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"A SENSE OF WIDER FIELDS AND CHANCES": TOWARDS A LITERARY HISTORY  
OF ENGLISH-CANADIAN SATIRIC FICTIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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"His own blood stirred with the desire to accomplish, to carry further; and as the scope of the philanthropist did not attract him, he was vaguely conscious of having been born too late in England. The new political appeal of the colonies, clashing suddenly upon old insular harmonies, brought him a sense of wider fields and chances..."

Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist*

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## Abstract

This dissertation combines literary analysis with genre study and cultural history to trace the evolution of a tradition of nineteenth-century Canadian satiric fiction. Through a close reading of canonical texts examined within the contexts of their production, I analyze the moral, social, and political norms that inform nineteenth-century Canadian satire and determine how these norms have either been maintained or modified. The introduction defines the key terms of the thesis by reviewing the principle theoretical arguments surrounding the study of satire, and by elaborating the critical stance as one informed by the reading practices of New Criticism and Historicism.

Part One explores the development of the satiric sketch in the Colonial Period and focuses on Thomas McCulloch's *The Stepsure Letters* (1821-3) and Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* (first series, 1836). In their condemnation of the vices and follies exhibited by their neighbours, McCulloch and Haliburton share many of the same norms; however, the evolution of the satiric viewpoint is one of ever-broadening scope. Both writers focus on similar class and social issues, for instance, but Haliburton also considers larger political matters centred around the complicated issue of Imperialism.

Part Two examines the rise of the satiric novel in the Confederation Period and focuses on James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888) and Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904), which both take up the "Imperial Question." De Mille's fantastical adventure questions both Christian doctrine and Victorian values in its profound exploration of the individual challenge to define a code of values by which to live, and

its thoughtful inquiry into the imperialistic urge to impose those values on others. Duncan's authentic depiction of turn-of-the-century small town Ontario's emotional and intellectual responses to the political debate on international relations satirizes the ignorant assumptions and lack of imagination displayed by both Canadians and Britons.

The conclusion surveys the ways in which these writers urge their readers to recognize the "wider fields and chances" available to them; that is, the geographical, philosophical, and imaginative spaces open to all colonists/Canadians, and the attendant social, economic, and spiritual opportunities, risks, and responsibilities to be encountered there.

## SATIRE: AN INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to the first New Canadian Library edition of Thomas McCulloch's *The Stepsure Letters* (1960), Northrop Frye argues the importance of exploring our literary history: "There are two main values to be derived from the study of our cultural traditions. One is that what writers write and readers respond to instinctively, by virtue of their context in space and time, they do with greater skill and pleasure, respectively, if they know more about that context. The other is that such study helps to distinguish for us what is past from what is permanent" (ix). Frye points to McCulloch as the appropriate starting point for tracing a literary continuum which seeks to reveal the development of a prominent aspect of Canada's literary character. Specifically, he argues that "McCulloch is the founder of a genuine Canadian humour: that is, of the humour that 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 the human sense, has been the prevailing tone of Canadian humour ever since" (ix). Sixteen years later, Tom Marshall concludes a brief article entitled "Haliburton's Canada" (1976) by remarking that the tradition of Canadian humour represents a potentially fruitful area for critical inquiry. He argues that Thomas Chandler Haliburton's comedy grows out of a certain ambivalence: "the things Canadian, American, and British that he criticizes are inside him as well as outside him; one senses divided loyalties, ironic undertones" (137). The Sam Slick sketches, he notes, continually reveal an awareness of shifting perspectives, a willingness to live with uncertainties and antagonistic philosophies, and a pragmatic ability to see at least two sides to every question. Asserting that "This [ironic vision] is 'Canadian'," Marshall contends that this pattern persists in later Canadian writing—that similar ambivalences may be observed in the works of Leacock, Richler, Davies and others. Yet, he adds, "I am not aware that this pattern has ever been very fully examined as

it emerges from the styles, textures and formal structures of our major works of literature" (137).

Almost a decade later, W.J. Keith, in his *Canadian Literature in English* (1985), comments on this apparent reluctance to explore our literary legacy. He argues that although the existence of a Canadian tradition has often been asserted or questioned, "Canadian literature has seldom been considered in terms of any consistent historical continuity. Nor are there many generic studies to demonstrate the debt, in poetry or fiction or whatever, of one literary generation to another" (4). He suggests that this neglect is a result of a clash of loyalties and priorities: "Alongside the natural desire to foster and encourage a growing literature went a corresponding fear that this new creative burgeoning might be stifled by the burden of a traditional past, especially if the traditions in question came from outside the country" (4). Perhaps embarrassed by its self-conscious derivativeness from predominately British paradigms, the critical enterprise in Canada largely ignored the nineteenth-century roots of Canadian literature: "Emphasis fell on contemporary achievement; its ancestry, its lines of development, its relations to the larger context of literature in English, went for the most part unexamined" (4).

Keith's appraisal may no longer hold true for some fields of Canadian literary criticism; important work has been done in recent years both in the area of synthesizing literary history (New and Keith), and in the study of particular fields such as nineteenth-century Canadian women's writing (McMullen), the Canadian long poem (Bentley), and the roots of Canadian modernism (Trehearne). However, many significant areas of inquiry remain unexplored. As both Frye and Marshall note, Canadian literary humour is one of



them. More specifically, a second look at the humorists they name—McCulloch, Haliburton, Leacock, Richler, Davies—suggests that satiric fictions stand among our foremost canonical texts and invite critical attention to the charting of a tradition of Canadian satire. Indeed, from McCulloch in the early nineteenth century onwards, each successive period in Canadian national development has produced a celebrated satirist. Vincent Sharman suggests: "Because satire has long been a mainstay of Canadian literature, it is fair to say that an important part of the Canadian literary imagination is critical, ironic, and mockingly humorous" ("Satire" 556). Although critics acknowledge the contemporary satiric fiction of some of Canada's best-known living writers—Mordecai Richler, Margaret Atwood, and Timothy Findlay among them—there have been very few attempts to explore Canadian satire's ancestry, its lines of development. This study proposes to do just that. A close reading of representative texts will reveal the moral, social, and political norms that inform nineteenth-century English-Canadian satire and suggest how these norms were either maintained or modified in response to the socio-cultural and political activity of that century. It will serve as both an investigation of the circumstances which have promoted the continual production of satirical fiction in Canada throughout the Colonial and Confederation periods and a literary reevaluation of several canonical texts in light of their position along the continuum of Canadian satirical fiction.

In their introduction to *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (1995), Brian Connery and Kirk Combe announce their deliberate avoidance of defining the subject of their study: "Happily (and, we think, wisely), as editors of this volume, we assume no obligation to set ...limitations on the concept of satire. Our intention is not to engage in the folly (and, on

occasion, the knavery) of solving the dilemma of what satire is or ought to be" (13). A year earlier, Dustin Griffin, in his *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (1994), anticipated the prudence of such an approach, declaring that any definition of satire necessarily betrays a polemical base, an implicit definition of the proper nature of satire, or a partial view of the genre. Universalizing claims are suspect, he adds, because they focus on what element the theorist deems "most important to satire--its rambling variety, its defamatory invective, its free speaking, its ribald ridicule, or its moral function" (9). He resolves that the proper goal of the theorist of satire "is not to arrive at elegant and irrefutable definitions of satire as a genre but to enable readers of satire to become more attentive, to enable them to see an interplay of impulses and effects in a text" (186). Similarly, the aim of the present study is the discovery and contextualizing analysis of such interplay within and between Canadian satiric fictions. While the tabling of "elegant and irrefutable definitions of satire" is not an objective of my project (which is text- and not theory-centred), a rehearsal of some attempts to define the term satire is nonetheless called for.

"Satire is the stranger that lives in the basement," writes George Test at the end of his introduction to *Satire: Spirit and Art* (1991). His remark conveys the apprehensive welcome with which readers engage satire, a genre which is seemingly friendly and familiar at one turn, hostile and remote at the next. Indeed, satire defies easy categorization and for centuries has occasioned the production of often contradictory definitions and theories. P.K. Elkin calls it "the most variable of critical terms, appearing in a wide variety of contexts and changing from one context to another" (*Defence* 199). Edward and Lillian Bloom compare satire to the god Mercury who wears many disguises and satisfies many expectations: "Even as the deity

adroitly roamed from high to low—as orator and trickster, as fleet messenger and patron of the market place—so satire has always demonstrated its adaptability to circumstance and intention" (15). Its versatility is evident in its wide variety of forms. Edward Rosenheim remarks that the works which "at one time or another, have been called satiric represent an enormous diversity in substance, structure, style, and motive—covering, it is likely, as great a range as the literature which has, in any meaningful sense, been called tragic or comic" (2).

Griffin usefully elaborates some of the better known forms the genre has invaded:

(in verse alone) formal satire, epistle, letter from the country, lampoon, epigram, session of the poets, advice to a painter....The (mostly prose) Menippean line is itself a miscellany, from fantastic voyage to dialogue of the dead and learned anatomy....This is of course only the beginning of the difficulty of comprehending satire within a single theoretical frame, since it can through parody invade any literary form. (3)

Regarding satire's lack of consistent form, Christiane Bohnert quips: "If traditional genres, such as tragedies, sonnets, and novellas, resemble a well-regulated forest, then satire is the lawless and irrepressible poacher within" (151). These metaphors and lists underscore the variable nature of satire and suggest the difficulty inherent in producing a concise and yet comprehensive definition of the term. It will prove helpful, therefore, to approach the task by considering some of the categories of theoretical inquiry into which the definitions of satire can be sorted; these categories include a brief review of the etymologies and connotations of the word itself, an argument for a modern critical consensus of the major elements of satire, an analysis of satire first in its relation to comedy and then as a form of attack, a rethinking

of the moral norm often associated with satire's purpose, and a consideration of its social context. Applying something of a shotgun technique, the following brief survey hopefully arrives at what is most useful to the present study: a broad working definition.

### Etymology and Connotation

Few attempts to define satire begin by tracing the origins of the word itself. Perhaps this is because its etymology is ambiguous, or because the proposed derivations are highly suggestive and do not accord with a good deal of modern satiric theory. Yet, two popular root associations in particular can underscore the disparate perceptions of the genre. The first traces the word to the Latin root *satyrus*, from the Greek *satyros*, linking satire to "satyrs," the wild, goatlike men of Greek myth who—renowned for their strong sexual desires—danced in the train of Dionysus and chased the nymphs. The 1676 edition of Coles' *An English Dictionary* defines "satyre" as "an hairy Monster, like a horned man with Goats [sic] feet; also an invective poem." In his *Ars Grammatica*, fourth-century Greek scholar, Diomedes, explains that "'[s]atura is so called from the Satyrs, because in this type of poem (i.e. 'satura') laughable and shameful things are related in the same way as even those recited and acted by the Satyrs'" (qtd. in and translated by Van Rooy 124). Although modern critics often reject this etymology as a misinterpretation, it was at one time a legitimate derivation and has shaped readers' attitudes towards satire for centuries, fuelling conceptions (popular especially during the Renaissance) that the satirist is a ferocious malcontent—"an hairy Monster"—and that satire is an unruly, vulgar and rough-edged form. Such notions persist in contemporary discussions of satire. When asked if his satiric novel, *Our Gang* (1971), a

slashing parody of the Nixon administration, was in "Bad Taste," Philip Roth argued that [s]atire of this kind has no desire to be decorous. Decorum—and what hides behind it—is what it is attacking. To ask a satirist to be in Good Taste is like asking a love poet to be less personal. Good Taste is inimical to what makes this *satire*. Is *The Satyricon* in such Good Taste? Is *Gargantua and Pantagruel*? Is Aristophanes? Is Swift's *Modest Proposal*? Swift recommends the stewing, roasting, and fricasseeing of one-year-old children so as to unburden their impoverished parents and provide food for the meat-eating classes. How nasty that must have seemed, how unnecessarily vulgar, even to many who shared his concern for Ireland's misery. (qtd. in Lelchuk 217)

A second, and more widely accepted, etymology locates satire within the vocabulary of food by tracing it to the Latin word *satura* (mixture), which derives from the roots *satur* (sated) and *satis* (enough). Primarily, it meant "full," and then came to mean "a mixture full of different things." Diomedes notes that, according to the testimony of Marcus Terentius Varro, a Roman scholar and satirist in the first century B.C., *satura* was a stuffing crammed with many ingredients: he quotes the second book of the *Plautine Questions*: "*Satura* is raisins, barley, and pine-nuts sprinkled with wine-honey. Others add pomegranate seeds to these ingredients" (qtd. in Van Rooy xiii). Gilbert Highet notes that a "dish full of mixed first-fruits offered to the gods was called *lanx satura*; and Juvenal, no doubt in allusion to this strain of meaning, calls his satires by the name of another mixed food, *farrago*, a mishmash of grain given to cattle" (231). Note that, in his first satire, Juvenal names the wide range of subjects on his plate: "All human endeavours, men's prayers,/ Fears, angers,

pleasures, joys, and pursuits, these make/ the *mixed mash* of my verse" (*Satire* 1, emphasis added). These associations are a reminder of satire's reputation as witty food-for-thought and may help explain the genre's characteristic propensity for thematic and formal variety. In fact, an emphasis on miscellany appears in a third possible derivation. Diomedes suggests that satire may derive its name "'from a law, *satura*, which includes many provisions in a single bill, for it is evident that the verse composition *satura* also comprises many poems at once'" (qtd. in Van Rooy 1-2). However, some recent scholarship suggests that the affiliation of satire with a mixed mash of food is not merely a comment on its literary abundance and variety, but an indication of the type of consumer it demands. In her 1995 article entitled "*Satura* from Quintilian to Joe Bob Briggs: A New Look at an Old Word," Gay Sibley states: "Whereas heretofore the explanation has centred on the advantage of 'the mix' as appealing to a variety of tastes, my claim is that the possibility exists that...*satura* consisted of a mixture of ingredients that were blended in such a way that only those with 'discriminating palates' could come close to knowing what they were tasting" (59).

Whatever the true derivation of the word, Griffin observes that a large measure of satiric theory represents an attempt to deny these root associations. Because they challenge satire's claims to morality and artistic unity, he argues, theorists have long sought "to repress or domesticate the shaggy, obscene, and transgressive satyr...and to make it into the model of the moral citizen. Or they have resisted satire's traditionally farraginous nature and insisted that every satire must display thematic unity and formal clarity" (6). Yet, as Alvin Kernan remarks, whether suppressed or forgotten, these associations remain significant, "for the world of satire is always a fantastic jumble of men and objects....it moves always toward the

creation of messes, discordancies, mobs" (*Plot* 68). Combined, the "fantastic jumble" suggested by these various proposed etymologies underscores the energy and variety identified with satire, and hints at its paradoxical quality of repugnant appeal.

While these etymologically-inspired images of obscene satyrs and mixed platters have long clung to the term satire, its connotations have nevertheless changed considerably over time. Well into the eighteenth century, the term "satire" referred primarily to a complex and ritualized formal designation--namely, verse satire on the Roman model as established by Horace and Juvenal. Since then, it has gradually lost its sense of formal specificity and increasingly come to refer to affective and conceptual notions. Elkin observes: "Although we may describe a work which is predominantly satirical as 'a satire', that particular way of looking at its subject, which we term 'satirical', can be the informing principle of any kind of literary work or work of art or music you care to name" (*Satire* 6). The Blooms argue that satire as a modern designation suggests "a state of mind or feeling, a critical outlook on some detail or quality of existence" (36). This shift from the objective observation of form to the subjective interpretation of informing principle underlies the difficulty of arriving at a satisfactory definition of satire. Perhaps this is why Elkin opens his Inaugural Lecture by answering his own rhetorical question-- "What is satire?"--with a highly suggestive and scholastically prudent response: "The best definition I know is that provided by the Chinese pictograph for satire, which may be translated as 'laughter with knives'" (*Satire* 3).

### **"Laughter with Knives": A Modern Consensus in Brief**

Elkin's remark, and the Chinese pictograph behind it, speak to the key criteria that most

modern theorists of satire select to bring together its many diverse conceptions. In fact, a cursory glance at six such definitions suggests their ultimate similarity: all include reference to "laughter" and "knives." Ellen Leyburn, in her *Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man* (1956), argues that, in satire, "[t]here is always a judgment of faults, and there is always some sort of indirection in the conveying of the judgment, whether the concealment is laughter or some sterner sort of rhetorical intensification" (7). A year later, Frye identifies the same principal elements, couching them in slightly different terms in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957): "Two things, then, are essential to satire; one is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack" (224). Highet rehearses a variation on the same theme in *The Anatomy of Satire* (1962), in which he argues that "[h]atred which is not simply shocked revulsion but is based on moral judgment, together with a degree of amusement" (150) are the hallmarks of satire. In *The Plot of Satire* (1965), Kernan condenses this argument by asserting that satire is composed of "two components, art and morality" (17). Test expands on the same components in his *Satire: Spirit and Art* (1991), when he claims that satire is "at once an act of judgment, aggression, play, and laughter" (30). In view of this basic agreement amongst disparate critical schools and across several decades of scholarship, Elkin seems vindicated for having declared in 1974 that "every definition of satire worth considering refers to two essential elements: the perception of an incongruity and the expression of a criticism" (*Satire* 3). These "essential elements" of satire themselves require further elaboration.

### The "perception of an incongruity": Satire's Relation to Comedy



In his preface to *Animadversions*, John Milton contends that the "two most rational faculties of human intellect, anger and laughter, were first seated in the breast of man" (479). To some degree, both are present in satire, which attempts to strike a rational balance between (to collect the terms from above) humour, play, wit, incongruity or rhetorical intensification on the one hand, and judgment, criticism, attack, hatred or aggression on the other. Test comments that to "yoke the symbolic aggression of satire with a spirit of play is to commit barefaced paradox" (19). This paradox has traditionally been solved by dividing satire into two diametrically opposed categories. For instance, based on a somewhat reductive reading of Horace and Juvenal, there arose in the Renaissance two classifications of satire: Horatian--or "smiling"--satire favours laughter; Juvenalian--or "savage"--satire favours anger. If these classifications are considered the extreme ends of a satiric spectrum, then the perceived tone of an individual satire places it somewhere between the two.

Several theorists have found it useful to consider opposing categories of satire on such a spectrum, and many use Horace and Juvenal to designate the extremes. Borrowing from Aristotle, John Dryden separates the vigorous rant of Juvenalian satire as "Nature without Art" from the purposive discourse of Horatian satire as "Art Completed"; he describes the distinction between the two as the "vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place" (263). The Augustans equated Horace with light raillery against folly and Juvenal with fierce reproach against vice. Consider John Dennis's appraisal: "*Horace* argues, insinuates, engages, rallies, smiles, *Juvenal* exclaims [sic], apostrophizes, exaggerates, lashes, stabs [sic]" (2:218). Griffin sees Horace leaning toward comedy and Juvenal toward

tragedy. Test argues that satire reflects various combinations of play and laughter on one hand, and aggression and judgment on the other. Rosenheim envisions a satiric spectrum ranging from the essentially "persuasive" to the essentially "punitive." These various binary formulas and the spectrums they suggest indicate a like-minded appreciation of the scope of satiric attack: at one extreme, satire is deliberate, playful, artful, and persuasive; at the other, it is aggressive, grave, judgmental, and punitive. To complicate matters, some individual works range from one extreme to the other. Regardless, it is fair to say—if still somewhat reductively—that most satire falls between them, tending towards classification as Horatian or Juvenalian but not necessarily defined by these monikers.

Elkin explains that much of English satire—especially since the Augustans—is closer to the Horatian than the Juvenalian end of the spectrum simply "because it pleases more readily. It wins more friends and influences more people" (*Defence* 146). But what, asks Griffin, "is *pleasing* about a form that has often been regarded as displeasing, harsh, obscure, splenetic, malignant.... Why do we continue to read and enjoy satire?" (159). He then acknowledges that the "conventional answer is that the pleasure we take in satire derives from its wit" (159). Indeed, satirists and critics alike have long remarked on the effective fusion of humour with attack. Horace himself said that "ridicule more often cuts deeper into important matters than does seriousness" (*Sermones* I.10.14-15). Erasmus once noted that "such is the power of wit and liveliness that we can take pleasure in a witty remark even when it is aimed at us" (3:119). Alexander Pope's infamous assessment of his *The Rape of the Lock* (1712-14) provides a clever analogy. Describing the poem as "at once the most a satire, and the most inoffensive, of anything of mine," he observed that his readers "laugh at it, and seem heartily

merry, at the same time that they are uneasy. 'Tis a sort of writing like tickling" (to Mrs. or Miss Marriot, 28 February 1713/14, qtd. in Sherburne's Pope's *Correspondence* I.211). This cerebral "tickling" provides a slightly discomfiting pleasure to counter what might otherwise be a thoroughly unpleasant beating. Indeed, Leonard Feinberg insists, "[s]atire may offer other gratifications, but some pleasure it must give in order to hold the reader" (*Introduction* 8). He adds that satiric humour is often the result of exaggeration and overstatement which the satirist resorts to "in order to attract attention, for he is usually expressing an unpopular point of view--unpopular not because it is original but because it reaffirms inconvenient principles which society pays lip service to but does not practise" (*Introduction* 90). Thus, the use of comic devices may, in part, be a stratagem to capture and sustain interest--to divert unwary readers long enough to mount the concealed, and possibly offensive, satiric attack.

In his *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (1960), Robert Elliott concurs with Leyburn and Feinberg in identifying satiric wit and humour as the kind of rhetorical intensification that masks the judgement of faults, if not to aid in a surprise assault, then to help exonerate the satirist. Humour helps to create the illusion that the critical attack is light-hearted and not altogether serious. All the rhetorical manoeuvres which characterize comedy--irony, innuendo, burlesque, parody, allegory--become, in the hands of the satirist "devices of indirection which help make palatable an originally unacceptable impulse" (264). Similarly, Test remarks that adult forms of play "are often rituals in which the aggression of satire is expressed in a socially countenanced way. This is in accordance with the concept of *paidzeim spoude*, that is, playing seriously or seriously playing, as exemplified in Socrates" (23). And yet, as Elliott points out, it is a nice complication "that the devices which make satire

acceptable to polite society at the same time sharpen its point" (264). The suggestion that the tools of indirection, seemingly designed to blunt satire's inherently critical edge, actually serve to hone its daggers—supports the notion that wit and humour are a vital part of the satiric attack. Jonathan Swift's "To a Lady" renders explicit the metaphorical connection between satiric play and physical assault:

Like the ever-laughing sage,  
 In a jest I spend my rage:  
 (Though it must be understood  
 I would hang them if I could). (177-180)

The techniques of humour are often themselves forces in the critical onslaught. For instance, low burlesque—the reduction of something high and noble to something mean and contemptible—delivers the punch of both amusement and insult. The diminishing of the vital to the mechanical, the spiritual to the material, or the serious to the absurd, represents the reduction of life to its grossest constituent parts and renders the target laughably inferior. The resulting comic twist is sharply judgmental. Consider, for instance, the "reduction of man to meat in *A Modest Proposal*, to chemicals and statistics in *Brave New World*, and to political objects in *1984*" (Kernan, *Plot* 53). These witty, though damning, portrayals are—almost inexplicably—delightful entertainment. As Elliott remarks, "It is as difficult to account for our pleasure in vituperation as for our pleasure in tragedy. But it is there" (209n). Somewhat masochistically, our pleasure in satire may actually derive from the pain of the attack—a pain heightened by the workings of wit and humour.

The Blooms propose a different explanation for satire's use of comic devices. They

assert that arousing laughter serves the satirist's purpose by helping to create a homogenous audience: "Satiric laughter, although its immediate source or object may be private, is a form of release that takes effect only as a shared activity. Laughter invites others to share the reason for the laughter" (122). Expanding on this notion, they contend that communal laughter directed at a scapegoat--upon whom man's sins are symbolically heaped--makes it possible for a community divided by guilt and shame to reintegrate itself: "Comparably, the butt of satire may be a convenient surrogate for expelling communal vice or folly. His availability perhaps betokens man's sadistic instincts, but it also provides an illusory source of healing transference" (128). Test, although contending that catharsis is an unproved concept, nevertheless concurs that "laughter may produce an engaging communal experience, especially if the audience joins in laughter directed against a worthy victim" (24). And Kernan describes the levelling effect of satiric laughter, arguing that readers can "agree, no matter what our persuasion, that any furious activity which achieves the very opposite of its intentions is both laughable and dangerous" (*Plot* 173).

Several critics comment on the close relation of satire to comedy and offer various theories by which to differentiate the two. Rosenheim argues that comedy and punitive satire share the same formula--one which is based on the pleasure readers take in seeing a deserving victim get his just desserts. Both comedy and satire, he explains, represent "humiliation, discomfort, frustration, or some similarly defined experience on the part of agents who fail in some way to adhere to normally expected standards of conduct" (23-24). He then asserts that the difference between comedy and satire is a question of particularity in the object of attack. Whereas the comic dupe is the character who might well have been Smith, Jones or

Robinson, in satire "the victim *is* Smith, Jones, or Robinson—or, if not, belongs to a particular group or embraces a particular view which can be isolated, for the purpose of receiving our unflattering attention, from the rest of the world about us" (27). This, note, is a typically historicist distinction, because one that reads satire in terms of its specific reference to historical particulars.

Formalist and rhetoric scholars assume a different stance in commenting on the distinction between satire and comedy. In an article subtitled "Distinguishing the Comic from the Satiric" (1995), Christian Gutleben observes that, at least from a puristic point of view, "satire and comedy can comfortably enough be set apart because they belong—or at least used to belong—to two different generic spheres, namely and respectively, poetry and drama" (133). However, since these terms "no longer refer to a genre or a form but to a mode or even a mood....the distinction between the two necessitates then an intricate analysis of modality, tonality, and narrativity" (133). James Sutherland also argues for an analysis of narrative strategy, suggesting that the difference between satire and comedy lies in the perception of the writer's disposition: "it is the satirist's intention—to expose, or deride, or condemn—that distinguishes him from the writer of comedy" (7). He states that while the writer of comedy is also "very much alive to the follies and imperfections and faults of men and women" (2), he accepts them: "he has no great desire to pass judgment, and still less to strip bare and victimise the intellectual and moral imbeciles he has observed. It is, on the contrary, the mark of the satirist that he cannot accept and refuses to tolerate....he is driven to protest" (3-4). This protest, however, cannot overwhelm the comic element of the work and still be considered a satire. If such, it becomes a rant.

### The "expression of a criticism" : Satire as Attack

As Frye remarks: "Attack without humor, or pure denunciation, forms one of the boundaries of satire" (*Anatomy* 224). Elkin argues, conversely, that humour without critical attack forms another boundary. He comments that while the perception of incongruity issues in laughter, the critical attack renders the laughter responsible (*Satire* 3). Comedy, he argues, has the effect of enlarging our sense of the possibilities of life; it encourages free, liberating laughter. Satire, on the other hand, "allows us only responsible laughter, for no matter how gay and sparkling its surface, it is always fundamentally judicial--its distinctive effect is that of intensifying our awareness of norms, conventions, traditions, and established standards" (*Defence* 13).

In sharpening his distinction between satire and other forms of both comedy and critical attack, Frye also focuses on satire's purported effect of heightening readers' awareness of norms--especially moral norms. Further delimiting the boundaries of satire, Frye suggests that "satire is irony which is structurally close to the comic: the comic struggle of two societies, one normal and the other absurd, is reflected in its double focus of morality and fantasy" (*Anatomy* 224). He clarifies the roles of irony and morality by asserting that the "chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony" (*Anatomy* 223). He explains its militancy: "its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured" (*Anatomy* 223). Highet argues, as Frye does, that satire is bounded on all sides by other forms of humour and criticism--"on the one side, invective and lampoon; on the other, comedy and farce" (155). His understanding of the distinction focuses on purpose, and speaks to much of the above-quoted critical commentary:

"The purpose of invective and lampoon is to destroy an enemy. The purpose of comedy and farce is to cause painless undestructive laughter at human weaknesses and incongruities. The purpose of satire is, through laughter and invective, to cure folly and to punish evil" (156). To cure and punish, the satirist must first judge and attack.

According to Test, that "satire is an attack is probably the least debatable claim that one can make about it" (15). Leyburn, Frye, Elkin, Highet, Rosenheim and others have argued that one of the key features of satire is a critical attack which is typically cast as a judgment of faults. In their view, the effective satirist uses persuasive rhetoric to convince his readers that a guilty verdict is fair and that punishment is warranted: "Justice, we are asked to believe, will be served by satiric method and with distinction" (Bloom 65-66). Kernan points out that this view "makes of satire a type of propaganda originating in the author's prejudices and shaped to persuade us to share those prejudices" (*Plot* 4). Many critics use metaphors of crime and punishment to underscore this understanding of the satirist's motives. For instance, James Sutherland contends that the satirist, "like the magistrate on the bench, is there to administer the law, to uphold the order of a civilized community; he brings men and women to the test of certain ethical, intellectual, social and other standards. In assessing their degree of culpability he may take mitigating circumstances into account, but he is not, as satirist, bound to do so" (19). Similarly, Paulson argues that satire must "(1) make the reader aware of a pointing finger, of an ought or ought not, that refers beyond the page to his own life, or--and this is not always the same thing--(2) take a moral stand, make a judgement, and place or distribute blame" (*Fictions* 4). The Blooms contend that the object of satiric attack is not only a scapegoat but a cautionary example whom the satirist holds up to public display in



hopes that, "like a sea gull impaled on a pier to warn off other gulls, wrongdoing—when properly exposed—may deter others from related crimes" (17). Cautionary examples thus provide the impetus to reform, which, the Blooms argue further, is the purpose of satire:

Satiric representation, in other words, should be a goad toward positive action, uniting in its readers aesthetic satisfaction and the ache of conscience. Those details that had earlier pleased them—the reproaches and recriminations heaped upon others—are inverted to become a burden of personal faults, a source of amoral discomfort and remorse if not of outright pain. In censuring wrongdoing and foolishness, satire may set in motion the possibility of remedy (which can be the discontinuance as well as the rectification of error): the innocent, forewarned and innately scrupulous, are equipped to face their obligations; the guilty, if capable of repentance, are moved to self-redemption. (32-33)

Satire's cruel means must certainly be justified by such noble ends; however, some theorists assert that satire—while it undoubtedly attacks—does not really cure or punish at all, and never really intends to. Erin Mackie argues that "[r]ational and benevolent reform is satire's social alibi, but is often maintained on only the shakiest ground. Posing as the upstanding custodian of social and cultural correction, satire often stumbles, revealing motivations and producing effects irrelevant to reform" (173). Reviewing two centuries of English satire, Connery and Combe ratify this assessment, arguing that virtually all satirists *claim* one purpose for satire, that of high-minded and usually socially oriented moral and intellectual reform; however, they *engage* in something quite

different, namely mercilessly savage attack on some person or thing that, frequently for private reasons, displeases them. The veneer of civilized behaviour serves to mask great primitive urges. Thus, satire is a literary Trojan horse for which polite (or politic) artfulness produces a dissembling form, serving first to contain and conceal, and then to unleash the primitive passions of the satirist. (2)

Roth supports this theoretical argument. One interviewer asked: "Do you actually think that *Our Gang* will do anything to restrain or alter Nixon's conduct? Affect his conscience? Shame him? What *do* you expect to accomplish by publishing a satire like this one?" To which Roth responded:

Do I expect the world to be changed by *Our Gang*? Hardly. True, when we all first learned about satire in school, we were told that it was a humorous attack upon men or institutions for the purpose of instigating change or reform, or words to that effect about its ameliorative function. Now, that's a very uplifting attitude to take toward malice, but I don't think it holds water. Brilliant satires have been written in behalf of causes and values that didn't stand a chance, and the satirists knew as much beforehand....satirists are naïfs at heart; simultaneously, they are probably less afflicted with hopeful illusions than the ordinary citizen. No, I think writing satire is essentially a literary, not a political, act, however volcanic the reformist or even revolutionary passion in the author. Satire is moral rage transformed into comic art—as an elegy is grief transformed into poetic art. Does an elegy expect to accomplish anything in the

world? No, it's a means of organizing and expressing a harsh, perplexing emotion. What begins as the desire to murder your enemy with blows, and is converted (largely out of fear of the consequences) into the attempt to "murder" him with invective and insult, is most thoroughly sublimated, or socialized, in the art of satire. It's the imaginative flowering of the primitive urge to knock somebody's block off. It's a verbal ritualization of frustration and anger, akin maybe to the war dance, or sticking pins in voodoo dolls. (qtd. in Lelchuk 226-7)

Test disparages the determination of critics and theorists to cling to what he believes is an obsolete argument: "Despite the lack of evidence to support the claim of reform through satire, both the justification and convention persist, as a short tour through articles and reviews in scholarly journals and popular magazines and newspapers will show" (11).

Indeed, many theorists seem apt to give satire the benefit of the doubt. Feinberg blames readers for misinterpreting satire, stating that they "*assume* that the satirist is offering a positive solution, in the form of behaviour which is exactly the opposite to that displayed in his satire, but this rarely proves to be true" (*Introduction* 3-4, emphasis added). Then he defends the satirist for usually failing to indicate in his attack how vice and folly can be eradicated: "The mind which sees the faults in society is rarely the kind of mind which visualizes adequate solutions. There is no reason why it should possess two gifts instead of one. It is sufficient to point out faults and let others correct them" (*Introduction* 15). Similarly, Elkin concludes his *Augustan Defence of Satire* (1973) by justifying the genre's failure to recommend solutions to the problems it so forcefully depicts and derides: "the

generally acceptable view today would surely be that a satire has done its work when it has effectively demonstrated the failings of its subject, and that it cannot be expected to remove them as well" (84). He suggests that, in modern eyes, satire is "a catalytic agent rather than an arm of the law or an instrument of correction: its function is less to judge people for their follies and vices than to challenge their attitudes and opinions, to taunt and provoke them into doubt, and perhaps into disbelief" (201). The argument here, it seems, is that even if readers are obviously not *acting* on the counsel of the satirist, they are at least *thinking* about it.

The contention that satire is more interested in provoking, challenging and taunting readers into a thoughtful consideration of other viewpoints is, perhaps, more than a conspicuous attempt to excuse the genre's failure to effect notable reform. It can be argued that the satirist does not intend simply to impose his prejudices on his readers, that he wants instead to provoke them into a new realm of consciousness, enabling them to recognize and to concede their faults. Griffin asserts that satire cannot mend its readers, "it can only hope to make them *see*" (62). To his mind, the notion that the satirist sets out to convince readers that someone or something is vice-ridden or foolish and must therefore be punished and reformed is a misrepresentation of the genre's complex attitude towards its targets. The old rhetoric of persuasion, he argues, must be supplemented with a rhetoric of inquiry and provocation which "assumes that satirists--though they may not have answers to all their questions--exercise an overall control over the process of exploration, leading us to raise questions we must then ponder" (64). In this view, satire does not persuade readers to accept particular truths or to make specific choices; it persuades them to become more open-minded, to grow aware of the complexity and reward of free inquiry. And it leads the way in such an

inquiry, producing an open form concerned with exploring, unsettling, and questioning rather than a closed form intent on expounding, declaring, and concluding. Thus, satire is process-driven not product-driven; it raises questions instead of providing answers, not by default, but by design.

### Questioning the Moral Norm

What does satire question? Frye, Highet, Paulson, Kernan, and others provide the traditional interpretation by naming moral norms as the foundation of the satiric attack. W.H. Auden, who often argued for the moral function of satire, states that the "object of satire is a person who, though in possession of moral faculties, transgresses the moral law beyond the normal call of temptation" (383-4). In his *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (1982), Alastair Fowler declares that "a radical moral stance is perhaps the most striking feature of the satiric repertoire" (110). However, this narrow interpretation of satire's targets is also rebuked on a number of fronts. Most forceful, perhaps, is John Crowe Ransom's declaration that, generally, the "moralistic view of art is the immoral recourse of thinkers with moral axes to grind; or it is the decision of harried and unphilosophical thinkers who cannot think of anything else to think" (99). Equally blunt is Elkin's remark that the insistence on the moral underpinning of the satirist's project is, in his words, "bogus": "Critics have been taken in by the satirist's special pleas. The justification of satire lies elsewhere—in its art, not in its morality. Indeed in so far as morality is concerned, satire is in the long view amoral....It questions everything" (*Satire* 8). Responding to prevalent critical insistence on the satirist's moral certainty, Griffin retorts that if "the

satirist's job is to assure us, in no uncertain terms, that the established norms about good and bad, right and wrong, are solidly in place, one wonders how satire ever attracted any mature readers or retained their interest" (36).

Elkin's comment that critics "have been taken in by the satirist's special pleas" points to one explanation for the widespread depiction of satire as a predominantly moral attack: because the satirist says so. Just as Elliott argued that the satirist relies on comic techniques to render palatable the unacceptable impulse to criticize, so too can it be argued that the satirist rationalizes his attacks not only by claiming that they are a product of his own moral outrage, but by insisting that they may serve as moral edification for his readers. But, to some, this is a decidedly tired argument. Rosenheim notes that during historical periods in which the didactic power of any literature was ostensibly the very reason for its existence, the tendency to view satire in terms of its moral motives was completely understandable: "The persistence of such views into our own day, however, is somewhat more difficult to understand.... Yet tacit or explicit assumptions concerning the satirist's decency and altruism continue to color modern discussions both of satire in general and of particular satiric works" (181).

Feinberg suggests that the persistence of the moral view of satire is due, in part, to critical confusion over the nature of satiric norms. Because the satirist criticizes--effectively arguing that people are behaving the "wrong way"--he is implying that there is a "right way" to behave. This "right way," Feinberg states, has been interpreted as the "moral way" even though that is only one of the possible criteria. In fact, he declares, the satirist is usually more concerned with social mores and customs than with morality and ethics. He adds that "satire which achieves a lasting acceptance, is likely to depend on norms that seem to be

universal, values that transcend their own time and locale. In that sense social norms tend to overlap with widely accepted moral norms; from that gray area of semantics comes the confusion over norms of satire. But satire ranges over the entire field of human activities and relies on standards which may be metaphysical or social or moral" (*Introduction* 12). Test expands this list, stating that "the satirist's 'truth' may not be only moral but also ethical, political, aesthetic, common sense, or shared prejudices" (29).

Because the canon is largely comprised of satires which address "truths" that transcend specific occasions or crises of the moment, critics grow accustomed to reading satire as an exploration and celebration of so-called "universal" moral values. However, although such works may prove to hold a wider appeal and enjoy a longer life, all modes of human behaviour—from pressing ethical dilemmas to comparably trivial social niceties—are scrutinized with the same satirical eye. In *The Plot of Satire* (1965), Kernan surveys some of the typical criticisms that appear in satire; he remarks that an implicit or explicit set of values in a particular work often takes the form of specific judgments "on such matters as what kind of food to eat, how to manage your wife and your household, how to dress, how to choose your friends and treat your guests, what kind of plays to frequent and what kind of books to read, how to conduct political life" (16). While there may be a moral basis to some of these judgments, the values they uphold are not necessarily, or exclusively, moral. In his article, "Stratagems of Satire in North American Literature Before Halliburton" (1985), Thomas Vincent argues for the recognition of two ideologically distinct satirical perspectives: "the intention of moral satire is to affront the moral sensibility of the reader and thereby arouse his moral indignation; the intention of the satiric rationalist is to affront the reader's sense of

reasonableness and thereby arouse disdain for stupidity and intellectual inferiority" (56).

While moral satire may dominate the canon—especially in Augustan Britain—to assume that all satire has a moral foundation is to overlook the tradition of satiric rationalism, and therefore to disregard a wide range of subjects of satirical attack.

### The Social Context of Satire

Universalist explanations are also offered to account for the appearance of satire in particular societies. Some theorists say satire arises at a time when norms are firmly fixed. For example, Auden insists that it flourishes "in a homogenous society with a common conception of the moral law, for satirist and audience must agree as to how normal people can be expected to behave, and in times of relative stability and contentment, for satire cannot deal with serious evil and suffering" (qtd. in Paulson 204). Others argue, on the contrary, that satire is written at times when these norms are being widely challenged. For instance, John Snyder states that satire arises "when there is little credence in public standards of morality and taste" (100). Still others postulate that satire arises at times of transition between these extremes. Elliott suggests that "the greatest satire has been written in periods when ethical and rational norms were sufficiently powerful to attract widespread assent yet not so powerful as to compel absolute conformity" ("Satire" 272). Similarly, Claude Rawson remarks that satire "flourishes most in an order-minded culture, perhaps at moments when order is felt to be slipping" (viii). And Frank Palmeri suggests that "periods of collision between one cultural paradigm and an alternative... seem to favor the writing of narrative satire" (17). As Griffin remarks, "[a]t this point the sceptical observer would argue that a society's moral



norms are *always* being simultaneously challenged and affirmed, that generational conflict (being constant) always sets new idea against received opinion, young against old" (134).

Feinberg, too, dismisses the attempt to define the character of the society which provokes the production of satire, noting that the "indisputable fact is that significant satire has appeared in all kinds of society, whether they were labelled 'stable' (Moliere, Swift, Dickens), 'unstable' (Gogol, Heine, Voltaire), 'renascent' (Rabelais, Jonson), 'decadent' (Juvenal, Rochester), 'restrictive' (Chaucer, Gogol), or 'free' (France, Twain, Shaw)" (*Introduction* 43). Satire's subject matter is also an area of critical dissension: Auden's position that satire cannot deal with serious evil and suffering is countered by Hight--"there are very few topics which the satirist cannot handle" (16)--and Feinberg--"No subject seems to be sacred" (*Introduction* 36).

Furthermore, critics have debated whether the satirist writes with a conservative or a revolutionary outlook--does he support or challenge authority and tradition? Griffin (who has emerged in this survey as the voice of insistent compromise) argues that the distinction is moot:

First, there is a matter of terms. As many have observed, the conservative and the revolutionary are more akin than they may realize. The conservative wants to conserve the best of tradition, the radical or revolutionary wants to return to the *roots* to find a purity that has been corrupted. Each is oriented toward an ideal in the past. Second, even assuming that we can distinguish between the two, it is very difficult to agree whether we should place a particular satirist among the conservatives or the revolutionaries.... Third, there is little evidence that a satirist is typically motivated by clearly articulated political principles....

(149)

Cast in these terms, Griffin has a compelling argument. However, while the lines between conservative and revolutionary Canadian satire may not be clearly drawn, a useful distinction can be retained between Tory and Liberal satire, as evidenced, for instance, in the satiric fiction of Haliburton and Leacock versus that of Richler and Atwood.

### Satiric Fiction

Much of the theory and criticism surveyed thus far refers implicitly or explicitly to several centuries of English poetry and prose works excluding the novel. However, the focus of this study is "satiric fictions." Paulson asserts that all of satire is a fictional construct, "both in the sense that it pretends to be something that it is not, and in the sense that it produces stories, plots, and characters' relationships" (*Fictions* 9). For present purposes, however, fiction refers to storied prose--sketches, short story cycles, and novels in particular. Contemporary scholars recognize the growing dominance of the novel form. Griffin asserts: "In the last two hundred years satire in the Western tradition is most commonly found not as an independent form or as parody; it is found in the novel" (4). In fact, he believes that, more than any other literary form, the novel has proved to be extremely hospitable to satire. He explains that other literary forms "find themselves invaded and parodically subverted by satire: the parasite overwhelms the host. What satire wants to do can generally be done within the generous confines of the novel without disturbing its economy" (4).

Not surprisingly, others argue that the diametrically opposed demands of the two genres make for an uneasy coalition called the "satiric novel". For instance, Elkin remarks

that "the novel, as its name indicates, is by nature innovative. It sets out to break new ground, whereas satire, by tradition at least, safeguards existing boundaries. Furthermore, in so far as it grew from biography, memoirs, and personal letters, the novel tended to be personal and subjective, thus going against the public stance of the satirist as guardian of the commonweal" (*Defence* 189). But this argument convinces only if readers accept the "tradition" that the satirist is a conservative intent on protecting the status quo and that all novels must be true to their etymology and thus display an interest in innovative ideas and techniques. David Watson puts aside his reservations, similar to Elkin's, to define the modern satiric novel as an "extended prose work which places psychologically developed characters, with whom the reader may identify, in a satiric setting, and then establishes these characters as both vehicle for and object of attack" (35). He adds that, by its nature, "the satiric novel leaves the reader with a sense of emptiness and frequently discomfort—a void from which the reader must emerge to find his own values" (35). Finding one's own values—under the often outrageously prejudicial guidance of the satirist—is one productive way of describing the function of all satire.

### **New Criticism and Historicism**

As this brief introductory survey reveals, the various and contradictory arguments which attempt to place restrictions on our understanding of such issues as what satire is, how it works, and why, when, and where it arises, though valuable, prove to be limited. The most constructive approach would encourage readers to remain open to various interpretations of satire's motives, function and methods. For example, the rhetorical techniques of wit and

humour may be tools of indirection to conceal the satiric attack for maximum effectiveness or to provide the satirist with the defence that his attacks are not wholly serious; they may be sugar-coating to render palatable the unacceptable impulse to criticize and to take the edge off the bitterness of the satiric assault; conversely, they may actually contribute to the pain of the satiric onslaught; or they may serve to create the sense of a homogenous community. To privilege one of these arguments over the others is to ignore many avenues of potentially fruitful inquiry. In different times, under different social-political conditions (as variously represented), different answers to the relevant questions asked of and about satire will be most productive. A conclusive summary of this century's two principal schools of thought in regards to satire will help point the way to some middle ground from which to proceed with a reading of nineteenth-century Canadian satiric fiction.

Despite satire's demonstrated variable and elusive nature, there arose, in the late 1950s, a consensus of sorts among theorists at Yale—a group including Robert Elliott, Alvin Kernan, Maynard Mack, Ronald Paulson, and Martin Price. Closely aligned with New Criticism, these formalists argued that satire is art and ought to be treated as an aesthetic object, not a biographical or sociological document. As Test remarks, the "work or expression of satire is observable, its techniques, diction, form, devices discussable" (15). In their view, the satirist produces a highly rhetorical art, proceeding by clear reference to resolute moral standards. For instance, in *The Cankered Muse* (1959), Kernan asserts that the satirist sees the world "as a battlefield between a definite, clearly understood good, which he represents, and an equally clear-cut evil. No ambiguities, no doubts about himself, no sense of mystery trouble him, and he retains always his monolithic certainty" (22). Considered as a

self-contained verbal order, satire makes use of fictions which are concerned, finally, with timeless universals rather than ephemeral particulars. The display of wit and the force of the critical attack—not the historical details—are the keys to persuading readers that something or someone is absurd or reprehensible. Griffin elaborates on the formalist theory, explaining that "insofar as a satire serves not to attack an adversary but to unsettle its readers, conduct an inquiry, or explore a paradox, it draws those readers into a space defined for the purpose and relies little on their specific knowledge of the external world" (120).

It follows, then, that a firm grasp of rhetorical techniques leads readers to a greater appreciation of the workings of satire than does the old biographical approach which these formalists often disdained. Consider Kernan's mocking remark that "it would be nonsense to argue, as the biographical critic does, that all authors of satire are straightforward, honest, pessimistic, indignant men who dislike ostentatious rhetoric, come from the country, and have simple moral codes" (*Muse* 22). This theory of satire emphasizes its autonomy, not its historicity. These precepts were hardly new. Most of them had been fully expressed in Dryden's "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" (1693), a work which is itself largely based on notions well established by Renaissance commentators such as Isaac Casaubon and André Dacier. It is perhaps due to its reiteration that this argument is often termed the "conventional" theory of satire.

