owner of The Montreal Star. He asked Leacock to write "a serial-type contribution that would have a distinctive Canadian setting" (Legate, 61). The resulting sketches appeared between February and June, 1912, and following their success in the newspaper were gathered with little change into the book published two months later (Curry 96). Legate notes that "Sunshine Sketches never reached the circulation of his other collections, earlier or later" and suggests that as "a parochial treatment of parochialism . . . its appeal was limited" (63)-- a reception that should remind readers of the reception of Haliburton's The Old Judge. Sunshine Sketches nevertheless continues to be the most studied work by Leacock, and the one which many Canadian critics use to describe the nature of his genius as a humorist, ironist and satirist.

Leacock's is not the first comic or satiric portrait of a Canadian small town--Fleming had created Speckport more than thirty years earlier. Furthermore, the people of Orillia, Ontario, whose own small town is widely accepted as the origin of Mariposa were outraged by his portrait.

What made Leacock so successful? Beverley Rasporich and James Steele have both examined Leacock's literary persona, and concluded that somehow he managed to appear to be all things to all people. Steele suggests that he "frequently changed the national identity of his literary voice" (59). According to Steele, Leacock had three distinctly different national voices: "Sometimes he wrote as a Canadian, for a Canadian audience, and about a distinctly Canadian community" but at "other times he writes just as unequivocally as if he were an American, writing for an American audience from an American point of view" (59-60). Still later, Steele suggests, he wrote as an Englishman. He notes that in My Discovery of England "Sir Owen Seaman claims that Leacock is 'all British, being English by birth but Canadian by residence' [and] further maintains that Leacock's humour is British by heredity" (60). Steele suggests that Leacock was truly cosmopolitan in spirit, but his article raises confusing questions about Leacock's Canadian identity.

Rasporich argues that in all of his guises Leacock is a Canadian, indeed, that he is a quintessential Canadian. Following an examination of British, American and Canadian cultural and literary influences on Leacock, she concludes that

as an urbane, conservative, patriarchal and moral voice, the Leacock persona is as much a mythic representation of the Canadian character as Sam Slick's is of America's. When Legate argues that Canadians have no "native" humour he is quite right in the sense that we have no comic tradition in the style of the native humour which developed in the United States. We have no long tradition of established literary folk humour, no long lineage of folk prophets of the soil, no extensive regional celebrations of grass roots characters. To Leacock's point in time neither should we expected to have had ("Stephen Leacock" 174-75).

Leacock was a member by birth, heredity, and education of the intellectual elite of Central Canada. His humour, before and after 1912, reflects many of the cultural tenets of that segment of Canadian society. Although he employed many of the same techniques as his fellow humorists in such periodicals as Grip, he never descends to the popular plane of journalism. None of his characters, except Josh Smith in Sunshine Sketches, speaks anything even resembling the vernacular, and his narrator is as far removed from the people of Mariposa as either Sam Slick or the Squire from the Bluenoses.

These remarks are not written to detract in any way from Leacock's reputation as a very fine Canadian humorist



who speaks from a perspective and in a tone that is distinctly Canadian, as Rasporich and Watters conclude. I merely wish to draw attention to the fact that there were mitigating factors that combined with his peculiar genius to earn Leacock his place of honour in Canadian literary history. Other Canadian humorists, some with skills approaching Leacock's, were not as fortunate. Their work has remained lost in obscure newspapers, ignored in popular magazines, and, for reasons already mentioned, denied a place in the literary and cultural history of this country.

This study has revealed that many Canadian writers were creating humour of varying quality in the nineteenth-century. Although it has not attempted fully to evaluate or even catalogue the work of these humorists, it has suggested that more detailed study of newspapers and periodicals may well reveal humorists of talent whose work will enrich our view of ourselves. Yes, there is a nineteenth-century Canadian humour. The lighter side of the Canadian imagination did not wilt and die after Haliburton--it simply went underground into the "unliterary" world of Canadian (and American) journalism. Evidence of its existence and power is still there--waiting to be discovered.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the preparation of this bibliography I have followed the instructions for English-language references in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (1988). Many Canadian writers, especially those who wrote humour, used pseudonyms. In the text, I have identified the author of any given work by the name by which he or she is commonly known: the pseudonym "Ralph Connor" in preference to Charles Gordon, but George Longmore and Samuel Hull Wilcocke rather than the pseudonyms, "Launcelot Longstaff" and Luke McCulloch, respectively.

Works now available through micropublication have been entered according to the publication information given on the title page of the original work followed by the name of the micropublisher. CIHM refers to the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions. CLA refers to the Canadian Library Association.

Newspapers and periodicals are entered separately, but the poems, articles and skits from them are not. More works have been consulted than appear here. I have included primary and secondary works consulted but not cited following the list of works cited, but I have not attempted to compile a bibliography of Canadian humour--this is the list of works cited or consulted for this dissertation only.