However, this conventional approach was by no means universally advocated. Most notably, significant objections were raised by contemporary theorists at Chicago—chiefly A.R. Heiserman, Edward Rosenheim, and Sheldon Sacks. These historicists disparaged the formalist project as one which "tends to separate the work from the author who produced it,

the world out of which it grew, and the audience toward which it was directed" (Griffin 29). Acknowledging that the study of rhetoric may sharpen readers' perception of satiric art, they argued that it also stifles their awareness of satire's energy. As Griffin explains, the historicist theory grew out of a desire to "resituate satire in history, to locate its origins in the interplay between the creative imagination of the satirist and his personal circumstances, and to focus on the character of the satirist's appeal to his reader" (29). Sacks suggests that satire operates by attacking "particular men, the institutions of men, traits presumed to be in all men, or any combination of the three" (7). Rosenheim focuses more on the notion of particularity, arguing that "satire is not only an attack; it is an attack upon *discernible, historically authentic particulars*. The 'dupes' or victims of punitive satire....possess genuine historic identity. The reader must be capable of pointing to the world of reality, past or present, and identifying the individual or group, institution, custom, belief, or idea which is under attack by the satirist" (25). In this view, referentiality—not rhetoric—is the key feature of satire. Thus Rosenheim stresses "the indispensable relationship between satire and historic fact" (33) even as he acknowledges that the "search within the canon of the author, through the contemporary materials which may prove germane, and into more remote sources which have conceivable bearing upon the satirist's intention, is, of course, a formidable task with results that are rarely definitive" (33).

Reviewing these discordant theories, Griffin argues that their proponents now appear to have been too preoccupied by larger theoretical considerations and to have pushed their claims too far. He remarks that, thirty years later, in a different critical climate,

the Yale formalists...now seem to have insisted too much on satire's

transcendence of the particular. Today we are readier to see that literature of any kind is always implicated in its time and place, and more hesitant to speak about art and universals. The older Chicago historicist claims about "discernible historical particulars," unable to account for a satire as canonical as Gulliver's fourth voyage, now seem based on a narrowly positivist view of historical "facts." (119)

This move towards a more inclusive critical approach is evident in recent scholarship. In 1995's *Theorizing Satire*, Kirke Combe argues vehemently for what he terms "cultural criticism." While his remarks initially seem to align him with the older historicists, he espouses a more comprehensive view which recognizes the dilemma the historicist critic faces. It is helpful to quote Combe at length:

To impose general laws from without, as would a structuralist, or to confine oneself to intertextual issues, as would a post-structuralist, misses out on the *quidditas*--the messy, earthy whatness--of satire. Thus, while guiding principles and intertextuality are not to be eschewed, it strikes me that for a method of cogent inquiry satire demands intense referentiality. Satire is not a self-enclosed verbal construct. Neither celebrating its structural integrity nor unmasking its internal contradictions adequately accounts for the genre. Satire is a product of a particular person writing at a particular time for a particular audience within a particular society. If we lose sight of this, we have lost sight of satire--and perhaps of literature as a whole. At the same time, however, I must stress that the historical referentiality being recommended for the study of

satire *includes* generic considerations of the form. That is to say, how the traditions of satire--whatever those might be within a given historical time frame--are applied *by writers of that specific era* has everything to do with the type of satire that era will produce. And this, I think, is where so much confusion enters into the attempt to understand satire. Where do we draw the line between legacy and locality? Can we? Should we even try? ("New Voice" 74)

If attempting--or arguing about the wisdom of attempting--to draw such a line produces so much confusion, it seems expedient for present purposes to avoid the exacting exercise. And, of course, what Combe observes about the writers of satire applies also to the critic: that is, both are at once limited and enabled within the contexts of history and literature. That said, Combe's insistence that the study of satire can, and should, include an investigation of historical referentiality *and* generic considerations of form points the way to a possible solution to the formalist and the historicist impasse. A two-pronged analysis of nineteenth-century Canadian satiric fictions can engage the texts both as self-contained works of art and as products of distinct social, historical, personal and political contexts. Close readings of the texts are essential to determine the degree to which various authors artfully wield the conventional weapons of satire as outlined by the formalists. The historicists' privileging of interdisciplinary cultural analysis allows for the identification of the social, moral, and political norms which contribute to the production of Canadian satiric fiction. Together, these modes of critical inquiry should help both to discover the germination of nineteenth-century Canadian satiric norms and to assess the extent to which these norms are



entrenched in a literary tradition of Canadian prose satire, and indeed, in Canadian society itself.

## COLONIAL PERIOD

Satire is primarily an urban form. Satirists need a community of people, not only to read their censure, but to provoke it. According to Dustin Griffin, the prominence of satire in any literary culture has historically been founded on three conditions. Most important is the presence of a compact and relatively homogenous community located in the cultural and/or political capital. This community, he adds, often has an aristocratic rather than a bourgeois basis, for satirists are "themselves somewhat aristocratic in their sympathies and prejudices if not in actual social status--disdainful and imperious, intolerant, sharply aware of social differences, sensitive to style, suspicious of the mob" (137). Such a community fosters the other two conditions: a knowledge of the conventions of satire among writers who know each other and take part in the community's civic life; and a reading public that is interested in literary gossip and rivalry and that appreciates ridicule, allusions, innuendos and in-jokes of all kinds. These conditions prevailed in Juvenal's Paris, in Boilieu's Rome, and in Pope's London. In fact, the Augustan age is considered "La Belle Epoque" for satire in England. However, after the mid-eighteenth century, the conditions for satire there became increasingly less prevalent as the court ceased to be the cultural centre of the nation, writers were less likely to be located only in London, and the reading audience expanded and diversified.

In the Maritime region of British North America, however, the conditions necessary for the rise of a satiric literature were just beginning to appear. They arrived, so to speak, with the Loyalists. While there had been significant waves of immigration into British North America throughout the eighteenth-century (including one great wave of nearly 25,000 Highland Scots in 1773), none was so consequential as the arrival of approximately 60,000

Loyalists from the rebel colonies to the south, more than half of whom settled in Nova Scotia between 1783 and 1786. In sheer number, they were overwhelming: in a matter of months, the population of Halifax (founded in 1749) tripled to become a city of ten thousand, while the provincial population doubled. This influx of political refugees not only bolstered the English-speaking population of the existing provinces, but it sparked the creation of two new English-speaking provinces--New Brunswick and Upper Canada. The profound Loyalist impact was not, as W.J. Keith observes, simply statistical: "it was this nucleus of immigrants and settlers, unwilling to sever connexions with the mother-country, that laid the foundations --at once social, political, and psychological--for what eventually cohered as the Canadian nation" (1-2). Those foundations necessarily had a satirical edge, for "is not the act of emigration itself a kind of satire--a romantic, indeed a revolutionary rejection of an established order? The emigrant discards an old life in favour of another to be established in a new land" (Scott and Smith xvi).<sup>1</sup>

The Loyalists abruptly transformed the scattered frontier, "giving it a varied class structure, a multiplication of specialized trades, a temporary influx of capital, and a new political and cultural orientation" (Cogswell, "Settlement" 86). Several hundred were not only graduates of Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and other American colleges, but were leaders in their professional capacities as clergyman, teachers, lawyers, judges, and civil and military officials. Ray Palmer Baker remarks that the Loyalists, "favored by the Government, appointed to lucrative positions, and enriched by grants of land and money, soon stamped their peculiar ideas on the communities in which they lived" (*History* 34). They possessed intellectual, social, moral and political ideals and traditions, which they cherished with pride.

They soon established King's Academy at Windsor (1787, raised to the status of college in 1789), modelling its entrance conditions, curricula, and aims on both Oxford University in London and King's College (later Columbia University) in New York.<sup>2</sup>

The sudden arrival of an educated class seldom found in pioneer communities spurred a cultural phenomenon in Nova Scotia. In addition to the founding of schools, it saw "the endorsement of theatrical performances, the development of newspapers and printing shops, the organization of agricultural and reading societies, and the writing of polite literature as part of the fabric of conventional society" (G.Davies, *Maritime* 30).<sup>3</sup> Among the Loyalists were several prominent literary figures of the Revolutionary War period, including Jonathan Odell, Jacob Bailey, and Joseph Stansbury—all vehement critics of the rebels. Political satire in verse and prose modelled on John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, and Alexander Pope, was the weapon of choice among these writers. As John Logan remarks: "Ridicule and burlesque are natural methods of attack by those who are confident of the righteousness of their cause and of the mean character and motives of their opponents" (*Haliburton* 130).

The American resistance to the Stamp Act<sup>4</sup> in the mid-1760s had seen the emergence of satire as a prominent literary form in the American colonies. It not only developed in concert with the growing sophistication of the audience in general, but it also cleaved along specific ideological lines as the colony moved towards Rebellion. On one hand, the Tory satirists brought their moral vision and their faith in the experience of British social history powerfully to bear on the issues of their times:

The embracing of this destructive impulse was viewed as symptomatic of a weakness in moral sensibility which, if permitted to go unchecked, would

manifest itself in the degeneration of the moral character of American society generally. Such disruptive dissent, then, would isolate America, not merely socially and politically, but more important, morally (even spiritually), from the main-stream of human civilization as expressed most fully and most truly in the social evolution of the British nation. (Vincent, "Stratagems" 57)<sup>5</sup>

The Rebel satirists, on the other hand, did not have such ready access to an authoritative satiric tradition. For the most part, Thomas Vincent observes, they ridiculed the "pompous self-righteousness and the arrogant self-interest implicit in the position of those defending established order from within" ("Stratagems" 57). However, the most effective Rebel satirists, such as Philip Freneau, countered the power of Tory morality not only with a tempting vision of freedom, opportunity, and progress, but with the force of reasoned conviction to rational principles. Vincent remarks that this "assertion of reason implied that independent judgement, flowing from intellectual self-reliance, could provide the energy and self-confidence necessary for individual and social evolution" ("Stratagems" 57).

Thus, before the hostilities broke out, "a virtual war of satires erupted covering the full spectrum of satiric modes: mock-heroic and Hudibrastic verse, travesties and parodies, songs and ballads, plays, essays, and letters-to-the-editor" (Vincent, *Satire* xiv).<sup>6</sup> This deluge of satire not only honed the talents of the writers, but it also helped to produce a sophisticated and appreciative audience for the work. Since the expatriate Loyalist writers retained their disapproval of the new Republic, "their literary mood and form followed the satiric manner of the poets, pamphleteers and journalists of the pre-revolutionary days" (Logan, *Haliburton* 130). For instance, Vincent notes, between 1779 and 1784 Bailey

"vigorously and savagely attacked the American rebels and their aims in such satires as 'The Character of a Trimmer' and 'America.' In these poems and in shorter pieces he used Hudibrastic verse satire as a trenchant and incisive instrument for clarifying and articulating the fears, frustrations, and moral indignation aroused in him by the American rebellion" (DLB 19). Thus, through Loyalist readers and writers, the counter-revolutionary ideals of Tory Americans were carried into British North America.<sup>7</sup> This satiric eye, which viewed the world through the lens of eighteenth-century British conservatism, was soon turned on the Loyalists' adopted home. Concerned, on the one hand, with the immediate concerns of building a stable and prosperous home, these satirists also scanned the horizons, worried about the colonies' long-term position *vis-à-vis* the mother country and the new Republic. The resulting literature is curiously bi-focal in its subject matter. For instance: "Bailey's and Odell's political satires, together with [the anonymous poem] 'The Times,' are concerned with widely different aspects of international affairs in North America; [Samuel Denny] Street's 'Creon' deals with a local political incident against the background of eighteenth-century political philosophy; Bailey's 'Jack Ramble' attacks a significant religious problem in local, international, and universal terms" (Vincent, *Satire ix-x*). Here, then, was the satisfaction of Griffin's conditions for the rise of satire: a homogenous community with aristocratic character (in their sympathies and prejudices if not in actual social standing) and comprised, at least in part, of active writers educated in the conventions of satire and by sophisticated readers receptive to their work. While these writers were scattered throughout the Maritimes--rather than located in one cultural or political capital--they shared a small audience and were aware of one another's work.

The presence in the Maritime region of these and other, lesser-known, Loyalist writers--such as Samuel Andrews, Mather Byles, Jr., Roger Viets, Joshua Wingate Weeks, and Deborah How Cottnam--greatly contributed to "the emergence of literarily inclined newspapers and their concomitants: strong, regionally based writers" (G.Davies, *Maritime* 48). Baker points, for example, to the establishment of the first literary journal in Canada, *The Nova-Scotia Magazine* (1789-1792), whose subtitle explained its scope: "*A Comprehensive Review of Literature, Politics, and News. Being a Collection of the Most Valuable Articles which Appear in the Periodical Publications of Great Britain, Ireland, and America; with Various Pieces in Prose and Verse Never before Published*" (45). The purpose, outlined by printer-editor John Howe (Joseph's father) was threefold: "'to preserve and diffuse a taste for British literature'; to encourage 'young writers among the rising generation to try their strength'; and, finally, to further the interests of the province" (Baker, *History* 45).<sup>8</sup> The magazine had 200 subscribers, including judges, surgeons, and the Bishop of Nova Scotia: its success, albeit short-lived, spurred the development of half a dozen similar initiatives, including the *Nova Scotia and New Brunswick or Historical, Literary, Theological and Miscellaneous Repository*; *Acadian Magazine and Literary Mirror*; *New Brunswick Religious and Literary Journal*; *The Pearl*; *Halifax Monthly Magazine*; and *Nova Scotia New Monthly Magazine* (F.Sutherland 18).

As instrumental as the Loyalists were in creating the conditions for the development of satiric fiction in the Maritimes, they did not have an immediate and unified literary effect on the literary development of their new country. Fred Cogswell cautions that, while many of the Loyalists poets continued to write satire, they did not provide the Maritimes with an



instant literature--as the dearth of English writing produced in the region in the twenty-five years following their arrival attests. It was not until the early decades of the 1800s that the cultural fruits of the Loyalist presence in the Maritimes were realized. Stanley McMullin argues that remarkable socio-political changes during these decades prompted the sudden outpouring of writing in the region:

Its citizens participated in debate over the role of politics, religion, and education....All aspects of life were scrutinized, debated, and judged. The major criticism of the society appeared in the pages of the various newspapers, which were often involved in extended exchanges of opinion both in editorial commentary and in letters to the editor. *The Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), *The Novascotian* (Halifax), and *The Colonial Patriot* (Pictou) led the way. Given this mood of self-examination and debate, it is not so strange that satire should emerge as the most evolved literary genre of this period. (*Canadian* 34)

Indeed, throughout the 1820s and 30s in particular, moral and political satire flourished in the region--especially in the newspapers. In addition to new writing from the descendents of the Loyalist contingent, satiric and ironic comments on a wide range of topics appeared in the *Acadian Recorder* under the pseudonyms Viator, Agricola, Investigator, T.S.B., and Mephibosheth Stepsure, and in the *Novascotian* under the pseudonyms Patty Pry and Sam Slick and under the heading "The Club."<sup>9</sup>

In his biography of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, V.L.O. Chittick questions whether or not the arrival of the Loyalists was "the unmitigated blessing it has long been considered to be" (166). He acknowledges that they certainly must be credited with the establishment of

a bishop's see, a college, and literary magazines, and with the improvement of the roads, schools, and various public institutions. But he wonders if too high a price may have been paid for "their much talked-of culture, superior education, and high professional standards" (*Study* 166). He argues "that they were from the professional, military, and merchant classes, and in many instances used to the conditions of city and town life in the compactly settled districts of the eastern states, [and that this] made them, in the large numbers in which they came, an acquisition of questionable desirability to a wilderness community in crying need of farmers and laborers" (*Study* 167). Chittick's point is especially valid in light of the grievous turn of events in the province's fortunes in the next generation. For while political dislocation greatly contributed to the development of a satiric temperament in the Maritimes, the precipitating factor of its dominance may well have been the sudden and severe economic crisis which struck the region with the close of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. David Stouck argues for direct cause and effect, stating that the "deflation of the economy and its attendant political turmoil...brought about the flowering of early Maritime culture in the form of satirical prose fiction" (1).

The depression produced disastrous effects on the agricultural development of the region. "Farming," Chittick remarks, "had long been a despised occupation among the Nova Scotians, and the Loyalists, coming in complete unfitness for a life of manual labor, and crowding into official and professional positions, had very probably contributed to the contempt in which it was held" (*Study* 168). Early in the war-period, many farmers rejected the arduous and poorly compensated chore of raising grain in favour of the relatively easy and profitable task of producing the large quantities of timber, beef and hay demanded by the

extensive Halifax military and naval establishments. The lavish expenditures of British capital in the province made the period one of apparent prosperity; however, when the inevitable retrenchment came, the artificially stimulated markets collapsed. While some fortunes were made, years of luxury and extravagance led most to financial ruin. Still, many farmers balked at the idea of returning to their farms. Instead, Chittick explains, "in emulation of the speculating activities of the Halifax merchants, or possibly of what they believed the secret of the Americans' prosperity, numbers of them turned to 'tradin', the one activity least needed in a country of failing food production and without the means upon which a substantial trade could be built" (*Study* 169).

Those farmers who were committed to their vocation faced hardships as well. Gwendolyn Davies notes that an "increasing number of immigrants, escaping depressed conditions in Great Britain, came to Nova Scotia and took up farming in spite of their having little previous experience as farmers" (*Letters* xxii). To exacerbate matters, two natural disasters took their toll on the region. The years 1815 and 1816 came to be known in folk memory as "the year of the mice" and "the year without summer" respectively (*Letters* xxii). The "Land of Promise" was soon sarcastically dubbed "Nova Scarcity." Scottish emigrant, John Young, was among the first to employ the satiric essay as a means of addressing the despair sweeping the province. Possibly taking his cue from "Columnella" who discussed the province's agricultural prospects in a series of letters printed in *Nova Scotia Magazine* several decades earlier, Young adopted the pseudonym, "Agricola," to coax and chide his neighbours to take their farming seriously. The letters were published in the *Acadian Recorder* from 1818 to 1823 and the first thirty-eight were collected and published in Halifax as *The Letters of*

*Agricola on the Principles of Vegetation and Tillage* (1822). Young's efforts helped to legitimize farm work, stimulate the improvement of farming methods, and establish Agricultural Societies under the patronage of the governor. They also, as Gwendolyn Davies observes, "led to many discussions of farming in newspapers and helped to create the climate for McCulloch's letters on the need for agricultural and other reforms" (*Letters* xxii-xxiii).<sup>10</sup>

Hence the satiric essay, modelled in part on those which had filled the immensely popular British periodicals, *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, was one of the earliest forms of creative prose to appear in the country. The enduring popularity of this neoclassical form long after it had fallen out of vogue in England is evidence of the lasting impact of the Loyalists' conservative tastes. However, nostalgia and mere literary imitation may not have been the reasons for the perpetuation of these older literary forms. McCulloch, Young, and other influential Scots who immigrated to British North America were also conservative and schooled to appreciate the efficacy of the neoclassical form. Another reason would have been that early nineteenth-century Maritime socio-political philosophy had much in common with British Augustan tenets. Consider, for instance, P.K. Elkin's description of the Augustan philosophy in relation to its literature:

...a yearning for the middle way was both fervent and widespread in the formative years of the Augustan age; and living in an age whose goals were order, stability, and compromise, instead of experiment, revolution, and individualism, writers aimed less to inspire and arouse than to correct....

Augustan satire was firmly rooted in the comforting conviction of the age that men are free and responsible beings, who can set about improving themselves

and their society by the exercise of reason—of those higher powers of will, understanding, and mind, which make civilization possible. (*Defence* 9)<sup>11</sup>

These ideals are precisely those which inform the satirical writing of two of the most important writers of Canada's colonial period: Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Both men claimed insights into the ills which threatened their communities—insights grounded in particular political, social, moral, and religious beliefs--and both wrote in an attempt "to convert their neighbors to their ways of thinking by putting the situation as they saw it before them in fictitious but realistic terms. Out of their efforts, the first serious realistic Canadian prose fiction was born" (Cogswell, "Haliburton" 106).

### THOMAS McCULLOCH'S *THE STEPSURE LETTERS*

While the Loyalists and their descendants clearly had a profound influence on and continued to dominate all aspects of Nova Scotian life, they were not without considerable opposition. This bastion of Tory-Anglicanism was contested by an emerging liberalism championed, in part, by the Secessionist branch of the Scottish Presbyterian church. Stanley McMullin notes that "Ministers of the Scottish Secessionist church, who arrived in the colony after 1800, were graduates of the great universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, where their Calvinist training was leavened by the metaphysical speculations of the Scottish enlightenment" (*Canadian* 32). These were the men who instigated liberal reform in education and politics in Nova Scotia at the turn of the century. Thomas McCulloch was in many respects the leader of this reform movement and "a major force in shaping the intellectual, religious, and cultural life of Nova Scotia in the first four decades of the nineteenth century" (G.Davies, *DLB* 228).

McCulloch was a liberal Scottish Presbyterian who emigrated to Nova Scotia two decades after the Loyalists' arrival. He was born in Renfrewshire, Scotland in 1776. The son of a master block-printer, he studied medicine at the University of Glasgow before entering the Secession Divinity Hall at Whitburn. He was ordained a minister in 1799 and conducted a successful ministry in Stewarton for four years. In 1803 he volunteered for colonial missionary work and travelled to Pictou, Nova Scotia, establishing a Secessionist Presbyterian congregation there. McCulloch immediately became embroiled in provincial affairs. A year

earlier, the province had decided that, while students of any religious denomination were free to attend King's College, only those students who swore to the 39 articles of the Church of England would be permitted to graduate. Since non-Anglicans constituted a large majority of the student body, enrolment immediately dropped to just one-sixth of its previous number, leaving most students without access to higher education. V.L.O. Chittick refers to this decision as "a measure stupid beyond belief. It cut King's College at the very beginning of its long record of usefulness from the support of the dissenting majority of Nova Scotians, and from all possibility of the larger service to the whole people then so badly needed" (*Study* 22).

Resolving to provide a liberal and non-sectarian program of higher learning open to all, McCulloch began a long career as a social reformer. Starting in 1805, he offered alternative schooling in his own home until finally, in 1818, he officially opened Pictou Academy. As its principal, he fought doggedly for its survival until 1838.<sup>12</sup> Because of its secessionist affiliation, it was never designated a college; however, students from throughout the region came to study under McCulloch, a renowned lecturer in science and theology.<sup>13</sup> The Academy produced men who went on to become university presidents at McGill, Queen's, and Dalhousie (Baird 613). In 1838, McCulloch himself brought the same Scottish system of practical education to the fledgling Dalhousie College in Halifax, serving as its first principal until his death. Just as he had at Pictou, McCulloch laboured intensely as a lecturer and worked tirelessly to build the institution's library, add to its museum collection, and acquire scientific apparatus.<sup>14</sup> He also founded a theological seminary at West River, Pictou County, which was later moved to Truro and joined with the Free Church Seminary to form

the Halifax Presbyterian College. John Irving remarks that when McCulloch died in 1843, "Nova Scotia had lost its ablest and most persistent champion of liberal education" ("Philosophical" 448).

McCulloch's thirty-year writing career was closely connected to his work as a clergyman and an educator. He was a prominent pamphleteer in religious controversy, publishing several tracts in Edinburgh attacking Roman Catholicism and defending Calvinism: *Popery Condemned by Scripture and the Fathers* (1808), *Popery Again Condemned by Scripture and the Fathers* (1810), and *Calvanism, the Doctrine of the Scriptures* (published posthumously, 1849). In these major works, totalling more than 1000 pages, "McCulloch out-thought and out-wrote his Catholic opponents in an astonishing display of theological argument" (Lochhead, "McCulloch" 694). He confirmed his reputation as a church scholar with *The Prosperity of the Church in Troubled Times* (1814) and *Words of Peace* (1817). McCulloch's battle for educational rights for the province's dissenters also found expression in his writing. In 1818, he adopted the pseudonym "Investigator" and published a series of letters in the *Acadian Recorder* which argued his "belief that education was the single most important factor in producing good, moral, loyal, and successful citizens" (McMullin, "Liberal" 73).<sup>15</sup> He advanced his views on education in his address at the opening of the Pictou Academy, *The Nature and Uses of a Liberal Education Illustrated* (1819), and in his subsequent, "A Lecture Delivered at the Opening of the First Theological Class in Pictou Academy" (1821). These works convey his optimistic philosophy that man's flexibility of mind gives him the infinite capacity to respond to the challenges in his environment. He argued that a



liberal education is therefore essential not only for the members of such learned professions as law, medicine, and theology, but for everybody engaged in the world's work. Each individual, no matter what his occupation may be, must live in organized society and therefore needs to understand the principles of his art or trade and the spirit of his culture. (Irving 449)

Not surprisingly, McCulloch's philosophical and theological notions, together with his belief in the utility of education, found their most enduring expression in his fiction. He is, of course, best remembered for *The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure*, a series of sketches in letter form which combine the plainly didactic elements of his other writing with the entertaining aspect of satiric fiction. Commenting on Thomas Chandler Haliburton's similar use of the sketch form, George Parker notes that it was an ideal choice in that it was "flexible enough to accommodate subject matter conventionally associated with the letter to the editor, the essay, the short story, and the anecdote" (CEEECT xx). The twenty-five linked letters were published serially in the *Acadian Recorder* beginning on December 22, 1821 and appearing irregularly until March 29, 1823. Reissued in book form in 1862 (the title page reads 1860), the *Letters* represent one of the earliest fictional prose works set in this country.<sup>16</sup>

*The Stepsure Letters*, as they are commonly called, are rooted in McCulloch's dismay at the demoralizing effect of the depression and the deterioration of the manners and morals of Nova Scotian society. In "A Missionary Educator: Dr. Thos. McCulloch," Frank Baird outlines the general atmosphere of the Pictou community:

Intemperance and profanity, superstition, poverty and ignorance, the difficulty of obtaining even the plainest necessaries of life, the length and severity of the

winters, the scarcity of fuel, the apathy of the people, the presence in the community of a number of ungodly and violent men, some of them old soldiers and some American adventurers, who were openly opposed to religion and morality,—these and many other problems had to be reckoned with by Dr. McCulloch, from the beginning. (612)

Like many satirists before him, McCulloch proclaims that his motives for writing are magnanimous—"To record calamities, is a disagreeable task: but in the present case, it is an act of justice to our town, which ought not to be omitted."<sup>17</sup>

His constant theme is that both material and spiritual prosperity can be achieved through strict adherence to the religious values of piety and modesty and to the stereotypically Scottish values of hard work, thrift, and sobriety. As Robin Mathews notes in *The Stepsure Letters: Puritanism and the Novel of the Land*, "the force of the land itself is a moral and economic stabilizer: "The satire is consistent: those who remain on the land, labour, live frugally and self-sufficiently, and follow Divine purpose are contented, economically secure, and assured of their eternal future....from the appropriate use of land flows the possibility of the good life" (136-7). McCulloch champions the puritanical, homespun values of the modest but comfortable family farm, while scorning the prodigal values associated with the alluring but ultimately spurious enticements of the city. Thomas Vincent argues that McCulloch's utilitarian attitude

is 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. It is the fostering of such values as independence in

judgement, intellectual self-reliance founded on reason, and the objective of utility that provides a link between the two. ("Stratagems" 59)

But, because McCulloch's pragmatic sensibility is firmly grounded in rigorous moral standards, *The Stepsure Letters* more accurately represent a conflation of moral satire and satiric rationalism. Since hard work renders both God and man happy, to live usefully *is* to live morally. Thus, from either a rational or a moral viewpoint, it simply does not make sense to leave the land.

Gwendolyn Davies remarks that in addition to having drawn on various aspects of Scots culture for his satiric perspective, McCulloch may also have found his literary inspiration in his homeland: "With their episodic structure, stock figures, direct address, and socially conscious protagonist, the letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure employ many of the conventions of popular fiction familiar to McCulloch in his youth in Scotland" (*DLB* 231). Indeed, the collected *Letters* provide textbook examples of both the "idle apprentice" and the "industrious apprentice" tales so popular in Britain for decades. Northrop Frye points out that these tales gained popularity with the rise of the British middle class in the mid-eighteenth century as evidenced in novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, and in William Hogarth's paintings, *The Rake's Progress* and *The Harlot's Progress*. But it was in North America, he argues, where there was no aristocracy to suggest an alternative type of social prestige, that these tales flourished, adding that "*The Stepsure Letters* have a minor place in the development of this convention, but their place is strategic for anyone interested in the origins and traditions of what is now Canadian culture" (*Letters* iv).

Letters one to six and fifteen are essentially satiric sketches which detail the downfall of those who begin with numerous advantages—such as a reasonable sum of money, good land or a timber stand, and plenty of energy—and squander it all through mismanaged affairs and vice-ridden behaviour. Letters eight to fourteen narrate the history of Stepsure's rise from a lame orphan to a respected and affluent land owner. In Letters twenty-one, twenty-two, and twenty-four, Stepsure recounts the story of William; Letters eighteen and twenty are written by Saunders Scantocreesh<sup>18</sup>; and Letters twenty-three and twenty-five are Stepsure's replies to the critic, Censor.<sup>19</sup> Together, the series forms what Mathews calls a satirical allegory,

in which a simple human being seeking an undisturbed independence in a more or less pastoral surrounding takes advice from his betters, studies self-sufficiency, marries sensibly, works hard, and, by so doing, provides a satirical comment upon most of the others around him. They are people who attempt to live more mobile, economically complex lives than the protagonist, and they end in ruin and, often, incarceration. (128)<sup>20</sup>

While the *Letters* cohere as a collection, they were not originally intended to be read as such and therefore do not attempt a sustained narrative. As in the essays of *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, the connection between the chapters is not achieved through unity of plot but through continuity of character and tone.

The principal mouthpiece in this satire is Mephibosheth Stepsure himself, a candid farmer who takes keen notice of his neighbours' failures while vaunting his own successes. Marjorie Whitelaw observes that Stepsure is the perfect illustration of the Protestant work ethic in successful practise: "McCulloch makes him the ideal settler: unfailingly thrifty,

prudent, hard-working, moderate in his pleasures and strong in his piety. And, of course, he prospers accordingly" ("McCulloch" 141). In short, he is "the kind of character that satirists have used for a norm ever since satire has been written" (Frye, *Letters* v).<sup>21</sup> His first name is derived from Samuel II: Mephibosheth is the lame son of King Saul whose name means "one who scatters or disperses shame," thus disclosing McCulloch's satiric reformist intent.

Frye suggests that Stepsure's lameness "acts as a kind of lightning rod to deflect the envy of others—one juvenile delinquent, we learn, would otherwise have beaten him up merely out of exasperation at his serenity" (*Letters* v). Moreover, his deformed feet make him conscious of his human limitations, compelling him to "step sure"—the secret of his success. By contrast, "gadding about," he insists, is largely responsible for both the moral and economic decline of his community. In this respect, Stepsure's *Letters* resonate tellingly with John Gay's Augustan satiric poem, "Trivia: The Art of Walking the Streets of London" (1716). Alvin Kernan describes the Walker's attitude: "He does not go out, and cannot conceive of others going out, just to visit a friend, seek amusement, or see the sights. The approved step is never 'loitering,' but always quick, busy, hasty, on business bent" (*Plot* 46). This too is the approved step in *The Stepsure Letters*.

In fact, McCulloch implies that any movement away from the home and farm which is not directly related to their provision and upkeep, proves a foolish expenditure of valuable energy indicative of poor domestic management and lax moral conduct. "Gadding about" refers not only to trips to the city to find easy jobs or to purchase extravagant fashions and merchandise, but also to a whole host of behaviours which breach the puritanical codes of social and moral conduct: trips to the tavern to drink, gamble, and fight; trips to neighbours'

homes to gossip, dance and frolic; trips to Ledger to purchase more goods on credit.

Throughout the community, houses in ruin and farms in neglect testify to their desertion by families who waste their time and money elsewhere.

Most of the townsfolk seem oblivious to the connection between hard work and success. Stepsure often allows their own conversations to provide ironic commentary on their ignorance, folly and irresponsibility. When he attends a farm auction, he notes that large numbers have turned out for the event: "Not that our townsmen in general intended to buy; for, in talking together before the sale commenced, they all agreed that money was money now, and no where to be got: but having nothing to do at home, they rode over to see how the farm would go, and who would get it" (Letter 6, 63). Such "gadding about" sows the seeds of ruin and often culminates in a trip to jail for the head of the soon economically and spiritually bankrupt household. But, as Frye notes, "McCulloch keeps his touch light, and the harsher legal penalties awaiting them are referred to only parenthetically" (*Letters* vi).

The *Letters* begin with a series of cautionary tales of town folk who are impoverished when, after a taste of gentility, they refuse to relinquish their improvident lifestyle and return to their farms. For instance, Letter one tells the story of Solomon Gosling who tried to profit by building vessels to supply the war effort but lost everything when peace came. Lazy but driven by a desire to rise above his class, Gosling decides to open a general store. Stepsure qualifies this description: "When I say a general assortment, it is necessary to be a little more explicit. It did not contain any of those articles which are used in subduing the forest, or in cultivating the soil. These he knew to be not very saleable" (Letter 1, 9). When the business appears to be an immediate success—Gosling is not concerned that his goods are sold almost

exclusively on credit--the family's morals begin to decline. Stepsure's observations are seemingly sympathetic in their delicate understatement: "My neighbour's children are as fine a young family as any in the town; but it unavoidably happened, that the apparent prosperity of their father introduced among them habits, not very friendly to regular industry and saving" (Letter 1, 12). Like their perceived heightening of social status, their prosperity is an illusion and soon the Gosling family is in dire straits. The satiric targets here are obvious: commercial trade as opposed to industrious husbandry, and buying on credit instead of paying with cash.

In what will become in these *Letters* an oft-rehearsed defence, Gosling blames Nova Scotia for his failure, remarking to Parson Drone:

"The truth is, parson, the country does not deserve to be lived in. There is neither trade nor money in it, and produce gives nothing. It is fit only for Indians or emigrants from Scotland, who were starving at home. It is time for me to go elsewhere, and carry my family to a place that presents better prospects to young folks." (Letter 1, 11-12)

But Gosling is carried off, instead, to lodge with the sheriff until his debts can be repaid. Stepsure concludes this account with an explicit denial that the story is a satiric fable, although his disclaimer is conspicuously tinged with irony: "To your readers in general, it will not, I know, be very interesting; for they have all seen the like, and heard the like, a hundred times before...it will be impossible for them to deduce from it, any sage moral for their own direction in life" (15). Instead, he asks the editors to publish this news, this "true story," so that Gosling's relatives far and wide may "learn how their relation Mr. Solomon is

getting on, since he quitted the farming" (15-16).

The final lines of this first letter in the series include a sly jab at Gosling's fate and a suggestion of its relevance to the Nova Scotian readership: "I have not been able to afford them a very flattering view of our trading concerns. Yet, still, they will see, that, when they go to live with the sherriff, as the most of them are likely to do, they will get into very genteel company" (16). The ensuing letters provide accounts of similar failure: Letter four describes the undoing of Caleb Catsup and Mr. Steer who both neglect their farms, the former in favour of electioneering, and the latter to pursue cattle dealing. Letter fourteen describes the plight of a Captain whose error in judgement Stepsure easily summarizes: "In the pursuit of military honour, the pursuits of husbandry had been considerably overlooked; so that the Captain's means of domestic comfort did not keep pace with the increase of his family" (Letter 14, 149). Shopkeepers, cattle dealers, tavern owners and innkeepers, civil and military officials—all come under fire for plunging their families into moral decline and financial ruin when they leave the modest comforts and satisfactions of farm life in search of easier and more lucrative occupations. Like so many Bloomian gulls impaled along the pier, the wrongdoings of these families provide a deterrent for readers who can easily see the relation of crime and punishment in these cautionary tales.<sup>22</sup>

While McCulloch's stories are rooted in factual accounts of Pictou's struggling families, his reliance on stock characters belies his literary debt. His emphasis on industry is manifest in figures who are named according to their principal occupation—which does not necessarily refer to gainful employment. For instance, Drone, Sham, Howl and Yelpit are preachers; Snout and Bullock are pig and cattle farmers respectively; Shootem is the Captain



of the Militia; Holdfast and Catchem serve respectively as sheriffs; Soakem and Tipple are tavern owners; Cribbage and Pool are gamers; Miss Totabout is an incessant gossip; Miss Sippit is a renowned hostess; Trudge is a pedlar; and so on. Stepsure observes this obvious correlation between occupation and character but—in his typically judicious manner—phrases the argument tentatively. When he describes Steer's apparent moral corruption as a cattle dealer, he points out that,

When he began the business he was a civil young man, and religiously deposed. But whether it be that cattle, like sailors, will not get on without swearing; or whether, that those who associate with brutes, become brutes themselves, I do not know: but Steer became the most profane person in town, and did a great deal of harm among the youngsters. (Letter 4, 45)

With great irony, McCulloch has his characters ignore the overwhelming evidence to reject the suggestion that occupation greatly influences character. Stepsure recalls that, long ago, Parson Drone

tried to persuade us, that a person's general habits grow out of his occupation. But almost the whole town laughed at him. One was sure, that, if he had money to lend, he would have more conscience than Gripus the usurer; and another, that he could keep a tavern forever, without becoming such a drunkard as Tipple. None of the young people could see how a little card playing and frolicking could interfere with sober and industrious habits; and the old folks to a man declared, that it was perfectly easy to job about the one half of the year, and to be very good farmers the other. (Letter 2, 23-24)

In this sea of fools, McCulloch's satiric norms are represented by Stepsure himself and those akin to him in ideology and practice. These include his wife, Dorothy, and her mother; their children; his cousin, Harrow; Parson Drone; and the feisty Saunders Scantocreesh, "a hardfaced, hard working Scotchman; who, a few years ago, came among us with his stockings and shoes suspended from a stick over his shoulder, but now possesses one of the best farms in the town" (Letter 1, 13). All are devout Presbyterians and productive settlers whose well-kept homes and farms provide evidence of their prosperity and contentment.<sup>23</sup> As Vincent Sharman notes, the house is a metaphor for the soul in the *Letters*. Since Stepsure is the ideal Presbyterian settler, his house, land, crops, orchard, and animals are well-managed: "Stepsure's house symbolizes the perfection of earthly endeavour; it parallels...the Heavenly House" ("McCulloch" 622).

Most of these recurring characters simply furnish the background to McCulloch's narrative and do not contribute much to its satiric thrust. However, Stepsure's gently phrased irony is balanced throughout the *Letters* by Parson Drone's moderate exhortations and by Saunders Scantocreesh's militant attacks. W.J. Keith remarks that Stepsure uses Drone in the same way that McCulloch uses Stepsure: "to provide advice that is at the same time distanced and rendered palatable through humour. Though constant reference is made to the congregation sleeping through Drone's sermons, his moral position generally carries McCulloch's [sic] implicit support" (16).<sup>24</sup> Indeed, while the boring preacher is the object of some teasing, he also explicitly renders the thematic warning that Stepsure imparts only by anecdote. During one sermon, Stepsure reports, Drone asks of his congregation:

let me earnestly beseech you to beware of every thing which interrupts

domestic society; for I tell it to you from this sacred book, (and he gave a rap upon the bible, which made many of us start,) I testify to you, that the person who is often from home, whether upon business or from any other cause, is in danger of returning a worse man and to fewer enjoyments. (Letter 4, 40)

Stepsure often makes his points by recalling Drone's past sermons and indicating that, although the Parson has many detractors, he is nonetheless inclined to agree with him. In this way, Stepsure pontificates by paraphrase, not only lending ecclesiastical authority to his argument but also simultaneously placing himself at one remove from the didactic force of his rhetoric. This technique can again be seen at play in the following rumination, in which Stepsure considers the possible causes of the depression:

When parson Drone came among us, he tried to persuade us, I remember, that the property of the town at the time, could not make us wealthy; and, therefore, that, if we would all be rich; we must, by labour, add as much to its values, as would enrich us all. But to the most of us it appeared very plain, that, if every one of us made so many bargains and gained by each of them, he would be so much the richer; and you may depend upon it, no man who can become rich by head work, will ever submit to the drudgery of farming....I am inclined to think that our parson told us the truth; but the Reverend Shadrach Howl ...declares, that our calamities are a judgement upon the town for rejecting his [Howl's] doctrine. (Letter 3, 28)

Stepsure repeatedly recalls the Parson's warnings and notes how they have long been disregarded by most of the community. It soon becomes clear that years of facing a heedless

and dwindling congregation have taken their toll on the man who is simply too weary to bother anymore. Despite the obvious need for good counsel in the region, Drone now "rarely gets beyond the doctrine of patience. This he prescribes even in cases which appear to need immediate relief. When Tubal Thump's young daughter in law came, the other day, with black eyes, to the parson, complaining of her husband; he only told her, that what can't be cured must be endured" (Letter 12, 123). This generic maxim becomes Drone's catch phrase in his later years.

While Drone is amusing in his increasingly ineffectual counsel, Scantocreesh engages readers with his ceaseless exuberance. Gwendolyn Davies remarks that he too is something of a stock figure and that, while he is no doubt intended to be entertaining, McCulloch implicitly supports the values evident in this outspoken farmer:

Scantocreesh is in many respects a reincarnation of the spirit of the Covenanters. Faithful to principles of moral rectitude, he calls upon the Bible and the Confession of Faith when his daughters want to go to dancing school, invokes the memory of the Scotch Worthies, Claverhouse, and the Highland Host for those who do not live virtuously, and prescribes terrible punishments (eating her own tongue to the root) for deviants of the true path. While McCulloch pokes fun at Scantocreesh's rigidity, he leaves no doubt of his admiration for Saunders's faith and sincerity. (*Maritime* 67)

McCulloch seasons Stepsure's opinions by quoting Scantocreesh's piquant castigations. For instance, while Stepsure is subtle in his placement of blame in the Gosling family's downfall, Scantocreesh is brazen in his censure of similar families. Scantocreesh declares that if the

youth of this country "were only brought up as they ought to be, they would become judicious and respectable men: but many of their parents were fools; and their children, as might be expected, turned out to be rogues and vagabonds" (Letter 16, 168). While Stepsure routinely implies as much, he is careful not to allow his readers to confuse the fiery Scotsman's outbursts with his own measured tones. When Scantocreesh insists that the town's independent preachers "are under the delusions of satan," Stepsure remarks: "How far Saunders views...are correct, I shall not pretend to affirm: Nor, indeed, will any of your readers be well qualified to judge; till they peruse that part of the chronicles of our town, which directly records the life and ministrations of parson Drone and his helpers" (Letter 16, 170-171). As Janice Kulyk Keefer observes, McCulloch uses Scantocreesh "as Stepsure's straight man and also as a deflector for the queasy or revolted feelings that Stepsure's morality inspires in the average reader" (41).

Scantocreesh is also inclined towards violent expression. When recounting a dancing accident, Stepsure reports that

Saunders declares, that, if his foot had been in old Stot's shoe; instead of kicking Miss Sippit's shins and tearing her slipper, he would have broken the leg of the brazen faced limmer....and, as for the rest of the ne'er do wells, instead of letting them off with the loss of their trumpery, he would have applied a cudgel to their back and sent them home with their buttocks bare; and then, instead of junketting about the town, they would be glad to stay at home and wear homespun, like other decent folk. (Letter 17, 184-185)

When Stepsure learns of the uproarious public response to his letters, he resolves to quit

writing until Scantocreesh explains the rebukes to him: "My word, he said, was not believed; because the country was swarming with a set of idle vagabonds like the sherrif's people, who were not willing to see themselves described: That, if they got what they deserved, instead of being allowed to go galloping about, they would be put under saws and harrows" (Letter 5, 52-3). McCulloch even has Scantocreesh write a few letters to the *Acadian Recorder* in defence of Stepsure, in which he threatens those who have proclaimed that "lame Stepsure the rascal sud get his back weel scored. I wad like to see wha wad attempt it. He wad shune ken whether my auld axe handle or his hurdies war hardest" (Letter 18, 203). By having Stepsure quote and paraphrase his parson and his neighbour, McCulloch ensures that a full range of satiric response to particular situations is present in the *Letters*. And, while readers are subjected to some harsh censure, they cannot hold Stepsure responsible for the more denigrating statements.

In addition to enlivening his narrative with a variety of voices, McCulloch counters his high moral tone and sophisticated irony with striking low imagery and coarse humour in a style reminiscent of some of Jonathan Swift's satire. The *Letters* repeatedly warn that those who attempt to live beyond their station and surround themselves with luxuries will ultimately live in squalor mess and misery. To labour the point, Stepsure describes dirty homes filled with the stench of human and animal excrement, and inhabited by starving children, battered wives, and disgraced husbands and fathers. For instance, Loopy's dwelling becomes, of necessity, as much a barn as a home for his ambitious family: "Pigs, dogs, cats, and fowls, all make it, and make use of it too; and my neighbour's house, beside the finery of the young ladies, suspended upon nails and pegs around the walls, generally contained a great variety of

articles and smells, very useful to the farmer" (Letter 10, 104). Scatological humour leavens these epistles, bringing home to common sense the short distance to fall from human to animal should McCulloch's moral-ethical precepts be ignored. Stepsure describes Hodge's mortification at a frolic when he falls and overturns the tea table:

Whether this unusual combination of accidents had produced a sudden convulsion of nature; or whether Hodge had been dining upon cabbage, which, you know, is a windysome kind of food, I cannot tell: but the poor fellow, in falling, made a lengthy apology, which scandalized the whole assembly of young 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. (Letter 17, 182)

Keith comments that there is "more than a trace of the down-to-earth Swiftian eighteenth century" in Stepsure's description of his critic "Censor" soaring through the air to land "'feet foremost into Peg's [Pegasus's] huge accumulation of odiferous sweets' (Letter 18)" (16). When McCulloch collected his sketches in 1823 and sent them to William Blackwood in Edinburgh to consider for publication, their rejection was based, in part, on the crude imagery. While Blackwood praised their rich detail and "informing genius," he concluded that: "'The humour and satire have all the pungency and originality of Swift...with I am sorry to say too much of his broad and coarse colouring. Taste in these things has now a days got even more refined, and what was fit for the tea table in the days of Queen Anne would hardly be tolerated now in the servant's hall'" (qtd. in G. Davies, *Maritime* 63).<sup>25</sup>

In a similar vein, Jim Hornby argues that our modern sensibilities are repelled by

other aspects of McCulloch's fiction. He contends that McCulloch's attempt at "satiric indirectness is too often marred by pontification" (11). Fred Cogswell adds that "Christian ethics, one feels, ought to be an end in themselves and not a means of making money, and to a healthy nature cold-blooded gloating over the misfortunes and failures of others is never pleasant" ("Haliburton" 107). It is true that, despite the humour that infuses the *Letters*, Stepsure is clearly a self-righteous prig who is suspiciously proud of his material attainments and his new-found fame. However, these character flaws open up interesting interpretive possibilities by compelling readers to appraise Stepsure himself with a satiric eye. Critics such as McMullin disagree, maintaining that "Stepsure is McCulloch's ideal citizen. For this reason he never appears as a figure of scorn or ridicule. His voice and the voice of McCulloch almost always sound in tandem" ("Liberal" 77-78). It is the "almost" here which proves intriguing. In fact, as Gwendolyn Davies remarks, "the real strength of the interconnected letters lies in the author's subtle treatment of the central figure, Stepsure" (*DLB* 230). While his profitable adherence to his righteous principles makes him the satiric norm against which his dubious neighbours should be measured, Stepsure gradually reveals himself to be as fallible as they are.

This fallibility is especially evident near the end of Book One. When Stepsure learns that the Attorney General has referred to him in the *Weekly Chronicle* as a gentleman, he is obviously bursting with pride: "Who could have believed that lame Boshy would ever be called a GENTLEMAN, at a public meeting of the grandees of the province" (Letter 17, 187). This validation by his social betters transforms his self-image and seems instantly to alter his long-cherished priorities. Admitting that he is "beginning to think that I possess



more dignity than I was formerly aware of," he imagines that "when I get myself seated in stile, with a table before me, covered with a green cloth reaching down to the floor, so as to keep my feet out of the way, I shall make a very respectable looking gentleman" (Letter 17, 188). If, as Frye suggests, the moral of Stepsure's lameness is that "it is only the deformities of which one is unconscious that are ridiculous" (*Letters v*), then Stepsure's ironic self-consciousness about his lame feet and his eagerness to appear "in stile" reveal him to be utterly ridiculous. And not only does he show signs of attempting to rise above his station, signing himself "Mephibosheth Stepsure, Gentleman," but he also confesses to dreaming about lasting fame as a writer. Agreeing to continue his letters, he briefly acknowledges their original edifying purpose, but focuses on the possibility that they might bring him enduring renown:

as I am the only writer who has attempted to make our people see and be ashamed of themselves, my credit is pledged to stick to the point till a better appear. My neighbour has also supplied me with an additional hint, which is never lost upon an author. He says that Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott show me how renowned lame writers may be: and he does not see why Mephibosheth Stepsure might not become as famous as them both. To a lame author nothing, you may depend upon it, could be more gratifying; for Saunders is an excellent judge. (Letter 21, 226).

By this point, Stepsure has become the satirist satirized; he is both the agent and object of McCulloch's ridicule. Vincent notes that "such an approach amplifies the potential narrative complexity of the piece, makes considerable demands on the author's ability to

control the logic of the focuses of satire, and requires a rather sophisticated level of response from its readers" ("Stratagems" 60-61). This relatively sophisticated narrative stance recalls much successful British satire. Consider, for instance, Gay's manipulation of the Walker in "Trivia"; although he clearly uses his main character to voice his own satiric responses to the growing crudeness of Augustan London, he also makes the Walker's paranoid and egocentric attitudes the object of much satiric prodding. While the Walker is ostensibly the font of truth and wisdom, he is, finally, laughable in his own lack of self-awareness. Similarly, Stepsure, whom readers might initially trust to provide a satiric norm against which the follies and vices of an entire community can be measured, proves in the end to be susceptible to them. In this way, McCulloch reveals that Stepsure is not perfect; still, his *relative* success in the context of so much failure raises questions which readers are invited to ask of themselves.

These subtle narrative complications, however, did not attract the most vocal reader response at the time of original publication. While the editors of the *Acadian Recorder* praised the satires for portraying "with such inimitable truth the thoughtless, luxurious [sic], and extravagant habits of our population" (11 May 1822), and encouraged their author in his plan to continue writing, outraged voices across the province cried scandal. So accurate were the *Letters* in their depictions of the trials and tribulations of Nova Scotian folk, that many were certain that their own thinly-disguised hard-luck stories were being offered up as entertainment for the population at large. McCulloch's son, William, later recalled:

No little indignation was expressed by those who thought themselves caricatured, and many more were the efforts made to discover the audacious slanderer. A gentleman describing the effect of those letters in his own

neighbourhood said 'We looked with great anxiety for the arrival of the "Recorder," and on its receipt used to assemble at the shop of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ to hear "Stepsure" read, and pick out the characters, and comment on their foibles, quite sure that they and the writer were among ourselves. Great was often the anger expressed, and the threats uttered against the author if they could discover him. (73)

McCulloch acknowledged the impact of the *Letters* privately and publicly. He wrote to his friend, the Reverend John Mitchell in Glasgow that "'No writing in these provinces ever occasioned so much talk. Almost everyone who read them was angry in his turn and by and by laughed at his neighbour'" (qtd. in Whitelaw, *McCulloch* 28). He addresses this dual response--the very indicator of the best satire--in the closing lines of Book One, by having Stepsure explain in explicit terms how he hopes readers' reactions will serve to change the behaviour which prompted the *Letters* in the first place. Likely agreeing with Milton that the most rational faculties of human intellect are laughter and anger (479), McCulloch tells his readers how to handle them both:

Gentlemen, after telling so many truths about the people of our town, I must now beg leave to say a few words to your readers. Some of them, I have been told, are a good humoured, laughing sort of folks; and others are just as crusty and angry at the chronicles of our town. To the first I would observe, that they have a right to laugh at themselves as much as they please; and when they get their laugh out, to reform as fast as they can. But when they meet with their angry neighbours, they should consider that laughing is a very serious thing,

and ought to be tempered with a great deal of gravity; for no man in a passion likes to be laughed at. As for your crusty readers, they have just as good a right to be angry, and far more reason. I would advise them, therefore, to keep it up till they are very angry; which they may easily be, by telling every body their complaints: and when they have thus learned that every body is laughing at them, they might transfer their rage against the exposure of folly, to the fools who need to be exposed. I am sorry that the chronicles have affronted them; very sorry, indeed, that their neighbours should be laughing at them; for I must say that all your readers, if they only had good management, would be a very decent sort of folks. (Letter 17, 189-190)

Here, McCulloch reveals his awareness that wit and humour are a vital part of satiric attack-- that the laughter prompted by the attack (and not the attack itself) is the agent which might force this community to re-examine its priorities.

Robertson Davies calls *The Stepsure Letters* "a finer piece of Canadian irony than the much-praised Sam Slick stories of Judge Haliburton" (*Critic* 235). While she does not offer such an evaluation, Gwendolyn Davies agrees that the *Letters* mark a watershed in nineteenth-century Maritime literature, representing "on one hand the climax of forty years of post-Loyalist writing on the follies and foibles of society, while at the same time setting a new standard by which the narrative newspaper satires of the Club group (1828-31) and Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1835) would be measured" (*Maritime* 13). And McCulloch's influence reaches well beyond Haliburton, temporally and geographically. Indeed, he is often regarded as the

point of origin for various facets of the tradition of Canadian prose fiction. Sharman suggests that our modern literary puritans are elaborations on Stepsure:

We have only to look at the members of Leacock's Mausoleum Club, at Robertson Davies' gallery of pinch-faced Ontarians, at Earle Birney's *Mr. Legion* ("Damnations of Vancouver"), or at MacLennan's *McQueen* (*Two Solitudes*). Thomas McCulloch's Mephibosheth Stepsure...provides a splendid reference for these puritanical figures, and provides, consequently, a strong link between writing in colonial Nova Scotia and in Canada after 1867.

("Stepsure" 618)

Beverly Rasporich argues that not only do McCulloch's conservative morality and intellectual idealism spring up again in Leacock and Davies, "but the transit of McCulloch's emotions as he meets the New World is tied to a psychology of religious questing which would seem to be the very metaphoric base of Canadian humour" (229). And Keith states that the *Letters* yield

the first manifestation in our literature of a Canadian small town, and the contrast between rural and urban patterns of life, between small towns and metropolis (often with a satiric edge to the writing) becomes a fruitful subject extending through Haliburton to Leacock and beyond. That McCulloch [sic] anticipates Leacock in having a 'Rev. Mr. Drone' as his local minister may perhaps be attributed to coincidence, but it could represent an early example of the continuities of cultural tradition. (16-17)

These observations support Frye's contention that Thomas McCulloch is the founder of a

genuine Canadian humour: "that is, of the humour that 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 the human sense, has been the prevailing tone of Canadian humour ever since" (*Letters* ix). As Whitelaw remarks, McCulloch had a lasting impact on Nova Scotia, and eventually on all of Canada, because the time, the place and the man were all right for each other: "He was like a pebble thrown into a pond that was Nova Scotia then, and the ripples are touching us still" (*McCulloch* 3).

### THOMAS CHANDLER HALIBURTON'S *THE CLOCKMAKER*

Thomas McCulloch certainly made waves in the literary community of Nova Scotia; throughout the 1820s, the social commentary of *The Stepsure Letters* continued to have a pervasive influence on the local writing scene. Gwendolyn Davies points out, for instance, that the *Letters* were recalled by "a series of thirteen 'Stepsure in Town' poems that ran in the *Acadian Recorder* from 1 January 1825 to 17 June 1826...[and] 'The Club' group of the *Novascotian*, Joseph Howe's Halifax newspaper, also remembered the satirical side of McCulloch in its sketch of 15 May 1828" (CEECT xxxiv). It is possible that McCulloch's success suggested the idea to Joseph Howe for "The Club," a series of largely satirical pieces which appeared sporadically in the *Novascotian* from May 1828 until October 1831. The fifty-two sketches, songs, dialogues, and dramas were ostensibly a record of the secret meetings of a group of gentlemen who gathered together regularly to converse over a glass of port and a fine cigar. They were clearly modelled on John Wilson's "Noctes Ambrosianae," a series of imaginary conversations on politics and literature reputed to have taken place in an actual Edinburgh pub, published in *Blackwood's Magazine* from 1822 to 1835, and well known on both sides of the Atlantic. Appearing pseudonymously, the sketches were apparently written by Howe and a group of wits including Laurence O'Connor Doyle, Captain John Kincaid, S.G.W. Archibald, Beamish Murdoch, Jotham Blanchard and, most notably, Thomas Chandler Haliburton.<sup>26</sup> Howe's Club sketches, then, form something of a literary bridge between Canada's two foremost Colonial satirists.

Despite its "stated 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 to be enjoyable" (G.Davies, *Maritime* 88-89). The conversation of this group, while frequently focused on local legislative activities, ranged over a wide variety of topics, including discrimination in education, religious persecution, class inequality and upward mobility. This particular group was well suited to the task of satirizing the injustices and imprudences of the day:

Intimate with provincial society and politics because of their professional status, and at the same time distanced from it by their ironic vision and anonymity, the Club members seemed well cast to don the cloak of moral indignation and authority so characteristic of many of the sketches. The group was, in fact, the self-proclaimed conscience of Nova Scotia, seeing "the whole population of the province...turning their eyes toward the Club for counsel and protection." (G.Davies, *Maritime* 90)

The Club sketches, while popular for their clever satire and amusing repartee, also contributed greatly to the formation of public opinion on relevant issues.

Although the sketches were immediate successors to the reform works of Agricola, McCulloch and others, they were more diverse, cosmopolitan, spontaneous, and erudite than any Nova Scotian social writing to that date (G.Davies, *Maritime* 105). Haliburton's participation in the Club series gave him the opportunity to develop the techniques he would use to bring Sam Slick to light just a few years later: he became adept at the sketch form, learned to combine socio-political commentary with entertaining anecdotes, mastered colloquial and conversational speech, and recognized the humorous and satirical potential



inherent in dialect and caricature. Indeed, "the social thrust, vivid language, and dramatic qualities that were to make the Sam Slick narratives so memorable" were already in evidence in the Club proceedings (G.Davies, *Maritime* 105). The Club sketches therefore represent a small but important step in drawing up a declaration of the literary independence of British North America that was to culminate in the publication of Haliburton's Sam Slick sketches.

Haliburton was by birth, education, and vocation completely representative of the early community leaders in the Maritimes. He was born in 1796 in the small town of Windsor, Nova Scotia, into a leading Loyalist (and pre-Loyalist) family.<sup>27</sup> This socio-political heritage was to become evident in all aspects of his professional life. Biographer V.L.O. Chittick suggests that Haliburton acquired from his father a reasoned theory of Tory principles and practices, and from his mother (and step-mother) the unreasoning passions and prejudices associated with them (*Study* 15). He was educated at the Tory, Anglican-administered King's Grammar School and King's College, graduating in 1815.<sup>28</sup> He made two trips to England while he completed his law education in his father's office. Then, in 1820, Haliburton was called to the bar of Nova Scotia. Shortly thereafter, he moved his family to Annapolis Royal, where he practised law for the next six years, becoming a Judge of the Probate Court in 1824. In 1826 he was elected to the provincial House of Assembly as the member for Annapolis Royal.<sup>29</sup>

Haliburton served successfully in the House for three years, often showing signs, as Edward Waldron remarks, of the forceful wit he was later to bestow on Sam Slick: "In one speech, during a mock address to England as 'John Bull,' he referred to John Bull's 'oldest

son, our brother Jonathan, a long, tall, *rigular* Yankee....,' a description that fits Sam nicely" ("Haliburton" 169). Since the speeches of the legislature were reported by Howe in the *Novascotian*, Haliburton soon became well-known for his strong convictions and exuberant oratory: "Tactlessly outspoken and possessing a great gift for ridicule, he threw all his strength into any issue he supported and gored his friends and foes in turn" (Cogswell, "Haliburton" 108).<sup>30</sup> While his performances were often entertaining, Haliburton was nonetheless a serious advocate. One colleague remarked that "'his attitude and manner were extremely impressive, earnest and dignified; and although the strong propensity of his mind to wit and humor were often apparent, they seldom detracted from the seriousness of his language when the subject under discussion was important'" (qtd. in Chittick, *Study* 93). Since the colony of Nova Scotia was in the process of redefining its position *vis-à-vis* the mother country, the subjects under discussion in the House were intensely serious.<sup>31</sup>

Although he was a lifelong conservative, Haliburton sometimes argued in direct opposition to the Tory party line. For instance, he supported the Assembly's calls for reform when it railed against the flagrant abuses of power demonstrated by the Executive Council, and he attempted to block measures petitioned by the Council which he thought were aimed primarily against the poor (McDougall, *Tradition* 10). Chittick asserts that Haliburton's conspicuous "advocacy of various measures of reform is not strange, however, for in contrast to the illiberality of His Majesty's Council even an orthodox Tory would have looked a radical" (*Study* 76).<sup>32</sup> Thus Haliburton "frequently found himself at odds with the ruling oligarchy...and his championing of educational reform, Catholic emancipation, and Thomas McCulloch's Pictou Academy were highlights of a brief political career" (R.Davies, *DLB*

138). Ray Palmer Baker argues that Haliburton's decision to leave politics was based, in part, on the outcome of McCulloch's struggle. His "ridicule of the Council for its refusal of a grant to the common schools and the Presbyterian Academy at Pictou led to an open quarrel between the two houses. When the lower eventually yielded, he withdrew in disgust" (*History* 72).<sup>33</sup> Thus, while the Club sketches provide a literary connection of sorts between McCulloch and Haliburton, this educational issue briefly connects them politically.<sup>34</sup>

Despite supporting some specific calls for change, Haliburton remained a right-wing Tory who could not back the burgeoning reform movement taking hold in the province. Fearing "what he called the 'tyranny of the majority,' he opposed bitterly the levelling tendencies of his age" (McDougall, *Tradition* 22). The campaign for responsible government--which would render the provincial government responsible to the electorate rather than to the Colonial Office in London--was completely at odds with his fervent desire to maintain close ties with Britain.<sup>35</sup> While he agreed that, to some extent, protest against Britain's ignorant mismanagement of her colonies was justified and that changes in the established systems of government were required, he envisioned a system of patronage in which Britain would appoint Nova Scotians to oversee colonial affairs on its behalf. Indeed, he was sorely disappointed by the British government's failure to treat its colonists as full-fledged citizens, "conferring full rights and special privileges as it did only upon those born in the mother land. Particularly galling in this system of favouritism was the way in which the posts in the colonies themselves were given, often as rewards, to Englishmen rather than colonists" (Fortier 93).<sup>36</sup>

While Haliburton was sometimes incensed by British rule, he did not view such

conflicts as opposition between "'a tyrannical government and an oppressed colony'," but rather as a family quarrel, "'a question, in short, between the parent and the child'" (qtd. in Chittick, *Study* 80). He feared that republicanism lurked behind the push for responsible government and worried that "the agitation for reform would end in complete independence, after which the colonies would eventually become part of the United States" (Stouck 3). Hence, Haliburton fought democratization on all fronts, not only opposing responsible government, but opposing Confederation to the end of his life.<sup>37</sup> As Chittick details, in this era of constitutional reform, Haliburton soon found himself "out of sympathy with the spirit of his age. It was not that he retreated from a position he formerly occupied. He simply stood still in a period of general advance, and so undeviatingly did he cling to his Tory principles that eventually even his own party moved on and left him" (*Study* 152).<sup>38</sup>

In 1829 Haliburton left the House and returned to Windsor to accept the chief-justiceship of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, a position rendered vacant by his father's death. When this lower Court was abolished twelve years later, Haliburton was elevated to the bench of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. Robert McDougall surmises that the "spirit of buffoonery and the irrepressible wit which became the very life and soul of Sam Slick undoubtedly enlivened many of the sittings over which Haliburton presided; and newspaper reporters sometimes attended expressly to hear the fun" (*Tradition* 7). Upon his retirement in 1856, Haliburton moved to England where he re-entered politics as a Conservative Member of Parliament, holding his seat until his death. In 1858 he became the first colonial to be awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Laws by Oxford University. McMullin notes that despite settling into political and social life in England, Haliburton "maintained an

interest in British North America and became chairman of the Canadian Land and Immigration Company, travelling to Ontario to negotiate a deal for land that now lies in Haliburton County" (*Canadian* 29). Overall, however "the British government paid little attention to Haliburton beyond offering him the presidency of Montserrat, 'a wretched little West Indian Island,' which he declined" (McMullin, *Canadian* 29). He died in 1865.

The biography briefly rehearsed here shows that Haliburton's successive careers as lawyer, assemblymen, and judge fixed the opinions that he would so staunchly urge upon his compatriots in fifteen books written and published between 1825 and 1860. Baker remarks that it is not difficult to trace the origins of the ideas which Haliburton explored in all his writing: "These volumes are the full outflowering of the Tory spirit. The mantle laid down by Jonathan Odell and his fellow satirists was thus taken up by Haliburton" (*History* 71). He divides Haliburton's writing into four categories: historical and political treatises; the *Slick* series; miscellaneous fiction, in which the *Slick* methods are further developed; and compilations to meet the demand for Yankee stories (*History* 75-76). It is not surprising that fully two-thirds of these volumes are creative satiric comedy. Not only was Haliburton educated in the satiric mood and manner of his ancestors while at King's College, but, as Reginald Watters observes, his years on the judicial bench likely fostered a temperament already well-suited to satire: "judges are not called upon to resolve conflicts by discovering or inventing compromises; instead, they administer established law and assess penalties against those who violate it. A satirist," he adds, echoing James Sutherland and Ronald Paulson, "is a self-appointed judge, with clear ideas of what human beings and human behaviour should be, and with the lash of ridicule he punishes those who fail to meet his

standards" (*The Old Judge* x).

Haliburton surveyed the colony and found that while its natural advantages were beyond compare, the government and industry of its inhabitants failed to meet his standards. He resolved to set his judgements in print, though he was not yet ready to do so with the "lash of ridicule". He began his literary career with the publication of *A General Description of Nova Scotia* (1823).<sup>39</sup> While he was prompted, in part, by a desire to make Nova Scotians appreciate their heritage and resources, he was even more concerned with making Britain recognize the value of her colony. During a public dinner given in his honour, Haliburton described his reasons for undertaking the project:

in early life I twice visited Great Britain, and was strongly, and I may say painfully, impressed with a conviction that has forced itself upon the mind of every man who has gone to Europe from this country--namely, that this valuable and important Colony was not merely wholly unknown, but misunderstood and misrepresented. Every book of Geography, every Gazetteer and elementary work that mentioned it, spoke of it in terms of contempt or condemnation....Where facts were wanting, recourse was had to imagination. (*Novascotian*, June 13, 1839, qtd. in Chittick, *Study* 123).

Haliburton felt that if he could set the record straight, he would increase the immigration of properly informed and well-prepared settlers which would greatly benefit the colony (McMullin, *Canadian* 47). While he apparently apologized for the volume which, he said, was hastily compiled, critics note that "it is an informative account of the state of Nova Scotia in 1823, full of his personal comments on the past, present, and future of his native

province" (R.Davies, *DLB* 137). Stanley McMullin elaborates on the volume, indicating that Haliburton's frustrations with his fellow citizens were apparent even in this descriptive catalogue of his province:

Haliburton catalogues native plants and wildlife, describes major towns, gives information about native Indians, and makes comments about population and commerce. He also has something to say about the settlers of the colony. The Nova Scotian, he says, is prone to speculate, to enter into trade, and to dabble in small coasting vessels, to the neglect and injury of his farm. The settler shows his attraction to high living through his love of "superfine flour," which even the poorest Nova Scotian sees as an indispensable necessity. (*Canadian* 46)

Such comments clearly echo McCulloch's censures in *The Stepsure Letters* which were causing a stir as Haliburton compiled this work. The House formally thanked him for his undertaking, and, as Chittick points out, it "was more than a gracious compliment that the clerk then read to Haliburton. For the first time, provincial literature received official recognition" (*Study* 118).

At the urging of friends and colleagues, Haliburton spent the next seven years researching and compiling a full-length history entitled *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* (1829). This two volume work is a more extensive version of the *General Description* and includes the provinces's "statistical returns and other data respecting its population, industries, commerce, and its still to be developed resources" (Chittick, *Study* 135). Printed in Halifax by Joseph Howe, it was one of the first Canadian books of

importance to run through several editions (Baker, *History* 76). Gerald Rimmington opens his article entitled "The Geography of Haliburton's Nova Scotia" with the claim that "There is no more fascinating account of Nova Scotia in the early nineteenth century than that given by Thomas Chandler Haliburton" (488).<sup>40</sup> The volume is still recognized as one of century's major pieces of historical writing.

While Haliburton again received public commendation for the effort, the work did not, to his dismay, sell overseas. Darlene Nelita Fortier notes that the carefully researched history "was passed over by the reading public in England for the more sensational accounts of America written by English travellers" (60). Haliburton would later vent his frustration by having Sam Slick deride those very writers, referring to them as

Ensigns and Leftenants, I guess, from the British marchin regiments in the Colonies, that run over five thousand miles of Country in five weeks, on leave of absence, and then return, lookin as wise as the monkey that had seen the world--when they get back, they are so chock full of knowledge of the Yankees, that it runs over of itself, like a hogshead of molasses rolled about in hot weather--a white froth and scum bubbles out of the bung; wishy washy trash they call tours, sketches, travels, letters, and what not, vapid stuff, jist sweet enough to catch flies, cockroaches, and half fledged galls.<sup>41</sup>

Despite such apparent bitterness, Haliburton is also delightfully self-deprecating about his writing, opening chapter nine of the second series of *The Clockmaker* with the Squire's remark that, next to the fictional Josiah Slick's History of Cuttyhunck, "Haliburton's History of Nova Scotia...is the most important account of unimportant things I have ever seen" (290).



During the banquet speech of 1839 (cited above), Haliburton shared his reasoning behind the decision to turn next to humorous writing.

I felt I had not accomplished all I wished [in writing the History], that though something had been attained there was still much more to be done. It occurred to me that it would be advisable to resort to a more popular style, and, under the garb of amusement, to call attention to our noble harbors, our great mineral wealth, our healthy climate, our abundant fisheries, and our natural resources and advantages, arising from our relative position to the St. Lawrence, the West Indies, and the United States, and resulting from the circumstances of this country being the nearest point of the American continent to Europe. I was also anxious to stimulate my countrymen to exertion, to direct their attention to the development of these resources, and to works of internal improvement, especially...the rail road from Halifax to Windsor, to awaken ambition and substitute it for that stimulus which is furnished in other but poorer countries than our own by necessity. For this purpose I called in the aid of the Clockmaker. (qtd. in Chittick, *Study* 179)<sup>42</sup>

Or, to quote the clockmaker himself: "When reason fails to convince, there is nothin left but ridicule. If they have no ambition, apply to their feelings, clap a blister on their pride and it will do the business. It's like puttin ginger under a horse's tail, it makes him carry up real *handsom*, I tell you" (No. 12, 66).

Haliburton was encouraged in his plan by Joseph Howe despite the fact that differing political opinions were, by this point, beginning to sour the friendship between the two.

Regardless of their disparate aims, they were, as Cogswell remarks, united by a "common love of Nova Scotia and a common concern over its lack of prosperity" ("Haliburton" 110). Indeed, they proved to be in complete agreement about the province's deficiencies and how best to remedy them. In a lengthy sequence of articles in his *Novascotian*, Howe had attempted to instill in his readers a faith in themselves and their province's resources. By all the arguments at his command he endeavoured to convince them that "the deplorable state of the province was due to temporary causes, and that the certainty of its future prosperity was warrant for taking an optimistic view of the situation. All that was needed to tide over the crisis, he insisted, were energy and perseverance" (Chittick, *Study* 171).

While Howe's "Western Rambles" (23 July - 9 October, 1828) and "Eastern Rambles" (17 December, 1829 - 19 October 1831) earned him an appreciative audience, they did not inflame his readers with passionate interest. Then, on September 24, 1835, he began the publication of a series of anonymous sketches entitled "Recollections of Nova Scotia."<sup>43</sup> "Didacticism being Haliburton's primary motive and satire his genre," notes Carole Gerson, "he did not write within the tradition of the novel—which would have required the creation of a complete fictional world—but instead created one outstanding character to perform as his persona" (*Purer* 53). Thomas Raddall provides a memorable description of the main character, Samuel Slick, from Slickville, Onion County, Connecticut, as

a glib rascal who went about selling gimcrack wooden clocks—"warranted to run from July to Eternity"—to the gullible Bluenoses, at the same time laughing up his sleeve and making snide remarks on the way they lived, the way they bungled their business affairs, and their time-wasting habit of snivelling at the

government instead of getting down to honest work. All in a vein of humour that was broad, to say the least, and at times downright indecent. (37)

This was a far cry from Howe's writings which argued that Nova Scotians were the finest people in the world. Nobody then saw, Raddall suggests, that Howe and Haliburton were working towards one end: "Both sought to arouse their people for the new march of the western world toward prosperity which was just getting under way in the 1830s. Joe Howe chose to cajole and flatter them into it. Tom Haliburton chose to sting and lash them into it" (37).

The literary lashes caused a sensation. The first twenty-one were serialized in the *Novascotian*,<sup>44</sup> but the series had not yet been completed when, in response to local popular demand, it was expanded to thirty-three sketches and republished, still anonymously, as *The Clockmaker: or, The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville* (1837). Slick became an instant celebrity. As George Parker remarks: "Slick, the archetypal swaggering and sharp American trader, became one of the most popular comic figures of the century and turned the first series of *The Clockmaker* into the first Canadian best-seller" ("Haliburton" 510). Within months, pirated editions began to appear abroad: London publisher, Richard Bentley, issued a British edition in the spring of 1837; Philadelphia printers Carey, Lea & Blanchard printed the first American edition that autumn.<sup>45</sup> Gerson describes the international reaction:

Distant readers responded to the humour and vitality of the fiction and adored the idiosyncratic Slick for his "welcome unconventionality." Nova Scotians paid more attention to the underlying reality, with mixed reactions. *The Novascotian* lauded Haliburton for establishing the literary validity of Nova

Scotia, finding that *The Clockmaker's* being "so generally admired by the experienced judges of England, stamps it with the quality of sterling merit."

(*Purer* 53)

Haliburton learned the extent of his spreading fame when he toured Britain and Europe the following year; he returned to a Nova Scotia that, while somewhat embarrassed by their unflattering portrayal in the sketches, was nonetheless proud to claim this indigenous writer as its own: "After all, Sam Slick was being discussed in remote Mississippi cabins as well as in the drawingrooms of London and New York, and as a result the Bluenoses found themselves under the eyes of what seemed the whole world for the first time in their existence" (Raddall 38).

In all, Haliburton produced eight "Sam Slick" books.<sup>46</sup> In addition to three volumes of *The Clockmaker* (1837, 1838, 1840),<sup>47</sup> Slick appears in *The Attaché; or, Sam Slick in England* (1843), *Sam Slick's Wise Saws and Modern Instances; or, What He Said, Did, or Invented* (1853), and *Nature and Human Nature* (1855). To a lesser extent, Slick figures in both *The Bubbles of Canada* (1839) and *The Letter-Bag of the Great Western; or, Life in a Steamer* (1840), the "authorship" of which can be attributed to him as may be gathered by the dedication of the former and the last letter of the latter. These works enjoyed enormous popularity. By his death in 1865, "Haliburton could claim that his literary creation had appeared in over 200 editions in Europe and North America, that the name of 'Sam Slick' had become almost universally recognized in the English-speaking world, and that his trademark 'Slickisms' had infiltrated everyday speech" (Laird 75).<sup>48</sup> The intercontinental popularity of Sam Slick made Haliburton "the most famous writer in nineteenth-century

British North America" (Morrison 58).

Like McCulloch, Haliburton based his satire on the decline of able colonists into various forms of debasement through vices such as class pretension and laziness while they shifted the blame for their failures onto the banks, the courts, the government, and the land itself. In his castigation of the vice and folly he sees everywhere around him, Slick is clearly aligned with Stepsure. Northrop Frye asserts that "[t]here is little doubt that Haliburton knew McCulloch's work well enough to draw the whole framework of his satire on Bluenose society from it" (*Letters* v). Chittick was perhaps the first to discuss Haliburton's indebtedness to McCulloch:

Every one of the social, economic, and agricultural truths which subsequently had to be reimpressed on the easy-going Nova Scotians in Sam Slick's strangely fabricated vernacular before they would bestir themselves into self-sustaining activity was clearly anticipated and expounded in the elucidation of his neighbors' unnecessary misfortunes by Dr. McCulloch's soberly deliberative, frugal-minded, oddly named cripple. Only in his political philosophy, which found its more immediate provocation in conditions and events of considerably later date than those witnessed by Mephibosheth Stepsure, did Sam Slick hold forth for the benefit of the Bluenoses independently of this canny Scotch-colonial creation. (*Study* 379)

The addition of a political theme is, of course, by no means Haliburton's only significant point of departure from McCulloch. While the Reverend must certainly be counted among Haliburton's influences, the disparities between their satirical approaches are self-evident. As

Robin Mathews notes: "Just as John Young's arguments made their way, transformed into *The Stepsure Letters*, so McCulloch's arguments made their way, transformed into T.C. Haliburton's series of sketches" (132). And, of course, it is worth reiterating that, as satirists, McCulloch and Haliburton share influences reaching back to Aristophanes, Horace and Juvenal and, more immediately, to the neo-classical and Tory satirists of eighteenth-century England.

Part of the transformation from McCulloch to Haliburton involves the creation of a different kind of satiric mouthpiece. Unlike McCulloch, who portrays a lacklustre local farmer whose letters to the Halifax newspaper reveal his righteous indignation at his neighbours' conduct, Haliburton portrays an effusive foreign salesman who amuses a new friend with a vigorous upbraiding of the colony's shortcomings and is surprised, later, to find his harangues in print for all to read.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Sam Slick—a smooth-talking, sharp-eyed, Yankee peddler who threatens to beat up those who do not believe him and offers to be skinned or shot should he be proven wrong—was (and still is) a singular figure in Canadian literature. Vincent Sharman contends that Stepsure "lacks Sam Slick's verbal power, and his humour at the expense of his profligate neighbours seems condescending and self-righteous—even for a satirist" ("Satire" 556). Indeed, Janice Kulyk Keefer argues, "[a]nything more unlike the chicanery and opportunism of that verbal contortionist Sam Slick than the moralizing of Mephibosheth Stepsure cannot be imagined" (43).

While Slick is obviously not cut from the same cloth as any Canadian satiric persona who preceded him, he is by no means unique. George Parker comments that, in a general way, Slick is "a direct descendent of the *Miles Gloriosus* and the resourceful servant of

Roman and Renaissance comedy" (CEECT xx). Other literary historians point to numerous possible contemporary influences on the composition of the literary vehicle for this world-famous Yankee. Not the least of these is the aforementioned glut of travel books written on the United States between 1800 and 1835, even "a cursory examination" of which "will reveal every one of the essential features of Sam Slick's Yankeeism many times repeated" (Chittick, "Gen-u-ine" 59-60).<sup>50</sup> But the Yankee as comic figure had been appearing in literature long before travel books came into vogue. For more than a century before Haliburton was born, humorous literature based on comic types had been continually produced in America, ranging from Nathaniel Ward's *The Simple Cobbler of Agawam* to Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*; as Chittick observes, "the comic presentation of the 'genuine' Yankee on the stage or in print had begun almost as soon as he had made himself thoroughly familiar throughout the United States as the itinerant tradesman of reality" (*Study* 369). McDougall elaborates, noting that "Sam's democratic brashness, his 'calculatin'' shrewdness, his colossal assurance and resourcefulness in argument, his readiness with homespun comments, with anecdotes and tall tales—all these traits were already connected with popular conceptions of the Yankee character in Haliburton's time" (Introduction x). Moreover, Baker adds, the Yankee peddler had also already become a stock figure on the English stage: "Haliburton had at hand, therefore, not only the main outline of his character but also a precedent for his appearance in literature" (82).

Claude Bissell agrees, noting that the American idea had become so universally recognized that it could be "presented in an exaggerated, even fantastic way, without inviting ridicule. There emerged a composite character, whose base was the shrewd practical Yankee

and whose super-structure was the western teller of tall tales" ("Haliburton" 6). Waldron contends that Slick is modelled on this composite, and argues that Haliburton was obviously familiar with Seba Smith's peddler of axe-handles and crackerbarrel philosophy, Major Jack Downing of Portland, Maine<sup>51</sup>—as well as with the Western types such as Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, and Paul Bunyan. He notes that Haliburton brought the Down East and the Frontier schools of American humour together in a fascinating blend, creating a character with the behavioral traits of Yankee tradesman and the speech characteristics of the ring-tailed roarer (170).<sup>52</sup>

Others argue that, while Haliburton was undoubtedly well read,<sup>53</sup> his literary creation was a composite formed from sources more immediate to him. In his introduction to *The Sam Slick Anthology*, Watters remarks that Haliburton himself "probably sat in judgment over more than one sharp-practising Yankee pedlar" (xxi). Logan names the particular peddler he says provided the model for Slick:

There can be no doubt as to the realism of Haliburton's chief character, Sam Slick. He is a transcript of the "composite" order from nature, the main outline being derived from a real clockmaker-peddler, named Seth, who was a well-known, if not popular, character amongst the people within Haliburton's judiciary circuit, and who, at least once, had appeared as plaintiff in a suit for payment of a promissory note before Judge Haliburton. (*Haliburton* 112)

While H.P. Scott acknowledges that Haliburton may have captured the broad strokes of Slick from this "flesh-and-blood clockmaker, Seth", he insists that this man was, at best, a mere shadow "to assist him in embodying his idea" (45).<sup>54</sup>



There is also, Chittick adds, the bare chance that Haliburton took his cue from a correspondent in the *Novascotian* whose comments on the literary possibilities inherent in the peddler figure appeared on June 26, 1834, more than a year before Slick sprung to life on those very pages:

"No man, Sir, be his situation or profession what it may, can feel the pulse of the community, or form an estimate of their moral and physical standing with the accuracy of the pedlar--the guest, alternately of the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the religious and the irreligious; he converses with them on equal terms--hears their opinions of men and things--brightens with them in the recital of their hopes and sympathizes in their anticipated evils. It follows that the pedlar is the man to give the true state of the public mind upon questions of general interest." (qtd. in *Study*, 183-4)

Finally, McCulloch's *Letters* must be returned to as a potential source of inspiration. The close of Book One recounts Stepsure's conversation with "Trudge, the pedlar of our town," who regales the modest farmer with tales of the esteem in which he is held by the gentlemen politicians in Halifax. Stepsure admits to being flattered and more than a little excited by the news of a possible pension but adds: "At the same time I must confess, that...I had some misgivings about its truth: both because pedlars are privileged talkers; and because, when he was speaking about the pension, he was persuading my spouse to purchase a great bargain of a shawl which would cost her only ten dollars" (Letter 17, 186-187). Trudge may well be peddling the same "soft sawder" here that Slick was to become (in)famous for a decade later.

There are also numerous speculations as to how Haliburton came up with the scores of anecdotes, homilies, and tall tales which pepper not only *The Clockmaker* series, but the volumes to follow. While critics generally allow Haliburton's powers of invention to account for much of the work, they also look to his friends, colleagues, and casual acquaintances as likely sources of material. Scott and Baker note that tradition credits both Haliburton's coachman, Lennie Geldert, and his friend and fellow judge, Peleg Wiswall, with providing a fund of stories from which to draw.<sup>55</sup> Bill Percy and Watters focus on Haliburton's travels as a judge which afforded him hours of leisure in the taverns and inns of the province and thus the opportunity to become acquainted not only with the local people but with the Yankees travelling in Nova Scotia for business and pleasure: "From his curiosity about places and events, his shrewd observation of character, his ear for anecdotes and tall stories, and his keen sense of humour came the material for his best and most popular works" (Percy 24).<sup>56</sup> Chittick adds that Haliburton likely supplemented these sources with clippings

from the "Varieties" columns of the newspapers, local and foreign, commonly read in his time in Nova Scotia, and partly from the inevitable backwash of American political gossip which reached the province through other departments of the press, or by word of mouth. If "the Major" of "The Club" group was a portrait drawn from Haliburton, as it seems to have been, in part at least, then as far back as 1828 he had begun the custom which never left him of collecting amusing and extravagant tales. (*Study* 183)

So much speculation about the emergence of this fictional character reveals the "remarkable vitality of Haliburton's portrait of the clockmaker—and at the same time, of course, its

faithfulness to a real-life background of clock-peddling and Yankee enterprise" (McDougall, Introduction ix-x). Sam Slick, the insightful, sharp-tongued, door-to-door salesman, became a legend in his own time. Logan declares that this is Haliburton's greatest achievement as an original satiric humorist: the creation of "a socially and intellectually inferior character, who is not a single type but many characters, to be the critic of his social and intellectual superiors, and the mouthpiece of wisdom to them" (*Haliburton* 126).

Whatever his inspirations and sources, Haliburton found, in Sam Slick, an ideal voice for his satire. First and foremost, the boldness, energy, and humour of Slick's speech give him the qualities of dynamic life that allow this essentially two-dimensional figure, "like the gingerbread-man of the story-books...[to] hop out of the oven and run away across the fields" (McDougall, *Tradition* 15). His vibrant expression holds readers' attention throughout what would otherwise be a series of dry lectures on the state of affairs in the colony.<sup>57</sup>

McDougall declares that *The Clockmaker* is "one of the most zestful monologues ever written" because Slick is "supercharged with ideas, and there is no stopping him. From his mouth comes a steady stream of saucy opinions; anecdote is heaped upon anecdote, tale upon tale; and the whole of it is lit with both lunatic and satirical laughter" (*Tradition* 16-17). In the words of Sam Slick himself, Haliburton later reveals his awareness of the comparative power of speech: "Why is it if you read a book to a man you set him to sleep? Just because it is a book, and the language ain't common. Why is it if you talk to him he will sit up all night with you, and say, 'Oh! don't go to bed yet, stay a little longer'?--Just because it's talk, and the language of nature....Anythin' to please must be nateral, I don't care what it is" (*Wise Saws* 220-221). Written chat, Crofton suggests, "was the next best medium to oral chat

for holding the attention of all classes" (92).

Watters notes that while Slick obviously delights in the power of words, his vocabulary is that of common folk: "his language is indescribably rich in similes and metaphors created out of the details from all areas of common life--the ordinary interests, trades, and activities, of men and women of the time" (*Anthology* xvi).<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Bissell suggests, Slick's outrageous speech characteristics help "drive home the critical judgement" ("Haliburton" 9-10). Chittick agrees, noting that it "was the uninterrupted flow of Sam Slick's conversation, with its succession of sharp comment, apt illustration, and grotesquely didactic tales, that was relied upon to point the contrast between American keenness and Nova Scotian indifference" (*Study* 181). Thus, the style and content of Slick's tirades serve Haliburton's satiric purpose both by proving endlessly entertaining, and by being so overstated that Slick criticizes with impunity. For Slick's "satiric utterances--so often grotesquely and *purposely* exaggerated--the public could not hold him responsible. 'A satirist,' says Sam Slick in 'Nature and Human Nature,' speaking of his already published sayings and doings, 'a satirist finds it convenient sometimes to shoot from behind a shelter'" (Crofton 105)<sup>59</sup>

Equally important to his satiric purpose is the fact that Slick has considerable and varied knowledge of America, England and Nova Scotia and is therefore fully capable of expressing his creator's wide-ranging critique of regional and international colonial affairs: "As an American, moreover, he could voice opinions about Britain and her colonial administration that were more irreverent than would be plausibly uttered by a loyal colonist" (Watters, *Anthology* xi). As both an outsider and a neighbour, Slick's criticisms and

proposals are presented with an effective mixture of brutal objectivity and friendly concern perfectly suited to the satiric voice. And finally, since Nova Scotians had long been drawn to the seductive occupation of trading and still regarded American traders with admiration and envy, Slick is an authority figure whose criticisms of the "blue noses," as he terms them, carry weight.

While this exuberant American is unarguably the central figure of the text, he is not in control of its narrative. Instead, Slick's "sayings and doings" are ostensibly recorded for the press in the first-person narration of an English Squire whom Slick meets and rides with on the road from Colchester to Fort Lawrence.<sup>60</sup> The depiction of two men travelling together, one a high-minded intellectual and the other a plainspoken man-of-the-people, provides the dramatic frame which loosely structures the sketches. Both the structuring device and the contrasted characters are likely based on a number of eighteenth-century adaptations of *Don Quixote*, such as H.H. Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1815) (Jones 27).<sup>61</sup> Each number in *The Clockmaker*, like each letter in *The Stepsure Letters*, provides a self-contained selection of incidents from Nova Scotian life designed to admonish vice and folly. Readers are diverted by the lively anecdotes and then instructed by the moral maxim, often printed in italics, which caps each sketch. W.H. New observes that Slick's voice varies over the course of the sketch depending on Haliburton's purpose. The satiric anecdotes are comically conveyed "in an artificial northeastern U.S. dialect, full of flat *a*'s, pronounced *r*'s, syllepsis (*ax* instead of *ask*), and regional verb forms" (193). However, when Haliburton narrows in on his political point,

author and character begin aurally to coalesce....Even though [the] words are

still attributed to Sam, the dialect *cadence* disappears as Haliburton turns to the reader to make his point didactically, directly, *and in the formal idiom of his class and political intention*. The vernacular, the "people's voice," is given over to instructive anecdote, but however effective it is as shrewd satire, the vernacular voice (like the perspective it carries) remains that of the Yankee, the outsider; when the moral and message are to be intoned, Haliburton's speech register shifts to that of the already established authority" (194).

Slick argues that he and the Squire are qualified to analyze the failings of the blue noses who "are a cross of English and Yankee, and therefore first Cousins to us both" (61). In this way, Thomas Vincent argues, Haliburton "brings a third perspective into play by drawing the Nova Scotian into the ideological drama as a silent arbitrator between the fictional Englishman and the fictional Yankee" ("Stratagems" 61). The dynamic relationship between the principal figures not only provides narrative continuity throughout the series, but also greatly enhances the possibilities for satire since the sketches are animated, in part, by the friction between the Squire's polished British idiom and Tory-Augustan philosophy and Slick's rough Yankee idiom and Whig-republican philosophy. And, of course, it is perhaps too tempting to see Slick and the Squire as projections, or dramatizations, of the reform and conservative aspects of Haliburton's personality.

The satiric possibilities in this friction are apparent from the first meeting of the Squire and Slick, which is described in "The Trotting Horse," the opening sketch of *The Clockmaker*.<sup>62</sup> After divulging to readers that he enjoys riding a horse that can best any other in the colony because it allows him to outpace unwanted company, the Squire is

unceremoniously greeted by Sam Slick who pulls up alongside him atop "Old Clay."<sup>63</sup> The Squire's initial bewilderment is indicative of Haliburton's concern with social rank: "The Squire does not immediately know to which class of society Sam belongs, and Sam, the true Yankee, is not concerned about whether or not he is crossing social boundaries when he accosts the Squire" (McMullin, *Canadian* 56). Piqued by Slick's impertinent inquiries about his travel route, the Squire is nonetheless equally curious about the peculiar stranger.

Annoyed with both Slick and himself, he resolves to trot ahead:

I could not account for my idle curiosity--a curiosity, which in him, I had the moment before viewed both with suspicion and disgust--but so it was, I felt a desire to know who he could be who was neither lawyer nor preacher, and yet talked of his *circuit* with the gravity of both. How ridiculous, I thought to myself, is this, I will leave him....I congratulated myself on conquering my own curiosity, and on avoiding that of my travelling companion. This, I said to myself, this is the value of a good horse; I patted his neck, I felt proud of him.

(9-10)

The smug Squire, both literally and figuratively "riding for a fall," is shocked and dismayed when the brash Yankee not only easily overtakes his trotter but proceeds to instruct the gentleman on proper horsemanship: "What, not enough, I mentally groaned, to have my horse beaten, but I must be told that I don't know how to ride him, and that too by a yankee!" (11). Within minutes of meeting, the Squire's British egotism is deflated and Slick's American levelling tendencies are in full display. When Slick confesses: "I don't like to ride in the dust after every one I meet, and I allow no man to pass me but when I choose" (11),

the Squire again recognizes his own shortcomings mirrored in this coarse American. He wonders, "Is it possible...that he can know me, that he has heard of my foible, and is quizzing me, or have I this feeling in common with him" (11). In his "Carnival and Violence: A Meditation," Robert Kroetsch remarks that the

complexity of Haliburton's observations and self-exploration are so brilliantly dramatized in the opening scene of *The Clockmaker* that I can imagine North American writing itself breaking loose on those few pages....Haliburton's struggle both to ride with and ride away from his carnivalesque double is a moment of continuing consequence in the history of North American literature. He has met the devil himself and, as in true carnival, has found him a rather endearing fellow" (100-101).

But the difference between the two men is clear: while the Squire is fully conscious of his personal conceit, Slick is completely unaware of his own overweening pride.

The Squire sees himself both from within and without and can identify the similarities and differences between his inner sense of self and his outer demeanour. He is more aware of how he appears in the eyes of others. This self-awareness provides occasions for ironic amusement throughout the sketches. For instance, even though the Squire mocks Yankees for their annoying habit of behaving as though they belong to a higher social class, he is also quick to admit to travelling incognito so as to attract special regard from innkeepers:

"Wherever too there is mystery there is importance--there is no knowing for whom I may be mistaken, but let me once give my humble cognomen and occupation, and I sink immediately to my own level" (No. 11, 54).<sup>64</sup>



Slick, on the other hand, has a singular self-perspective and is either unable or unwilling to view himself from without. By being indifferent to how others see him, he is incapable of true self-knowledge and therefore unable to change. It is precisely Slick's lack of self-awareness that occasions "his usefulness as an instrument for slashing satire, which demands a dogmatic, single-visioned outlook, a self-assurance untroubled by misgivings, a set of rigid principles and positive judgments with which to lash fools and sinners" (Watters *Anthology* xv-xvi). Thus, while it seems that the Squire has been bested in this exchange, he actually comes out ahead of Slick because of his ironic self-awareness and also because he is gentleman enough to regain his good humour and decide to travel with Slick (though he admits that he hardly has a choice).<sup>65</sup> Hence, the Squire is more than a mere foil to the clockmaker. Representing readers' interests and reactions, he serves as a thoughtful, perceptive lens through which to view the itinerant Yankee.

That said, it is still fair to assert that much of the Squire's narrative is taken up with the simple recording of Slick's opinions and anecdotes. To this end, he is primarily a prompter. For instance, in the second sketch, the Squire wonders to himself, "[h]ow is it that an American can sell his wares, at whatever price he pleases, where a blue-nose<sup>66</sup> would fail to make a sale at all," and resolves to "enquire of the clock-maker the secret of his success." He asks: "how is it...that you manage to sell such an immense number of clocks, (which certainly cannot be called necessary articles,) among a people with whom there seems to be so great a scarcity of money" (13). Later, in "The Clockmaker's Opinion of Halifax," the Squire remarks: "You appear...to have travelled over the whole of this province, and to have observed the Country and the people with much attention, pray what is your opinion of the

present state and future prospects of Halifax?" (No. 13, 67). Slick's lengthy answers to these two questions fulfil one of Haliburton's primary aims in the sketches: economic and agricultural reform.