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The Humorist and The True Humorist (Saint John, N. B. 1865-67)

Montreal Gazette (Montreal) 1785- CLA microfilm

New Dominion Monthly (Saint John, N.B.) 1867- CLA microfilm

Nor'Wester (Winnipeg) 1864-66 CLA microfilm

Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser (Halifax) 1769-90. CLA microfilm

The NovaScotian or Colonial Herald (Halifax) 1824-44 CLA microfilm

Quebec Gazette (Quebec) 1764-1800 CLA microfilm

Royal Gazette and Miscellany of the Island of Saint John (Charlottetown, P.E.I) 1791-92 CLA microfilm

Upper Canada Gazette or, American Oracle (York, Ont.) CLA microfilm

The Royal St. John's Gazette and Nova-scotia Intelligencer (Saint John, N.B.) 1783-98. CLA microfilm

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Amaranth (Saint John, N. B.) 1841-1843 CIHM microfiche

Anglo-American Magazine 1852-55

The Canadian Forget-Me-Not for MDCCCXXXVII CIHM microfiche

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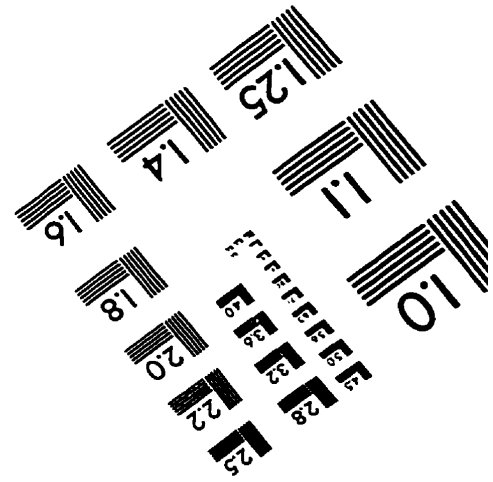
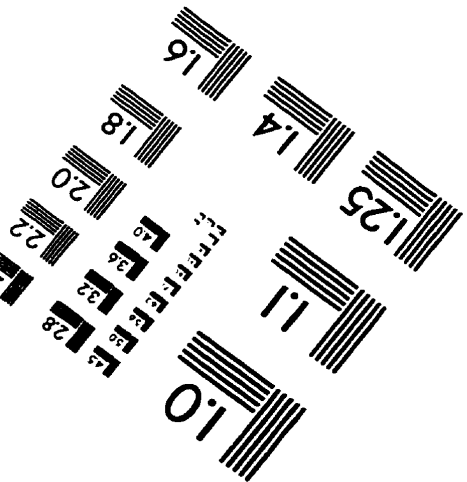
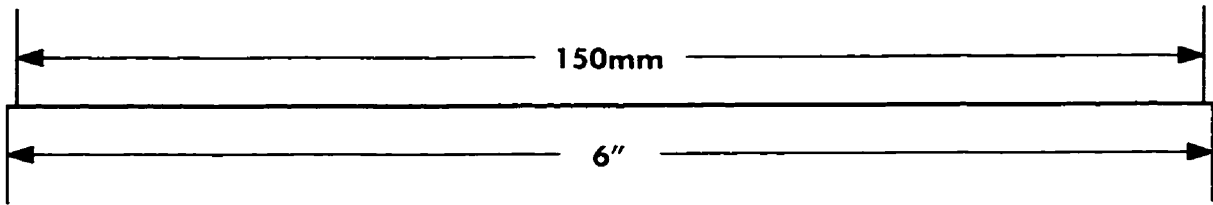
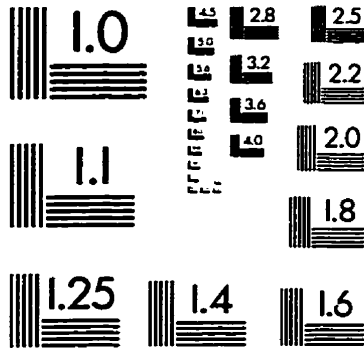
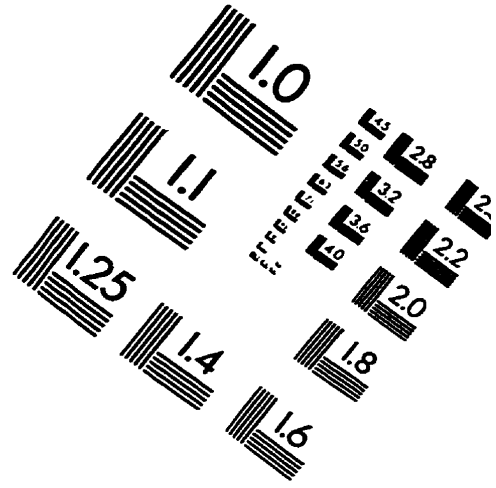
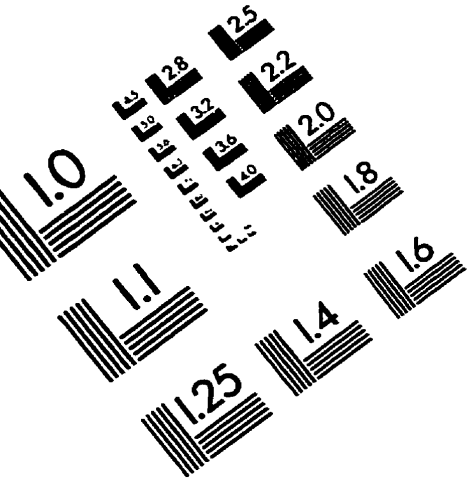
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