Parker argues that "when Haliburton first began his sketches, his main aim was to awaken Nova Scotians to the opportunities for increased economic prosperity that they were missing" (CEECT xxiv). Haliburton urged his fellow colonists to strive for economic independence, primarily through the harvesting of Nova Scotia's abundant natural resources, as well as for a personal independence of spirit. Like Young and McCulloch before him, Haliburton frequently accuses his compatriots of "false pride which deters them from putting hands to the plough...lack of enterprise, and a fatal procrastination at the proper season. They are frivolous in fall and winter and inactive in spring and summer" (Logan, *Haliburton* 109). In addition to rehabilitating the colony's agricultural resources, Haliburton also promotes a general advance in marketing, trade, industry, and communication. It is "no coincidence that throughout the *Clockmakers*, but particularly in Series One, Haliburton advocated...building bridges, canals, and railroads, improving communication links, especially through the use of steamships between Nova Scotia and England, and increasing exports" (Parker, CEECT xxiv). He prophesied that technological advances would provide increased access to the greater markets of the United States and Great Britain and thus bring Nova Scotia out of its depression.

Haliburton's desire to make both Nova Scotians and Britons aware of the thwarted potential of the colony is reflected in Slick's satiric rationalist perspective. He analyzes Nova Scotia's strengths and weaknesses and proposes sensible solutions which are not complicated

by emotional prejudices and allegiances or by an overriding concern with social or moral propriety. The Squire agrees with most of Slick's observations and recommendations; indeed, he asserts that Slick "appears to be such a shrewd, observing, intelligent man, and so perfectly at home on these subjects, that I confess I have more faith in this humble but eccentric clock maker, than in any other man I have met with in this Province" (No. 13, 73). Thus, both narrators voice Haliburton's own pragmatic estimation of the state of affairs in Nova Scotia. Slick's commentary generally revolves around three basic premises: first, that Nova Scotia has a wealth of untapped resources floundering in the hands of lazy, pretentious, ignorant and distracted colonists; second, that besides the sweat of its collective brow, the only thing the province needs immediately to achieve success is a railroad; and third, that widespread failure in the face of these simple truths is due to the blue noses' reluctance to follow America's lead and "go ahead."<sup>67</sup>

Slick constantly sings the praises of the "pretty Province" (No. 13, 67) in which he travels, enumerating its vast resources and criticizing its fortunate inhabitants for being too blind or disinclined to exploit its potential riches. Instead, he observes, Nova Scotians look for easier, more lucrative employment. For instance, Slick sardonically remarks to the Squire: "I reckon they are bad off for inns in this country. When a feller is too lazy to work here, he paints his name over his door, and calls it a tavern, and as like as not he makes the whole neighbourhood as lazy as himself" (No. 3, 17). If Nova Scotians would only labour for their profits, Slick suggests, the resources of the colony would richly reward them. Implicit in these diatribes is the notion that Americans have done far better with far less, as in the following characteristic rant:

I never seed or heard tell of a country that had so many natural privileges as this. Why there are twice as many harbors and water powers here, as we have all the way from Eastport to New Orleans. They have all they can ax, and more than they deserve. They have iron, coal, slate, grindstone, lime, firestone, gypsum, freestone, and a list as long as an auctioneer's catalogue. But they are either asleep, or stone blind to them. Their shores are crowded with fish, and their lands covered with wood. A government that lays as light on 'em as a down counterpin, and no taxes. Then look at their dykes. The Lord seems to have made em on purpose for such lazy folks. (No. 3, 18)

Kulyk Keefer notes that, like McCulloch, Haliburton insists that "not primitivism but rather decadence was a prominent feature of communal life—the decadence which lured the sons of industrious farmers off the land into local taverns and shops, or into ballrooms and government offices in Halifax" (35). While Slick often points to Nova Scotia's abundant mines, fisheries, and forests, his prime focus is on its farm land. He chides the blue noses for turning their back on it in an effort to rise above the station of the humble farmer. Echoing Agricola and Stepsure before him, Slick often declares that "*Pride, Squire, and a false pride, too, is the ruin of this country, I hope I may be skinned if it tante*" (No. 26, 159). In various towns along the circuit, Slick points out examples of ruinous class pretension, noting that

Agriculture is not only neglected but degraded here. What a number of young folks there seem to be in these parts, a ridin about, titivated out real jam, in their go-to-meetin clothes, a doin nothin. It's melancholy to think on it. That's the effect of the last war. The idleness and extravagance of those times took

root, and bore fruit abundantly, and now the young people are above their busines. They are too high in the instep, that's a fact. (No. 26, 158)<sup>68</sup>

If, Haliburton implies, instead of directing their energies into ludicrous attempts simply to appear prosperous, Nova Scotians would "go the whole hog" to make their farms actually prosper, then the colony would not be wallowing in an economic slump.

Slick argues that in addition to laziness and worldly ambition, Nova Scotians are overly concerned with politics, as though endless talking about reforming the government would solve all of their problems. In "Gulling a Blue Nose," Slick declares that Nova Scotians are so distracted by politics that they are easy pickings for enterprising peddlers such as himself: "Politicks and such stuff set 'em a gapin, like children in a chimbly corner listenen to tales of ghosts, Salem witches, and Nova Scotia snow storms; and while they stand starin and yawpin, all eyes and mouth, they get their pockets picked of every cent that's in 'em" (No. 31, 184). Slick argues that "[i]f folks would only give over talkin about that everlastin House of Assembly and Council, and see to their farms, it would be better for 'em, I guess" (No. 23, 138). This is especially true, he adds, since nothing important is ever accomplished in the House anyway:

this little House of Assembly that folks make such a touss about, what is it? Why jist a decent Grand Jury. They make their presentments of little money votes, to mend these everlastin rottin little wooden bridges, to throw a poultice of mud once a year on the roads, and then take a "blowin time" of three months and go home. The littler folks be, the bigger they talk. (138-9)

In this way, Slick derides both the politicians who are ineffective and the folks who sit

around talking politics when they should be working.

While Slick suggests that the natural advantages of the province provide nearly everything the colonists require to succeed, he also contends that these riches are wasted without a means by which to transport them between their own cities and towns and further into foreign markets. Although, like McCulloch, Haliburton realized that "gadding about" instead of "stepping sure" was a major cause of the province's depression, Slick nevertheless "expounds a gospel of go-ahead and hustle which is foreign to McCulloch's way of thinking" (Frye, *Letters* vii). This is because Haliburton saw a sharp distinction between simple "gadding about" and purposeful "going ahead." As Joseph and Johanna Jones note: "To him, all the way from the Sam Slick sketches to *The Season Ticket* (1860), written about British railway travel, mobility had seemed the key to political survival and growth, particularly in North America where there was still a vast continent to be moved into" (28). Hence, throughout the sketches Slick argues on behalf of his creator's convictions for the construction of a railroad linking the main cities to the coastal ports.<sup>69</sup>

Slick urges the project through a variety of metaphors: "*Make a rail road to the Minas Basin, and you have a way for your customers to get to you, and a conveyance for your goods to them....If a man has only one leg, and wants to walk, he must get an artificial one. If you have no river, make a rail road, and that will supply its place*" (No. 17, 97). In "The Clockmaker's Opinion of Halifax," he calls on a more lively and elaborate anecdote to make his point:

When I was at Warsaw, as I was a sayin, there was a Russian officer there who had lost both his arms in battle, a good natured, contented critter, as I een

a most ever seed, and he was fed with spoons by his neighbours, but arter a while they grew tired of it, and I guess he near about starved to death at last. Now Halifax is like that are *Spooney*, as I used to call him, it is fed by the outports, and they begin to have enough to do to feed themselves—it must larn to live without em. They have no river, and no country about em, let them make a rail road to Minas Basin, and they will have arms of their own to feed themselves with. If they don't do it, and do it soon, I guess they'll get into a decline that no human skill will cure. They are proper thin now, you can count their ribs een a most as far as you can see them. *The only thing that will either make or save Halifax, is a rail road across the country to Bay of Fundy.* (No. 13, 72)

Dismissing the politicians who argue that the construction would be too costly, Slick insists that the railroad would pay for itself soon enough (No. 7, 34). He closes the discussion with his most vehement urging for these politicians to stop talking about acting on the proposal and get to work:

make a Railroad from Windsor to Halifax; and mind what I tell you now, write it down for fear you should forget it, for it's a fact; and if you don't believe me, I'll lick you till you do, for there aint a word of a lie in it, by Gum: *'One such work as the Windsor Bridge is worth all your laws, votes, speeches and resolutions, for the last ten years, if tied up and put into a meal bag together. If it tante, I hope I may be shot'*. (No. 31, 189)

The Squire, noting that "Mr. Slick has often alluded to this subject, and always in a most

decided manner," announces that he is "inclined to think he is right....I therefore pronounce '*there will be a railroad*'" (No. 13, 73).

Slick is not so sure. In both farming and industry, he remarks, Americans are committed to progress while the blue noses do not have the ingenuity or inclination to keep up. That is why the Americans already have a railroad and the Nova Scotians are still debating the proposal in the legislature:

"we go ahead," the Novascotians go "astarn." Our ships go ahead of the ships of other folks, our steam boats beat the British in speed, and so do our stage coaches; and I reckon a real right down New York trotter might stump the univarse for going "ahead." But since we introduced the Rail Roads if we don't go "ahead" it's a pity. We never fairly knew what going the whole hog was till then; we actilly went ahead ourselves, and that's no easy matter I tell you.

(No. 7, 32)

As Frye points out, Haliburton makes it clear here that the Americans have experienced success "not because independence is better than colonial status, but because they had developed their own resources with so much drive and energy. So, if the Bluenoses would ...get busy developing their natural resources, they'd really go places" ("Mask" 42-3).

The apparent reluctance of Novascotians to "go ahead" is punctuated by their exasperating refusal to take responsibility for their resulting failures. Slick points up the contrast:

We reckon hours and minutes to be dollars and cents. They do nothing in these parts, but eat, drink, smoke, sleep, ride about, lounge at taverns, make



speeches at temperance meetings, and talk about '*house of assembly*.' If a man don't hoe his corn, and don't get a crop, he says it is all owing to the Bank; and if he runs into debt and is sued, why he says the lawyers are a curse to the country. They are the most idle set of folks I tell you. (No. 2, 13)

Slick finds it good sport to watch these folk scramble to render someone else accountable for their own destitution: "It beats cockfightin, I tell you, to hear the blue noses, when they get together, talk politicks. They have got three or four evil spirits, like the Irish Banshees, that they say cause all the mischief in the Province. The Council, the Banks, the House of Assembly, and the lawyers" (No. 14, 77). This insistence that something inherent to the province itself to is to blame for its lack of progression explains why so many colonists have fled to the south: "the old folks say the country is too young, the time will come, and so on; and in the mean time the young folks won't wait, *and run off to the States where the maxim is 'youth is the time for improvement, a new country is never too young for exertion--push on--keep movin--go ahead'*" (No. 13, 72).

But, Haliburton suggests, taking up residence in the United States with the same poor habits and attitudes is no more a solution to the fundamental problems plaguing Nova Scotians than remaining in the colony and calling upon the Banks, the Assembly, the Council, the Governor, the Colonial Office, and Great Britain herself to rectify them. In "Conversations at the River Philip," Slick regales the Squire with the story of Pugnose the innkeeper who plans to go to the States:

he says he has to work too hard here, that the markets are dull, and the winter too long; and he guesses he can live easier there; I guess he'll find his mistake

afore he has been there long. Why our country ant to be compared to this, on no account whatever--our country never made us to be the great nation we are, but we made the country. How on airth could we, if we were all like old Pugnose, as lazy as ugly, make that cold thin soil of New England produce what it does?....a feller who finds work too hard here, had better not go to the States. (No. 4, 23)

Throughout the sketches both Slick and the Squire note that Nova Scotians "must be told that they have no reason to look South for better conditions but need only look round where they live to find everything useful for a development much more promising than is to be found in New England or farther South still" (Liljegren, II 18). Slick is blunt in his reproach: "you may blame [others]...till you are tired, but it's all your own fault--*you've got no spirit and no enterprise, you want industry and economy; use them, and you'll soon be as rich as the people in Halifax you call great folks.*--they did'nt grow rich by talking, but by working" (No. 21, 126). In all of his appraisals, Slick's underlying message is: "*Give up politicks--its a barren field....Look to your farms--your water powers--your fisheries, and factories. In short...look to yourselves, and don't look to others*" (No. 21, 126).

In Slick's satiric rationalist voice, Haliburton reveals his admiration for American industry, confidence, vigour and resourcefulness. His portrayal of the smart and determined Yankee trader touring the Maritime provinces to earn his living sharply underscores Nova Scotians' contrasting gullibility and lack of ambition, not to mention their damaging dependence on importation.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Slick's all-American enthusiasm, boundless energy, and often astonishing "sayings and doings" render him a far more attractive figure

than the sluggish, insipid, whining creatures who languish in the colony. Frye asserts that, for many reasons, Slick is an appealing character:

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. I say nearly everything, because I have some doubts about his ability to spit through a keyhole and never wet the wards. He's kindly, humane and courteous; he puts himself out a great deal for other people; he's a dangerous man in a fight but he never starts one; he's a sharp operator but he's right when he says he never really cheats anybody; he just doesn't interfere with people who are determined to cheat themselves. ("Mask" 41)

Arguable as some of Frye's appraisals are, Slick's positive qualities nonetheless indicate that Haliburton would have his compatriots emulate the attitudes and behaviours which have enabled their American cousins to "go ahead" where they have "gone astarn".<sup>71</sup>

However, a significant element of the American experiment troubled Haliburton deeply. While he championed personal and economic independence, he regarded a corresponding political independence as the sheerest folly. Holding firm to his Tory-Loyalist conviction that the maintenance of the British connection was crucial to the success of the colony, he laboured to convince his readers to remain loyal colonists. This is Haliburton's other purpose in writing *The Clockmaker*—the attempt "to prove the superiority of English institutions and to induce colonists to form a just estimate of their own" (Baker, *History* 84). To this end he focuses sharp satirical attacks upon the failure of Britons on both sides of the Atlantic to close ranks. Fortier observes that an "improved imperial connection, which would

place colonial resources at the service of the Mother Country and provide the colonies a more distinguished status, is the ideal against which unsatisfactory conditions in the present are judged in his work" (i). As a proud Yankee, Slick revels in American political independence. Therefore, he cannot serve as the mouthpiece for this half of Haliburton's satiric thesis, at least not in the same way.

However, Slick's characterization is far more ambiguous than a brief survey of his comments on Nova Scotians' failures makes evident. In fact, while he is set up as the norm that informs Haliburton's satiric rationalist perspective, he is, conversely, the object of scorn for Haliburton's moral satirical perspective. From this point of view, he becomes the satirist satirized. To achieve this double vision, Haliburton manipulates his readers' ambivalent attitudes towards America. While he champions the various American virtues embodied in Slick, he also imbues the clockmaker with stereotypical American faults, including flag-waving jingoism, contempt for other nations, arrogance and boastfulness, complacency about corruption, crudeness and love of violence, and rejection of tradition. Slick serves as a continuous lampoon of his fellow countrymen by exhibiting these qualities throughout the sketches. The result is a character who is alternately commendable and contemptible.

For instance, even as Haliburton chooses a Yankee peddler as his satiric mouthpiece because he knows the curiosity with which American traders are held in the colony, he simultaneously scorns that interest by revealing the parasitical nature of Slick's vocation and its steady impoverishment of the province (Chittick, *Study* 180-181). Slick freely admits that "[i]f the blue noses knew the value of money...they'd have more cash, and fewer clocks and tin reflectors, I reckon" (No. 16, 86). Here, readers are asked to recognize and reform their

own gullibility and pretension, but, more importantly, they are invited to read Slick's cunning and deceit in his trading practices as more contemptuous than their own faults. As the Blooms might argue, Slick provides a source of healing transference by becoming a scapegoat, the rejection of whom allows readers the opportunity to reaffirm their own moral values.

Throughout *The Clockmaker* Haliburton ensures that his readers understand that this crafty salesman is a manipulator and an opportunist and therefore clearly not a hero. In moral terms, Slick is just that: *slick*. His name is an obvious indication of his suspect character in that it is "a Yankee vulgarization of the adjective 'sleek,' which acquired a moral connotation and meant the ability, in business dealings, to gain profit by sharp perception of how to take advantage of another person less quick-witted" (Logan, *Haliburton* 129-30). This artful entrepreneur may claim simply to be benefitting from his customers' own greed and stupidity, but Slick repeatedly proves himself to be morally unprincipled: "For instance, he insists that, while it is wrong to steal a watch, it is 'moral and legal' to get one by cheating. 'Let the buyer beware' was close to the core of Sam's commercial dealings" (Watters, *Anthology* xi). No matter how mesmerizing Slick's personality becomes in the context of the dramatic narrative, his satiric implications cannot be ignored. As Vincent explains, Haliburton depends on his readers' critical awareness to recognize the whole range of Slick's moral decay, including

"the inherently materialistic character of Sam's notion of human achievement and success; the exploitative nature of his dealings with people; his propensity for unscrupulous and unethical business practices if he thinks they will go unnoticed; the element of retribution and violence often associated with his sense of justice; his misogyny; and his general vulgarity"

("Stratagems" 63). McMullin also comments on Slick's shallow character, noting that his lack of moral values leads to a growing inability to reconcile his own behaviour with his stated ideals. To his mind, Slick's "tendency to rationalize his actions to meet his precepts is perhaps the most significant condemnation which Haliburton makes of Sam's personality.... [and] a reason to which Haliburton attributes the failure of American society to achieve any significant cultural and social excellence" (*Canadian* 61-62). These moral failings qualify the desirability of Slick's—and, by extension, America's—influence on the struggling colony. Having isolated themselves from the mainstream of civilization by rejecting British authority, Americans have become blind to traditional moral and humanistic values. Haliburton is obviously warning Nova Scotians against choosing a similar path.<sup>72</sup>

While the deficiencies in Slick's character do not invalidate his own condemnation of others' faults, they do open the door for a critical appraisal of the American character and, by extension, of the American system of government. Slick furnishes this critique unwittingly, oblivious to the irony which underscores his perpetual bluster and swagger. For this half of Haliburton's satiric thesis, the Squire plays a more complex role. Through his careful observation of Slick's faults, he guarantees that readers will see Slick's negative qualities clearly. For instance, he notes that "[w]ith all his shrewdness to discover, and his humor to ridicule the foibles of others, Mr. Slick was blind to the many defects of his own character; and, while prescribing 'a cure for conceit,' exhibited in all he said, and all he did, the most overweening conceit himself" (No. 23, 133). S.B. Liljegren notes that the "quarrels between the Squire and Sam very often turn on the English objection to American boasting, in particular when the implication appears that the progress of the United States involves the

decline and ruin of the mother country" (II 11). Of course, the Squire is not always able to get a word in edge-wise, as in the following: "'I guess we are the greatest nation on the face of the airth, and the most enlightened too.' This was rather too arrogant to pass unnoticed, and I was about replying, that whatever doubts there might be on that subject, there could be none whatever that they were the most *modest*; when he continued..." (No. 7, 32).

Perhaps the most memorable exchange between Slick and the Squire on the subject of American national conceit takes place in "The American Eagle." In this sketch, Slick declares that since the "British can whip all the world, and we can whip the British,"<sup>73</sup> the magnificent eagle with an anchor clutched in its claws, "afeared of nothin of its kind, and president of all it surveys," is an apt emblem for America. Looking for the Squire's assent he asks: "It was a good emblem that we chose, warnt it?" (No. 12, 60). The Squire, seeing that there "was no evading so direct, and at the same time, so conceited an appeal as this," replies: "The emblem is more appropriate than you are all aware of, boasting of what you cannot perform, grasping at what you cannot attain, an emblem of arrogance and weakness, of ill directed ambition and vulgar pretension" (60). Slick was, the Squire notices, "evidently annoyed, and with his usual dexterity gave vent to his feelings, by a sally upon the blue noses"; he declares that if "that Eagle is represented as trying what *he cant do* its an honorable ambition arter all, but these blue noses wont try what *they can do*....*An Owl should be their emblem, and the motto 'he sleeps all the days of his life'*" (61). Here is an example of how Haliburton constructs a scene that "wipes up the blue noses considerable hard, and don't let off the Yankees so very easy neither" ("Slick's Letter," 6).

A similar turn in the conversation occurs in "The White Nigger," when the Squire

finally takes Slick to task on his continual boasting of his "free and enlightened" country.

Putting aside, for the moment, his British manners, he interrupts the clockmaker:

Old Clay puts me in mind of one of our free and enlightened—. Excuse me, said I, Mr. Slick, but really you appropriate that word "free" to your countrymen, as if you thought no other people in the world were entitled to it but yourselves. Neither be they, said he....Look at our declaration of independence...."We hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." I guess King George turned his quid when he read that. It was somethin to chaw on, he had'nt been used to the flavor of, I reckon. (No. 27, 161)

The Squire takes offense at these remarks and fires a volley back, declaring that Jefferson "should have said, 'all white men;' for, as it now stands, it is a practical untruth, in a country which tolerates domestic slavery in its worst and most forbidding form. It is a declaration of *shame*, and not of *independence*" (161). Slick defends the American practise by once again turning his attention to Nova Scotia and arguing that the province deals in white slaves. The Squire vehemently objects to this remark: "Thank God, said I, slavery does not exist in any part of his Majesty's dominions now, we have at last wiped off that national stain" (161). But the clockmaker wins the point: "Not quite, I guess, said he, with an air of triumph, it tante done with in Nova Scotia, for I have seed these human cattle sales with my own eyes" (161-162). He goes on to describe the colonial practice of auctioning poor men to farmers—the very same sort of "human cattle sale" that Mephibosheth Stepsure found himself in before he himself became an independent farmer. Again, the Squire is distracted from his



criticism of American braggadocio by Slick's insistence that Nova Scotians simply have less to brag about.

While Slick's propensity for boasting is perhaps the most insistently and comically represented American fault in these sketches, Haliburton quietly insinuates his concern about more disquieting American tendencies and their growing influence on Nova Scotians. A strong supporter of the Church of England, Haliburton viewed the separation of Church and State in the United States as evidence of the disintegration of institutions that consolidate the state:

He believed that religious values advocated by a state church produced a moral people by defining a clear and consistent norm of behaviour. He believed that the monarchical system and religiously inspired education shaped a cultural life which had a consistent norm to which all people could reasonably aspire. The commitment to such a norm allowed the possibility of a balance between aspiration and action. (McMullin, *Canadian* 62-63)

Moreover, while he saw the republican form of government "as appropriate in its American setting, since it had a historical justification in the kind of society developed in the New England states in colonial times," he was still "opposed to the wholesale levelling process which resulted in what he called the 'mobocracy' of American life" (McDougall, *Tradition* 26). He thought some aspects of the American constitution invited instability, particularly the theory of slaves' rights, and he had forebodings of the coming storm over slavery. Asserting that the democratic experiment rendered Americans susceptible to mass rule and hysteria, Haliburton predicted in these sketches that there would be a civil war before long.<sup>74</sup> But, as

Frye remarks, "it gives him no pleasure to predict this, and his treatment of America is both sympathetic and affectionate" ("Mask" 41).

Chittick agrees, asserting that the irony of Slick's repeated reference to the "free and enlightened" state of his country indicates more about "Haliburton's doubt of the boasted blessings of political liberty, than it does the Nova Scotians' general animosity towards their rivals" (*Study* 195). As the complex characterization of Slick makes perfectly clear, Haliburton championed the unique American genius, but also was disturbed by their rejection of traditions which could have disciplined that genius: "Sam's inconsistency--he is part Tory, part democrat, often wise and sometimes blind--represents Haliburton's view of the essential formlessness of American culture. With the push for responsible government, the same drifting away from the past was beginning to be felt in that province as well" (McMullin, *Canadian* 59-60).

Haliburton's skilful control of the function of his two narrators allows him to express this dual perspective on the colony's various problems and on the radically different proposed solutions. In his pragmatic moments, Haliburton adopts a detached perspective from which even his Tories are not spared. Consider Slick's appraisal of the political struggle between the Tory and the Reform parties:

If I was axed which side I thought was the farthest from the mark, in this Province, I vow I should be puzzled to say. As I don't belong to the country, and don't care a snap of my finger for either of em, I suppose I can judge better than any man in it, but I *snore* I don't think there's much difference....the popular side are not so well informed as tother, and they have

the misfortin of havin their passions addressed more than their reason, therefore they are often out of the way, or rather led out of it and put astray by bad guides; well, tother side have the prejudices of birth and education to dim their vision, and are alarmed to undertake a thing, from the dread of ambush or open foes, that their guides are etarnally discryin in the mist--*and beside, power has a nateral tendency to corpulency*. As for them guides, I'd make short work of 'em if it was me. (No 18, 103)

Nor was he blind to the faults of the British people or government. As Crofton points out, Haliburton was "fond of satirising the blunders of the Colonial Office and the sometimes ludicrous ignorance of its officials about the colonies" (78). Furthermore, he adds, "he lets Mr. Slick comment freely on the monotonous, material existence of the squirearchy, the mercenary attentions that are forced upon travellers, and other British faults and flaws" (78).

However, Haliburton ultimately champions Tory-Augustan precepts in arguing that pragmatic values must be considered with a keen eye on their relative position to moral values. Progress, he argues, need not come at the cost of a community-based and hierarchically structured society. From the perspective of a moral satirist, Haliburton demands that the drive for advancement inherent in the American "go ahead" philosophy and so necessary for the success of the colony, be tempered by a humanistic purpose, a moral vision that is informed by centuries' old British traditions. Vincent argues that this tradition, this sense of cultural connection, is what Slick and his nation are lacking and they do not even recognize the deficiency: "political rebellion isolated them intellectually and spiritually from the mainstream of human civility, and emotionally they continue to glory in that

isolation" ("Stratagems" 63-64).

While the satiric rationalist and the moral satiric perspectives had been ideologically quite distinct, Haliburton made extensive use of both in *The Clockmaker*. Unlike McCulloch, who conflates the two perspectives into one puritan vision of Nova Scotian life, Haliburton eyes Nova Scotia's state of affairs *vis-à-vis* America and England from an endlessly alternating perspective. As a result, "the play of satire is remarkably rich and complex. It provides an interesting glimpse, if only a glimpse, of a way Canadians would later develop of looking in upon themselves with reasonable clarity by looking out upon John Bull and Uncle Sam. By the same token, it prophesies faintly our twentieth-century commitment to the uninspiring but useful middle course" (McDougall, Introduction xv). In their sayings and doings Slick and the Squire together reveal two sides to every question. Readers are asked to see the value in both the pragmatic and the moral approach and to attempt to chart a sensible and yet principled path between them. To do so, Haliburton realizes, one must have "an ability to live with uncertainties and antagonistic philosophies, an awareness of shifting perspectives" (Marshall 137). Tom Marshall contends that such ability and awareness informs *The Clockmaker*: "This," he adds "is 'Canadian'" (137). Despite their numerous disagreements and their disparate personalities, the Squire admits to looking forward to meeting up with Sam Slick again soon. While this is obviously a plot device designed to ensure another series of sketches, it is also an indication of the Squire's astute appreciation of alternative viewpoints:

I look forward with much pleasure to our meeting again. His manner and idiom were to me perfectly new and very amusing; while his good sound

sense, searching observation, and queer humor, rendered his conversation at once valuable and interesting. There are many subjects on which I should like to draw him out; and I promise myself a fund of amusement in his remarks on the state of society and manners at Halifax, and the machinery of the local government, on both of which he appears to entertain many original and some very just opinions. (No. 33, 202)

Frye remarks that it was, "of course, inevitable that Haliburton's more brilliant and highly coloured satire should have pushed McCulloch's into obscurity" (*Letters* vii). It is no surprise that *The Clockmaker* remains in print and in the canon of Canadian satiric and comic literature more than 160 years after its initial publication. From both the New Critical and the Historicist viewpoint, there is much to justify contemporary readers' interest. On the one hand, critics such as Bissell suggest that Haliburton's narrow aims in writing the sketches are "not obtrusive and [do] not stand in the way of contemporary enjoyment" (9). Waldron agrees, arguing that despite "the parochial character of some of their contemporary political concerns, Haliburton's works still convey a laugh to modern readers" (169). This is, McDougall offers, because "the tricks of making people laugh change little with the years" (Introduction x). Cogswell concurs, adding that even though some of the humour is dated, there is, in his best work, "enough humour and wise comment of a universal nature to make it worth reading today" ("Haliburton" 115).

On the other hand, critics have also pointed out that Haliburton's sketches provide interesting historical portraits of pre-Confederation life in the Maritime colony: "Sam Slick,"

Frye remarks, "is at his best when he's describing the country and its customs, and he's at his best often enough to bring Nova Scotia in the 1830s really to life. That doesn't make *The Clockmaker* provincial or antiquated; it makes it concrete" ("Mask" 43). Furthermore, Parker adds, the sketches are "the most important early literary works to recognize the need for a reinvention of the British North American provinces in the 1830s and to evoke a characteristically ambivalent Canadian attitude towards the United States" (CEECT xvii). But underpinning that ambivalence, Richard Davies argues, was a growing sense of affinity which vied with the British connection; Haliburton thus epitomized the main tendencies of Canadian life and literature, "tendencies inextricably connected with developments south of the Border, and therefore American even in the narrower sense of the word, yet as undoubtedly English as the people of this Continent were English in thought and speech after the Revolution" (Baker, *History* 69).

Sam Slick and the Squire are wildly successful mouthpieces for an author who attempts to incite Nova Scotians to define who they are and want to become by identifying and evaluating the fundamental characteristics of both British and American society. In his efforts to make Nova Scotians see themselves clearly and make conscious decisions about their political and cultural future, Haliburton "articulated political issues that anticipated those that led British North Americans to form the Dominion of Canada in 1867 and those that still beset Canadians. Above all, through the debates of his chief characters, he provided a forum for the discussion of ideas about culture and civilization that continue to engage North Americans" (Parker, CEECT lxxxvi). While, in *The Clockmaker*, Haliburton was able to look at these issues from a variety of perspectives, he nonetheless took a firm medial position and

held it throughout, as typically oxymoronic as that must sound. While he could often be gently ironic, he could also be a master of hard-edged satire. McDougall remarks that Haliburton's position "far out on the wing" enabled him to write satire, because "he was perfectly clear as to where and how his values differed from and were superior to the values commonly held in his society, and because there therefore existed between him and everything he opposed an area wide enough for the play of a vigorous dialectic" (*Tradition* 19). But, as the country moved towards Confederation, the satirically enabling extremes closed in upon the centre and the middle way was embraced, politically and socially, thereby curtailing the possibilities of "laughter with knives" for years to come.

### Endnotes: Colonial Period

1. W.L. Morton illustrates the extent of the Loyalists' fidelity to the Crown: "The decisive act of the Revolution was, of course, the throwing off of allegiance by the Declaration of Independence. Equally decisive was the resolution of the Loyalists to maintain their allegiance. How clearly the matter was understood is shown by the declarations required of settlers in British America after 1783, in which they were required to acknowledge 'the Authority of the King in his Parliament as the Supreme Legislature of this Province'" (*Contexts* 173).
2. Ray Palmer Baker notes that the "first English college in Canada, like the first English schools, whether Puritan or Loyalist, was...closely connected with the intellectual life of the Old Colonies" (*History* 48). The president of King's College, William Cochrane, was formerly a professor of Greek and Latin at Columbia, while two of its three governors—Sir John Wentworth, and Chief Justice Samuel Blowers—were graduates of Harvard.
3. Halifax was not, of course, entirely devoid of literary culture before the Loyalist influx. Gwendolyn Davies points out that after "the first printing press was brought to Halifax by Bartholomew Green in 1751, [the] 'literature of empire' was soon replaced by locally written prose and poetry. From the 1752 founding of John Bushell's *The Halifax Gazette* onward, Maritime newspapers and periodicals stimulated literary life by providing publishing outlets for regional authors and by excerpting the latest writing from Britain and America" ("Maritimes" 731).
4. The Stamp Act of 1765 (which required that a stamp be affixed to documents and newspapers) was the first British Act to impose direct taxes on the American colonies. Although the revenue was intended to finance troops stationed in the colonies, American antagonism forced Parliament to repeal it the following year. The Declaratory Act of 1776 nevertheless asserted Parliament's right to impose laws on the colonies, thus aggravating the opposition that led to the American Revolution.
5. Note, for instance, Jacob Bailey's long anti-rebel satire, "America." Judging from the completed portion (it is over 4100 lines, but unfinished), Thomas Vincent observes that the poem "was intended to be a quasi-historical explanation of the causes of the American Rebellion from a Tory point of view, together with some description of the personalities and events of the Rebellion, also interpreted from a Tory point of view" (*Satire* viii).
6. Concentrating on the Loyalist poets, Vincent elaborates on the wide range of satiric modes employed by these writers: "Bailey's poems are pure low-burlesque in the Hudibrastic mode....Croke, on the other hand, writes with an eye to eighteenth-century mock-heroic satire; Pope's *Rape of the Lock* looms large behind 'The Inquisition'. Odell, Street, and the poet of 'The Times' turn to tetrameter metric forms in the tradition of English octosyllabic verse-satire, the tradition to which Swift and Anstey belonged" (*Satire* x).



7. Vincent asserts that "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" (*Satire* xiii). He adds that "One might have expected a geographic separation of the prevailing modes of satire in light of the Loyalist migration, which was in part at least ideologically fuelled. To some extent this occurred, but the social and political dynamics of the emerging societies in the United States and Maritime Canada did not remain static, and neither society was immune to the continuing interaction of the ideological tensions that lay behind the recent conflict" ("Stratagems" 57-8).

8. Vincent further elaborates on *The Nova-Scotia Magazine* which was established and originally edited by the Rev. William Cochran, first president of King's College, Windsor: "The bulk of each issue [60+-80+ pages] was made up of material Cochran found in British and American books and magazines; passages by such well-known authors as Edward Gibbon, Richard Cumberland, Hester Piozzi, William Cowper, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Joseph Priestley, and Benjamin Franklin, as well as little-known journalists. Prose fiction and poetry were prominently featured, and there were brief notices of new books; in addition there were detailed reports on the political scene in both Nova Scotia and Great Britain and a 'Chronicle' of current events, domestic and foreign" ("Nova-Scotia" 812).

9. Of course, not all of Canada's early satirical works were produced in the Maritime provinces of British North America. For instance, Ramon Hathorn points to several works produced in Lower Canada during this period, noting that "satirical reactions to the Anglo-Saxon 'conqueror' are found as early as 1767 when, in a poem published for New Year's Day in *La Gazette de Québec*, rhyming couplets praise the new governor with discreet, tongue-in-cheek irony" (561). Note also Joseph Quesnel's one-act play, *L'Anglomanie; ou Le Dîner à L'Angloise* (c. 1803) which "pokes fun at the French-Canadian élite who only too eagerly ape British ways and customs" (561, see also Elaine Nardocchio and John Hare).

10. Robin Mathews argues a clear connection between the letters of Agricola and those of Stepsure: "McCulloch wants to show, as a continuation of *The Letters of Agricola*, that even a lame orphan, applying himself to labour on ordinary land can prove that agriculture may be successful and satisfactory occupation....McCulloch's purpose is to argue for the legitimacy, morality, and viability of the land life: from the appropriate use of land flows the possibility of the good life. That is John Young's argument in *The Letters of Agricola*, and McCulloch agrees, even to the point of repeating Young's call for agricultural societies" (136-7).

11. Discussing the verse satire of the period, Vincent observes that while "the American experience was more immediate, the great legacy of eighteenth-century English satiric verse had the most marked effect on the form and style of Maritime narrative verse satire, and provided the moral as well as the literary justification for writing this kind of verse. In the hands of poets such as Samuel Butler, John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, and Alexander Pope, verse satire in eighteenth-century England had been established and accepted as one of the important articulators and guardians of the inherent order of human society. Its avowed role was to direct common sense and reason against the insanity of human folly and vice whenever and wherever it should raise its head, to condemn and ridicule deviations from the accepted norms of human conduct,

and to re-assert the social, political, moral, and religious values that underpinned the stability of eighteenth-century life" (*Satire* x-xi).

12. Stanley McMullin adds that the "debate over Pictou Academy became political since the Anglican-controlled Governor's council--which acted both as an upper house and as the executive body executing the laws they themselves passed--refused to grant permanent funds even though the House of Assembly continued to request them" (*Canadian* 32). And the Academy was also under threat from the Kirk--the Church of Scotland Presbyterians (See G.Davies, *Biography*).

13. Gwendolyn Davies reports the Pictou Academy "acquired an enviable reputation when its first three graduates travelled to the University of Glasgow and successfully passed the MA examinations there" (CEEECT xix). Frank Baird adds that these three and their four fellow graduates "were the first regularly trained native ministers sent out by any college in Canada" (615).

14. McCulloch's actions support A.B. McKillop's claim that the "contribution of Scotland to nineteenth-century Canadian life was immense....the Scot brought with him to Canada a general appreciation of the necessity for popular education. To a large extent this was part of his Presbyterian inheritance....a distinguishing characteristic of Scottish education was that in contrast with that of England it was broadly humanistic and highly philosophical" (*Disciplined* 24-25). In fact, McKillop refers specifically to McCulloch in his remarks about the development of the educational system in Canada: "The university curricula, as developed under the influence of such Scots as Bishop John Strachan of Trinity College, Thomas McCulloch of Pictou Academy, Daniel Wilson of University College, and Thomas Liddell of Queen's, uniformly showed their Scottish orientation by the preeminence afforded to the mental and moral philosophy of the Scottish Common Sense school" (*Disciplined* 29-30).

15. McMullin adds that, as "Investigator," McCulloch also "expressed concern that students going to the United States for their education stood in danger of acquiring dangerous democratic beliefs that had no place in the Nova Scotia context. Control and development of provincial educational institutions was essential for the development of the colony within the boundaries of the British heritage" ("Liberal" 73).

16. The original *Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure* was a compilation of sixteen letters written by "Stepsure" himself; this study uses Gwendolyn Davies' edition which includes all of the linked letters produced by McCulloch during this period. An explanation follows in the text.

17. Thomas McCulloch, *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters* (1862; rpt. *The Stepsure Letters*. Ed. Gwendolyn Davies. Ottawa: Carleton University Press-CEEECT, 1990) Letter 17, 180. All further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically by letter number and page number in the text.

18. Letter Eighteen is to the editors of the *Acadian Recorder* and introduces what McCulloch viewed as the second book of the series; and Letter Twenty is to Willy Whooshlicat, a childhood friend of Scantocreesh's in Scotland.

19. Gwendolyn Davies explains that "[s]ix letters from 'CENSOR' were published in the *Acadian Recorder* between 21 December 1822 and 25 January 1823. They attacked a range of topics from the low-necked dresses worn by women at the theatre to the writings of John Young, the *Free Press*, and James Irving, a Truro schoolmaster, whose essays on English poetry had been appearing in the *Acadian Recorder* since 1820. Sustained by the philosophy that 'a society that grows up without the benefit of a public censor, is sure to shoot out into a thousand extravagances and follies,' Censor titillated his audience with speculations that he was, among others, 'Mephibo' the old fox' in disguise [*Acadian Recorder*, 21 December 1822, p2]. His identity, however, has never been satisfactorily resolved. On 28 December 1822 Censor began his letter "*On Mephibosheth Stepsure*" by praising the conception, design, and thrust of the letters. Admirable as he found these characteristics, he nonetheless condemned Stepsure for the indecorousness of his scatological images, 'the sameness of his characters,' and the infelicity of his language...[which betrayed] 'neither a chaste imagination, nor much power of language. As moral portraits they may find a place on the chimney piece of the cottage, but they will ever be refused admittance into the drawing-room of polite life.' [*Acadian Recorder*, 28 December 1822, p2]....On 8 february 1823 Stepsure's first letter on Censor was published in the *Acadian Recorder*; his second on the same subject appeared there on 29 March 1823" (CEECT xxv-xxvi).

20. In response to Stepsure's characterization, Janice Kulyk Keefer comments: "Perhaps more vicious and desperate things have been said of *The Stepsure Letters* than of any other 'classic' of Canadian literature. It is simple to see why; the text's narrator (whose ungainly Christian name furnishes yet another reason to damn McCulloch's pen) is a prig and paragon to boot....To a non-Calvinist, Stepsure is the worst kind of snob—he is one of the Elect, and the virulence of his state of grace is manifest in the verse of Proverbs he alludes to in recounting the doom of a reprobate: 'I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh'" (41).

21. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye outlines further this type of satiric figure and indicates how Haliburton's Sam Slick sketches are part of the same tradition: "the satirist may employ a plain, common-sense, conventional person as a foil for the various *alazons* of society. Such a person may be the author himself or a narrator, and he corresponds to the plain dealer in comedy or the blunt advisor in tragedy. When distinguished from the author, he is often a rustic with pastoral affinities, illustrating the connection of his role with the *agroikos* type in comedy. The kind of American satire that passes as folk humor, exemplified by the Biglow Papers, Mr. Dooley, Artemus Ward, and Will Rogers, makes a good deal of him, and this genre is closely linked with the North American development of the counsel of prudence in Poor Richard's Almanac and the Sam Slick papers" (227).

22. John Young had also observed that colonists shunned farming in favour of any other prospective employment in an attempt to secure a higher social class in the New World. In the introduction to *The Letters of Agricola*, he states that the "keeper of a tavern or a tippling-house, the retailer of rum, sugar and tea, the travelling chapman, the constable of the district were far more important personages, whether in their own estimation or that of the public, than the farmer who cultivated his own lands. He was of the lowest caste in society, and gave place here to others who, according to the European standard of rank and consequence, are confessedly his

inferiors" (ix).

23. Beverly Rasporich points out that McCulloch's *Stepsure* and Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard* have much in common as a voice of colonial puritanism and a rising middle class; however, "[w]hile *Poor Richard* unabashedly expounded such virtues as industry, frugality and prudence as *The Way to Wealth*, Mephibosheth is interested in money in so far as it provides modest comforts and 'snug living.' Wealth is actually less important than the good life of domestic bliss" (231). This difference, Rasporich, contends, suggests "the special character of the Nova Scotian's and Canadian humour" (231).

24. Stanley McMullin argues a similar connection between these characters and their author, asserting that "Drone becomes the voice of McCulloch giving moral direction to society; *Stepsure* becomes the practical man exemplifying the value of Drone's precepts" ("Liberal" 77).

25. McCulloch was incensed that Blackwood rejected his novels but offered him ten guineas a sheet for contributions to the magazine: "'Now dirty as B[lackwood] thinks my novels I judge them purity itself compared with his magazine and it would be a subject of serious consideration with me whether I ought to write for a publication whose tendency is so irreligious'" (to John Mitchell, qtd. in G. Davies, CEECT xlii).

26. Jotham Blanchard, a member of the provincial House of Assembly, was a former pupil of Thomas McCulloch's. For further discussion of the identity of the Club wits, see J.W. Longley, *Joseph Howe*. Vol 12 of *The Makers of Canada*. See also Gwendolyn Davies' "The Club Papers: Haliburton's Literary Apprenticeship," and her *Studies in Maritime Literary History*.

27. V.L.O. Chittick describes Haliburton's birthplace: "The Windsor of Haliburton's youth was an inconsiderable community of not more than 1500 inhabitants, but...it was already well on its way to becoming the prosperous town of more recent times....The nearness of the place to Halifax, combined with its natural attractiveness and its obvious agricultural and commercial possibilities, quickly made it what it long remained, the resort of persons of wealth and connection....[with a] reputation for carrying invidious social distinction to absurd lengths" (*Study* 18-20). H.R. Percy adds that Windsor "was known as 'the most aristocratic society outside of England.' This elite consisted of retired army officers, government officials who used it as a country seat, Loyalists whose wealth had proved portable, professional men, academics and men of the cloth" (4-5).

28. It was at King's College, Gwendolyn Davies points out, that Haliburton "received reinforcement of his Tory and Anglican views, developed standards of reading taste based on a study of Horace, Virgil, Cicero, Demosthenes, Sophocles, and Juvenal, and learned the conventions, forms, and disciplines of classical satire" ("Assessment," Ed. Frank Tierney 153). Chittick adds that Haliburton's ensuing professional career, and the careers of most of his contemporaries at college, reveal that King's was "the highway to official preferment": "Out of a student body, which in all his four years as an undergraduate taken together never numbered more than twenty-five, seven became clergymen of the Anglican Church, and counting twice those who held more than one office, one became a Chief Justice, five became Supreme Court

Judges, one a Commissioner of Crown Lands, three Solicitor Generals, two Attorney Generals [sic], and one a Master of the Rolls" (*Study* 23). For a discussion of the role of religion and education in the shaping and strengthening of Loyalist ideals, see Judith Fingard's *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia, 1783-1816*.

29. In Annapolis Royal "Haliburton found a social atmosphere and a political tradition precisely calculated to continue the influence of Windsor and King's College. As the former capital of the province, Annapolis Royal still clung to something of its old-time air of superiority....The predominating element among the influential residents of the town was Loyalist, or of Loyalist descent, an element which...included men who had been 'of high official rank and importance'" (Chittick, *Study* 42-43).

30. L.A.A. Harding describes Haliburton's ability to have "the most potent, grave and reverend [men] of the Provincial Assembly in stitches--and they were not really laughing men...to the point where Jo Howe, the ambitious journalist, gave up trying to take his words down and just laughed instead" ("Brine" 526).

31. But, as Chittick notes, "Haliburton's levity, and its resultant disastrous effect on the gravity of the House, did not pass uncriticized. Mr. Alexander Stewart...was moved to remark that... 'he had never seen a greater perversion of eminent talents than had been displayed by [Haliburton], for he had seemed to think that a grave constitutional question in which their dearest rights and interests were involved was not to be settled by reasoning, but by fun and jocularly'" (*Novascotian*, Supplement Mar. 1. 1827, qtd. in *Study* 84-85).

32. The Executive Council was, in Chittick's words, the most unrepresentative body of men as could be found in Nova Scotia: "It included, besides the Governor, as ex-offio members, the Bishop of the Church of England, the Chief Justice, the Provincial Treasurer, and the Collector of His Majesty's Customs...the Attorney-General, the Surveyor-General, and three associate judges of the Supreme Court. Nearly all of them were members of the Anglican Church.... All but one were from the city of Halifax, and belonged to the same exclusive social set. Five were said to be connected by blood or marriage with one family. Those who were not judges or lawyers were capitalists or merchants. Of the eight directors of the solitary bank that the province had...at one time five belonged to the Council!" (*Study* 74).

33. Chittick surveys the history of opposition between the two houses, which began as far back as 1775: "In the beginning it was merely a manifestation of rivalry between the Loyalists, rapidly gaining control in the lower House, and the pre-Loyalists, still outnumbering the newcomers in the upper. Then with the eventual predominance of the former group in both Houses it had, for a time, disappeared, and during the long period of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 had been held in check through the combined influence of common prosperity and a common enemy. On its reappearance with the financial depression and readjustment consequent upon the return of peace, however, it was no longer an indication of a temporary misunderstanding between rival groups of settlers....It was now a contest in dead earnest between the rights of the people, as represented by the House of Assembly, and those of the Crown, as embodied in His Majesty's Council" (*Study* 73).

34. In what Chittick describes as Haliburton's "outrageously bold attack on the most sacred personage of His Majesty's Council, the Lord Bishop himself" (*Study* 107), Haliburton declared: "I will never consent that this seminary of education for dissenters, shall be crushed to gratify the bigotry of a few individuals in this town, who have originated, fostered, and supported, all the opposition to Pictou Academy'" (*Novascotian*, Mar.6, 1828, qtd. in *Study* 109).

35. In many Sam Slick works, the bold Yankee became a mouthpiece for Haliburton's call to defeat the movement for responsible government. As Blake Crofton notes, Sam argues in the second series of *The Clockmaker* that the British connection "should not be dissolved *even at the desire of the colonies!* Looking far ahead of his contemporaries, Haliburton put forward strong pleas for an Imperial Federation....A particular form of Imperial Federation that has many advocates to-day [1896] is thus suggested by Sam Slick (*Wise Saws*, c. 25): 'It shouldn't be England and her colonies, but they should be integral parts of one great whole--all counties of Great Britain. There should be no taxes on colonial produce, and the colonies should not be allowed to tax British manufactures. All should pass free, as from one town to another in England the whole of it one vast home-market, from Hong Kong to Labrador'" (78-79).

36. Denunciations of this state of affairs appear frequently in the Sam Slick books. See, for instance, Sam's lengthy speech on the colonists as second-class citizens in the British Empire in volume four of *The Attaché* (208-212). Northrop Frye adds that Haliburton championed a revised system of patronage: "As for the kind of person who should be appointed--well, there are several hints, sometimes not very subtle hints, about one in particular who has deserved well of his country" ("Mask" 40).

37. This is not to say, of course, that Haliburton opposed political federation of the provinces; he resisted Canadian independence. As an ardent imperialist, he shared the Loyalist vision of a federation of the British North American provinces within the larger British Empire.

38. For more details on Haliburton's career in the legislature, see Chittick's "Haliburton as Member of Parliament."

39. The scope and approach of Haliburton's *General Description* is similar to his predecessor Jacob Bailey's "Description of Various Journeys Through Nova Scotia," which surveyed the geography, economy, and people of the province before Haliburton was born. Both works prefigure Joseph Howe's 'Western Rambles' and 'Eastern Rambles' (1828 and 1831).

40. Chittick reports: "it is generally conceded that it was his patriotic endeavours as the pioneer historian of his province that finally turned the scales in his favor when the matter of a successor to the office left vacant by his father's death was under consideration" (*Study* 145).

41. Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *The Clockmaker; or, The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick of Slickville* (1836; rpt. *The Clockmaker: Series One, Two, and Three*. Ed. George Parker. Ottawa: Carleton University Press-CEECT, 1995) No. 11, 57. All further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically by sketch number and page number within the text.

42. Later, Haliburton would reiterate his theme and purpose for creating Sam Slick in the "Valedictory Address" at the conclusion of *The Attaché*. He states that the Slick books were meant "to pourtray character--to give practical lessons in morals and politics--to expose hypocrisy--to uphold the connexion [sic] between the parent country and the colonies, to develope [sic] the resources of the province, and to enforce the just claims of my countrymen--to discountenance agitation--to strengthen the union between Church and State--and to foster and excite a love for our own form of government, and a preference for it over all others" (394).

43. McDougall acknowledges that "[s]ince the satire of the first series of *The Clockmaker* was veiled, and since Joseph Howe, though the leader of the reform movement, was still a good friend of the author, it was not wholly inappropriate that the sketches should appear in the columns of Howe's *Novascotian*. There arose, nevertheless, the pleasant paradox of this Yankee democrat, Mr. Slick, being fathered by a Tory die-hard and presented to the public in the pages of a liberal newspaper" (Introduction xiv).

44. George Parker clears up a common misunderstanding about the number of sketches which were published in the *Novascotian*: "What should have been No. 11, 'Cumberland Oysters produce melancholy forebodings,' was called 'No. 12.' Nos. 12 to 22 thus are actually the eleventh to twenty-first sketches" (CEECT xxv).

45. Laird adds that Carey, Lea & Blanchard "was among the largest and most prolific American publishing houses [with]...the reprint rights for the works of many of the most popular contemporary literary figures, including Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Robert Montgomery Bird" (74-5). For more information on the publication of *The Clockmaker*, see Bruce Nesbitt, Ruth Panofsky, and George Parker.

46. I have limited my study predominantly to the first series of *The Clockmaker*. I take my justification from numerous critics. Fortier notes that "later works in the Sam Slick series, written with an eye to the larger reading publics of the United States and of England, tended mainly to juxtapose America and England" (106). McDougall observes that Haliburton's satiric attack narrowed over the years "to a more severe concentration on political themes" (*Tradition* 25-6). Cogswell argues that "Haliburton gradually lost the perspective necessary to the humorist. In *The Clockmaker*, he could allow himself to be worsted by Sam Slick and laugh. In less than ten years, his consciousness that his political ideals were doomed prevented Haliburton from further self-laughter. The more strongly the forces of history turned against Toryism, the more extreme became his satire in its favour until the effect of his humour was vitiated by partisan distortion" (99). Stanley McMullin suggests that "With the passage of time, the vitality of Sam declined, and none of these books displays the overall vitality of *The Clockmaker*" (*Canadian* 63). Frye asserts that when Slick "begins to sound like a cranky Nova Scotian Tory who wants a bigger job from the British government, scolding everybody else for wanting the same thing, he isn't Sam Slick any more. Then he makes us feel that we're listening, not to Sam Slick or even to the real Judge Haliburton, but only to Haliburton's ego, and nobody's ego is worth listening to" ("Mask" 44). And Thomas Vincent argues that the first series "was clearly aimed at a Nova Scotian readership, and not significantly affected by the author's hopes of reaching a

broader audience. Because of that, it reflects the state of satiric perception and reflection in Haliburton's immediate cultural and intellectual milieu" ("Stratagems" 54). Thus, unless otherwise stated, references to "*The Clockmaker*" are to the first series only.

47. Bill Percy provides a summary of Haliburton's principal focus in each step of the series: "In the first series, Haliburton had poked fun at the Bluenoses and their way of life, seeking reform through ridicule; not, it seems, without effect. Bluenose didn't like it, but he laughed, a little sheepishly, with the rest. By the second series, Haliburton was becoming alarmed by the 'contagion of democracy,' and sought to stem the advance of reform by satirizing American republicanism. By the third series his efforts had overtones of desperation. His chief target became the British, who, he felt, were letting the colonies slip through their fingers from sheer indifference" (45).

48. In his *Dictionary of Americanisms: A Glossary of Words and Phrases Usually Regarded as Peculiar to the United States*, John Russell Bartlett records over one hundred examples of colloquial words or expressions attributed, or illustrated with reference, to Haliburton's Sam Slick. Waldron notes that Haliburton "has been credited with creating such familiar phrases as 'upper crust,' 'as quick as a wink,' 'six of one and half a dozen of the other,' 'stick-in-the-mud,' 'as large as life and twice as natural,' and scores of others" (171).

49. In fact, the series is introduced by Slick's letter to Howe detailing his outrage at this breach of confidentiality: "It was a nasty dirty mean action, and I don't thank you nor the Squire a bit for it. It will be more nor a thousand dollars out of my pocket. There's an eend to the Clock trade now, and a pretty kettle of fish I've made on it, hav'nt I? I shall never hear the last on it, and what am I to say when I go back to the States? I'll take my oath I never said one half the stuff he has set down there" (5).

50. See Darlene Kelly's "Thomas Haliburton and Travel Books About America" for a complete discussion of their influence on his writing.

51. From 1830 to 1833, Maine journalist, Seba Smith, published a series of letters on politics in the *Portland Courier*. New York writer, Charles Augustus Davis imitated these letters in a series published in the *Daily Advertiser* from 1823 to 1824 and re-published in book form in 1835, under the title of "Letters of J. Downing, Major, Downingville Militia, Second Brigade. John Logan suggests that "it is probable that Haliburton read Smith or Davis or both, since their satiric humour (in their political letters) had great vogue in the United States and the Maritime Provinces" (*Haliburton* 113). Richard Davies points out that there is documentation that Haliburton read at least one of them; in a letter to Howe, Haliburton asked "to borrow Jack Downing? [sic] for a few days" (*Letters* 78).

52. American humorist Artemus Ward is said to have called Haliburton "The Father of American Humour" (McDougall 3). In general, it can be argued that Haliburton's humour anticipated the form or manner of many subsequent American humorists, especially Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, B.P. Shillaber, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frances Miriam Whitcher, Petroleum V. Naseby, G.W. Peck, E.W. Wescott, and, most notably, Mark Twain.



53. Walter Avis notes that Haliburton's anthology, *American Humour: Traits of American Humour, by Native Authors* (3 vols, London, 1852), testifies to the fact that he "was an assiduous reader of dialect literature and comic almanacs. This material, rich in extravagant language and homely metaphor, unquestionably contributed much to the diction of Sam Slick" (xxi). Haliburton later edited another collection of America stories: *Americans at Home; or, Byeways, Backwoods and Prairies* (3 vols, London, 1855).

54. Seth was not the only real clock peddler named as Slick's original. In his introduction to *The Clockmaker* (McClelland and Stewart—NCL, 1958), McDougall tells of discovering a second-hand copy of the text with a newspaper clipping pasted inside which read: "Jackson Young, known throughout New England as the original of 'Sam Slick, the Yankee Clockmaker,' written by Judge Thomas Chandler Haliburton, is dead here [Bangor, Maine], aged 87 years" (ix).

55. See Scott's "Haliburton as a Humorist and Descriptive Writer" (45), and Baker's *A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation* (82).

56. See also Watters' introduction to *The Sam Slick Anthology* (viii).

57. Fortier suggests that whatever appeal Haliburton's treatment of subjects such as imperial status, patronage for colonists, and better representation in international negotiations has "derives from his representation of them in the vivid terms of experience....Merged in this way with the 'sayings and doings' of Sam Slick, abstract political problems become accessible to the common reader in the form of entertainment. But the concrete instance, whether served up in the form of aphorism, homely pronouncement, or secular exemplum, is used as much to educate as to divert" (96-97). McDougall adds that Haliburton himself admits that his humour is something of a sugar-coated pill. In a speech delivered soon after his first successes with *The Clockmaker* he claims to have found it expedient "'to intermingle humour with the several topics...as to render subjects attractive that in themselves are generally considered as too deep and dry for general reading'" (qtd. in *Tradition* 14).

58. British poet, Walter Savage Landor, composed a tribute "To Judge Haliburton" which comments specifically on the wisdom inherent in Slick's common speech:

"Once I would bid the man go hang  
From whom there came a word of slang;  
Now pray I, though slang rains thick  
Across the Atlantic from *Sam Slick*,  
Never may fall the slightest hurt on  
The witty head of Haliburton,  
Wherein methinks more wisdom lies  
Than in the wisest of our wise"

(qtd. in Chittick, "Gen-u-ine" 61).

59. Waldron goes so far as to remark that "[f]or today's readers, Sam's language is probably a more important reason for reading him than are his observations on the times" (*DLB* 171). For a more detailed discussion of Sam Slick's speech, see Walter Avis, Richard Bailey, and Elna

Bengtesson, as well as Chittick's "Haliburton's 'Wise Saws' and Homely Imagery," and Harding's "Folk Language in Haliburton's Humour."

60. Initially, the Squire is presented as an Englishman, but in the third series of *The Clockmaker*, he refers to himself as a "native and resident" of the colony. Watters comments on the change: "Apparently Haliburton had only gradually become aware of the disadvantage he had imposed on himself by casting both of his main characters in the role of outsiders who were supposedly observing Nova Scotian conditions without personal involvement. But eventually Haliburton recognized that it would be useful, as well as appropriate, to include at least one character who, while being a Bluenose, was *not* the ignorant, lazy, uncouth, stupid fellow Sam delighted to delude and ridicule. Furthermore, the Squire came to embody the positive qualities which Nova Scotians were being exhorted to acquire, while at the same time he served as a foil to the qualities in Sam which Haliburton did not want his countrymen to absorb from their American neighbours" (*Anthology* xiii-xiv). So, while he is finally identified in *The Attaché* (1843) as "Thomas Poker, Esquire, a native of Nova Scotia, and a retired member of the Provincial bar," he will remain, for the purposes of this discussion, an Englishman known simply as "the Squire."

61. John Matthews elaborates on the connection between the *Clockmaker* series and Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*: "Farrago is a frontiersman, from western Pennsylvania, who has acquired an Irish servant, Teague. These two go visiting the East, and their adventures occasion the satirical description of a number of prominent New England institutions....Teague marks a halfway point between Sancho Panza and Sam Slick. He is neither as naive as Cervantes' character, nor as shrewd as Haliburton's. Like Sam, Teague has the gift of swift repartee and comic exaggeration, together with the Irish ability to reveal obvious but hitherto disguised absurdity by seemingly innocent description. As Sam Slick feels he is more...than a match for the Nova Scotians, so Teague is convinced of Yankee simplicity" (38).

62. In "Another Source for Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*," D.M.R. Bentley argues that "some of the raw materials that Haliburton brilliantly shaped to his own satiric purpose" (76) are to be found in a John Howison's *Sketches of Upper Canada* (1821). There are striking similarities not only in language, tone and character, but also in incident: the encounter between the Squire and Sam Slick described in "The Trotting Horse" closely echoes an incident described in Howison's *Sketches*.

63. Parker states that, in addition to being the first Canadian fiction writer to employ regional dialects and to create colloquial and racy dialogue, Haliburton was "the first Canadian writer to use roads, railways, and steamships as literary devices" ("Haliburton" 511).

64. In "No Name is My Name," Kroetsch explains that the Squire's "resistance to a speakable name" is an early example of a peculiarly Canadian trait: "The man who exploits social hierarchy by being falsely named into it wants also to be free of it. He wants to have a system that gives him identity and stature, but he wants to be free of that system. This man is surely ready to enter into the Canadian Confederation" (42). The unnamed narrator reappears throughout Canadian literature: Kroetsch points, for instance, to those in Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* (1941), A.M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* (1951), Hubert Aquin's *Prochaine Episode* (1965), and

Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* (1977).

65. McMullin suggests that throughout *The Clockmaker* series, the Squire, and later the Reverend Mr. Hopewell, "exhibit a lack of social pretension while displaying the natural superiority of their education and breeding. In fact, they present a model for harmonious class interaction. . . . As representatives of the ideal British class system, they are consistent in their roles. It is significant, then, that Sam, the character from the 'classless' American society, should be the foil for much of the irony in *The Clockmaker*" (*Canadian* 59).

66. Archibald MacMechan speculates as to the origin of the term "bluenose": "'Somewhere near the end of the eighteenth century, it was used to designate our potatoes and our people. It conveys a sneer at the cold pinched faces of our provincials, residing in a land of everlasting ice and snow'" (qtd. in Keefer 32).

67. These principal categories of satiric observation are also identified in a British review of the first series of *The Clockmaker*: "The character and appearance of the country on various occasions enables the active-minded, speculative Yankee, to suggest plans for railroads, (seemingly a mooted question in the colony), better modes of cultivating the surface and the propriety of turning to account the mineral resources of the province; as well as for the censuring with unsparing ridicule the alleged sloth, self-conceit, want of enterprise, and grumbling dispositions of the Nova Scotians'" (*Spectator*, 1 April 1837 p. 306, qtd. in R. Davies, *Haliburton* 12).

68. Some critics remark that Slick often simply refers to nameless passersby to make his point. However, it is important to note that while Slick does not reside in the same towns as the subjects of his satirical critiques, he is nonetheless very familiar with them. The Squire points out that "The Clock Maker was an observing man, and equally communicative. Nothing escaped his notice—he knew every body's genealogy, history and means, and like a driver of an English Stage Coach, was not unwilling to impart what he knew" (31).

69. Haliburton likely took his cue from Joseph Howe who, in his editorials in the *Novascotian*, had been urging "the building of a government railway from Windsor to Halifax, designed to promote both agriculture and fishing by bringing the Bay of Fundy districts within easy reach of the Halifax markets" (Chittick, *Study* 177).

70. The Jones' argue that this satiric use of a peddler-figure to point out the differences between the duper and the duped is centuries old: "Sam's pride in his own expertise, coupled with a good-natured cynicism about the gullibility of his customers, leads us all the way back to the first supersalesman in English literature, the Pardoner of *The Canterbury Tales*, cut from the same bolt" (28-29).

71. Haliburton could not have anticipated the far-flung influence this satiric figure would have. R.G. Haliburton comments that long after Slick first appeared in print, "it was by many persons referred to as a store-house of practical wisdom and common sense, and a *vade mecum* as to the affairs of every-day life. Forty years ago [1847] an able but very eccentric Danish Governor at

St. Thomas, in the West Indies, was noted far and wide for his excessive admiration for Sam Slick's works. Whenever a very knotty point arose before him and his Council, which consisted of three persons, he used to say 'We must adjourn till to-morrow. I should like to look into this point. I must see what Sam Slick has to say about it'" (32).

72. Haliburton's most extensive non-fiction remarks about America are included in *Rule and Misrule of the English in America* (1851): "This work traces the origins of American democracy from its beginnings in Massachusetts, and is Haliburton's most extended criticism of the ideals and institutions of the United States, as well as an attack on two centuries of British 'misrule' on the American continent" (Parker, "Haliburton" 511).

73. Slick's bragging is paraphrased in Alexander Glendinning's poem "Damn Yankees, 1830"—a satirical attack on boastful Americans published in his *Rhymes* (1871):

"These are the freeman--these the fellows  
 Who boast that they can buy and sell us!  
 They whip John Bull! and John, they tell us,  
 Whips every nation;  
 But they're as windy as the bellows,  
 They lee like station"

(qtd. in Smith and Scott 17-18).

74. Haliburton foretells the Civil War by having Sam list various conflicts brewing in America—Black and White, Protestant and Catholic, Abolitionist and Planter, Nullification and Tariff, General and State Government—and then asking: "you have heerd tell of cotton rags dipt in turpentine, havnt you, how they produce combustion? Well, I guess we have the elements of spontaneous combustion among us, in abundance—when it does break out, if you dont see an eruption of human gore, worse than Etna lava, then I'm mistaken. There'll be the very devil to pay, that's a fact....it fairly makes me sick to think on it" (No. 11, 56).

**CONFEDERATION PERIOD**

In his introduction to *The Clockmaker*, Robert McDougall argues that the particular brand of satire that Thomas Chandler Haliburton mastered in these sketches found no successor in Canada because "the springs which feed such writing as Haliburton's were pretty much dried up at their source" (xvi). He points not only to the general rise of Victorian seriousness in English literature, but also to specific developments in the domestic political culture, including the winning of responsible government and the westward shift of settlement and development. Changes such as these, he notes, "took the sharp taste out of the nation's drink" (xiv) and deprived new writers of the benefits Haliburton had enjoyed from being rooted in a small, distinctive cultural environment. In McDougall's estimation, "nearly a hundred years were to pass before Canadians took freely to laughter and mockery again. Leacock was a long way off" (xvi). Later, he qualifies this remark by arguing that while Leacock was a first-rate humorist who shared Haliburton's powers of comic invention, he was only a satirist in a limited sense since, "unlike Haliburton, he had no position either right or left of centre such as might form the base for systematic and hearty ridicule" (*Tradition* 20). He resolves that the bold satire which Haliburton had engendered might, at best, be said to reappear in the poetry of the depression which once again occasioned a wide separation of the country's political and social values: "In sum, then, we must conclude that Haliburton is not conspicuously related to the main stream of our literary traditions" (*Tradition* 20).

Other critical assessments support the contention that Haliburton's death represented the end of the line in the short-lived Canadian tradition of literary satire. In an article entitled "Why Haliburton Has No Successor," John Logan anticipates McDougall's assumptions about the deleterious effect on the native satiric tradition of British North America's changing

the deleterious effect on the native satiric tradition of British North America's changing social, political and economic circumstances: "The conditions which produced the genius of Haliburton never having existed in Ontario and Quebec, and having even in his own time ceased to exist in Nova Scotia, a successor to his genius in Canada was inevitably almost impossible" (367). As for Leacock, Logan argues that he writes in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin:

the truth is that Franklin was the first American humorist who wrote exaggerated nonsense, expressed with an air of serious veracity, who wrote, that is, satiric burlesque, which is characteristic American humour, and that he left successors in both the United States (notably Mark Twain) and in Canada (notably Stephen Leacock); whereas Haliburton, writing a quite different species of humour, with a different social aim, is a humorist and satirist, *sui generis*--and has left no successor. ("Haliburton" 364)

Taking a different tack in his *Tradition in Exile*, John Matthews blames Canadian readers for failing to differentiate between Haliburton's careful synthesis of British, European and American satiric traditions and the vulgar American humour which merely formed one part of that synthesis. He asserts that, as a result, Canadian writers "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). He and Logan both lament the fact that it was left to Mark Twain to annex Haliburton's unique creations to the tradition of American literature.

While such remarks are common, they by no means indicate a critical consensus on

the issue. Taking up the argument of whether or not Twain borrowed directly from Haliburton, Darlene Fortier challenges the notion that Haliburton's work does not have solid ties to later satirical humour in Canada. She argues, in fact, that he is firmly entrenched in a long tradition of transcontinental English literature. To her mind, Haliburton's humour, like Twain's, "forms a distinctive strand in a sub-genre of international fiction....Several other writers belong here too, including James de Mille and Sara Jeannette Duncan" (116), the two writers whose major Canadian novels provide the primary material of the present chapter. Bruce Nesbitt, responding specifically to Matthews' assertions, also argues that Haliburton's work is firmly connected to a tradition which extends well into the twentieth century. Taking a page from Frye's "Introduction" to McCulloch's *Stepsure Letters*, he cites a long line of Canadian literary works which counsel prudence and which share a particular brand of humour based on a single vision of society—regardless of the differences in those visions or the relative success or failure of their heroes' quests (Introduction 13). Nesbitt argues that this tradition begins with McCulloch, is notable in James De Mille and Stephen Leacock, and is so frequent in twentieth-century fiction that "dubious Canadians might well suspect that historians have rediscovered Menippean satire as the most suitable way of treating the current political and social development of the country" (Introduction 14).

Other critics sanction the notion that satiric works by Haliburton, De Mille, Duncan and Leacock can fruitfully be discussed in relation to one another. For instance, John Moss, seeking to explode the critical myth that early Canadian writing is disengaged, dated, and irrelevant, counters that many early Canadian writers are manifestly political—that they are concerned with the evaluation, definition, or reform of society. He states that



De Mille and Leacock both have satiric social visions that cast their works in speculative modes, leading one into high Victorian adventure, both intellectual and imaginative, and the other into disconcerting nostalgia for what might have never been. The social realism of Duncan's novel shows her the most astute political writer we have yet produced. Haliburton's politics and polemics are inseparable....Each of these writers is thoroughly responsive to the conditions of his or her own time. It is that which allows them to transcend so well, to bring their realities with them, into present relevance. Possibly without exception, they are overtly political writers--appropriate, and perhaps inevitable, in a country where community concerns generally take precedence over the individual. (*Beginnings* 11)

James De Mille and Sara Jeannette Duncan can be said, then, to form a link between those two most prolific and celebrated writers in the tradition of Canadian satiric prose fiction: Haliburton and Leacock.

This is not to dismiss the critical views of McDougall, Logan, and Matthews. In fact, their various observations about the transformation of the colonies over the course of the nineteenth century help to explain the altered spirit of satire which infuses the works of such writers as De Mille and Duncan. As Reginald Watters remarks: "there is no question that the slashing satire of dogmatic extremism as practised by Haliburton has been displaced in Canada by a more restrained form of satire tempered with irony and humour" (*The Old Judge* xi). Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) provides an early example of such restrained irony and humour. Her collection of character sketches, personal impressions,

anecdotes, poems, and short stories detailing the troubles of an ill-suited immigrant to Upper Canada is unified, in part, by Moodie's ironic voice. This voice provides gentle (and sometimes not so gentle) satirical commentary on her neighbours' behaviour even as it reveals that her distress is exacerbated by her own uncompromising stance as "a British army of occupation in herself, a one-woman garrison" (Frye, "Conclusion" 351). Although, as writers, there may be little to connect Moodie with McCulloch and Haliburton, her literary position as a satirist satirized places her own fictionalized persona in the company of Stepsure and Slick. Regardless of this connection, Moodie's satiric stance is clearly not informed by their "dogmatic extremism." The political, social, and economic processes which contributed to the displacement of blunt satire by indirect irony were already well underway during Haliburton's lifetime. It should prove worthwhile, then, to take the time briefly to outline these complex cultural processes that produced the two greatest works of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian satire and humour, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888) and *The Imperialist* (1904).

### **Political Background:**

Peter Waite begins his account of Confederation in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* with the statement: "The Confederation movement followed Newton's first law of motion: all bodies continue in a state of rest or of uniform motion unless compelled by some force to change their state" ("Confederation" 488). Prior to the nation-creating act of Confederation, British North America consisted of six distinct colonies with self-conscious identities: the Atlantic provinces of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, and

the united provinces of Canada--the future Ontario and Quebec. They were similar not only in their basic institutions, allegiance, and defence, but in the dominant conservatism which had grown out of their confrontation with revolutionary America and which continued to underpin their political cultures.<sup>1</sup> While voices of democratic populism were raised to various extents throughout the colonies, the anti-democratic and elitist governments were solidly backed by Loyalists and by the continual influx of immigrants from the United Kingdom. Despite these similarities, the political development of the provinces was markedly different. Their physical separation and the racial and religious differences of their inhabitants contributed to disparate political processes, rates of change, and styles of political leadership. S.F. Wise groups the pre-Confederation progress of these provinces into three patterns: Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island were the least populous, had the least advanced political organization, and thus had the most unhappy political records. Their political growth was punctuated by civil unrest due to social and religious tensions coupled with economic stress.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the Canadas were troubled by popular disturbances on a grander scale: recurrent crises ended in armed rebellion by sections of both provincial populations in 1837. Furthermore, the relationship between political groupings in this region was fiercely antagonistic. Conversely, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick enjoyed a moderate political culture which saw no serious challenges to authority and hence the course of political change in these provinces was relatively smooth (186-187).

Regardless of their different political developments, all of the provinces underwent similar constitutional changes in the middle decades of the century: "In each, there was a shift from gubernatorial rule to party rule, a shift from metropolitan to local control, a

change from oligarchic to more democratic politics" (Stewart 6). Among the most significant formative events in the histories of these colonies was the achievement of responsible government in the 1840s and 50s. Responsible government was a feat of compromise between parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy, transferring powers to the colonies without severing imperial ties; the Colonial Office still appointed the provincial governor, but he was now required to choose cabinet ministers who were members of the elected legislature. The Cabinet became accountable to, and could be removed by, the majority of the legislature.<sup>3</sup> The winning of self-government had a moderating effect on the overall political climate of the colonies; the greater range of participation in public policy-making quieted the boisterous calls for reform that had been resounding throughout British North America for decades. More specifically, the new political order "persuaded most reformers that it was no longer necessary to look to the south for inspiration, particularly since the first by-product of responsible government was their own elevation to power" (Wise 119-120). This compromise led to the gradual decline of the politics of ideology, softening the contrast between radical reformers who championed the new Republic and High Tories who held fast to the old Monarchy. Moderate liberals and moderate conservatives drew closer together and "though they might remain enemies upon the hustings, something akin to a common political culture was taking shape" (Wise 115).

"'A Canadian,' Arthur Phelps has said, 'is one who is increasingly aware of being American in the continental sense without being American in the national sense'" (qtd. in Klinck, "Activity in the Canadas" 139). This awareness is grounded in the transformation of the political culture in British North America which gave rise to a common attitude towards

the United States. For most of the nineteenth century, any sense of a shared identity among the colonies was grounded in their consciousness of not being American. This feeling was most pervasively manifested in a fear which was fed by real and anticipated invasive actions on behalf of the Americans, including the post-rebellion border raids, the War of 1812, the "fifty-four forty or fight" presidential campaign of 1844, and the Fenian Brotherhood raids of the 1860s and '70s (McKillop et al., Introduction to Wise xii-xiii). However, beyond the anxiety engendered by these actions, the colonists' attitudes towards America were divided along ideological lines. The conservatives regarded the United States with disdainful moral superiority that focused on its degradation as a slave republic; they viewed the country's degeneration into civil war "as the inevitable outcome of the weaknesses of government in the United States and as a satisfactory vindication of British American forms and ways" (Wise 138). Against the dominant conservatives, voices of liberal reform were raised which hailed American political systems as inspiring models. Of course, the ideological division is not absolute: Haliburton's ambivalent perspective on the vices and virtues of the American republic, as expressed in his *Clockmaker* series, exemplifies the conflation between the moral sentiment of High Tory allegiance and the rational principles which inform the liberal (and radical) push for reform. Perhaps unwittingly, Haliburton signalled a shift in political consciousness which saw a gradual move towards the centre.

The Canadas' shift to the political centre was the most dramatic of the colonies. While all of the provinces witnessed struggles between the reformers and the ruling elite, only here did such struggles briefly threaten civil war. As historian George Stewart notes, these

extraordinary divisive political battles lasted from the late 1820's to the late

by burning of the Parliament Buildings in Montreal in 1849. Such persistent political violence had no parallel anywhere else in the post-1783 British Empire. Even the other British North American colonies that received responsible government in the 1840's, like Nova Scotia, were struck by the turmoil and violence of the Canadian political world. (5)

To a large extent, the Confederation movement grew out of the dynamics of the political culture of Upper Canada. Throughout its history Upper Canada's fears of American incursion were intensified by an insecurity grounded in their geographic isolation from the English-speaking Atlantic colonies, by the influx of non-Loyalist Americans into their province in the early 1800s, and most obviously by their severe ordeal in the War of 1812. The War engendered an intense provincial patriotism and empowered the conservative elite: for half a century following the conflict, Upper Canada was ruled by the so-called Family Compact, a group of elite local notables held together by patronage. Like the corresponding Chateau Clique in Lower Canada, the Family Compact aimed to create a hierarchical social, religious and political order in the province and was hostile towards reform in any guise (Wise 214-215). Desmond Morton argues that "by insisting on war, the American warhawks had helped to cancel a process that might have led to peaceful absorption of the colony by the United States. Upper Canada would now be British" (35). In fact, an important part of the Family Compact's mission was

a very conscious, sustained effort to remove the American influence from every sphere of life including politics, religion, and education. Laws attempted, though with little success, to keep American immigrants from

owning land, voting, and exercising other privileges for seven years. Perhaps more important, British immigrants were sought to offset the weight of American numbers in Upper Canada. (Bell and Tepperman 81)

As a result, this ruling elite was supported by a significant proportion of the population which included not only the Loyalists but also the nearly half million British immigrants who flowed into Upper Canada between 1815 and 1837.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding the dominance of this conservative majority, the government faced a crisis of legitimacy in the mid-1830s. Farmer and labour radicals led by William Lyon Mackenzie and representing the forces of republicanism fronted a determined opposition. Emboldened by the new Whig administrations that came to power in England after 1830 and which appeared to endorse some of their grievances, they staged a series of increasingly violent clashes that culminated in the Rebellion of 1837. This, and the corresponding uprising in Lower Canada, failed because of lack of effective military leadership and insufficient popular support. Indeed, the "real drama of the Rebellion," Wise suggests, "was found in the overwhelming turnout of the militia, not the few hundreds of radicals gathered at Montgomery's Tavern" (216). In response to these insurrections, Britain sent Lord Durham to investigate. His report on the political crisis resulted in the Act of Union (1840) which joined Upper and Lower Canada (now Canada West and East) into a single assembly, insisted that the appointed executive council depend on the elected assembly for support, and created municipal governments to handle localized controversies.<sup>5</sup> Over time, this solution--intended to assimilate the French Canadians--actually focused attention on the line it was supposed to obliterate and embittered the feelings it expected to soothe. However, as W.L. Morton notes,

the Union, "with all its faults, was the school in which the Canadian Fathers of Confederation learned the principles on which confederation was to rest" (*Critical* 20). Political leaders were forced to recognize their differences and learn to compromise to achieve their aims.

The quashing of the rebellion and the subsequent creation of a provincial union did not abolish the radical left in Canada West, but it did firmly relegate it--and its notions of democracy as a political creed--to a minority element in the dominant political culture. Interestingly, this turn of events also decimated the radical, High Tory right. As a result, much of the violence and unreasonable invective vanished from political proceedings and two moderate parties of the centre emerged, sharing a common political culture. Despite surface antagonisms, the parties held some fundamental assumptions. By mid-century, Conservative John A. Macdonald and Liberal George Brown, though mortal enemies, formed the "Great Coalition"; significantly, they both looked to define themselves against the United States by championing notions of "peace, order and good government" over the liberty of the individual, by exhibiting devotion to the British empire and a marked preference for its political institutions, and by regarding American-style democracy with trepidation and hostility. These sentiments were increasingly echoed in the other colonies. Throughout British North America a moderate political climate was forming, characterized by a two-party system<sup>6</sup> and coupled with a rough consensus in attitudes towards the United States. Wise argues that "it is not too much to say that the large measure of agreement among provincial leaders on the nature of and dangers from political 'Americanism' constituted one of the unifying intellectual forces in the Confederation movement" (145).



The essential conservatism of the provinces and the mounting concerns regarding their political future were intensified by a number of developments during the mid-century. The colonies enjoyed a decade of prosperity, due in part to Britain's guarantee of huge loans to complete public works on the St. Lawrence. In 1841, twelve thousand tons of shipping cleared the port of Quebec; in 1846, the total reached forty thousand tons (D. Morton 44). However, while the colonies were booming, the mother land was facing tough economic times. These circumstances greatly affected Britain's colonial policy between 1846 and 1849. Arguing that the colonies' prosperity proved that they no longer required trade protection, and insisting that the Irish famines were aggravated by tariff barriers to cheap food, Britain decided to revolutionize its commercial practices by shifting to free trade in its dealings with British North America. As a result, wheat exports in 1848 dropped from 3.9 million to 2.2 million bushels. Desmond Morton comments on the perceived calamity: "As the Irish famine of the 1840s dumped shiploads of penniless, starving people in Canadian ports, the triumph of free trade in Britain wiped out Canada's only real export market" (45).

Short-term but intense economic misery sparked an annexation movement in the Canadas in 1849. This movement was largely the reflex action of the Montreal business community who were scrambling to maintain political control over economic policy now that the imperial trading system was jeopardized and responsible government had empowered the reactionary French majority in Canada East (Wise 116).<sup>7</sup> Colonial opinion hardened rapidly against the annexation scheme and made the colonists increasingly aware of the need to consider their political future. For many British Americans in all the provinces, "the precipitation of the American question into politics at a time of crisis in their relationship

with Great Britain forced a new examination of themselves and their institutions and awakened the first glimmerings of the idea of a new British North American people" (Wise 132). Meanwhile, the California Gold Rush fuelled an American economic boom that buoyed the northern colonies as well. Merchants soon realized that not only had the British markets not dried up, but the United States itself was a potentially huge export market. In 1854, British Governor General Sir Edmund Head went to Washington and returned with a ten-year Reciprocity Agreement which essentially erased the border for wheat, lumber, fish and other natural products. Canada's economy prospered and the annexationists were quieted for some time.

As the decade wore on, moreover, it became clear that the deepening crisis in the United States would certainly plunge that country into civil war; any remaining champions for adopting American political institutions or for joining the United States outright were clearly disenchanted into silence.<sup>8</sup> And the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 heightened the colonies' fear that they represented easy conquests in the face of U.S. "Manifest Destiny."<sup>9</sup> Although the Americans were preoccupied with their own affairs for the moment, these fears were not unfounded; after all, "war was an appetite that grew with the feeding. Even after four years of fighting and half a million dead, the United States' military strength seemed to keep on growing. If Washington wanted a pretext to turn northward, one would not be hard to find" (D.Morton 71). The War also confirmed Britain's fear that an Anglo-American conflict was possible if not probable. The British government's policy of neutrality aroused fierce resentment throughout the Northern States. Convinced that the best way of preventing an attack on the British colonies was to make it clear that Canada

would be defended by reinforcements, Britain rushed three battalions with supporting arms to Quebec (W.L.Morton, *Critical* 97).

Perhaps the most significant incident of the conflict, from the British perspective, occurred in the waters off Havana, Cuba, in November, 1861. U.S. naval officers aboard the *San Jacinto* seized two Confederate commissioners, travelling aboard the British Royal Mail Steamship *Trent*, as contraband of war. The British government, angered at the violation of neutrality, demanded the release of the Confederates. More than a month later, the American government finally condemned the act and complied with the order. In the interval, Britain operated under the assumption that the war would spread into its territory and immediately committed a sizable contingent of its army to the defence of British North America. The colonies' response to the Trent Affair was also decisive as they rallied to their own defence. W.L. Morton remarks that this common display of sentiment was one of the formative experiences of the pre-Confederation years: "for one tense month all British Americans, whatever their origins, had to choose whether they would accept or resist American conquest. The decision to resist was a decision for a separate destiny and a distinct nationhood" (*Critical* 102).

And so, in what Desmond Morton terms "an almost continent-wide coincidence," all British North Americans were taking serious stock of their future in the 1860s (71). Despite their diversity, the colonies shared an increasingly common political culture as well as a number of serious problems. Such conditions provided the foundation for a Canadian national feeling which was fortified by the construction of a railway that created a physical link between the provinces, proving it was possible to break the barriers of distance and climate.

The stage was set for earnest discussion of Canadian Confederation.<sup>10</sup> The driving force came from Canada West, which was increasingly frustrated in its union with Canada East. The relative equality of power between them despite the fact that the former's share of the population had become a large and ever-increasing majority, led to a political deadlock and a growing reform movement which called for representation by population. Moreover, expansive settlement in Canada West produced an impending shortage of arable land. In a desire to break the political deadlock, acquire more land, and develop its economic interests, Canada West eyed the huge expanse of terrain lying between it and the Pacific ocean and began to conceive of its appropriation:

Add to this the American menace in the Northwest, the reconsideration by the imperial government of the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company, the relinquishment by that company of the area beyond the Rockies, and the discovery in British Columbia of gold, and one has some of the more important factors operating in Canada to bring about a distinct westward outlook. The coming of the railway area was about to provide the means to an end. (W.M. Whitelaw 36).

Convinced that the abundant natural resources of all the colonies could support a full-scale domestic economy, Canada West regarded the Maritime provinces with renewed interest. Their position on the Atlantic ocean and the continued development of the Intercolonial railway promised the inland colonies much-needed access to ice-free ports without the perilous necessity of travelling through American territory, thus assuring an outlet for Canadian goods in time of peace and a route for British troops in time of war (W.M.

Whitelaw 16). It did not take long to persuade the government of Canada East to consider the notion of forming a central link in a union which would unite the untapped potential of the west and the relative sophistication of the east. When the Canadas learned that the Atlantic provinces planned to discuss a Maritime union at Charlottetown on September 1, 1864, they asked to send a deputation. As a result, the Conference turned into an informal colloquium on the larger federal proposal. In fact, the eastern colonies agreed to postpone discussion of a Maritime union until a British North American union had been officially considered at the Quebec Conference to be held the following month.

Although, as Ged Martin remarks, Confederation "was at best a long-term development strategy ingeniously passed off as an emergency response to current crisis" (*History* 26), the Maritimes were willing, if not eager, to engage in the discussion. Their reasons were primarily economic. The United States, aggravated by the provinces' obvious sympathy for the Southern Confederacy during the Civil War, had recently given twelve months' notice that Reciprocity, and its accompanying fishing agreements, would end. The Maritimes, which were heavily dependent upon exports of timber and fish, looked to the other colonies as a substitute market (albeit a poor one). W.M. Whitelaw adds that, whatever their misgivings about ulterior motives on behalf of the inland colonies, the Maritimes were envious of Canada's spectacular economic development: "With some disregard of the complexity of the factors involved, they commonly regarded the Canadian development as the result of the union of 1841" (3). A Canadian union held the promise of completed railways, expanded and more highly centralized schools systems, improved social services, and governments with enhanced access to credit.

Canada West proposed a unitary system of government under which all power would be in the hands of a new national parliament. They argued that only a strong central government and a fully integrated national economy could assume the burden of defence,<sup>11</sup> achieve expansion into the west, and secure the investment capital abroad for the completion of crucial railways. They were, of course, opposed by Canada East and the Maritimes who resisted the notion of having their distinct administrations and their regional identities subsumed by a unitary state that would clearly be dominated by Canada West. The leaders soon hit on federalism as a pragmatic compromise which would create a strong central government to serve common interests and preserve provincial governments to oversee local affairs.<sup>12</sup> Although federalism was foreign to the British constitutional model and outside the experience of these colonial legislators, they were able to balance the contradictory tendencies of the provinces who desired both national unity and provincial autonomy. Thus, without completely dismantling their current administrations, the colonies agreed to give the most important legislative powers and sources of public revenue to the federal government (Brooks 123-124).<sup>13</sup>

In three short weeks, the leaders had an agreement. The next stage—ratification by the provincial assemblies—took several years: the motion carried relatively quickly in Canada East<sup>14</sup> and West, was hard-won in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and was defeated in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland (who later entered Confederation in 1873 and 1949 respectively). The British Parliament passed the British North America Act of 1867 (now called the Constitution Act), creating a new country out of the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the United Canadas, and transferring to its federal and provincial legislatures

the exclusive right to make laws for Canada and its provinces.<sup>15</sup> Full self-government was almost achieved,<sup>16</sup> though the split from the mother country was far from complete. W.L. Morton notes that it may seem somewhat bizarre that in this giant step towards independent nationhood, these fathers of Confederation insisted on the continued personal allegiance to the Crown; however, he adds, the imperial connection was significant to Canada because it sustained the whole constitutional heritage of the colonies. Without the connection, the allegiance to the Crown would have ended and the monarchical principle would have been lost. With it would have gone the compromise of responsible government and all the gains made since 1837. The ending of the connection would have thrown the control of events into the hands of the extremists...none of whom valued responsible government, and all of whom would have plumped for republican institutions and annexation. (*Contexts* 177)

As this comment makes clear, Confederation was by no means celebrated throughout the new Dominion. Negotiated by a handful of political elites over several years, it was hardly a "popular" movement.

Confederation's opponents had much to be worried about. Carl Berger summarizes the principal concerns: "The new Dominion was weak and thinly populated, internally divided by sectional, racial, and cultural conflicts; it was confronted by an enormously powerful and hostile neighbour; and at the very moment that British support was most necessary, Canadians could no longer assume that it would be automatically given" (61). Even among Confederation's supporters, national feeling lagged; as a result, Canada was slow to develop a notable political community.<sup>17</sup> Happily, good economic times made the deal easy to

promote and the federal government pushed ahead with its programme of nation-building. The remarkable growth and prosperity that the whole region had been enjoying for more than a decade continued on into the 1870s. The loss of Reciprocity with the United States did not suffer the young country unduly and Ottawa was able to spread the wealth generated through taxation—assuming debts, increasing transfer payments, and continuing to build railroads. Gradually, the Dominion grew to include Manitoba (1870), British Columbia (1871), and Prince Edward Island (1873). In ten short years, the Dominion had reached most of the goals of Confederation.

However, by the late 1870s Canada felt the pressures of an economic slump and by the mid-1880s suffered the effects of a world-wide Depression. Moreover, Canada was strained by a series of domestic crises, including the ongoing problem of labour violence in Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, and Saint John; the dilemma of Native displacement; the prospect of the CPR declaring bankruptcy before the completion of the lines; the worries of decreasing immigration and increasing emigration;<sup>18</sup> and the promise of disastrous political fall-out from the Riel Rebellions. Such economic, social, and political pressures kindled a mood of self-doubt in the young Dominion; throughout the last quarter of the century, Canada began to evaluate its internal strength and its position in the international arena. One of the consequences of this uncertainty was the reinvigoration of the long-simmering annexationist debate. This time it was couched in terms of a commercial union with the United States—a concept which swept Canada, especially south-western Ontario, between the 1887 and 1891 general elections.<sup>19</sup> Ironically, it was only by considering the controversial proposal of closer Canada-U.S. relations that Canadians were moved to reappraise their



future economic and political relationship with Britain (Burgess 63). As a result, the nationalistic zeal which was so lacking in the early days of Confederation found both its impetus and its focus.

Initially, opponents of commercial union with the United States assumed a defensive posture by simply seizing upon its antithesis—commercial union with the British Empire: "The vague idea of imperial federation served as a convenient vehicle by which Canadians could put more distance between themselves and their American neighbours. Correspondingly it enabled them further to entrench their sense of national identity within the more comfortable embrace of the British empire (Burgess 62-63). Confronted with the calculated economic logic wielded by the supporters of commercial union with the United States, imperial federationists deliberately struck at the emotive chords of Canadian national identity. The tactic apparently worked: the thought of Washington strong-arming Canadian fiscal policy likely inspired new branches of the Imperial Federation League throughout the country.<sup>20</sup> Soon, however, increasingly serious contemplation of the matter propelled Canada into a new phase of national consciousness; A.B. McKillop suggests that this phase was marked by two conflicting tendencies: "the celebration of Canada's pioneering role in the establishment of colonial self-government within the empire, and the resentment against Canada's continuing subordination to Britain in international and constitutional affairs" (Introduction to Wise xiii).

These tendencies gave rise to complex imperialistic sentiments which centred on Canada's essential independence from the mother country. W.L. Morton describes the identity crisis:

Canadian life was quieter and slower than American, more modest than

British, duller than both, but, many Canadians were pleased to think, more godly than either. These differences, felt but undefined, which distinguished Canada from the two great states in whose orbits it moved, were the ultimate basis of its independence in America. Such feelings were struggling confusedly for expression in Canada in 1871. (*Critical* 265)

It is important to note that imperialistic notions were not at odds with nationalistic fervour. Quite to the contrary, Canadian imperialism was one variety of Canadian nationalism. Indeed, the founders of the "Canada First" movement,<sup>21</sup> perhaps the best-known champions of imperialism in the later decades of the nineteenth century, were considered ardent nationalists. Citing an 1871 speech in which William Foster urged Torontonians to believe that "'all the requirements of a higher national life are here available'," Roy Daniells goes so far as to suggest that nationalism, as a sentiment, first found expression in the Canada First movement ("Confederation" 205). Canadian imperialists had an intense awareness of and pride in the new nation, but they combined these feelings with a desire to transform the British Empire so that Canada could take up a position of equality within it. They hoped to achieve a co-operative political, economic, and military union with Britain. Writer Wilfred Campbell coined a phrase; Canada was to be part of a 'Vaster Britain':

It is unjust to speak of this version of the imperialist ideal as showing the 'butler's mind': it contemplated not serving Britain, but sharing Britain's glories. The psychological source of this intoxicating imperialism was not perhaps so much loyalty to Britain, but rather discontent with the dimensions of the Canadian scene. Canada was at the close of the last century a poor

country, mainly concerned with material problems, and steadily losing many of her people to the large, rich, exultant land to the south. Imperialism was a kind of beneficent magic which would cover our nakedness and feed our starving spirits. (Brown, "Canadian Poetry," qtd. in Mandel 39)

As far as imperialists were concerned, Canadian Confederation not only provided the model for unions elsewhere in the Empire, but it represented a historical example of how the Empire itself would someday be formally unified (Berger 124).<sup>22</sup>

In an attempt to colour their sentiments with native hues, imperialists plumbed the British-Canadian past to argue that their movement had the force of history behind it. Consequently, imperialist literature glorified Canada's history by casting it as "the story of material progress and the steady advance of liberty and self-government. For them, all Canadian history was ceaselessly moving toward one irrefragable conclusion—the acquisition of full national rights and freedom within an imperial federation" (Berger 109). Not surprisingly, the tradition of the United Empire Loyalists became the focal point; imperialists credited the Loyalists with carrying into Canada the entire corpus of British cultural and political achievement and with fostering and defending the concept of an imperial federation with the British Empire (Berger 106-7). Robert Haliburton's review of British diplomacy, published in 1872, and subtitled 'The Dream of the United Empire Loyalists of 1776,' emerged out of a tradition of Maritime imperialism which was at the heart of his family history. In fact, both Thomas Chandler Haliburton, father of Robert, and Joseph Howe were hailed as founding members of imperialism:

Because he was one of the first British North Americans to regard the

achievement of responsible government as a precondition for imperial federation, Joseph Howe was accorded a prominent place in the imperialist tradition. To Howe, "responsible government had conferred upon colonials only the partial rights of British citizens. As a natural extension, the Empire ought to be reorganized without delay to confer these rights in all their fullness." The Nova Scotian had enunciated this idea at an inhospitable time, but by the 1890s he and his contemporary, Judge Haliburton, who had held to the same notion, were regarded by the advocates of imperial unity as the fathers of the movement. (Berger 120)

Robert Haliburton's speech is representative of a good deal of imperialist literature; grounded in history—and especially in the achievements of the Loyalists—it was calculated to create a cohesive national heritage by defining and defending a century-old British-Canadian tradition whose principles could continue to be championed into the new era.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Literary Activity:**

Imperialist propaganda was not the only literature being produced on the subject of Canada's state of affairs during the Confederation period. Canadian scholarly writing, at the time, also addressed the issues at hand. As Berger notes: "During the late 1880s books and popular articles offering comparative treatments of the British, American, and Canadian constitutions appeared in increasing numbers and not a few were written with the intention of strengthening an attachment to British institutions" (158). While Roy Daniells argues that there is "no simple correspondence between an objective record of political, social, and

economic events, on the one hand, and on the other, a criticism of the arts" ("Confederation" 207), there is evidence that ongoing socio-political discussion affected Canadian creative endeavours. The imperialist focus on Canadian history, for example, may have inspired an outpouring of historical fiction; romanticized versions of incidents in Canadian history abounded in the late nineteenth century in dramas such as Charles Mair's *Tecumseh* (1886) and Sarah Anne Curzon's *Laura Secord* (1887), in poetical collections such as William Kirby's *Canadian Idylls* (1888), and in children's novels such as Agnes Maule Machar's *For King and Country* (1874) (Berger 95). And certainly the school of Confederation poets grew out of the upsurge of Canadian nationalism in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Daniells points to the collection of poems edited by William D. Lighthall in 1889, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, as a landmark of cultural publication:

It is hard to imagine a more perfect manifesto, articulating as it does a sense of the magnificence of the landscape, a vision of manifest destiny, an epic feeling for the heroic past, and a shining desire for moral excellence. The relation of English-speaking Canada to Quebec, to the Empire, to the United States, and to native Indian races has an air of being realized with the clarity of a cameo. In compiling his anthology, Lighthall explicitly disclaims a purely literary aim. He is looking only for poetry that illustrates the country and its life "in a distinctive way." ("Confederation" 212)

Less appreciatively, A.J.M. Smith remarks that Lighthall's critical introduction is not all forward-looking and perceptive: "It has (inevitably) the defects of its time. The book was just able to include some of the early poems of Roberts, Carman, Lampman, Campbell, and

Scott; it illustrates the spirit of rather blatant nationalism characteristic of the post-Confederation period and prepares the way for the Maple Leaf school of versifiers and critics that was dominant until the late twenties" (25). J.M.S. Careless agrees that the zeal of the Canada First movement to bring about the realization of nationhood had a profound effect on the production of creative writing in Canada:

Its ardent idealists did not get far in mundane politics; but they struck respondent chords and roused opinion, and their writings contributed to the growth of a self-consciously Canadian literary tradition, from the poetry and drama of Charles Mair to the pamphlets and editorials of William Foster. The national tradition grew onwards through the 1880s, without the strongly political emphasis of the Canada Firsters, in the poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford, George Frederick Cameron, and Archibald Lampman; in the prose of William Kirby, Graeme Mercer Adam, Sarah [sic] Jeannette Duncan, and others. Furthermore, critical literary reviews blossomed: *The Canadian Monthly* (1872-82) and *The Week* (1883-96), both of which promoted Anglo-Canadian cultural self-awareness as well as setting discriminating standards for intellectual tastes. (36)

Yet, most of the literature that commented satirically on specific events and circumstances throughout the period has not, for one reason or another, found its way into the larger canon of Canadian satire. Many Canadian satiric poets of the nineteenth century produced forgettable verse; Fred Cogswell points to John Lepage's *The Island Minstrel* (1860, 1867), William Murdoch's *Poems and Songs* (1860), Moses Hardy Nickerson's *Carols*

*of the Coast* (1892), and David Fleming Little's *Poems* (1881). He suggests that some "contain many local satires and epigrams of more than passing interest," but most of the work is "not sufficiently polished in form and phrase to make worthwhile for a reader the detailed study of local and political issues necessary to give them point" ("Maritime" 131). Even successful satiric works may prove to have short shelf lives because of the dryness or particularity of their subjects. For instance, Cogswell argues that James Arminius Richey's five volumes of scholarly verse (1857-1862) "contain many manly and skilful satires constructed in defence of Anglicanism against its more extreme opponents," and that the anonymous *No Sect in Heaven* (1868) is "a clever and refreshing attack upon sectarian bigotry in its more absurd manifestations" ("Maritime" 132). These notable religious satires have not proven to be entertaining enough to survive as creative literature separate from their specific contexts. Yet, even fascinating pieces with seemingly universal significance have faded to mere passing references in literary histories. A case in point is William Henry Fleet's satiric fiction on the Rebellion Losses Bill, a burlesque entitled *How I came to be Governor of the Island of Cacona; with a Particular Account of my Administration of the Affairs of that Island...By the Hon. Francis Thistleton, Late Governor of the Island of Cacona* (1852). Ray Palmer Baker offers a ringing endorsement, suggesting that as "an entertaining picture of colonial administration and party government--of the eternal struggle between the Suckers and the Bullfrogs--it will always be valuable: the inefficiencies of Downing Street and the pettifoggeries of the Governor's Cabinet have universal significance" (*History* 99). Still, Fleet's fantastic voyage and residence in a strange land is barely a footnote in the international tradition of such fiction. The same holds true for the once notable poetry of

French-Canadian satirists such as Louis Fréchette<sup>24</sup> and Félix-Gabriel Marchand,<sup>25</sup> the satirical letters of James McCarroll,<sup>26</sup> as well as numerous anonymous satirical stories, poems, and plays in such periodicals as *The Canadian Illustrated News* (1869-1883) and *Grip* (1873-94).<sup>27</sup> The specificity of some of these works may help explain their obsolescence: the anonymous play, *The Boycott* (1881), satirized a farmer's boycott in Scotland; Sarah Anne Curzon's *The Sweet Girl Graduate* (1882) attacked discrimination against women at the University of Toronto; Jay Kayelle's play, *Underground Theology* (1881), was a satirical attack on "free-thinkers," while his *Marmion* (1882) satirized the removal of immoral books from grammar schools; J.W.S.'s (pseud.) play, *Ambition; or, Be Sure You Are Off With the Old Before You Are On With the New* (1885), satirized the decision to build a New City Hall in Hamilton; and Roly Rowan's (pseud.) play, *Woman Suffrage* (1892) satirized a suffrage meeting.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, such long-forgotten satirical dramas once flourished across the new Dominion. L.W. Conolly describes Nicholas Flood Davin's play, *The Fair Grit; or, The Advantages of Coalition* (1876), as "one of the best nineteenth-century political satires," noting, however, that it "did not meet with the stage success of William Henry Fuller's *H.M.S. Parliament; or, The Lady Who Loved a Government Clerk* (Ottawa, 1880), an attack on MacDonald's National Policy that was performed in many Canadian cities in 1880" (301). The contentious annexation issue and the subject of national identity were satirized by Jean Newton McIlwraith in her musical comedy, *Ptarmigan; or, A Canadian Carnival* (1895). Conolly adds that dramatic parodies and burlesques "were other lively and popular nineteenth-century genres," and points, for instance, to George Broughall's *The 90th on Active Service; or,*



*Campaigning in the North West* (1885) and *The Tearful and Tragical Tale of the Tricky Troubadour; or, The Truant Tracked* (1886) which were performed at Winnipeg's Princess Opera House in the late 1880s (301). Richard Plant adds to the list: *Fair Rosamond* (anon., 1881) parodied Swinburne; anonymous parodies of Shakespeare appeared in *Acta Victoriana* (1882); C.P.M.'s (pseud.) *Innocent Bigamy* (1882) and Titus A. Drum's (pseud.) *The Baron Bold and the Beauteous Maid* (1884) parodied melodramatic theatre; J.W. Bengough's *Bunthorne Abroad; or, the Lass That Loved a Pirate* (1883) parodied Gilbert and Sullivan's hero; and Edward Worth's *Worth's Burlesque Ritual* (1896) burlesqued secret societies (329-336).

The public taste for parody and burlesque was satisfied by the period's fiction as well. Carole Gerson, in *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, notes that a minor vein of literary satire burlesquing the prevailing norms of romantic fiction can be traced through the latter half of the 1800s: "The comic side of the prevailing taste for romantic fiction, later immortalized in Leacock's *Nonsense Novels* (1911), proved irresistible to a few of his predecessors" (91). By way of example, she points to Abraham Holmes' spoof on the sentimental seduction tale, *Belinda; or, The Rivals* (1843): "Similar to the way James De Mille was later to use the form of the adventure novel to ridicule the extravagances of romantic fiction, Holmes manipulates the form of the sentimental novel to unmask the hypocrisy which frequently underlies moralistic tales of seduction and betrayal" (*Purer* 144). Gerson refers also to Stella Mackay's send-up of romantic convention, "The Vow. A Tale of Love--Blood--Thunder--and Happiness" (1867), and to Walter Blackburn Harte's burlesques, "Noblesse Oblige: A British Society Novel. By a

Crowned Head. Abridged and Mutilated by W. Blackburn Harte," and his "Something in the Wild West" (*Purer* 91) which satirizes high society and the American frontier respectively.

Works such as Rosanna Leprohan's five exposés of the frivolity and hypocrisy of fashionable society, serialized in *The Literary Garland* between 1846 and 1851 (138), and the anonymous *Sir Peter Pettysham* (1882), "'a satirical story of Canadian life marked by considerable ability'" reveal that manners, morals, politics, religion and business remained satiric targets in fiction throughout the period (Gerson, *Purer* 145). Indeed, although William Fleet (and Robert Barr and Grant Allen after him<sup>29</sup>) are now considered minor writers, their success as satirists indicate that popular writing during the latter half of the nineteenth century addressed the pertinent socio-political questions of the time. In fact, Roper argues that "fiction with a purpose," that is, the social protest or problem novel, was widely written and read in the latter part of the nineteenth-century ("New" 293). His review of Canadian literary taste in this period also identifies readers' dual desire for stories set in both foreign and domestic locales: "They wanted a setting which gave them the pleasures of the exotic and the unknown, or the pleasures of recognition of the familiar" ("New" 287-288). Joseph and Johanna Jones support this observation, noting that hunger "for stories of new places dwelt in by strange people or even ingratiatingly familiar ones—became curiously strong in the later nineteenth century" (42). The popularity of the "problem novel" combined with the twin preference for exotic and indigenous descriptive locales engendered two striking phenomena in literary taste in the Americas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Utopian fiction and regional—or local colour—fiction (Roper, "New" 293-6). As an emerging Canadian nation struggled to define itself, both internationally and domestically, this twofold

literary vogue provided a full spectrum of social analysis by balancing broad, philosophical allegories of hypothetical and universal societies with intimate, realistic portraits of specific Canadian communities.

Taken together, James de Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (published in 1888, begun in the late 1860s) and Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904) satirically and ironically address both ends of this spectrum in works that have become a deserving part of the canon of Canadian satiric fiction. By detailing the escapades of a British sailor lost in the land of the Kosekin—a society of congenial cannibals who worship darkness, misery, poverty, and death—De Mille's adventure tale targets the values of Victorian society (particularly its missionary Christianity) which underpin its imperial mission. Near the other end of the spectrum and written at the tail end of the period, Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904) is an authentic depiction of turn-of-the-century small town Ontario which poses particular questions about the repercussions of a nation's growing pains on the average Canadian community. While the administration of Elgin provides the crux of the novel's plot, it actually depicts emotional and intellectual responses to the political debate on international relations. Notably, these novels also satirically burlesque the conventions of popular adventure and romantic tales respectively. More importantly, however, De Mille's and Duncan's novels are typical of the changing satiric temper of the period since they are, in contradistinction to the writings of McCulloch and Haliburton, less likely to rail against the vices and follies that hinder the growth of a fledgling community and more likely to be concerned with exposing the social illusions of an increasingly sophisticated society.

### **JAMES DE MILLE'S *A STRANGE MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A COPPER CYLINDER***

James De Mille was born in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1833, the third child in a large, prosperous family of Loyalist descent. When he was nine years old, his family left the *via media* of the Anglican Church for the more pious form of Christianity to be found in the Baptist Church. His father, Nathan Smith De Mill,<sup>30</sup> a successful lumber merchant and ship-owner, was known facetiously among his detractors in the community as "Cold Water De Mill" for his relentless puritanism. His temperance crusade and alleged anti-intellectualism were the stuff of legend in Saint John; tales tell of his discovering a barrel of rum on board one of his vessels and personally heaving it into the harbour, and of his burning a consignment of novels discovered in another shipment. Although Patricia Monk asserts that such stories are apocryphal, she points to the facts behind them. First, Nathan De Mill was a dedicated member of the total abstinence movement in Saint John, serving as its president from 1832 to 1845.<sup>31</sup> Second, a letter from De Mill to John S. Pratt, the merchant who shipped the novels, reveals that they were not burned but rather sent on to an auctioneer to sell. Nonetheless, his attitude towards fiction is plainly stated: "'The Books for this Province to Sell are Religious Books, including those in the Sunday School Departments, Moral Subjects including Works on the Temperance Cause or the Total Abstinence Principle, [and] Travels and Voyages. Those Works you have sent are nearly all Novels and such as I do not like to Sell for I consider them the devil's department'" (qtd. in *Gilded* 29). Archibald MacMechan adds that although Nathan De Mill helped to found Horton Collegiate Academy,

a Baptist boys' preparatory school, and supported Acadia College (now Acadia University) in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, these actions were not "based on any admiration for secular learning but rather on approval of [their] dominant atmosphere of evangelical Christianity and strict morality" (qtd. in Parks, "Strange" 67).

It was from a puritanical home into these equally austere institutions that De Mille was duly sent. He attended Horton in 1847 for a year before moving on to Acadia. Upon concluding his studies in 1850, he and his elder brother, Elisha Budd, travelled in Europe for eighteen months. Although James's journal has been lost and his brother's proves a rather prim record of their adventures, Carole Gerson suggests that this "year and a half of travels...deeply impressed the future novelist" ("Three" 199). In fact, the voyage will prove to be the archetypal situation throughout De Mille's writing career. Upon his return in 1852, De Mille entered another Baptist institution, Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. During his studies, he began to write. A few of his earliest efforts have survived, including a piece of nonsense verse and a mock dirge written to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne". These, together with the satirical "Class Poem of 1854" written a few years later, provide an early indication of the literary leanings that would later inform De Mille's best-known work. Monk remarks that the "satirical approach of the 'Class Poem 1854' is perhaps not unexpected in the festive circumstances of the poem's occasion, but the ironic eye of the satirist is not always opened quite so early in life, particularly in a devoutly religious home of the sort from which De Mille had come to Brown only two years before" (*Gilded* 157). In his last year at Brown, De Mille wrote prodigiously and began to explore the American market for popular fiction. He published sixteen stories in two Boston journals: *Flag of Our Union* and

*Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion.*

Upon graduating with an M.A. in 1854, De Mille returned home to a province in the throes of a severe economic crisis. The following January he secured his first job as the assistant editor of Reverend I.E. Bill's *Christian Visitor*, a Baptist newspaper set up by a church committee that included Nathan De Mill. An editorial in the first issue of that year comments on the disastrous reversal-of-fortune in New Brunswick which began with the cholera epidemic and was followed by a commercial crisis occasioned, in part, by a glut on the European timber market:

"The dawn of eighteen hundred and fifty four was hailed with rejoicing, and for months we were in a feverish dream. Never was the city so prosperous; never was wealth so abundant. Indeed the greatness of our prosperity was only equalled by the greatness of its fall....Our present condition is most melancholy. The Banks refuse discount, and the scarcity of money is felt by all. The timber trade is ruined, and the price of all wood goods has fallen to a frightful degree. Freights are unprecedentedly low, and ships at any price are unsaleable." (qtd. in Monk, *Gilded* 86)

The long-term consequences of these economic woes greatly affected De Mille. Over the next few years, business failures plagued his father, his church, and him personally. As both a ship-owner and a lumber merchant, Nathan De Mill felt the crisis deeply and only the diversity of his freight handling saved him from complete financial ruin. Furthermore, several prominent members of De Mille's Baptist Church--including his father--had invested in the West Columbia Mining and Manufacturing Company in Ohio. De Mille left the *Christian*

*Visitor* to become a bookkeeper for investor Edmund Crawley, the president of Acadia who had gained personal control of the ailing company. However, early in 1856, De Mille left this sinking ship and returned to Saint John to try his hand at another career. He became a partner in the Colonial Book Store which opened in May, 1857. Specializing in religious books, stationery, and school supplies, the store was initially successful enough for De Mille not only to marry his longtime fiancée but to open a second branch across the street in 1858 (Monk, *Gilded* 91-92). However, continuing economic hardship in the community, De Mille's general ineptitude for business, and his ruinous decision to buy his way out of a strained partnership left the shops in a precarious financial state and De Mille mired in a \$20,000 debt it would take him more than a decade to clear.

Ashamed at being compelled to turn to his cash-strapped father for help, he found salvation in an unexpected offer from Acadia; the Board of Governors asked him to join the faculty as a professor of classics. Although he immediately accepted, he requested a year-long leave-of-absence in order to set his affairs in order. During this time he transferred the stock and lease of the bookshop to a new owner, prepared his curriculum, and produced a "flurry of serial writing" (Parks, "Strange" 63). He made substantial contributions of the "Sunday School" variety to the *Christian Watchman*--a Baptist weekly newspaper edited by his brother Budd, now a pastor--including the serial versions of *Andy O'Hara; Or, The Child of Promise* (which would appear in book form in 1861) and "The Missionary's Son."<sup>32</sup> Each of these pietistical novels "traces the development of a young boy from a Christian home who goes astray but returns to the fold in adult life" (Monk, *Gilded* 178). Malcolm Parks suggests that, in addition to these spiritual tales, it is probable that De Mille also wrote the satirical

romance *The Dodge Club; or Italy in 1859* during this interval, although the work did not appear in *Harper's Magazine* until 1867 ("Strange" 63).<sup>33</sup>

In the summer of 1861, De Mille took up his post at Acadia and "made an immediate and favourable impression on the students, as well as on his colleagues" (Monk, *Gilded* 100). MacMechan's research notes include letters from people who remembered De Mille as an excellent, if demanding, teacher who surprised his students with his remarkable generosity and approachability. On the other hand, he apparently also routinely revealed his satirical temperament. One former student paraphrases John Dryden's description of Juvenalian satire in recalling De Mille's sharp tongue: "'His fine satire so delicate that, like a blade of keenest edge, it cut into a fellow so deftly, that he hardly knew it, until he felt the blood trickling down'" (qtd. in Monk, *Gilded* 102). Another recalls that while De Mille "was always genial and agreeable," there was nevertheless in his conversation "'usually a tinge of the satirical. While he was doubtless a sincere Christian, and occasionally occupied the pulpit very acceptably, he took delight in ridiculing everything like cant, and even the ordinary words and actions of the 'pious' sort of people often brought to his keen eye and thin curling lip that peculiar sarcastic smile of his'" (qtd. in Monk, *Gilded* 102). As Monk points out, "the use of the term 'satiric' in these two accounts by his former students suggests an awareness on their part of the latent social critic in De Mille's personality" (102). Reviewing these recollections, Parks adds that it "is hardly necessary to observe that such a marked disdain for evangelical piety strikes an alien note in the Acadia of the early 1860's, which contemporary accounts depict as intensely conscious of its duty to oversee the spiritual and moral condition of its students. Certainly it is not what one would expect of an ardent or even a moderately



committed Baptist" ("Strange" 68). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that in the second half of the decade, De Mille left both the College and the Church.

In 1865, the sudden death of Professor Thomas McCulloch (the son of the author of *The Stepsure Letters*) created a vacancy at Dalhousie University. After some shuffling in the faculty, the Board of Governors accepted De Mille's application for the Chair of Rhetoric and History. Despite the increasing attention he devoted to writing over the ensuing years, De Mille, "if not a wholly dedicated teacher, was at least a hardworking, conscientious, and impressive one" (Monk, *Gilded* 124). In addition to his lectures and academic administration at the College, his commitment to augmenting the library, his public speaking engagements,<sup>34</sup> and his eight years' labour on *The Elements of Rhetoric* (1878), De Mille's legacy includes the introduction of a fourth-year course in the history of Canada: "The course was radical, not merely in terms of Dalhousie's curriculum, but of the history curricula in other Canadian universities, and James De Mille may well have been the first person to offer a course in Canadian history in a Canadian university" (Monk, *Gilded* 126).

Within a few years of transferring to the non-sectarian Dalhousie College, De Mille also returned to the Church of England.<sup>35</sup> Such significant changes in his life may have been made possible, in part, by the death of his father in 1864: "One assumes that De Mille had no desire to wound his father by an act which, however blameless, would probably have been taken as a tragic betrayal" (Parks, "Strange" 69).<sup>36</sup> Yet, as Monk explains, the catalyst for De Mille's change of faith may well have been the scandal implicating his father-in-law, Dr. John Pryor, then a minister at the Granville Street Baptist Church. In April 1867, Pryor was charged with immorality after being apprehended leaving the home of a woman of ill-

repute in the early morning hours. Although a church council cleared the minister of wrongdoing, the local elders ignored the verdict, effectively shifting the debate to a discussion of the right to self-government among individual churches within the Central Association of Baptist Churches. Eventually, Pryor lost his fight and left the province to take up a new ministry in the United States. De Mille, who had been active in his father-in-law's defence, was distressed by the entire affair: "The most obvious outward effect on him was a change in his religious affiliation....A second effect of the aftermath of the Pryor scandal on De Mille was apparently to make him turn more and more to his writing, as though to use it as a method to escape, either psychologically or physically, from the pressures of Halifax" (Monk, *Gilded* 133-134).<sup>37</sup>

Reserving his days for academic work and his evenings for the production of fiction, De Mille became—in John Moss's words—"somewhat of a Jekyll and Hyde" (*Guide* 90).<sup>38</sup> During his first year at Dalhousie, De Mille's instructive religious story, *The Martyr of the Catacombs: A Tale of Ancient Rome* (1865), appeared in print and he began work on a similar novel, *Helena's Household* (1867). Both "describe the persecution of the Christians in first-century Rome, allowing their author to display his scholarly knowledge of the period and to illustrate the superiority of the Christian doctrine of love over previous religions and philosophies with numerous conversions and scenes of martyrdom" (Gerson, "Three" 218-219). However, to meet the demands of his publishers, De Mille was forced to make extensive revisions "to simplify and adulterate the theological substance of *Helena's Household*"; indeed, De Mille "'was so disgusted ...with the outcome, that he made up his mind never again to attempt a serious novel.'" After that unpleasant experience in 1866, his

main intention as a novelist, as several of his letters demonstrate, was to bow to the commercial demands of publishers" (Parks, Introduction xxv, qts. Laurence J. Burpee).<sup>39</sup>

What follows in the later 1860s are works some claim that De Mille himself called "potboilers," for they were written to raise the funds not only to clear the substantial debts he had accrued as a bookseller but also to support his growing family. Fred Cogswell identifies James De Mille, along with May Agnes Fleming, as one of the first Canadian writers to "sit down cold-bloodedly to write for money" ("Maritime" 119).<sup>40</sup>

De Mille worked tirelessly, averaging better than a book a year for the next two decades, including boys' adventure stories, historical romances, humorous and satirical novels of travels and manners, mysteries, melodramas, and sensational novels. MacMechan asserts that, at the time of his death in 1880, De Mille was "'the widest read and most productive of Canadian writers'" (qtd. in Gerson, "Three" 199). These potboilers were indeed lucrative: for instance, he received \$1000 for *Cord and Creese* (1869), and \$2000 for *The American Baron* (1870). To put these sums into perspective, one should note that at the time De Mille earned approximately \$1200 a year at Dalhousie and that, in 1876, he purchased a large, handsome home for \$3900 (Monk, *Gilded* 114; 118). In spite of--or perhaps because of--his determination to exploit his talents in order to generate much-needed funds, he disdained materialism. MacLeod points to De Mille's speech at the sixteenth opening of Dalhousie College (1878), in which he insisted: "'The age is too much given up to mere money getting....we see around us too much high living and low thinking. Plain living, high thinking, culture of the mind, denial of the body--these are surely noble aims'" (qtd. in Kilian 62). Crawford Kilian remarks that De Mille, "whose morality was brightened by a

lively sense of the absurd," must have relished the irony in his role as the upholder of such virtues, considering that intelligence and piety had not prevented the spectre of bankruptcy from haunting him, his family, or his church; on the contrary, it was not by high thinking but only "by grinding out simple-minded thrillers had he gained some financial independence" (62).

However, as Monk argues, the portrait of De Mille as a frenzied writer churning out mindless, slipshod manuscripts for ready cash does not stand up to scrutiny (220). Not only did he produce neat, carefully revised manuscripts, but they often cunningly reflected his own interest in linguistic puzzles and puns. As George Parker comments, De Mille's imitations of the mysteries popularized by Poe, Dickens, and Wilkie Collins—*Cord and Creese*, *The Cryptogram* (1871), and *The Living Link* (1874)—"are exciting, carefully convoluted stories of secret codes and assumed identities" ("De Mille" 287). And there is plenty of evidence that De Mille took his writing seriously and usually imbued even his lightest tales with moral and intellectual counsel. For instance, his two series for boys—the 'Brethren of the White Cross' and the 'Young Dodge Club' series<sup>41</sup>—reveal both a conscious attempt to entertain his readers with fast-moving action and lively characters and a restrained effort to teach practical information and lessons in ethics. Following the Horatian dictum, De Mille filled these volumes with comic mishaps in which the characters learn discretion and responsibility by exercising their own judgement. While these tales are not weighted down by heavy-handed moralizing, "it is clear from his examples of appropriate behaviour that what De Mille seeks to instil through them is a Victorian, middle-class, Protestant code, closely resembling the one in which he himself was brought up, and which is offered in many similar books of the

period" (Monk, *Gilded* 181). Recent criticism suggests that the serious intent underpinning these popular books actually informs a good deal of De Mille's fiction, and that De Mille himself made it something of a sport to infuse his low-brow plots with high-brow ideas.

George Woodcock was among the first modern scholars to agree with MacMechan's contention that De Mille's fiction contains "'literary practical jokes on the public'" (qtd. in Gerson, "Three" 210). He asserts that while De Mille was indeed forced to indulge the tastes of the circulating library patrons, he nonetheless quietly catered to the astute reader: "in this respect--rather like Conrad and Melville--he was a bifocal novelist, whose works can be read at double levels of intent and meaning, so that *A Strange Manuscript...*[is] as beguiling an adventure story, for those who do not wish to probe its more ironic levels as *Lord Jim* or *Typee*" ("Vision" 101). Twenty years later, in the 1990s, the concept of the "bifocal novelist" whose tongue-in-cheek potboilers ironically impart clever insights to the perceptive reader has proliferated in De Mille criticism. Linda Lamont-Stewart submits that recent critics are drawn to De Mille's fiction in large part because the dual nature of his working life "immediately opens the possibility, even the probability, that his fictional works will ironically exploit the gap between their intellectual author and the popular audience he is addressing" (21).

Reviewing his oeuvre, Gerson contends that, in his best novels, De Mille "maintained a humorous distance from his preposterous plots and predictable characters, hinting that his playful efforts to 'out-Braddon Miss Braddon' were burlesques of the standard components of popular fiction intentionally exaggerated to underline their absurdity" (*Purer* 54-55).

Gwendolyn Guth concurs: "That De Mille himself was interested in the self-parody of metafiction is readily apparent. The majority of his novels fall into categories which he

defines as either 'sensation novel' or 'satirical romance'—categories which poke considerable fun at the act of authorial creation" (43). George Parker remarks that De Mille's novels "were often parodies of Victorian fictional realism through the use of narrative techniques now associated with postmodernist novelists" ("De Mille" 287). Kenneth Wilson's "The Nutty Professor: Or, James De Mille in the Fun House" makes bold (albeit carefully qualified) claims about De Mille's anachronistic postmodern bent:

I would argue, tentatively, that De Mille parodied the conventions of the genres in which he wrote—opening the way for self-reflexivity and indeterminacy—in order to show both his cultural superiority to, and his enjoyment of, these genres. If De Mille had not had this perhaps contradictory relationship to his material, it is doubtful that his writing would have taken the form that it did. In other words, it is because of the differences between two taste cultures—his own and his audience's—that De Mille's work displays such affinities with postmodern writing. These affinities are, however, more than simply literary curiosities: they are suggestive of the ways in which De Mille's fiction might have subverted the dominant literary taste culture in Canada during the nineteenth century (as described by Carole Gerson in *A Purer Taste*). Such a subversion could have had wider implications, if by parodying romance fiction De Mille's work also subverted the ideological ground upon which the romance rested in Victorian Canada. (146)

It is certainly ironic, then, that De Mille's increasing stock in Canadian criticism is not based on the more than two dozen successful popular novels he published during his

lifetime, but on the one he may not have intended to publish at all (at least not in its present form). The posthumous appearance of *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888)—which was itself a manuscript found among De Mille's papers following his death—or, more accurately, its republication in 1969 in McClelland and Stewart's "New Canadian Library" series, confirmed De Mille's place in the canon of Canadian fiction.<sup>42</sup> Reginald Watters introduces the NCL edition by arguing that, in all of Canadian literature, "there is nothing comparable to this remarkable novel, which successfully combines the features of a satirical anti-utopian commentary on contemporary life with a swiftly paced narrative of travel, romance, and fantastic adventure" (vii). Originally read as just another potboiler, critical opinion regarding the novel's aesthetic and intellectual merits has changed dramatically over the past century.<sup>43</sup> As Lamont-Stewart argues in "Rescued by Postmodernism: The Escalating Value of James De Mille's 'A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder,'" the advent of a postmodern aesthetic opened up new interpretive possibilities for the novel:

The problem of whether *Strange Manuscript* is a serious novel of ideas by a nineteenth-century Canadian intellectual or a hack work of vulgar popular fiction produced for strictly mercenary reasons ceases to be a problem. The gap between author and audience becomes an invitation to investigate questions of cultural production, and the text's troublesome generic instability becomes, ironically, the primary source of its aesthetic and intellectual value. (35)

Several recent critics, while continuing to situate their judgments in invidious comparisons to De Mille's less ambitious work, have argued that *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper*

*Cylinder* deserves serious critical attention. For instance, Joseph and Johanna Jones remark: "One book alongside a middling lot of others hardly makes a major writer, but it is still true that *A Strange Manuscript* is the finest piece of Canadian fiction before 1890 (the year Sara Jeannette Duncan began publishing)" (36). Kilian goes as far as to suggest that "[i]f De Mille was simply an industrious hack with the luck and wit to write one good novel toward the end of his career, well and good; it is still the best novel written in nineteenth-century Canada, and one of the best in all Canadian fiction" (67).<sup>44</sup> In addition to being a fine piece of fiction, it is the most satirical of De Mille's works, and the only one to comment (albeit implicitly) on the choices facing the emerging Canadian nation as it struggles to define itself in relation to the British Empire and to the larger world.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this novel is its unique blend of fanciful and serious writing. A fantastic adventure and romance narrative is inset with long passages of scientific factual exposition, thereby fusing, in a sense, the avocational writer De Mille was obliged to be with the scholarly writer he could have been. Gerson comments that, in this work, De Mille "closed the gap between romance and realism in a particularly ingenious manner, his double narrative structure allowing him to have his cake and eat it too" ("Three" 229-230).<sup>45</sup> The title alludes to a multidimensional and explicitly metafictional narrative complexity. The first part, *A Strange Manuscript*, refers to the lengthy first-person account of the marvels and misadventures of Adam More, a British sailor who, after becoming separated from his ship, drifts into a tropical land nestled deep in the south polar region, and populated by prehistoric beasts and a primitive people called the Kosekin. The second half of the title, *Found in a Copper Cylinder*, refers to the novel's third-person discovery-framework which



both encloses and periodically interrupts More's incredible tale, creating an extended *mise en abyme*. A group of bored British yachtsmen, languishing upon the wind-bereft *Falcon*, find the manuscript floating in the sea six years after its apparent date of composition and resolve to pass the time by reading it aloud, pausing now and again to partake of refreshments and to engage in speculation and debate about the manuscript's authenticity and content.

Balancing More's overt authorial presence in the manuscript is a less conspicuous narrator in the frame tale, who nonetheless makes readers aware of his role as organizer and editor of these sections of the novel. For instance, when the men play at a gaming regatta, the narrator notes that "bets were now made as to the direction which [their toy boats] would take, as to the distance by which the red would beat the white, as to the time which would be occupied by the race, and as to fifty other things which need not be mentioned" (4). Then, upon the discovery of the copper cylinder, the narrator adds to the speculation on board by wondering: "Were there treasures inside--jewels, or golden ornaments from some Moorish seraglio, or strange coin from far Cathay?" (7). Later, when Featherstone interrupts Melick's reading to announce dinner, the narrator also interjects, suggesting: "Let us pause here for a moment to take a minuter survey of these four friends" (60). Furthermore, the prominent separation of the text into titled chapters, combined with obvious clues that the novel was designed for serial publication (note the over-repetition of key concepts and the tendency toward cliff-hanging plot twists), underscores an insistent authorial presence behind this double narrative structure. Viewing the *Kosekin* through More, More through the yachtsmen, and the yachtsmen through a detached narrator, readers are ever-conscious of being manipulated by multiple "authors" and "readers" and cannot help but wonder if and where,

among so many voices, De Mille's own might be heard.

The "strange manuscript" itself—written as a request for its finders to communicate the sailor's fate to his family—takes up the bulk of the narrative, representing 26 of 31 chapters. Stranded sailor Adam More, whose name recalls both the first man and the Renaissance author of *Utopia*, details his encounters with the Kosekin and describes their peculiar philosophy and behaviour. Having reluctantly sacrificed his fellow castaway, Agnew, to a group of ghastly cannibals only days before, More is relieved by the seemingly gentle and generous demeanour of the Kosekin. He is, in fact, instantly taken in by their doting behaviour, despite having cautioned himself moments before "that even civilized people would not necessarily be any kinder than savages" (52). While he is puzzled by their unusual physical traits—especially their aversion to sunlight—on the whole he adjudges this curious race to be a compassionate, courageous, and charitable one, "animated by a universal desire to do kindly acts" (83). However, it soon becomes clear to readers that this reluctant explorer misinterprets the Kosekin by viewing them from the limited perspective of a "civilized" Englishman and Christian. More himself begins to grasp the truth predominantly through his conversations with Almah, a beautiful fellow-captive from another Antarctic society with whom he falls in love.

The Kosekin world appears to be turned upside-down and inside-out, an impression strengthened by the image of a people living on the underside of the globe and deep within a ring of mountains suggestive of "a vast basin-shaped world" (51).<sup>46</sup> Their value system proves, in many ways, to be diametrically opposed to that of Western civilization: in fact, the Kosekin preference for darkened caverns over sunny pastures is indicative of their entire

ideology. They work feverishly to obtain poverty and squalor, they desire to be separated from those they love, and they eagerly anticipate the blessing of death—which they exalt as the true goal of life. Not only is death the most coveted state, but it is the greatest honour one can bestow on a fellow Kosekin. More is horrified (over and over again) to learn that the ultimate ideal in this topsy-turvy town is to be stabbed to death by the Chief Pauper at a public ritual and then to be ceremoniously consumed at the ensuing cannibal feast, the *Mista Kosek*. These, More discovers, are the honours reserved for him, their esteemed guest, "Atam-or." Stunned, he questions the Kosekin about their beliefs but is unable to reconcile their views of human nature with his own, and he repeatedly professes this lack of understanding. In fact, More is an especially dense, strainingly ingenuous narrator who is so engrossed in the disturbing discrepancies between the Kosekin and his own people that he is incapable of seeing the striking similarities between the two.

Although, at first, it is admittedly difficult to see our likenesses reflected in these death-worshipping cannibals, readers should soon become aware of the parallels between the Kosekin world and our own, and thus become increasingly exasperated by More's shocked revulsion and muddled comprehension, as well as alert to the satiric intentions in De Mille's novel. The Kosekin share some of our values: for example, suicide and bigamy are moral transgressions for them as well as for us. Moreover, the Kosekin economic and political systems—free enterprise capitalism and democratic republicanism—mirror those of Western civilization despite the fact that they function to different ends (Watters, Introduction ix). Similarly, while the Kosekin assign wildly different values to abstract terms, their desire to obtain their goals leads them to behave in the same self-interested ways that we do. What

More initially interprets as heart-warming acts of kindness and charity, prove ultimately to be prompted by animosity and avarice. The Kosekin quest to assume the prestigious position of filthy pauper is a self-indulgence animated by the all-too-familiar sins of pride, envy, and greed, selfish desires which spawn acts of commercial unscrupulousness, labour unrest, and political violence. Revolutions are not uncommon here as wealthy classes attempt to force their unwanted possessions onto the privileged poor. Similarly, "[k]idnapping, assault, highway robbery, and crimes of violence have their parallel here in cases where a strong man, meeting a weaker, forces himself upon him as a slave or compels him to take his purse" (139). To complicate matters, the presence of the Kohen Gadol and Layelah—philosophical rebels who reject Kosekin values—reveals that, like Western society, this one also has its detractors.

Observations such as these perplex More but do not lead him to explore possible affinities with this strange race. The more readers learn about Kosekin behaviour, however, the more they must recognize a strong kinship with these polar people. Hughes argues that if the word "Kosekin" is derived from "kosek," the Hebrew word for dark, then the "'kin' at the end suggests that they may be *our* kin" (118). When More begins to learn the Kosekin language, he is presented with evidence that he shares an ancestry with these cannibals, but chooses to ignore it, remarking: "my knowledge of Arabic was of some assistance, though how it was that these people should have a language with that resemblance was certainly a mystery, and I did not try to solve it" (77). More's unwillingness to get to the bottom of the "dark and dreadful mystery" (102) of the Kosekin is evident throughout the manuscript. For example, when Almah is reluctant to reveal the horrors of the *Mista Kosek*, More is willing

to allow her to suffer in silence: "It was as though she knew the worst, and knowing it, dared not speak; as though there was something more horrible which she dared not reveal. For my part, I feared it so that I dared not ask" (87). More's fear, revulsion, and bewilderment render him mute when he should be inquisitive. Dozens of times throughout his tale, when readers might expect More to question what he hears or to reply to the statements directed at him, he opts instead for dumb silence: "I said nothing" (86), "I could not speak a word" (92), "I dared not speak" (116), "I could not trust myself to speak" (120), "I looked at her in wonder and could not say a word" (123), "I could not speak" (124), "To such a story I had nothing to say" (134), "To this strange remark I had no answer to make" (157), "I was too bewildered to say a word, and stood mute" (208), "To this I said nothing" (210), "I stood in silence" (212), "I made no reply" (215), "I said nothing" (225), "To this I had nothing to say; I was stupefied with horror" (244), "To this strange speech I had nothing to say" (249), "I had nothing to say" (264). It is ironic that More, who is obviously not a man of few words when one considers the length of this letter to his father, should so often be unable or unwilling to communicate. The resulting silence opens up a space for De Mille's readers to determine their own responses to, and pose their own questions of, these strange creatures.

Since our hero is clearly not the man to turn to for a keen appraisal of the Kosekin society and its connection with our own, readers might trust that the fellows who have fished the copper cylinder from the sea prove to be rather more insightful. Yet this party's interpretive skills have already been thrown into doubt; from the moment the "black speck" that proves to be the manuscript is spotted on the distant waves, the foursome reveal their tendency to permit their various humours and opinions to colour their perceptions. Weary

aristocrat, Lord Featherstone, a light-weight (or feather-brain), initiates a guessing game by wondering what the floating object is, but does not immediately venture a theory himself, commenting simply that it is "'a queer-looking thing'" (4). Writer and "professional cynic" (145), Otto Melick presumes that the "round spot" is not worthy of special notice, twice asserting that it is merely "'the spar of some ship'" (3). Dr. Congreve, the dull-witted fool of his Restoration comedian namesake, disagrees with Melick, contending three times that the cylinder is actually a can of preserved meat: "'I'm certain of that. It has come in good time. We can have it for dinner'" (6). And Noel Oxenden, Oxonianly pedantic but always ready to find a scientific basis for the most outrageous conjectures, proposes that the cylinder may contain "'the mangled remains of one of the wives of some Moorish pasha'" (6).<sup>47</sup> These speculations, ranging from the mundane to the sensational and asserted with various levels of conviction, all prove to be wrong—a fact well worth remembering in the ensuing debates. Notably, the questionable interpretive skills of both More and the yachtsmen are revealed early in the novel through More's discovery of Polley Reed's letter tucked into the pocket of a long-dead sailor. It is plain that Reed can barely write her thoughts and feelings, but it is plainer still that this writer can barely read them. While More is moved by the prophetically poignant appeal of this mini-manuscript (which ironically points up his astonishingly voluminous one), he barely discusses it. His failure to read Reed is, perhaps, due to his separation from women's and worker's experiences; he cannot comprehend this sad family's fate, but can only record his own and Agnew's melancholy reaction to the tale. In turn, More's letter—his own poignant appeal—falls into the hands of unskilled readers who not only completely ignore Reed's letter, but who also fail to respond to More's manuscript except in

the limited terms of how it relates to their particular experiences.

While Featherstone is initially the most excited of the group at the discovery of the manuscript, he admits to being "'an infernally bad reader'" (71) and defers to each of the others before taking his turn. His inability to "read" well becomes obvious in his trifling contributions to the subsequent discussion, although once again he is the instigator, tossing out a comment which echoes his first observation of the cylinder: "'A deuced queer sort of thing this....I hardly know what to think about it'" (61). Since Featherstone is so often at a loss about what to think—and his friends so rarely are—he functions as something of a mediator by controlling the pace of the reading and often steering the topics of conversation.<sup>48</sup> His guests find themselves in opposing camps, embroiled in a disagreement about how to appraise the manuscript. The chapter titles—"Scientific Theories and Scepticism" and "Belief and Unbelief"—anticipate the conflict. On the one hand, Congreve and Oxenden maintain that there is "'strong internal evidence'" (63) to accept the manuscript as "'a plain narrative of facts'" (227). Calling on their respective scientific specializations, they offer up their "proof" in long-winded orations on such topics as Ross's expedition to the Antarctic, extinct animals, coral islands, papyrus, and Grimm's law. In fact, at times, the chance appearance of the manuscript seems to Congreve and Oxenden to be little more than a serendipitous excuse to flaunt their considerable erudition. Fascinated by the minutiae of the alien landscape and its odd inhabitants, they prove maddeningly indifferent towards applying their knowledge to an interpretation of the larger human interest stories in More's manuscript; for instance, while they expound at length on dodo birds and eyeless fish, neither the Kosekin penchant for human sacrifice, nor More's acts of murder, seemingly warrant a moment's

notice.

Melick, whose name may echo the *melechs*, or kings, of the Kosekin world, stands in stubborn opposition to the serious discourse of Congreve and Oxenden. Rejecting their view of the manuscript's veracity, he charges that "'there is no theory, however wild and fantastic, which some man of science will not be ready to support and to fortify by endless arguments, all of the most plausible kind. For my part, I...believe More and his south polar world to be no more authentic than Sindbad the Sailor'" (70). He variously dismisses the manuscript as "'a transparent hoax'" (61), "'a sensation novel'" (61), and "'a satirical romance....directed against the restlessness of humanity'" (226). Continually mocking the scholars' painstaking (and sometimes painfully boring) rehearsal of facts and figures, Melick interjects light-hearted jokes, juvenile rhymes, and drinking songs into the otherwise earnest conversation. In this way, he serves as a comic corrective to the pompous lectures of Congreve and Oxenden, who entreat: "'let us discuss this for a little while in a common-sense way'" (61). Readers surely appreciate Melick's ironic perspective and likely join in the joke against his antagonists for their narrow-minded pretensions. Guth argues that if this symposium can be viewed as an intellectual chess game, then "Melick's comic checkmating of his opponents signals the superiority of his scepticism over their haughty boredom (Featherstone) and passive anatomizing (Congreve and Oxenden)" (44).

Yet, while Melick's incredulity is amusing and his witty remarks contain some truth (after all, he is correct in assuming that the manuscript is fiction, not fact), his contribution to the analysis is arguably no more enlightening than all of those dry statistics recited by his fellow vacationers--for which he mockingly offers a refreshing drink. It quickly becomes



apparent that for all his clever rejoinders, Melick himself also "remains oblivious to the manuscript's deeper significance as a commentary on his own culture and retreats to the pat phraseology of the hack reviewer" (Gerson, *Purer* 55).<sup>49</sup> Besides, as Watters points out, Melick's observations are sometimes "plainly mistaken," as when he claims that the Kosekin are "'animated by passions and impulses which are directly the opposite of ours'" (Introduction xviii). Readers can, finally, only be frustrated in their search for a reasonable ally in the frame tale, since this symposium, while sometimes diverting, fails to afford any significant elucidation of More's story. Stalled at the elementary level of arguing its validity—and caught up in a contest of intellectual one-upmanship—none of these ineffectual exegetes thinks to address the more complex (not to mention more interesting) themes embedded in the narrative. If nothing else, however, De Mille's misdirecting and blind fictional readers serve to make his actual readers acutely aware of the manuscript as a text open to a wide variety of (mis)interpretations. As Wayne Kime remarks, *A Strange Manuscript* "invites one to adopt not only the role of detective, but in addition that of judge. The reader is placed in a position as potential evaluator of the several interpretations of More's narrative put forward by Featherstone and his companions" (305n). By listening to these opposing arguments, readers begin to understand that obdurate extremism is the least productive way of approaching More's tale.

Since none of De Mille's sailors are deft enough to navigate the turbid waters of this enigmatic story, it is left to readers to seize the hermeneutical helm. Like their counterparts in the frame tale, readers of *A Strange Manuscript* can easily be drawn off course by devoting an unwarranted amount of time and energy to questions of passing interest. It may well be

that De Mille deliberately fashioned several interpretive enigmas to lure unwitting readers into the same exegetical whirlpools that overwhelmed the yachtsmen. The task of defining the novel's genre has proven to be one such potentially disastrous eddy, tempting critics to mimic the same vain dispute that had each of the yachtsmen marvelling at the others' stupidity. For instance, many critics have engaged in the lengthy debate about whether to categorize the work as a utopia (Kilian,<sup>50</sup> Hughes<sup>51</sup>), a dystopia (Watters,<sup>52</sup> Parks<sup>53</sup>), a little of both (Keefer<sup>54</sup>) or none of either (Woodcock,<sup>55</sup> La Bossière<sup>56</sup>). Ultimately, only open-ended descriptions of the novel dodge the critical pratfall of privileging some aspects of the text while repressing others. Kime provides such a description while acknowledging the pleasure De Mille must have derived from cruising all over the generic map: "The book is a generic non-descript, a pastiche of fantastic adventure, implicit social satire, intellectual puzzles, and parody. Frankly derivative, heterogenous in content and style, it is an extended professorial play, a learned amusement" (302). His comments recall Christiane Bohnert's observation of satire's lack of consistent form: "If traditional genres, such as tragedies, sonnets, and novellas, resemble a well-regulated forest, then satire is the lawless and irrepressible poacher within" (151).

Just as De Mille poached from various genres to devise an enigmatic form that fairly begs for classification, so too did he pilfer numerous texts to generate cryptic literary echoes which entreat critical inquiry. As a result, the remarkably allusive nature of the manuscript is another siren call which has enchanted De Mille's readers for a century, a potentially ruinous distraction from the uncomfortable satiric import of De Mille's comparison between the Kosekin and ourselves. On the one hand, critics argue that De Mille attempts to lend

credence to More's fantastic tale by including obvious references to various scientific texts: for instance, the description of Tierra del Fuego closely resembles an extended passage in naturalist Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*; the image of a hollow earth open at the poles is the principal concept in explorer John Cleves Symmes' *Symmes Theory of Concentric Spheres* (1826); and the climactic scene of ritualistic sacrifice atop a pyramid echoes a similar spectacle in historian William Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico* (1843). On the other hand, critics note that De Mille situates his novel firmly in the tradition of fiction. They argue that the character of More, the account of his harrowing journey, the descriptions of the strange land and its stranger inhabitants, the manuscript device, the fictional commentators, and the underlying theme of a topsy-turvy world which comments pointedly on our own are all fashioned with distinct reference to such works as Plato's *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Edgar Allan Poe's "Ms. Found in a Bottle" (1838) and *A Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* (1838), Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846) and *Mardi* (1849), Jules Verne's series of *Voyages extraordinaires*, including *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1870), Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), and W.H. Mallock's *The New Republic* (1877).<sup>57</sup>

The insistently allusive nature of De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript* raises the possibility that it parodies the works it mimics and plunders. However the critical endeavour of tracing De Mille's sources can tend to become an unproductive end in itself, or at least not the most productive. As David Ketterer suggests, "[f]ar from helping to clarify De Mille's satirical and/or allegorical intentions, this enterprise has exacerbated the problem by setting the book adrift in a sea of intertextuality" (11). Once again, critics run the risk of unwittingly

echoing the pathetic exegetes of the frame tale, producing impressive lists (such as the one above) but ultimately failing to provide a meaningful analysis of them. Perhaps the task of seeking out and attempting to discern the reasoning behind the inclusion of these various and sundry allusions misses the point entirely. Elaborating on his notion that *A Strange Manuscript* is "a learned amusement," Kime suggests that part of the entertainment De Mille designed the novel to afford his readers was the simple recognition of the radical eclecticism of the manuscript: "He appears to have conceived of the work as in part what we might now call a Nabokovian amusement: a succession of more or less exact literary echoes, perceivable only to the fit audience who might be familiar with the range of works thus alluded to, but providing for those persons a series of pleasant recognitions" (300). Pleasant recognitions, an appreciation of the farraginous nature of the text, these are the pleasures of satire; Gay Sibley reminds us that *satura* "consisted of a mixture of ingredients that were blended in such a way that only those with 'discriminating palates' could come close to knowing what they were tasting" (59). If De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript* smacks of satirical intent, the next exegetical difficulty comes in digesting it. Or, as Wilson queries, "how do you interpret a text that interprets itself and mocks the results?" (145).

Satirical intent clearly underlies several aspects of De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript*, especially the manner in which it invites readers to judge the principal figures in the text: the strange Kosekin, the naive More, and the inept yachtmen. That is not to say, however, that readers can readily discern De Mille's purpose in portraying this deviant society and these dense readers. Unlike Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Chandler Haliburton before him, De Mille does not make it easy for readers to identify the precise objects of his satirical attack.

In his *Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel*, Moss succinctly remarks that De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript* "can be taken as a satire on Christianity, British society, the aristocracy, the new age of science, Darwinism, or all of these—or something else entirely" (91). Part of the difficulty in identifying De Mille's satiric targets is the apparent lack of corresponding satiric norms: unlike the devout Mephibosheth Stepsure or the cagey Sam Slick, Adam More is not a voice of moral or rational censure; his bewildered distaste for the Kosekin way-of-life is an involuntary emotional reflex which is itself open to satirical appraisal. Likewise, the men in the frame tale not only fail to provide allies with which readers may align themselves in their judgement of the bizarre land and of More's behaviour within it, but their failure to judge at all proves worthy of a few satiric jabs. Some critics regard the lack of an implicit moral standard and a clear object of attack as evidence of De Mille's shortcomings as a satirist; for example, Wilson asserts that "De Mille's satirical intentions—whatever they might have been—are effectively lost within the text's hall of mirrors" (144). Parks counters that this unsettling effect is part of De Mille's brilliant strategy; having created a cast of characters who represent various forms of extremism, "De Mille's position in the midst of this ingeniously confusing welter of ironies and cross-purposes is far from obvious" ("Strange" 76). Indeed, this resolutely multifarious novel, while complex, becomes a bewildering "hall of mirrors" only when it is distorted by a critical reading which seeks to produce either a random list of every conceivable satiric target or a totalizing critique which isolates just one. It is far more useful to group the numerous apparent objects of De Mille's scorn around three interrelated topics: Christian doctrine, Victorian values, and the Imperialist impulse. Such a reading addresses both personal and political ideologies,

balancing De Mille's and late nineteenth-century Canada's identity crises to reveal not only a profound exploration of the individual challenge to define and defend a code of values by which to live, but a thoughtful inquiry into the imperialistic urge to impose those values on others.

The generally accepted composition date of De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript*, the late 1860s, coincides with his rejection of the Baptist faith and his return to the Anglican church, and brings to mind a former student's recollection that, at this time, De Mille "took delight in ridiculing everything like cant, and even the ordinary words and actions of the 'pious' sort of people often brought to his keen eye and thin curling lip that peculiar sarcastic smile of his" (qtd. in Monk, *Gilded* 102). Gerson suggests that during these years De Mille may have been inclined to poke fun at matters he had treated seriously in his earlier fiction; the "Christians hiding in the catacombs and longing for martyrs' deaths in his first two novels may have inspired his satiric portrayal of the death-loving, cave-dwelling Kosekin in *A Strange Manuscript*" ("Three" 219). Even still, this bizarre community was not idly conceived; through his portrayal of the Kosekin, More's encounters with them, and the yachtsmen's analysis (or lack thereof) of both, De Mille makes numerous satiric jabs at Christian extremism on the one hand, and utter godlessness on the other--flaws he saw as prevalent in his society.

De Mille draws on his considerable knowledge of classical and biblical history in this portrait of a secluded Old Testament people who originated in the Eastern Mediterranean but left before the New Testament and the Greek and Roman philosophies of humanism and rationalism transformed a (perhaps) Semitic tradition. As a result of their isolation, the

Kosekin remain ignorant of the fundamental precepts of the *via media* of liberal Christian ethics, particularly the Aristotelian principle of the "golden mean." Therefore, Parks notes, in their zealous pursuit of the virtuous life, the Kosekin can practice only vice:

The Kosekin drive the virtue of temperance to its deficiency of abstinence in denying the beauty and pleasure of life rather than simply avoiding its harmful attractions. They drive the virtue of courage to its excess of foolhardiness when they seek death in battle with fanciful persistence. They drive the virtue of liberality to the excess of prodigality when they strive to give away all their possessions in the attempt to attain the poverty and worldly misery that they deem necessary to their "salvation"....They deny love as they deny life itself.

They reject any compromise between the flesh and the spirit. ("Strange" 73-74)

Most importantly, the Kosekin push the *contemptus mundi* of the ancient Hebrews to gross extremes; the most esteemed men in the land are mass murderers. They have also, one presumes, lost sight of the religious beliefs that originally underpinned their rituals. In so doing, the rituals themselves have become perverted; note, for example, that the *Mista Kosek* can be seen as a loathsome perversion of those ancient sacrifice rituals that evolved into the Christian Eucharist where Christ's body is symbolically consumed by his devotees.

These origins explain why the Kosekin are simultaneously both strange and yet strangely familiar to Westerners; while they established a value system largely antithetical to our own, they did so by pushing our moral standards and our religious creeds to their logical ends. When one considers that Christian doctrine devalues earthly life and worldly pleasures in its celebration of poverty, abstinence, and mortification of the flesh, it is not so difficult to

understand the Kosekin reverence for penury, misery, darkness, and death. In fact, as Woodcock notes, De Mille implicitly compares the Kosekin philosophy to Christian principles:

Can ritual cannibals regard themselves as superior to literal cannibals? Can those who glorify death in battle be regarded as devoted to life? Can those who seek their light beyond death walk in anything but darkness on this earth? Can those whose religion is based on the sacrifice and death of their own redeemer, who see true life beginning with the end of what life they now enjoy, be regarded as anything else than the devotees of death? ("Vision" 109)

Ultimately, De Mille suggests, our tendency towards Christian extremism makes us fully capable of championing the same anti-vitalist values that More finds so unnatural in the Kosekin; the only thing separating us from them is our lack of fortitude to put these death-loving convictions into practise.

Adam More's Kosekin name, "Atam-or," which translates to "Man of Light," insinuates that he is a Christ-figure destined to redeem the crude Kosekin by teaching them the life-loving ways of the enlightened culture from which he has come. It is a paradoxical designation, of course, since More is by no means a representative of Christian ethics and behaviour. The irony is especially apparent in his fervent wish to discover a kindred spirit among the Kosekin: "If I could only find someone who was a coward, and selfish and avaricious...how much brighter my life would be!" (167). When his steadfast rejection of Kosekin values attracts the attention of philosophical rebels, readers recognize the chance for conversion, for the beginnings of a grass-roots movement to bring an uplifting and godly



perspective to Kosekin thought. More does not. Instead, he reveals his own ludicrous extremism by outlining the debauched values he so proudly upholds: "I told him that in my country self was the chief consideration, self-preservation the first law of nature; death the King of Terrors; wealth the object of universal search, poverty the worst of evils; unrequited love nothing less than anguish and despair; to command others the highest glory; victory, honor; defeat, intolerable shame; and other things of the same sort" (170). Layelah instantly co-opts More's words and re-phrases them into a revolutionary mission statement that not only foregrounds their anti-Christian basis, but makes of More something of an anti-Christ: "'He is right,' said Layelah--'the heaven-born Atam-or. He shall be our teacher. The rich shall be esteemed, the poor shall be down-trodden; to rule over others shall be glorious, to serve shall be base; victory shall be an honor, defeat a shame; selfishness, self-seeking, luxury, and indulgence shall be virtues; poverty, want, and squalor shall be things of abhorrence and contempt'" (171). While More is moved only by the strength of Layelah's convictions, readers cannot miss the intense satiric irony in this scene and consequently must wonder if they too espouse such rapacious values even as they hypocritically proclaim Christian hearts.

Ultimately, Parks suggests, De Mille may be implying that "the distorted conception of God held by life-denying Christians is actually akin to the godlessness of the Kosekin, that a caricature of God amounting to blasphemy is not far removed from utter unawareness of God" ("Strange" 73). It is not too much to say that More is as godless as the Kosekin he encounters: his values are entirely untouched by any true understanding of, or faith in, God's Kingdom. When More and Agnew improvise a Christian burial for Tom Reed, the long-dead

sailor, they both assert that the service did them good by renewing their faith. More avows: "It has reminded me of what I had forgotten. This world is only a part of life. We may lose it and yet live on. There is another world; and if we can only keep that in our minds we sha'nt be so ready to sink into despair'" (23). These cheering sentiments are repeatedly undercut, however, by More's contrary assertion that he fears death to be "The King of Terrors" (93, 131, 170, 255). When he is faced with "a lingering death of horror and despair" (44), More neither prays for salvation nor does he engage in any soul-searching which might indicate a faith in God's merciful presence. In fact, other than professing to trust in "Providence" (53), More does not refer explicitly to God at all. His few moments of jubilant transport are so ambiguous that they can easily belie pagan idolatry. For instance, when More first surfaces in the land of the Kosekin and realizes that the snow storms and monster-filled caverns are behind him, he reports: "I burst into tears, and thanked the Almighty Ruler of the skies for this marvellous deliverance" (49). Considering that much later, at the end of the long polar night, More is so enraptured by the dawn that he admits, "I could have fallen on my knees and worshipped that rising sun" (268), it is quite possible that the "Almighty Ruler of the skies" he celebrates in the early chapter is not God in his Heaven at all.

More's tendency to blasphemy is apparent in several other passages in the manuscript. Not only does he accept Layelah's adulation, calmly noting that "In me she saw one who seemed to her like a prophet and teacher of a new order of things, and her whole soul responded to the principles which I announced" (171), but he is just as likely to colour his actions in hallowed hues. For instance, when he considers sacrificing himself to save Almah,

he muses: "Perhaps she might yet regain her native land and rejoin her loved kindred, whom she would tell of the stranger from an unknown shore who had loved her, and through whose death she had gained her life" (221). Of course, the ultimate sacrilege occurs in the final scene when More is transformed, in Kosekin eyes, into "some mighty being--some superior, perhaps supernatural power, who was to be almost worshipped" (262). Upon murdering the Chief Pauper and the nightmare-hag, More is momentarily shocked to witness a congregation half a million strong reverentially bowing down before him; however, he nonetheless self-servingly accepts their worship and names himself the new Almighty Ruler of the skies:

there was, for a moment, a feeling of aversion and horror within me at filling such a position; that I, a weak mortal, should dare to receive adoration like this; and I recoiled at the thought; yet this feeling soon passed; for life was at stake--not my own merely, but that of Almah; and I was ready now to go through anything if only I might save her: so, instead of shrinking from this new part, I eagerly seized upon it, and at once determined to take advantage of the popular superstition to the utmost.... "I am Atam-or, the Man of Light! I come from the land of light! I am the Father of Thunder, of Cloud and Darkness; the Judge of Death!" (262-263)

Conflating Christ, Zeus, and the Grim Reaper, Adam More ascends/descends by treachery to become the spiritual leader of those he despises. The irony of this moment is compounded by the fact that More's final statement in the manuscript (as we have it) is to compare himself with the original Adam--"I am the only man since Adam that was ever married without knowing it" (269)--effectively setting himself up as lord of this anti-Eden.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the fact that the last full chapter of the frame, "Oxenden Preaches a Sermon," seems to promise an analysis of the perversion of Christian doctrine throughout the manuscript, the yachtsmen seem entirely ignorant of this subtext in More's tale. It is not just that they fail to address any of the issues discussed above, they fail to note even the most reader-friendly details, such as the fact that the rebels' "Ten Commandments" (169) invite comparison with our own, and that the Beatitudes of the New Testament bear curious resemblance to Kosekin precepts. Readers might suspect this foursome of being entirely oblivious to biblical scripture if not for the fact that they twice refer to the Flood Story in their discussions: early in the frame tale, Featherstone remarks that the mysterious cylinder may contain "'part of the provisions laid in by Noah for his long voyage in the ark'" (5); later, Melick taunts the scholars by suggesting that the Kosekin may have reached the South Pole by way of the ark: "'Shem landed there from Noah's ark, and left some of his children to colonize the country. That's as plain as a pikestaff'" (153). Such causal references to the Old Testament hint that the blindness to the Christian subtext underpinning the enclosed manuscript is entirely wilful. Several times throughout the frame, these interpreters seem deliberately to stop just short of turning a critical eye back on themselves.

Congreve and Oxenden suggest that the Kosekin may be a Semitic race who "'have had a spiritual development of their own'" (236), but they disregard the implications of this conclusion: "that if the Kosekin are our spiritual cousins, and have simply pursued our common heritage to its logical extreme, then we shall have to re-examine the Judao-Christian foundations of our present values to see whether they, or we, have been found wanting" (Kilian 65). Similarly, although Oxenden skirts remarkably close to suggesting that there is a

connection between our beliefs and those of the Kosekin when he asserts that "'[a]ll philosophy and all religions teach us this one solemn truth, that in this life the evil surpasses the good'" (236), he does not include Christianity in his ensuing discussion, referring instead to Indian, Japanese, Chinese, and Greek religions. Time and again, these men sidestep an analysis of More's principal anxieties, creating a curious sense of non-sequitur as the novel moves between adventure and frame; for example, after reading eight long chapters (9-16) outlining the Kosekin credo and More's aversion to it, the yachtsmen have no comment to make about either, but choose instead to quibble over the possible origins of the giant birds and swamp monsters that inhabit the region. Despite being at odds about the fundamental nature of this document, these "congenial friends" (1) are clearly united in their distinct reluctance to address any topic which might lead them to an analysis of their own espousal or rejection of Christian values.

In his creation of the extreme Kosekin society, his depiction of More's hypocritical reaction to it, and his portrayal of a group of readers unwilling to read More if it means reading themselves, De Mille satirizes not only Christian cant but the clichés and conventions underlying Victorian values at large—especially those related to love and war. Again, the satire is double-edged, revealing that both the severity of the Kosekin position and More's acute reaction to it are indicative of serious flaws in Western society. As Watters observes, "conventional romantic cant is rife among the Kosekin, and is practised literally; the results, which to them are simply logical, seem sheer lunacy to Adam More" (Introduction xv). Indeed, when the Kohen explains that it would be a "'self-contradiction'" for lovers to marry, but that sometimes those that unfortunately fall in love stay together for "'the children's

sake'," More calls his words "the wildest and maddest flights of fancy that ever were known" (132). However, it is not difficult to appreciate the irony here; marriages of convenience held together for appearance's sake surely cannot be a foreign concept to More. As Woodcock points out, "[u]nfulfilled love was a product of Victorian sexual morality and marriage customs" ("Vision" 109). Furthermore, our long literary tradition of glorifying the bittersweet ache of a broken heart may find an echo in the Kosekin preference for unrequited love and their custom of separating lovers in an un-marriage ceremony. More notes: "Lovers have died broken-hearted from being compelled to marry one another. Poets here among the Kosekin celebrate unhappy love which has met with this end" (137).

Even as De Mille satirizes the Kosekin opinion of the natural evolution of romantic relationships, so too does he ridicule More's attitudes towards women, and his emotional entanglements with Almah and Layelah. Through More's conduct, De Mille reveals flaws underpinning Western cultural assumptions that are as absurd as any Kosekin practise. For instance, More is disconcerted to note that, in this inverted hierarchy, men appear to occupy a position of subordination to women, although it is clear that, by Kosekin standards, women are weak. For instance, women are numerous among the wealthy classes, since "they are a little less unwilling to receive gifts" (142); in the army and navy they occupy the low positions of officer and general, because they "seem a little less fond of death than men" (142). Similarly, wives allow their husbands to give them everything and do everything for them, which seemingly makes them "universally the rulers of the household, while the husbands have an apparently subordinate, but, to the Kosekin, a more honorable position" (142).

It is in matters of love, however, that More finds the Kosekin culture insupportable. Layelah explains that women "'generally fall in love first, and it is expected that they will tell their love first. The delicacy of a woman's feelings makes this natural, for if a man tells his love to a woman who does not love him, it shocks her modesty; while if a woman tells a man, he has no modesty to shock'" (174). This speech is but a prelude to Layelah's declaration of love and proposal of marriage, an act which shocks More's very un-Kosekin modesty. Finding himself unexpectedly thrust into the woman's position of fielding inappropriate advances, More reacts with one of the most comic speeches in the novel:

The fact is that it doesn't do good for women to take the initiative--it's not fair. I had stood a good deal among the Kosekin. Their love of darkness, their passion for death, their contempt of riches, their yearning after unrequited love, their human sacrifices, their cannibalism, all had more or less become familiar to me, and I had learned to acquiesce in silence; but now when it came to this--that a woman should propose to a man--it was really more than a fellow could stand. I felt this at that moment very forcibly; but then the worst of it was that Layelah was so confoundedly pretty, and had such a nice way with her, that hang me if I knew what to say. (179-180)

More's fickle nature is also open to satiric attack since the only two women in the entire land to offer him any flattering attention find easy entrance into his heart; because he claims to love Almah more than life itself, but cannot deny that he is also quite enamoured of Layelah, More suggests marrying them both. He is ridiculed for such a proposal, but, in his defence, challenges: "Let any gentleman put himself in my situation, and ask himself what he would

do" (179). Ultimately, however, he chooses the placid, virginal Almah over the forward temptress, Layelah, revealing a male bias which dictates the subordination of women and demands that they obey strict gender roles. Both More's and readers' impressions of these women as strict opposites are undercut, however, by the fact that Layelah proves weak and submissive in crisis, deferring tearfully to More when he foils her rescue plan and crash-lands them on Magones, while Almah is strong and brave in crisis, taking charge once More has killed her would-be assassins, and conceiving of the plan that will not only save their lives but secure them a happy future.<sup>59</sup>

More's willingness to die on Magones, and his decision to kill the Chief Pauper and the nightmare hag, are both prompted by his love for Almah. Not only do these desperate acts put our romantic clichés into literal action, but they once again reveal More's hypocritical embrace of the very actions he abhors witnessing among the Kosekin. The Kohen points out the comparison: "'When you are with Almah you act like one of the Kosekin. You watch her to see and anticipate her slightest wish; you are eager to give her everything. She, on the other hand, is equally eager to give up all to you. Each of you is willing to lay down life for the other. You would gladly rush upon death to save her from harm'" (158). While the Kohen praises the "'almighty and wondrous power of Love'" (158) to effect such positive changes in More's behaviour, readers cannot fail to notice that it is the secular love of a beautiful woman and not the sublime love of God which prompts More to put selfless Christian precepts into practise. Furthermore, the phrase, "gladly rush upon death," recalls the very behaviour More is at a loss to understand in the Kosekin—especially when they embark on a sacred hunt: "These men who thought nothing of life, but flung it away at the



command of their chief without dreaming of flight or of hesitation" (91-2). More attends a few hunts but finds that he cannot stand them: "I was sickened at the horrible cruelty, the needless slaughter, the mad self-sacrifice which distinguished them. I was overwhelmed with horror at the merciless destruction of brave comrades" (103).

Perhaps more interesting than More's willingness to die, is his willingness to kill. The Kohen also points out to More that he upholds Kosekin principles when it comes to matters of war: "'Have you not told me incredible things about your people, among which there were a few that seemed natural and intelligible? Among these was your system of honoring above all those men who procure the death of the largest number. You, with your pretended fear of death, wish to meet it in battle as eagerly as we do, and your most renowned men are those who have sent most to death'" (157). Not surprisingly, More "had no answer to make" (157) to these strange remarks. He fails to see the similarity between killing those who "ask for it" literally and those who "ask for it" metaphorically; while he is horrified beyond belief when the Kohen begs on bended knee for More to give him "'the blessing of darkness and death'" (92), he is quite willing to inflict lethal force on those whom he determines are deserving of it. For instance, when More first realizes that he and Agnew are in danger among the natives who had welcomed them ashore, he swears that he is "ready to blow out the brains of the first who dared to approach me" (36). Even though he escapes without incident, he punishes the cannibals for breaking his own moral codes: "before I fled I turned in fury to wreak vengeance upon them for their crimes. Full of rage and despair, I discharged my remaining rifle-barrel into the midst of their crowd" (39). Similarly, as he awaits his ceremonial execution at the hands of the Chief Pauper, More takes comfort in his plan to kill as many of

his captors as he can, not in hope of saving himself, but in denunciation of their way-of-life: "My fire-arms were now my chief consolation; for I had fully made up my mind not to die quietly like a slaughtered calf, but to strike a blow for life, and meet my death amid slain enemies. In this prospect I found some satisfaction" (255). More's admission that he finds pleasure in the hope of inflicting violent death for its own sake underscores De Mille's anti-war message. The uselessness of armed conflict is suggested in More's observation of Kosekin battles: "The state is willing to destroy itself for the good of other states, but as other states are in the same position, nothing can result" (140). As Wilson asserts, the "similarity between the two societies is clearly a satirical attack aimed at Victorian militarism (139).

As Gerson points out, a brief review of De Mille's biography reveals that he was situated on the margins of several political and economic empires and that he was aware of the complexities of various forms of national and international power; for instance, he was educated in the United States, where his venture into writing was shaped by the cultural imperialism of the American publishing industry; he spent most of his life in the Maritimes, which he saw decline within Confederation; moreover, he was "an accomplished linguist who must have been aware of the larger historical situations associated with the rise and decline of world languages; and as the author of a textbook on rhetoric, he knew something about the power of discourse itself" ("Contrapuntal" 225). The pervasive arguments for imperial federation with Britain which were gathering force at the time that De Mille is alleged to have been composing *A Strange Manuscript* were indeed among the most powerful political and economic discourses in the country. In fact, the rise of imperialist sentiment—especially

as expressed in the writings of the "Canada First" group in the late 1860s—may well have inspired the anti-imperialist undercurrent in De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript*.

In *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, Carl Berger suggests that the view of the British Empire as a divine agency of progress whose duty was to seek out and to civilize and Christianize the world's "backward races" was a traditional one; however, "it became so firmly fused with the imperialist conception of Canadian nationality and purpose that the attainment of nationhood itself was made contingent upon the acceptance of the white man's burden" (218). Imperialists argued that the confederation of Canada and the imminent union with the British Empire was not an historical accident, but the result of God's larger plan; thus, in defining herself as a nation, Canada was obliged to assume her share in the Empire's work. Since the realization of the civilizing mission abroad was dependent upon the existence of a sound society in the imperial state, the social gospel was a necessary ingredient of imperialism: "Without a purified and healthy social order within, the imperializing nation would not only lack the strength for the exercise of power but it would also project its own evils into those lands over which it held sway" (Berger 186). The ideal social order, according to champions of imperialism such as George Grant and George Parkin, is grounded in a disdain for material goods and wealth and a corresponding celebration of the spirituality which underpins the human will and ideals that form the predominant forces in history and which truly make a nation great (Berger 219). In fact, these ardent imperialists "called for a dedication of material things and human effort to spiritual ends and created an imperialistic ethic which was so intense, so insistent upon self-sacrifice, that men must have wondered whether it could ever be achieved in this world"

(Berger 215). It becomes intriguing, then, also to read De Mille's portrayal of More and the yachtsman as representatives of the *actual* social order underpinning the so-called civilizing mission, and his description of the Kosekin society as already embracing the supposedly *ideal* self-sacrificial social order—that is, as a satirical send-up of the imperialist ethic that was so fervently championed by a vocal element of Canadian society.

Readers' initial impression of Adam More may well be that he is the very embodiment of the ideal imperialist championed by the likes of Parkin and Grant. In the opening paragraphs of the manuscript, More explains that he was the first mate on board a ship commissioned by the British government to convey convicts to Van Dieman's Land, a position that situates him as a man of some authority involved in "a venture directly bolstering the project of empire" (Gerson, "Contrapuntal" 227). The first phrase in More's letter of introduction—"I am an Englishman" (8)—implies that his British nationality is a defining characteristic; and his request that the manuscript be forwarded to his father is capped with a paraphrase of the Christian injunction to "Do unto others...": "*Do this for the sake of that mercy which you may one day wish to have shown to yourself*" (8). However, it immediately becomes clear that while More undoubtedly views the world through imperial eyes, he and his fellow shipmates are by no means on a Christ-like quest to bring spiritual enlightenment and civilized values to the world's backward races. De Mille makes this point with subtle irony in the first few paragraphs of the manuscript; More notes that the crew sighted Desolation Island on January 6th—the Epiphany, a Christian holiday commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the Magi.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Christ, whose earthly mission was to relieve desolation in all forms, these sailors are repelled by the dangerous and dreary prospect

and opt to move on quickly. Even as they express little interest in exploring these foreign vistas themselves, they nevertheless take the opportunity, when it arises, to write their names upon them: "The promontory was very singular in shape, rising up to a peak which was at least a thousand feet in height and readily identified by any future explorer. We named it, after our ship, Trevelyan Peak" (11). Clearly, they act as British imperialists.

Gerson suggests that the name of More's ship foreshadows his behaviour among the Kosekin: the *Trevelyan*, "likely named for Sir Charles Trevelyan, an influential career administrator from 1826 to 1865 who laid the foundations of both the education system in British India and the civil service in England, proves to be an appropriately christened vessel for one who will behave like a prototypical imperialist when he encounters an unknown Native society" ("Contrapuntal" 227). Indeed, when More is unwillingly thrust among grim landscapes and peoples, he cannot surmount his notably un-Christian disgust. Consider his description of the polar people he and Agnew first encounter: "They were human beings certainly, but of such an appalling aspect that they could only be likened to animated mummies. They were small, thin, shrivelled, black, with long matted hair and hideous faces. They all had long spears, and wore about the waist short skirts that seemed to be made of the skin of some sea-fowl. We could not imagine how these creatures lived, or where" (29). More proves Swiftian in his protracted explanation of his immovable repugnance at the mere sight of these people: "It was like the horror which one feels toward rats, cockroaches, earwigs, or serpents. It was something that defied reason. These creatures seemed like human vermin" (33). Such observations, ungenerous though they may be, are standard elements of the imperialist trope which must construct the "other" as uncivilized if it is to legitimize its

mission. More's dehumanizing rhetoric ("These people were not like human beings" [37]), his focus on skin colour, dress, and tools, and his remark that "their speech was a mockery of language" (37), encapsulate the racist assumptions with which European imperialists viewed the aboriginals of every continent on earth. More's need to categorize and rank this community exposes his bigotry and his assumption of superiority: "Even the wretched aborigines of Van Diemen's Land, who have been classed the lowest in the scale of humanity, were pleasing and congenial when compared with these" (30).<sup>61</sup>

Feeling uneasy among these unfamiliar people, More fires his gun, expecting that a display of force might "'inspire a little wholesome respect'" (31). Although the resultant smoke and noise do not produce the desired effect, More is certain that Agnew's fraternizing is inadvisable: "To make friends with such fiends was impossible and I felt sure that our only plan was to rule by terror--to seize, to slay, to conquer" (37). Here, and throughout his adventures, More is a parodic Caesar, not simply intent on imposing his values on any society he encounters, but willing to do so by violence--thus making the nineteenth-century British, in Al Purdy's phrase for twentieth-century Americans, "the new Romans". In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt argues that "bureaucracy and militarism are the central instruments of empire, and control over firearms the single most decisive factor in Europe's subjection of others, right down to the present day" (35). More's militarism is evident from the beginning of his escapades (he hauls a seemingly inexhaustible supply of ammunition), and his usurpation of Kosekin bureaucracy marks the end of them. When, standing amid the slain bodies of the Kosekin leaders, More and Almah claim all of the rights and privileges they desire, they expose the violent and

exploitative nature of the imperialist project, giving the lie to the "white man's burden."<sup>62</sup> More is not inherently powerful and successful; he survives because of his gun, and will prosper because of his deception. By twisting the Kosekin value system to his advantage, he will be able to wield power and to amass wealth while masquerading as a champion to his unwitting followers.<sup>63</sup> Thus, De Mille can be seen to argue that such behaviour, far from representing the idealized imperialist project, is the actual--and despicable--result of the so-called civilizing mission abroad.

But De Mille's satire of imperialism extends beyond pointing out the hypocrisy of More's actions among the Kosekin; in fact, the very manner in which More commits his story to text and the reception of that text by the yachtsman cleverly parody and ultimately undermine imperialist discourse itself. Considering the ostensible purpose of More's laborious task of writing this message-in-a-bottle, he devotes an absurd amount of time and energy to recording pseudo-scientific details on the one hand, and to recounting the trials and tribulations of his personal relationships with Almah and Layelah on the other. However, as Pratt explains, these wildly diverse rhetorical strategies are representative of the main tropes in imperial travel writing: "science and sentiment code the imperial frontier in the two eternally clashing and complementary languages of bourgeois subjectivity" (39). Uncertain and alone in an unfamiliar landscape and among unfamiliar people, More adopts the rhetorical tactics that will write him into a position of authority and power; he is, by turns, the scientific explorer participating in the European knowledge-building project which "asserted an urban, lettered, male authority over the whole of the planet" (Pratt 39), and the romantic hero not only fighting gallantly for survival amid unspeakable terrors, but caught in

a bewildering love triangle with two beautiful and eternally devoted women.<sup>64</sup> Significantly, De Mille ironically undercuts More in both roles, first by emphasizing the would-be scientist's ludicrous lack of inquisitiveness and his inability to understand his new environment, and then by revealing the romantic hero to be a man of highly feminized sensibilities given to frequent bouts of tears and fainting spells.

De Mille complements his satire of More's imperialism by portraying the yachtsmen as worthy of similar jabs; indeed, as their conversation continuously supports and justifies More's actions, readers are invited to condemn this ship of fools. Although these particular sailors are not overtly involved in the same imperial mission that More was, it is clear that they are to be read as imperialists. Gerson points out that, on one level, De Mille situates the frame tale within the metanarrative of empire through a series of broad hints relating to Featherstone's wealth; note, for instance, that he lounges in an Indian hammock, identifying him as a direct beneficiary of the British Empire; that the name of his yacht, the *Falcon*, metonymically identifies the predatory nature of his nationality and class;<sup>65</sup> and that the yacht lays becalmed between the Canaries and the Madeira Islands, "land belonging respectively to Spain and Portugal, originators of modern European imperialism" ("Contrapuntal" 227). More telling, Gerson argues, is the manner in which Featherstone and his guests manipulate knowledge and discourse. While the men are not representatives of the British government, military, or Church--institutions most directly involved in the imperialist mission--"the selection of readers for More's manuscript supports the current postcolonial analysis of knowledge and discourse as the underpinnings of empire" ("Contrapuntal" 227-228). In effect, the yachtsmen consume the manuscript as they likely consume the meals over



which they discuss it, savouring the bits that they enjoy and leaving untouched that which they consider distasteful. In doing so, they emphasize the conflict—evident in the double focus of More's narrative—between science and sentiment in imperial travel writing.

Congreve and Oxenden ignore the extensive portions of More's account that are written in the sensational and sentimental style of the popular anecdotal literature of survival. Instead, they marginalize the human drama at the core of More's tale and foreground his observations on the flora and fauna in this unknown south-polar tropic, attempting to wrest the writer from the literary tradition of sea voyages and shipwrecks, and to position him instead within the academically-sanctioned tradition of scientific exploration. Like More, who situates his own ample observations about such topics as ocean currents, weather patterns, shorelines, volcanoes, foliage, wildlife, and Kosekin customs and appearance in reference to well-known explorers' and naturalists' journals,<sup>66</sup> the learned yachtsmen discuss More's account in relation to their own specialties. Strangely enough, the resulting discursive monologues become a form of entertainment among the men; when Oxenden delivers a long lecture on the languages of the Aryan family, Featherstone exclaims: "By Jove!...I like this. This is equal to your list of the plants of the Coal Period, doctor. But I say, Oxenden, while you are about it, why don't you give us a little dose of Anglo-Saxon and Sanscrit? By Jove!" (151). Their narrow focus and encyclopedic attention to detail are consistent with the explanatory discourse so popular in late-eighteenth-century natural history writing; for instance, Pratt points to explorer John Barrow's description of a campsite by a salt lake which includes "two pages of speculation on the origins of the salt. Chemical, thermal, and geophysical hypotheses are offered to explain the presence of minerals, the composition of

bogs, the directions of mountain ranges and river flows" (60). Ultimately, Congreve and Oxenden are dissatisfied with More's narration, complaining that he "'is too general in his descriptions. He has not a scientific mind, and he gives but few data'" (148).

Melick, who does not participate (constructively) in these conversations, mockingly commiserates: "'What a pity is it...that the writer of this manuscript had not the philological, theological, sociological, geological, pæological, ontological, orthinological, and all the other logical attainments of yourself and the doctor!'" (238). Of course, he too is dissatisfied with More's manuscript, though for different reasons than his learned friends: "'I know no more about the geography of the antarctic circle than I do of the moon,'" he declares, "'I simply criticize from a literary point of view'" (65). To his mind, the manuscript is a poorly executed hoax (61). Scoffing at Congreve's and Oxenden's keen interest in the ostensibly scientific details of the polar-tropic's flora and fauna, Melick dismisses them as the stale literary devices borrowed from adventure tales; for instance, he ridicules the nightmarish underground cavern with its terrible sea serpent from which More barely escapes (65), as well as the numerous wild and tame monsters that More encounters during his stay with the Kosekin (143). While arguing that such plot points are reminiscent of "'one of the voyages of Sindbad the Sailor'" (66), Melick doubts that the manuscript's author was a sailor himself: "'No sailor would ever express himself in that way. That's what struck me from the first. It has the ring of a confounded sensation-monger all through'" (65). He concludes that the writer "'wanted to get up a sensation novel and introduce it to the world with a great flourish of trumpets, and so he has taken this way of going about it'" (61). Satisfied that he has solved the mystery of the strange manuscript, Melick then proceeds to review it; like many a

reviewer before him, he denigrates the work at hand by describing the one the author should have written:

"His plan is not bad, but he fails utterly in his execution. The style is detestable. If he had written in the style of the plain seaman, and told a simple unvarnished tale, it would have been all right. In order to carry out properly such a plan as this the writer should take Defoe as his model, or, still better, Dean Swift. *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* show what can be done in this way, and form a standard by which all other attempts must be judged. But this writer is tawdry; he has the worst vices of the sensation school—he shows everywhere marks of haste, gross carelessness, and universal feebleness. When he gets hold of a good fancy, he lacks the patience that is necessary in order to work it up in an effective way. He is a gross plagiarist, and over and over again violates in the most glaring manner all the ordinary proprieties of style."

(228)

Throughout the frame tale, the other men on board tolerate Melick's derision, repelling his criticisms as the predictable response of "'a professional cynic, sceptic, and scoffer'" (145). As a result, the men grow increasingly bewildered at the others' failure to modify their supposedly wrong-headed views. The impasse is most apparent in the final debate, which returns to the topic of More's reliability; an incredulous Melick asks Oxenden:

"Do you mean to say that you still accept all this as *bona fide*?"

"Do you mean to say," retorted Oxenden, "that you still have any doubt about the authenticity of this remarkable manuscript?"

At this each looked at the other; Melick elevated his eyebrows, and Oxenden shrugged his shoulders; but each seemed unable to find words to express his amazement at the other's stupidity, and so they took refuge in silence. (229)

The novel ends in silence when a weary Featherstone cuts short More's tale, declaring "'I'm tired, and can't read any more'" (269). By this point, the yachtsman are clearly deadlocked, each clinging resolutely to his own limited perspective and refusing to acknowledge the myriad ways in which both the Kosekin world and More's behaviour within it negatively reflect his own actions and assumptions. Ultimately, it is this self-defensive binary vision that De Mille mocks throughout *A Strange Manuscript*. Having ignored every opportunity to turn their interpretive gaze inwards to engage in a meaningful discussion of their own flaws, biases, and shortcomings, these readers ignorantly close the book on More's manuscript, accepting the familiar as further evidence of what they already knew, and rejecting the unfamiliar as inconsequential. As readers, they illustrate Swift's pessimistic definition of satire as "a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally see every body's face but their own" (247).

Each man, in his own way, fails to see that the concept of difference is gradually erased in More's manuscript as the familiar and unfamiliar are conflated in curiously significant ways. Their inability to recognize the collapse of binary logic in this world is, perhaps, not surprising when one considers the outcome of the gaming regatta in the opening pages of the novel. The men are excitedly engaged in the race between the white and red boats "until at last the two paper boats seemed blended together in one dim spot which gradually faded out of sight" (4). Instead of conceding a tie, the group engages in a spirited

argument: "Some of the bets were off, but others remained an open question, and each side insisted upon a different view of the case" (4). This pointless exchange--if the two boats have become one, the issue of "winner" and "loser" is moot--is, in essence, transferred to their next entertaining diversion: the strange manuscript found in a copper cylinder. In their reading of the Kosekin society, the yachtsmen refuse to acknowledge a "tie" (in this case, the erasure of difference) but hold fast to their insistence that there is always a winner and loser, an us and them, a right and wrong, a self and other. Janice Kulyk Keefer suggests that readers should come to see, as the novel unfolds, that De Mille's prime target of satiric attack is not his own society's hypocrisy or injustice, nor the Kosekin's transvalued society, but rather the general failure to appreciate that "all societies are relative and fictive in their recognition of what is 'normal' and 'natural.'" Accordingly, he sets up Adam More and an exemplary Kosekin as double mirrors reflecting one another's incredulity and horror at what each considers good or necessary" (134). Watters agrees, arguing that De Mille "compels us to re-examine and clarify our whole system of values, in order to eliminate the kind of misconception and error which we can so readily detect in the Kosekin view of life, and which they can see in ours, but which, to each people in turn, are concealed in their own outlook by the pattern of their *a priori* assumptions about human nature" (Introduction x). Thus De Mille insistently undercuts the binarism that supports imperialism; through the juxtaposition of More and the Kosekin people, it becomes evident that opposites are not necessarily contrary at all, but instead can be seen as fundamentally the same. Readers are constantly prompted by De Mille's text to recognize how a reliance on inappropriate binarisms--not to mention false assumptions, logical fallacies, and a clutch of other

interpretive pratfalls—leads both More and his first readers to ineffective and often ridiculous misreadings of texts, of individuals, and of whole cultures and societies. In this way, *A Strange Manuscript* may represent a self-deprecating satirical poke at De Mille's own exegetical profession. Guth concurs, arguing that De Mille's subtextual comments on exegesis provide a strong connection between More's romance adventure narrative and the frame tale:

Read concurrently, the frame and romance reveal misinterpretations, omissions, discrepancies, unanswered or ignored questions. They reveal the impossibility of exegetical consensus and thus the impossibility of ending (an important issue to consider in relation to De Mille's 'unfinished' novel).<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the inter-relationship of the two narrative movements is, simply, a moral one: a warning against exegetical absolutism, or, as in More's case, exegetical abdication. It is an inter-relationship specifically aimed at the reader, whose responsibility lies in seeing *A Strange Manuscript* as simultaneously a warning and an invitation: a warning about the difficulty of exegesis that nevertheless invites the reader to become an exegete in order to reach this conclusion. (48)

While this "minor classic of Canadian fiction" ("Strange" 61), as Parks terms it, has garnered a great deal of recent critical attention, James De Mille's "achievements in humour and satire have never attracted anything like the world-wide attention paid to his predecessor Thomas Chandler Haliburton or to his successor Stephen Leacock" (Watters, Introduction vii).<sup>68</sup> Indeed, until the relatively recent spate of scholarly articles, it seems that De Mille's satirical intentions were largely overlooked or dismissed as ineffective; consider, for instance,

Cogswell's appraisal of the novel for *The Literary History of Canada: "A Strange Manuscript* "is a good adventure story despite the tedious comments upon the manuscript and despite the satirical diversions" ("Maritime" 127-128). Most critics now agree that the "tedious comments" and "satirical diversions" are key elements of this novel, and the "good adventure story" which balances them out is really a complementary narrative movement that enhances and develops the satirical themes. Similarly, in *An Outline of Canadian Literature*, Lorne Pierce suggests that De Mille was the father of the Leacockian type of humour despite the fact that his novels do not "have a Canadian setting, nor any national point of view" (164). On the contrary, it can be argued that, while De Mille choose to set his tale impossibly far from Maritime shores, his point of view is specifically Canadian. Writing at the birth of the nation, De Mille encapsulated the complex issues surrounding Canada's changing relationship with the mother country in a deceptively simple popular story. By having one man's discovery of a strange race stand metonymically for the British imperialist project as a whole, and then by satirically undercutting that man at every turn, he clearly and insistently questions the values and assumptions that support notions of empire. The various failures of the manuscript's original readers prompt the text's actual readers to recognize the self-serving hypocrisy, contemptible racism, ridiculous notions of superiority, and sheer stupidity that inform the "civilizing mission" and implicitly asks readers if they care to be part of it. It was a full fifteen years after the publication of *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* that the "Imperial Question" came to a head; Canadians ultimately rejected the movement toward closer political, economic, and military ties with Great Britain. While De Mille's novel likely had little to do with the national resistance to active membership in the Empire,

the text stands as an early example of the philosophical objections to such membership.

Though very different in scope and approach from Thomas Haliburton before him, and Sara Jeannette Duncan after, De Mille casts a similarly sceptical eye across the Atlantic to the Colonial Office in Great Britain, and finds it wanting. In *The Imperialist*, as its title announces, Sara Jeannette Duncan takes up this aspect of De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript* and addresses the issue directly, if still with a sophisticated irony that had become by then the hallmark of Canadian satiric fiction.



### SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN'S *THE IMPERIALIST*

While there have been mere passing references to just half a dozen women writers in this study, there was certainly no lack of talented and prolific Canadian women producing fiction throughout the nineteenth century: Julia Catharine Hart, Anna Jameson, Sarah and Mary Eliza Herbert, Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Trail, May Agnes Fleming, Agnes Maule Machar, Isabella Valancy Crawford, Margaret Murray Robertson, Rosanna Leprohon, Sarah Anne Curzon, Susie Frances Harrison, Pauline Johnson, Marshall Saunders, Ethelwyn Wetherald, Lily Dougall and Sara Jeannette Duncan can be said to form the backbone of the canon. To a large extent, their work represents the best of the period's most popular genres ranging from supportive counsel to local colour, to melodramatic and mythic fiction, to sentimental and historical romance.<sup>69</sup> Sara Jeannette Duncan is both part of this tradition, and yet clearly stands apart from it. Her background as a pioneering journalist, her keen interest in modern literary techniques, and her life abroad in India and England gave her (what so many critics call) "a different point of view" than that of her literary contemporaries and foremothers. Duncan is not, of course, simply an important *female* writer; she has been called "one of the most important literary witnesses to the post-Confederation, pre-World War I era" (Tausky, *DLB* 97). Thomas Tausky suggests that the fascination of Duncan's work lies, in part,

in the fact that it can be—indeed, must be—examined in terms of several cultural contexts. Duncan can be seen as a product of the literary climate then

prevailing in Canada, and as an essentially Canadian writer with whom parallels may be found throughout our literature; as a writer strongly influenced by literary examples outside of Canada, particularly Howells and James; as a writer within the tradition of Anglo-Indian literature; as a novelist of Empire grappling with the colonial psychology that also produced fiction in other countries; and as a woman writer expressing a woman's perspective of the world. (*Canadian* 42)

Acutely conscious of Canada's changing political and cultural climate, Duncan prophesied that the impending breakdown of the long-powerful colonial ideology would have a profound impact on the nation's literary activity: "There is a wide difference, though comparatively few years span it, between a colonial and a Canadian, and we may not unnaturally look for a corresponding difference in their literary productions" (1887; qtd. in Tausky, *Journalism* 114-115). The difference Duncan speaks of is evident in her own work, which dramatizes the various affinities and distinctions between Canadians, Americans, and Britons in novels that ironically blend traditional romance with modern social realism. While she was forward-looking in her use of innovative fictional techniques and in her interest in portraying the social and political realities of her day, in many ways her approach can also be seen to recall that of James De Mille. Note, for instance, that Germaine Warkentin's general description of Duncan's fiction echoes much of what has been said of De Mille's work. She points to Duncan's "fine descriptive gift, the raw sting of an almost ungovernable irony, and above all her wicked sense of the difference between theory and practice, between the ways people say they behave, and the ways they actually do. In particular, we note how ready she

is to exploit popular narrative conventions (often by inverting them), and well-known narrative genres" (15). However, while De Mille's critics contend that he cleverly parodies romantic literary conventions to suggest his own cultural superiority to the popular audience his circumstances forced him to address, Duncan's satiric humour is seemingly intended to reform that audience. In both theory and practise, she argued that the most popular genres in North America were those that were the least suited to that society.<sup>70</sup>

In content, some of Duncan's work is reminiscent of an earlier Canadian satirist: Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Like him, she envisioned a politically and culturally vigorous Canadian nation which based its identity on its British heritage and continued to maintain close ties with the Empire, but which also benefitted from the American example of liberty, industry, and resourcefulness. Her satiric perspective on the blundering political relations between Canada, Britain, and America recalls Haliburton's Sam Slick sketches. In her support of an improved British connection, Duncan—like Haliburton before her—cast an ironic eye on "the many ways in which obtuseness and self-interest could combine to defeat even the best laid plans of Empire" (Fortier ii). However, because she believed that schemes for American annexation could no longer prevail, she did not share Haliburton's sense of urgency; to her mind, closer alliance to the motherland was not a strategy to ensure the mere survival of a British colony, but the basis for the Canadian nation's equal participation in the larger British Empire (Fortier 248-250).

Duncan's vision of the future, Faye Hammill contends, "was founded on a wholehearted belief in the possibility of a creativity inspired specifically by a love for, and knowledge of, Canada itself" (160). Unlike Haliburton's lavish praise of his birthplace which

was designed to inspire the British to make better use and take better care of its valuable resource, Duncan's appreciation of her homeland is grounded in a genuine pride in its achievements and concern for its future development. The most obvious manifestation of this pride and concern is found in her twelfth novel, *The Imperialist* (1904). In its ironic and poignant portrayal of small-town Canadian life, it anticipates Leacock's best-known work, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Joseph Zezulka notes the connection, observing that both Duncan and Leacock took a decidedly Canadian approach to the literary vogue of "local colour" fiction:

The demand for local colour encouraged, if it did not positively dictate, a certain degree of parochialism, which in turn could and sometimes did become stultifying. In the United States, the reaction against this element in regional art led to a "revolt from the Village" culminating in Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* in 1920; in Canada, it led more characteristically to an ironic or humorous deflation of the local without necessitating its outright rejection. In this sense, Leacock and Duncan and many subsequent writers have found in Canadian provincialism both their point of view and the target of their wit.

("Passionate" 81)

Duncan's satiric position in *The Imperialist* sets her apart from most colonial writers in its recognition that Canada has finally outgrown its colonial status and no longer shares its outlook with the motherland. While she still finds much to criticize in Canadian society, she also argues that its ideals are located there. She underscores this viewpoint by positing many of her satiric norms in Canadian society itself; while she invites all of her readers to share her

perspective, her portrayal of British visitor Arthur Hesketh demonstrates that British society—because it cannot always grasp these norms—often fails to read the irony, and therefore (to its detriment) cannot understand the Canadian viewpoint.

Duncan was born in 1861 in Brantford, Ontario, into a middle-class, Liberal family. Her father, Charles, had emigrated from Scotland in 1852; after working a short time in Saint John, New Brunswick—where he met and married Jane Bell, a second generation Canadian of Ulster stock—he moved on, settling finally in south-western Ontario, where he operated a successful dry-goods and furniture store for decades. In her biography of Sara Jeannette Duncan, Marian Fowler points out that "Charles Duncan had a driving ambition for material success, and a consummate belief in his own abilities to achieve it. By 1879, his dry goods and furniture store was already one of the biggest in southwestern Ontario" (15). Jane Duncan, Fowler adds, balanced her husband's "American ideals of material progress and hard work" with the "British cultural ones of custom and civility"; moreover, the town of Brantford was itself "half American and half British in its ideals" (28), thus fostering in Duncan a sense of her homeland as a development between the United States and the British Isles.

Alfred G. Bailey surveys the diverse cultural resources of Brant County and remarks that several other noteworthy Canadians, whose interests parallel Duncan's, originated from the area; Pauline Johnson, a contemporary of Duncan's, achieved considerable fame as a Native-Canadian poet; Norman Duncan (no relation) was both a distinguished journalist and the author of the popular "Billy Topsail" boys' adventure stories; and Adelaide Hunter

Hoodless founded the first Women's Institute there, "the nucleus of what came to be a world-wide movement" ("Setting" 207). Referring specifically to Duncan, Bailey adds that it is not too much to surmise that her intellectual development and literary tastes may have been formed, in part, by the fact that she was a welcome guest in the Brantford area homes of two important nineteenth-century Canadian figures:

Although she was only nine years old at the time that the man who was to invent the telephone took up residence with his parents on Tutelo Heights, it is said that she became a frequent visitor to the Bell homestead, and there mingled with the members of a family who had always, up to that time, lived in an academic atmosphere with individuals of broad culture and like interests. It may seem of almost equal significance to note that she was known to be a visitor on occasion, to the country home of the Honorable [sic] George Brown, now retired from politics, but still a power behind the Liberal party and the *Toronto Globe*. ("Setting" 207)

This informal schooling aside, Duncan was "educated as the daughter of an important merchant should be" (Warkentin 13), attending the local primary schools, the Brantford Collegiate, the Brantford Ladies College, and the Toronto Normal School. While she was trained to teach, and did supply-teach occasionally in Brantford's public schools between 1880 and 1884, she never took up a permanent post. In this respect too, Tausky argues, Duncan and Leacock were kindred spirits: "Like her contemporary Stephen Leacock, Duncan had little enthusiasm for teaching as a permanent vocation. In the 1880s, journalism would have appeared infinitely more alluring than teaching for a young woman of Duncan's

adventurous spirit" (*Canadian* 23). And it was. She began her career in journalism with short freelance contributions to the *Brantford Expositor* and the *Toronto Globe*. Having whetted her appetite for newspaper work, the enterprising young Duncan travelled to the New Orleans Cotton Centennial Fair in December 1884 as the self-appointed Canadian news correspondent. During her three-month sojourn, her reports appeared in newspapers in Toronto, London (Ontario), New Orleans, Memphis, and Washington.

The scheme worked brilliantly; for the next four years, Duncan was not only a frequent contributor to a handful of significant periodicals, but she also served as a correspondent for the *Washington Post* and joined the staff of the *Toronto Globe*, becoming the first woman to be regularly employed by a Canadian newspaper. Tausky remarks that Duncan's journalism, "prodigious in quantity and high in average quality, is the product of an original and vigorous mind, and says much about Canada's cultural situation, and an intelligent woman's sociological position, in the late Victorian period" (*Empire* 1-2). Indeed, Claude Bissell adds, far from exhibiting signs of her provincial upbringing, Duncan "was in many ways the freshest and liveliest voice raised at the time" (Introduction v). She was soon asked to represent the *Montreal Star* as one of only two women in the Parliamentary Press Gallery (although, as Misao Dean points out, "her assignments in Ottawa were mainly associated with the social life of the capital" [*Cousin* viii]).<sup>71</sup> Here, Duncan's circle of personal and professional acquaintances grew as she was regularly introduced to prominent politicians and writers. For instance, she befriended Nicholas Flood Davin, "one of Sir John A's protégées, the best Conservative orator in the House" (Fowler 152), as well as a successful satiric dramatist. She also visited frequently with Achille and Annie Fréchette: he

was a distant cousin of Wilfred Laurier, and the brother of well-known Canadian poet and satirist, Louis Fréchette; she was the sister of prominent American writer William Dean Howells. These men were often guests at the Fréchette household near Rideau Hall in Ottawa, as were Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, and Wilfred Campbell (Fowler 128-129).

Duncan worked tirelessly; in addition to her considerable chores at the *Globe* and the *Star*, she wrote regular columns for Goldwin Smith's the *Week* both in her own name and in that of her pseudonym, Garth Grafton<sup>72</sup>—sometimes in the same issue. Her foray into journalism coincided with the rise of the women's suffrage movement in the larger cities of Canada. As a result, her columns—"Woman's World" and "Other People and I" in the *Globe*, "Bric-a-Brac" in the *Montreal Star*, and "Saunterings" in *The Week*—became early forums for discussion of women's suffrage and education. In fact, Dean points out that not only did Duncan use her first column in the *Globe* in 1884 to call for the federal vote for Canadian women (*Cousin xx*), but her experience of "'the woman question'...included attendance at suffrage conventions in Washington and Toronto, visits to charitable institutions run by women, and research on opportunities for women in business and professional life" (*Daughter xiii*). Duncan was clearly aware that she herself was a "modern woman," something of a pioneer in the struggle to redefine women's roles in society. That said, she did not support the militant component of the Women's Movement. Instead, she took a moderate line, balancing her desire for change with her deeply-ingrained conservative instincts. Tausky remarks that while "Duncan clearly saw the hope of new career opportunities for women as an exhilarating prospect, she did not scorn marriage as an alternative, and she satirizes both



what she perceives as overly strident feminism and what she scorns as excessive timidity" (*DLB* 98). Indeed, he argues, such an approach characterizes Duncan's stance on almost any issue: "she seeks to discover what seems to her to be a sensible middle course, rejecting both the advanced position which she finds too radical, and the traditional position which she finds too outmoded" (*Empire* 21).<sup>73</sup>

Duncan was also especially keen to participate in the topical trans-Atlantic literary debates on realism, individualism, and nationalism. Her articles and columns "furnish particularly clear statements of her views on art. They also constitute one of the most vigorous nineteenth-century attacks on Canada's apathy in literary matters" (Hammill 154). A fan of Howells and of Henry James, whose works attempt an objective portrayal of ordinary life, Duncan urged the Canadian reading public to refine its literary tastes, to join her in spurning the tired popular romances that characterize a colonial backwater and embracing the innovative literary techniques that herald the cultural maturation of a nation.<sup>74</sup> In a column for the *Week*, for instance, she argues: "The novel of today may be written to show the cumulative action of a passion, to work out an ethical problem of everyday occurrence, to give body and form to a sensation of the finest or the coarsest kind, for almost any reason which can be shown to have a connection with the course of human life, and the development of human character" (1887; qtd. in Tausky, *Journalism* 113). Carole Gerson comments that Duncan "formulated the most serious defence of moderate literary realism to be found in pre-modern Canada" at a time when "articulate advocates of literary realism were rare in Victorian Canada, possibly rarer than anywhere else in the English-speaking world" (*Purer* 52).<sup>75</sup> Duncan extends her appeal for sophisticated readers to include a call for new

Canadian writers, arguing that there is a clear relationship between literature and national spirit. In one of her "Saunterings" columns, she begs patience with the early literary efforts of the young Dominion: "A spirit of depreciation of such faint stirrings of literary life as we have amongst us at present has often been remarked in Canadians, a tendency to nip forth-putting buds by contemptuous comparison with the full blown production of other lands, where conditions are more favourable to literary efflorescence. This is a distinctly colonial trait; and in our character as colonists we find the root of all our sins of omission in letters" (1886; qtd. in Tausky, *Journalism* 108). Duncan does not ask Canadians to support poor literature--"Gold is gold all over the world" she argues, "the literary standard should be equally unalterable" (1888; qtd. in Tausky, *Journalism* 117). Rather she foresees a strong national literature born of patriotism as the expected result of Canada's inevitable growth from obscurity to prominence in the international political arena. Over the next four decades, her own career as a fiction writer would repeatedly affirm the values and beliefs she expressed as a young journalist.

Like several successful women writers before her--including Grace Blackburn, Ethelwyn Wetherald, and Jean Blewett--Duncan was able to use her journalistic experiences as an entrance into a literary career. Her twin interests in the "woman question" and modern fiction came to a head during her most ambitious journalistic project: a long series of travel articles recounting the various escapades she and her companion, fellow journalist Lily Lewis, enjoyed and endured during a trip across Canada and onwards through Japan, India, the Middle East, and England. These popular pieces were revised to become Duncan's first--and most successful--novel, *A Social Departure: How Orthodocia and I Went Round the*

*World By Ourselves* (1890).<sup>76</sup> Warkentin contends that the seeds of Duncan's lifelong interest in the problematics of authority—how and by what right it is maintained—are found in this first novel which "mockingly addressed this question, both in its contrast between the high-spirited, unconventional narrator and her travelling companion, the aptly-named Orthodocia, and in the flouting—in a story about two unmarried young women travelling without a chaperon—of conventional ideas about the rules which ought to govern female behaviour" (9-10).<sup>77</sup>

Duncan married the following year and spent the remainder of her life in India and England; she died in 1923. In the intervening years, she wrote nearly two dozen novels in addition to journalistic pieces for British and Anglo-Indian periodicals. In appraising her literary career, critics rarely fail to acknowledge that, in both substance and style, Duncan's intense apprenticeship as a Canadian journalist served her well when she turned to fiction writing. For instance, Alfred Bailey contends that such work, "which was destined to widen her horizons far beyond what was customary, or even possible, for most young women of her day, seemed to develop her sense of the human comedy and gave her an opportunity for that objective appraisal of political motives and events" ("Setting" 207). Tausky adds that as early as her New Orleans articles, Duncan "had the ability to turn a shrewd piece of observation into a telling and often sardonic commentary on an entire social system. She was soon able to dramatize social tendencies by inventing caricatures, narrators and satirical scenes involving representative types" (*DLB* 99).<sup>78</sup>

Duncan's ensuing career as a novelist was an eminently successful one; all of her work was published by leading English and American firms—and most of it to high praise

(Tausky, "Writing" 324-325). Following the triumph of *A Social Departure*, she penned a series of "international" novels which, often using the trope of the young woman abroad, explore the tensions that arise when unbridled Americans visit the restrained British (*An American Girl in London* [1891] and its sequel, *A Voyage of Consolation* [1898]<sup>79</sup> and vice versa (*Those Delightful Americans*, 1902). These novels follow in the tradition of Canadian satiric fiction not only in their tendency to satirize the satirist but in their conflicting responses to the American character. Dean observes that, throughout the series,

Duncan uses irony to undercut the moral position from which the narrator judges the nation she visits. The ironic narrator satirizes the people she meets, but she is in turn satirized to an equal extent....Duncan does indeed admire the energy of her American characters, but she does so much as Thomas Chandler Haliburton admires his Sam Slick; in both cases admiration is balanced by a demonstration of the destructive elements of a personality shaped by the United States. ("Nationality" 133)

*A Daughter of Today* (1894), which was published, fittingly, in the interim between these novels, also echoes Haliburton's *Clockmaker* sketches by representing Canada as something of a philosophical middle ground between America and Britain, as a country that fruitfully combines a spirit of freedom and enterprise with a respect for tradition. In fact, Duncan implicitly argues, the capacity to strike a balance between these opposing forces is the quintessence of the unique Canadian character; American self-government and material prosperity are appealing, but only so far as they can be attained without giving up the humanistic goals championed by British tradition. Fourteen years later, in *Cousin Cinderella*:

*A Canadian Girl in London* (1908), Duncan again sets out to prove to her readers that Canadians have an ever-strengthening sense of national awareness. Not only does she posit her implied norms in the Canadian nation, but she reveals, through the ironic use of language, that Canadians have a distinctive point of view: "the difficulty of communication [Mary] and Graham experience [in London] demonstrate that they *are* marked out by nationality; the theme of ironic interpretation in the novel underscores their own and their readers' self-discovery as Canadians, able to 'get the joke' when others can't" (Dean, *Cousin* xvi).

Duncan's "international" novels are interspersed with another series referred to as her "Indian" novels. Warkentin offers that the "mordantly satirical picture she drew of Anglo-India throughout her life might suggest that she was unhappy with that part of the bargain" (16). While Duncan's satirical stance may or may not betray her emotional state during these sixteen years, it most certainly reveals a deepening rift between her support of the British empire and her awareness of the failures of the colonial project. The first two Indian novels reflect Duncan's own anxious introduction to the Anglo-Indian world: *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* (1893) and *Vernon's Aunt: Being the Oriental Experiences of Miss Lavinia Moffat* (1894) are "initiation" or "transition" stories. In the ensuing four volumes—*His Honour, and a Lady* (1896), *The Path of a Star* (1899), *Set in Authority* (1908), and *The Burnt Offering* (1909)—Duncan comes to terms with her surroundings and begins to explore the complex social and political issues that illustrate British attitudes towards the Indians. In these Indian novels, Warkentin argues, Duncan analyzed the problem of authority with increasing depth, seeing it "not just as an aspect of the colonial situation, or as a feminist

issue (though it was certainly both), but as a profound source of psychological and social conflict" (9-10). Nonetheless, even her mature novels indicate a personal struggle to reconcile her emotional allegiance to the precepts of British conservatism with her intellectual resistance to them. Tausky notes, for instance, that *The Burnt Offering* is "an uneven work" which, on the one hand, is "fascinating for its revelation of the extent to which Duncan had come to realize that Indians could be complex individuals rather than merely colourful underlings, but it is also filled with melodrama and strident defenses of the principle of British rule" (*DLB* 103).

Most of Duncan's favourite themes--the interest in the accurate depiction of social and political life, the corresponding parody of romantic conventions, the mingled concerns of private and public politics, the representation of Canadians as occupying a promising middle ground between the social and political extremes of Britons and Americans, the serio-comic presentation of these nationals abroad in one another's countries, and the sophisticated critique of imperialism--are epitomized in her longest book, *The Imperialist* (1904).<sup>80</sup> This novel appeared in the midst of her successful international and Indian series but initially failed to garner any significant critical or popular support. In fact, the novel received many bad reviews in England, the United States, and Canada.<sup>81</sup> Michael Peterman suggests that Duncan's "attempt to treat Canada realistically in a novel was...something of a gamble and an indulgence," and that she likely "placed her hope for its sales...in the topicality of the political issue and her proven ability to work humorously with the clash of cultural assumptions and values" ("Humour" 57). Unfortunately, Warkentin comments, *The Imperialist* was too advanced for its audiences: "they resisted the density of social

observation, the irony, and the sheer contemporaneity" (10). Rediscovered in the 1960s, it is now the work for which Duncan is principally remembered and is usually regarded as "the finest expression of Duncan's interests as a writer of fiction" (Tausky, Introduction to *The Imperialist*, Canadian Critical Edition, ix).<sup>82</sup>

*The Imperialist* is a story about the Murchison family of Elgin, Ontario; it is divided into two separate plots, each revolving around one of the passionate and idealistic elder Murchison children, Lorne and Advena. Lorne—the imperialist of the title—attempts to win his home-town for the Liberals and the town beauty, Dora Milburn, for a wife. He comes dizzyingly close to achieving his dreams, but, because he misjudges his community in general and Dora in particular, he fails in both attempts; his party rejects his imperialistic zeal in favour of a moderate candidate, and Dora rejects his ordinary Canadianness in favour of dapper British gentleman, Arthur Hesketh. Contrarily, Advena's story ends happily, although she, like Lorne, skirts dangerously close to mental collapse when she realizes that her dreams are imperiled by her romantic idealism. Advena and the Reverend Hugh Finlay initially renounce their love for each other in the shared belief that Finlay is duty-bound to honour his arranged engagement to Christie Cameron, a woman he barely knows. Their mutual friend, Dr. Drummond, hits on the pragmatic solution to marry Finlay's betrothed himself, thus clearing the way for Advena and Hugh's own wedding.

Lorne and Advena rarely appear together in the novel and each has little involvement in the other's trials and tribulations; their stories are, however, complementary in plot, theme, and character. As John Moss notes, "[a]ffairs of the heart provide the narrative superstructure of *The Imperialist*. The plot moves upon the configurations of courtship, while

themes are crystallized in the varying expressions of love" (*Patterns* 67). Moreover, through these twinned plots, Duncan variously explores the urgent need of these intelligent and imaginative siblings to balance idealism with pragmatism in order to succeed in love and life. And yet, even as these stories unfold in a corollary fashion, it is clear (if only from the title) that Duncan subordinates the romantic dramas to the political one. The depiction of Lorne's rise and fall in municipal politics is Duncan's synecdochal exploration of the likely Canadian response to the ever-intensifying imperial debate taking place throughout the Empire. In fact, she carefully researched the novel by reading widely the various attitudes towards imperialism expressed in British and Canadian political campaigning and editorial writing.<sup>83</sup>

In an oft-quoted letter to her friend, Lord Lansdowne, Duncan outlines the theme and focus of *The Imperialist*:

It seemed to me that among the assumptions and disputes over here [London, England] as to what the "colonial view" really is, it might be worth while to present the situation as it appears to the average Canadian of the average small town, inarticulate except at election times, but whose view, in the end counts for more than those of those pictorial people whose speeches at Toronto banquets go so far to over-colour the British imagination about Canadian sentiment. I thought it might be useful to bring this practical person forward and let him be seen. (1905, qtd. in *The Imperialist*, Canadian Critical Edition, 310)

To this end, Duncan sets up a conflict between Lorne's idealistic vision of imperial unity and the older politicians' practical assessment of South Fox's political priorities. Lorne loses, D.J.



Dooley reductively argues, because even "after every excuse has been allowed for it—the excessive idealism and intemperance of youth, the slim margin of prosperity which the community has, or at least used to have, the haziness and impracticality of the Imperial idea—the fact remains that Elgin judges in mean bookkeeper's terms" (34). To protect its economic interests, the town callously and perhaps stupidly "rejects a man of vision, a man who allowed himself to be swept away by enthusiasm but still had shown that he possessed imagination, a strong moral purpose, intelligence and an ability to learn" (Dooley 35).

The satiric effect of such a story varies according to the perspective of its two primary audiences: Canada and Britain.<sup>64</sup> Duncan cleverly addresses both audiences on several levels. As her letter to Lansdowne reveals, she hoped to disabuse the British public of the notion that Canadian hearts and minds belonged to London, and that the new Dominion would accept direction from the mother country without regard for its own interests. To Duncan's mind, any emotional allegiance to the heart-warming idea of Empire among Canadians is greatly outweighed by practical consideration of the cold, hard fact of Empire. If, at the bottom line, imperial unity does not offer Canadians an economic advantage or, worse, if it actually puts them at a disadvantage, then they will not support it. Octavius Milburn—the "practical person" Duncan brings forward—argues this position fervently in the novel: "'they'll be sick and sorry over this imperial craze in a year's time, every Government that's taken it up. The people won't have it. The Empire looks nice on a map, but when it comes to practical politics their bread and butter's in the home industries'."<sup>65</sup> While Milburn does not speak for every one in the novel, his fixation on local and mercenary issues is generally representative of Elgin's interests. Its priorities, the narrator explains, are "those

of the town, the Province, the Dominion" (49):

the concern of the average intelligent Englishman as to the consolidation of his country's interests in the Yangtse [sic] Valley would be a languid manifestation beside that of an Elgin elector in the chances of an appropriation for a new court house.... There was nothing, indeed, to interfere with Elgin's attention to the immediate, the vital, the municipal.... Like other movements of the single mind, it had something of the ferocious, of the inflexible, of the unintelligent; but it proudly wore the character of the go-ahead.... (49-50)

In echoing Sam Slick's favourite credo—and in characterizing his "go-ahead" philosophy as an essentially ignorant one—Duncan pointedly indicates that the Canadian small town is, unfortunately, more closely aligned with American than with British ideals. While British readers are thus warned against entertaining hope for imperial unity with Canada, Canadian readers are satirized for their mercenary motives, their lack of vision, and their compulsion to quash the imaginative and idealistic elements of their society, thereby squandering an opportunity to shuck off their colonial past and to assume their rightful place in the British Empire.

Yet, despite the faults of its inhabitants, Duncan's portrait of Elgin is undeniably appreciative and affectionate, even nostalgic. In fact, throughout the work, her witty intellectual detachment from Elgin is balanced by an ardent emotional attachment to it. This is likely because it is clear that, in many ways, Duncan's own memories of her life in Brantford served as "research" for *The Imperialist*. Not only is Elgin modelled on Brantford, but the Murchisons are based on the Duncans, and Advena Murchison is, at least in part, a

self-portrait. The dual impulse to celebrate and to denigrate Elgin is perfectly suited to the ironic voice of this gentle satire, and, as Peterman points out, it adds an edge to Duncan's humour:

She is adept at developing the comedy of contrasting points of view and at making both the humour and the contrast serve her larger thematic interests. Indeed her sense of humour, a careful and ingenious balancing of wry sympathy and probing satire, pervades the novel, providing its buoyancy of tone and, more importantly, an intelligent perspective in which to view the complexities of the political and social analysis on the one hand and the excessive self-seriousness of certain of her characters on the other. ("Humour" 56-57)

Far from interfering with the satiric effect of the novel, Duncan's double vision nicely complicates it. Indeed, there is much in *The Imperialist* to suggest that Duncan's satire is not simply directed at Canadians for failing to uphold British ideals, but at the British for expecting them to do so.

Duncan continually reminds her readers that Canada is a country quite separate from England in every conceivable aspect—from its official views on foreign affairs, to its unspoken rules on proper behaviour at a party. Hesketh's initial failure to recognize the social and political climate of the town points up the contrast between the two societies in ways that deride the stuffy superiority of the British point of view. Even Duncan's mocking portraits of the townspeople, clearly designed to amuse a British readership, often betray an indefensibly condescending tone that satirizes the cosmopolitan viewpoint as much as it does Elgin's

provincialism. For instance, the narrator, observing Lorne walking through the market upon his return to Elgin as a full-fledged barrister and solicitor makes a snide remark about his appearance: "The values of carriage and of clothes are relative: in Fifth Avenue Lorne would have looked countrified, in Piccadilly colonial....Lorne Murchison, to dismiss the matter, was well up to the standard of Elgin, though he wore his straw hat on the back of his head and buried both hands in his trouser pockets" (66). Later, when describing the young men gathered for a dance at the Milburn residence, the narrator again looks to sophisticated British readers to join in the criticism: "the young men were nearly all in the tailor's convention for their sex the world over...but there were some departures from orthodoxy in the matter of collars and ties, and where white bows were achieved, I fear none of the wearers would have dreamed of defending them from the charge of being ready-made" (44). While British readers may snigger at Elgin's comparatively gauche apparel, Canadian readers can chuckle at the pretentious preoccupation with it.

Duncan's ingenious double vision is sustained through the ironic voice of her narrator, a voice that is arguably female and through which—it is (almost) safe to say—can be heard Duncan's own voice.<sup>36</sup> Since irony is a favourite rhetorical tool among satirists, it is not surprising that Duncan should wield it throughout the novel. However, there is another, more complex, reason for the adoption of an ironic narrative voice when addressing more than one audience. As Linda Hutcheon notes in *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*:

Irony is a relational strategy in the sense that it operates not only between meanings (said, unsaid) but between people (ironists, interpreters, targets).  
Ironic meaning comes into being as the consequence of a relationship, a

dynamic, performative bringing together of different meaning-makers, but also of different meanings, first, in order to create something new, and then...to endow it with the critical edge of judgement. As noted, the Greek *eirōn*, from whom irony got its name, was a dissembler, a pretender, and that notion of pretence figures frequently in "performative" theories of irony. (58)

Duncan's narrative voice is just such a performance, a show designed to draw different interpretive groups into relation so that her readers might see (and judge) the various ways that they and others create meaning. Duncan's use of irony implicitly argues that before transatlantic issues such as imperial unity can be fruitfully explored, these separate communities need to recognize the simple fact that they view themselves and each other from unique perspectives.<sup>87</sup> Disagreeing with those theorists who suggest that irony *creates* communities by dividing audiences into the initiate and uninitiated, Hutcheon argues that "irony happens because what could be called 'discursive communities' already exist and provide the context for both the deployment and attribution of irony" (*Edge* 18). There is still the potential, she continues, for two kinds of audiences, "but instead of initiate and uninitiated, they might more accurately be called 'addressees' and 'hearers'....Both would be within the irony's 'participation framework'...that is, they would have different kinds and degrees of participation relative to it" (*Edge* 94-95). Because Duncan alternately satirizes British and Canadian readers, they each engage *The Imperialist*, at turns, as both addressees and hearers of Duncan's irony: they are both alternately the "you" that the narrator talks to throughout the text. Eventually, both audiences are made to appreciate the fact that Elgin is not simply--as its name might suggest--a diminutive copy of England. It has its own values

and traditions, its own priorities and goals, its own way of doing things.

The sense of difference between Britain and Elgin is clearly marked out in *The Imperialist* by language, visually and aurally. Duncan continually draws attention to the idiomatic differences between Britons and Canadians by placing the Canadianisms she adopts in quotation marks before normalizing them in the narrative—often commenting on the distinction. For instance, when introducing the Murchison household, the narrator observes that "'[t]he boys,' of course, were too young to think of matrimony," adding that they "were still the boys, the Murchison boys; they would be the boys at forty if they remained under their father's roof. In the mother country, men in short jackets and round collars emerge from the preparatory schools; in the daughter lands boys in tail coats conduct serious affairs" (23). When discussing household maintenance, the narrator makes it clear that the various words used for "servant" in Elgin differ from those used in England: "Mrs. Milburn's servants were all 'maids,' even the charwoman, who had buried three husbands" (42), while "The Murchisons were temporarily deprived of a 'girl'" (5). In some cases, the narrator simply draws attention to words that British readers might find unusual: for instance, when describing the holiday lacrosse match she explains that it cost "a 'quarter' to get in, so the spectators were naturally composed of persons who could afford the quarter" (5). Furthermore, the characters themselves sometimes draw joking attention to the differences in vocabulary between Britons and Canadians. During a family conversation following Lorne's return from London, Stella Murchison chides her father and brother for adopting or reverting to British idioms: asked if the city is crowded, Lorne replies, "'Crowded? Rather!'" to which Stella retorts "'We don't say 'rather' in this country, mister'" (121); and when Mr.

Murchison insists that "'tariffs are kittle cattle to shoo behind'," Stella facetiously interjects: "'Has anybody got a Scotch dictionary?....This conversation is making me tired'" (122). Narrative tactics such as these draw regular attention to the fact that Canadians and Britons speak a slightly different language. While the effectiveness of communication between the reading audiences is hardly at issue—surely they each understand each other's minor idiosyncrasies of speech—both are nonetheless often reminded in these ways of the gap between their interpretive communities.

In *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing*, W.H. New muses on the paradox: "Does language come before society, or society before language? And what effect does one's answer to this question have on literary intent and literary form, cultural production and cultural consumption, social organization and social desire?" (161). He offers that "[s]peech clearly shapes social perceptions and understanding, as do other codes of communication (visual, aural, and numerical signs, for example—or, in economic terms, 'the language of money'). Yet language codes are also themselves social constructions, conventionalized exchanges—often of such long standing that their access to 'meaning' no longer seems crafted or 'unnatural'" (161). Duncan plays with a version of this paradox throughout *The Imperialist* by subtly exploring the myriad ways that Elgin, although English-speaking, has developed its own language codes whose meaning is not immediately accessible to Britons. Each time the narrator translates an idiomatic phrase or gives voice to unspoken social customs for the benefit of her British readers, both audiences are reminded that Canada is, slowly but surely, becoming a society distinct from its Old World origins.

Throughout the novel, and especially in the first half (proceeding the Cruickshank

delegation to London), Duncan outlines Elgin's attitudes, opinions, and rules of conduct. For example, when describing Lorne's blunder of arriving too early for the Milburn dance, she explains that "[t]o be the very first and solitary arrival is nowhere esteemed the happiest fortune, but in Elgin a kind of ridiculous humiliation attached to it, a greed for the entertainment, a painful unsophistication. A young man of Elgin would walk up and down in the snow for a quarter of an hour with the thermometer at zero to escape the ignominy of it" (43). When Lorne awaits Dora in the drawing-room, Duncan offers that "[y]oung ladies in Elgin had always to be summoned from somewhere" (86). Mrs. Milburn and her sister, Miss Filkin, tactfully leave the two lovers alone to talk because, however strongly they wished to stay, they "could not hold out entirely against the unwritten laws, the silently claimed privileges of youth in Elgin" (89). Elgin's laws of courtship are not the only ones that are unwritten and silent; Duncan repeatedly indicates that the town cannot be easily known precisely because its expectations are usually understood without being stated. For instance, Duncan describes Elgin's collective response to Abby Murchison's marriage to Harry Johnson:

In the social estimates of Elgin the Johnsons were "nice people," Dr. Henry was a fine old figure in the town, and Abby's chances were good enough. At all events, when she opened her doors as a bride, receiving for three afternoons in her wedding dress, everybody had "called." It was very distinctly understood, of course, that this was a civility that need not lead to anything whatever, a kind of bowing recognition, to be formally returned and quite possibly to end there. (35)



Duncan salts her text with examples of the sort of behaviour that was "very distinctly understood, of course" in Elgin, but which might have to be explained to outsiders. Note, for instance, that "'Set your house in order and then your own church' was a wordless working precept in Elgin" (51), or that "In Elgin the very mention of cards played for money will cause a hush of something deeper than disapproval" (75), or that "Adolescence was inarticulate in Elgin on occasions of ceremony" (31). The general acknowledgment of unspoken precepts—which themselves often compel silence—binds the community together in discretion and diplomacy, while failure to recognize these codes can brand one a social pariah. When, for example, Mrs. Forsyth reports to Dr. Drummond that the midsummer congregations at Knox Church were surprisingly large during his vacation from the pulpit, the narrator snidely remarks that "Mrs. Forsyth was an excellent hand at pressed tongue and a wonder at knitted counterpanes, but she had not acquired tact and never would" (55).

Readers may be bemused by Mrs. Forsyth's verbal indiscretion, considering that she ought to know better than to impugn, however unintentionally, Dr. Drummond's ability to draw large summertime congregations; however, they are more likely to be offended by (or embarrassed by, depending on whether they are the addressees or the hearers) Hesketh's similar obliviousness. Upon his arrival in Elgin, Hesketh expresses a good-natured wish both to meet Lorne's family and to assist his new friend in his political campaign. On both occasions he reveals himself to be completely unaware of how to speak to Canadians. When Lorne's father uses the commonplace expression "'No sir!'" (148) in conversation with Hesketh, the young Briton mistakes the remark as a formal address: "Then did Mr. Hesketh show himself in true sympathy with the novel and independent conditions of the

commonwealth he found himself in. 'I beg you won't use that form with me,' he said, 'I know it isn't the custom of the country, and I am a friend of your son's, you see'" (148). Lorne must explain that his father—who is astonished by the young man's gaffe—spoke colloquially. Hesketh further reveals his ignorance of the Canadian character when he speaks on Lorne's behalf at an election rally in the country. The speech is, as Dooley notes,

almost an anthology of all the blunders Englishmen have ever committed through ignorance of Canadian affairs and unawareness of Canadian sensibilities—congratulating the colonials on their loyalty to the Crown, striking the Kipling note ("What should they know of England/ Who only England know?") in the most ludicrous and inappropriate way, and making self-important and snobbish references to the aristocracy with no sense of how such remarks grate on Canadian ears. Duncan is merciless towards him. (31)

In fact, Duncan allows Elgin itself to do the ridiculing; Hesketh is heckled by young and old. First, he is interrupted in the midst of his speech—"Had ye no friends among the commoners?' suddenly spoke up a dry old fellow...and the roar that greeted this showed the sense of the meeting" (192). Then, a week later, a young boy stops him on Main Street with the facetious question, "'How's the dook?'" (192).<sup>88</sup> The satiric bite in the phrasing and pronunciation of these rebukes is not lost on Hesketh: on the contrary, it seems that such embarrassing lessons were well-learned. By the end of the novel, Hesketh—unlike Mrs. Forsyth who never had not and never would acquire tact—has proven his adaptability to his new circumstances and may well, as he proudly claims, "'make a good Canadian'" (262). However out of tune he was originally, his voice too will ring as part of the collective that

the narrator refers to simply as "Elgin."<sup>89</sup>

Inasmuch as *The Imperialist* fundamentally concerns Lorne and Avena Murchison, and by extension the Murchison family and their associates, in the abstract sense it is clear that Duncan intends the town of Elgin to represent the novel's main character. Like "fifth business," the collective townspeople play a subsidiary but essential role in the lives of the Murchisons and are instrumental in bringing their stories to conclusion. Moss argues that, in the most important respects, the town is not merely a statistical presence:

The community is more than these families together, more than their businesses, their births, marriages, and deaths. It is the tensions that bind them in place, the forces that fix their position in relation to the far world outside. The community is also the customs, the affectations, and the manners that are the response of Elgin's present to the past; and the politics, the social plans and social structures that are determined by Elgin's collective anxieties and aspirations in regard to the future. (*Patterns* 73)

In the opening paragraphs of the novel, the narrator speaks of the town as a homogenous group in matters small or large. The scene opens with Old Mother Beggarlegs<sup>90</sup> selling "gingerbread horses and large round gingerbread cookies, and brown sticky squares of what was known in all circles in Elgin as taffy" (1) to the children celebrating the twenty-fourth of May, which, the narrator haughtily reminds "persons living in England...was the Queen's birthday. Nobody in Elgin can possibly have forgotten it" (2). Moreover, the narrator points out that the town shares a uniform point of view when assessing its individual members. Elgin passes judgment, for instance, on the Murchison children, accepting or rejecting them

in accordance with their compliance to its conservative standards and definitions of success.

Advena, known to be a dreamer, was regarded dubiously by the town at large:

No one could dream with impunity in Elgin, except in bed. Mothers of daughters sympathized in good set terms with Mrs. Murchison. "If that girl were mine—" they would say, and leave you with a stimulated [and notably *unspoken*] notion of the value of corporal punishment. When she took to passing examinations and teaching, Elgin considered that her parents ought to be thankful in the probability that she had escaped some dramatic end. (35)

Stella, on the other hand, is deemed to be "well equipped for society; she had exactly those qualities which appealed to it in Elgin, among which I will mention two--the quality of being able to suggest that she was quite as good as anybody *without saying so*, and the even more important quality of not being any better" (34, emphasis added). And Lorne is the pride of the town, which claims him as its own as he celebrates his various successes. Upon his graduation from law school at the top of his class, the editor of the Elgin *Mercury* closes the public announcement with the comment: "Elgin congratulates Mr. L. Murchison upon having produced these results, and herself upon having produced Mr. L. Murchison" (17). Later, when Lorne is tearing up the campaign trail, the narrator observes that "Elgin rose to its liking for the fellow, and even his political enemies felt a half-humorous pride that the town had produced a candidate whose natural parts were held to eclipse the age and experience of party hacks" (173).

However, even as the narrator repeatedly insists that Elgin shares a uniform perspective, it becomes evident to readers, as *The Imperialist* unfolds, that Elgin is a complex

social environment with multiple perspectives. When the narrator seeks to explain, for instance, some of the metaphorical phrases readers might overhear, she draws attention to the sub-groups, the racial elements, the class divisions that must inform any understanding of how Elgin works. She indicates a circumscribed interpretive community based on religious denomination when she explains that since it is well-known among the congregation of Knox Church that Peter makes final arrangements at the pulpit exactly three minutes before the minister ascends it, the phrase "'I was there before Peter' was a triumphant evidence of punctuality" (128). Similarly, the narrator draws attention to a hierarchical class structure when she informs readers that, because young bank clerks are considered the most eligible bachelors in Elgin, "[t]o say of a certain party-giver that she had 'about her every bank clerk in town' was to announce the success of her entertainment in ultimate terms....[and] 'D'ye take me fur a bank clurk?' was a form of repudiation among corner loafers" (36). Such seemingly casual remarks serve to reveal the omnipresent tensions in the social hierarchy of Elgin. It becomes clear to readers that the narrator's references to "Elgin's" standards of judgement do not refer to the town at large, but to a specific segment of it.

In his article, "The Narrative Politics of *The Imperialist*," Frank Davey addresses the multi-faceted character of Duncan's narrator. Not only does it alternately assume a detached third person omniscient voice and a more personal first person voice, but it fluctuates between a sophisticated and a provincial perspective. Sometimes it has an obvious cosmopolitan quality and seems to identify more with Britain than with English-speaking Canada; other times, "[i]t is most comfortable with a socially dominant middle-class, a class it easily locates in Canada but does not find in Britain....In religion, it is knowledgeable

about various protestant churches but most comfortable with Presbyterianism—a church which is an influential one in nineteenth-century Canada but a minor one in the social structure of nineteenth-century Britain" (424). This bi-focal narrator may well be the product of its author who (in direct contrast to the Murchison house) is *of* Elgin but not *in* it, who looks with world-weary eyes across vast distances of time and space to recreate the world of her childhood. However, another way to reconcile the cosmopolitan qualities of the narrative voice with its obvious familiarity with the Presbyterian middle-class in Canada is to suggest that the narrator is an outsider who tends to view Elgin through the eyes of Mrs. Murchison. This is not surprising given that the Murchison household provides the focus of the story, and Mrs. Murchison is "the central figure...with her family radiating from her" (5).

Duncan includes a number of broad hints in the text to suggest that Mrs. Murchison's views—which, because they are often rendered as criticisms of others, give an edge to the satire—typify those of her social standing in the town at large. For instance, when explaining the value its citizens place on regular worship, the narrator states that in "Elgin religious fervour was not beautiful, or dramatic, or self-immolating; it was reasonable....The habit of church attendance was not only a basis of respectability, but practically the only one: a person who was 'never known to put his head inside a church door' could not be more severely reprobated, by Mrs. Murchison at all events" (50). Or, when delineating the meal habits in the town, she reveals that "[s]ix o'clock tea, and that the last meal in the day, was the rule in Elgin, and a good enough rule for Mrs. Murchison, who had no patience for the innovation of a late dinner recently adopted by some people who could keep neither their servants nor their digestions in consequence" (28). In other instances, the narrator does not

explicitly align Elgin's and Mrs. Murchison's values, but rather adopts Mrs. Murchison's opinionated tone of voice to indicate that she is expressing one of Elgin's general truths. When describing her tea table, for example, the narrator's aside rings with Mrs. Murchison's own pride and pragmatism: "It was a table to do anybody credit, with its glossy damask and the old-fashioned silver and best china that Mrs. Murchison had brought as a bride to her housekeeping—for, thank goodness, her mother had known what was what in such matters—a generous attractive table that you took some satisfaction in looking at" (28). In many respects, it is Mrs. Murchison's values that are set up as the satiric norms in the novel, and they are offered with the confidence that readers will agree with her assessments. For instance, when the narrator outlines Advena's failings in the eyes of the community, Mrs. Murchison's viewpoint not only supports the judgement but provides the vexed tone:

When you have seen your daughter reach and pass the age of twenty-five without having learned properly to make her own bed, you know, without being told, that she will never be fit for the management of a house—don't you? Very well then. And for ever and for ever, no matter what there was to do, with a book in her hand—Mrs. Murchison would put an emphasis on the "book" which scarcely concealed a contempt for such absorption. (22)

Since readers are led to view the trials and tribulations of the Murchison family largely through the eyes of Mrs. Murchison herself, it is perfectly understandable that the scope of that perspective will be limited. When, in assessing the blind spots in Duncan's vision in *The Imperialist*, Gerson remarks that "Elgin is untroubled by labour unrest, significant poverty, or serious sexual scandal" (*Purer* 151), and Clara Thomas argues that

there "are no poor in her book....there are none of any community's pathetic outsiders, the so-called 'shiftless' failures, or even of its wage-earning working men and their families" ("Mythologies" 45), they are responding to the dominance of the middle-class viewpoint. The community's "pathetic outsiders" exist on the periphery of the Murchison family's lives and therefore are relegated to the margins of the text. There are, of course, poor people in Elgin, but they are noted only in terms of their impact on this family; Mrs. Murchison's trouble holding onto a reliable "girl" (5, 95), her disapproval of her children playing with poor children in the back garden (21),<sup>91</sup> her charitable donation of old clothes to Willie Parker, the paper boy (93), suggest the extent of her regard for the lower classes. Similarly, the narrator only occasionally reminds readers of the presence of the nearby Moneida Reservation, perhaps because Mrs. Murchison herself "'thought they were all gone long ago'" (239). The extent of the Murchison family contact with the local Natives is limited to their occasional appearance at the back door selling raspberries (239), the sight of "drunken Indians vociferous on their way to the lock-up" on public holidays (3), and the infamous incident in which Advena, as a child "had taken a papoose from a drunken squaw and brought it home for her mother to adopt" (35) At least, that is, until Lorne's election is rendered null and void "on the ground of the infringement in the electoral district of Moneida of certain provisions of the Ontario Elections Act" (238).

While Mrs. Murchison's perspective, in many if not all matters, is shared by her husband, John, he has far less to say through the course of the narrative. Likewise, the narrator has less to say about him and his views, although she is careful to inform readers from the start that "John Murchison was a man of few words, but they were usually



impregnated with meaning" (9). The conversation between Mr. Murchison and Dr. Drummond in the early pages of the novel reveals this habit of speech. Mr. Murchison's respect and admiration for his friend and minister remain unspoken but are clearly communicated in a short exchange:

John Murchison had not said much about the sermon; it wasn't his way, and Dr. Drummond knew it. "You gave us a good sermon last night, Doctor;" not much more than that...."The Wilcoxes...were sitting just in front of us. We overtook them going home, and Wilcox explained how much they liked the music. 'Glad to see you,' I said. 'Glad to see you for any reason,'" Mr. Murchison's eye twinkled. "But they had a great deal to say about 'the music'." It was not an effusive form of felicitation; the minister would have liked it less if it had been....he was able to take it with perfect dignity and good humour, and to enjoy the point against the Wilcoxes with a laugh. (13)

When, a few minutes later, Mr. Murchison accepts Dr. Drummond's congratulations on the news that Lorne had graduated at the top of his class, readers know--without instruction from the omniscient narrator--that his seemingly nonchalant response masks a great depth of feeling: "'Lorne's made a fair record, so far. We've no reason to be ashamed of him'" (16).

Mr. Murchison's reserve sometimes maddens his wife, who mistakenly takes it for indifference. When, during the ballot count, the family speculates over dinner about Lorne's chances of winning the election, Mr. Murchison fails to participate: "John Murchison had listened to their excited talk, mostly in silence, going on with his dinner as if that and nothing else were the important matter of the moment. Mrs. Murchison had had this idiosyncrasy of

his 'to put up with' for over thirty years. She bore it now as long as she could. '*Father!*' she exploded at last. "Do you think Lorne will get in by five hundred?" to which he judiciously replies, "'[t]hat remains to be seen'" (237). Duncan provides comic punctuation throughout the novel by routinely juxtaposing the brief and understated quality of Mr. Murchison's speech with his wife's effusive and overstated harangues. For instance, when the two sit together on the verandah in the evening--he smoking and reading, she knitting and talking--his responses to her host of familial concerns are exasperatingly short. At the news that Lorne is courting Dora Milburn, Mr. Murchison responds simply that "'Dora might do worse'" (93). He makes a similar (though notably inverted) comment when he learns that Advena may have designs on the Rev. Hugh Finlay: "'Advena...might do worse'" (96). And when Mrs. Murchison protests Finlay's lending Advena a book by Plato--"'a Greek heathen and no writer for a Presbyterian minister to go lending around'," Mr. Murchison offers that "'She might read worse than Plato'" (96).

The latter comment reveals another distinct difference between the Murchison parents; while she had an "instinct of order" (18) and "ideas [that] circulated strictly in the orbit of equity and reason" (23), "John Murchison had been made a careful man, not by nature, by the discipline of circumstances" (20). The tell-tale indulgence that betrays his decidedly romantic instincts is the fact that "he would buy books" (20). Classic English novels and literary periodicals were, to his mind, "essential, like tobacco and tea" (21). The conflict between husband and wife on this point is clearly stated:

Mrs. Murchison kept a discouraging eye upon such purchases; and when her husband brought home Chambers' *Dictionary of English Literature*, after

shortly and definitively repulsing her demand that he should get himself a new winter overcoat, she declared that it was beyond all endurance....He was also an easy prey to the subscription agent, for works published in parts and paid for in instalments, a custom which Mrs. Murchison regarded with abhorrence. So much so that when John put his name down for *Masterpieces of the World's Art* which was to cost twenty dollars by the time it was complete, he thought it advisable to let the numbers accumulate at the store. (20-21)

Such differences in temperament between the elder Murchisons are manifested variously in their children who are also contrasted with one another. Tellingly, both Lorne and Advena "came into the inheritance" of Mr. Murchison's library (and the periodicals packed away in the attic) and "made an early acquaintance of fiction" (20-21).<sup>92</sup> The impact on their characters is readily apparent; Lorne's passion and loquaciousness set him apart from his younger brothers, Alec and Oliver, who are essentially mute non-entities. Similarly, Advena's romantic tendencies and her dreamy detachment from the household set her apart from her more pragmatic and domestically-suited younger sisters, Abby and Stella. Despite their differences--and the minor tensions they cause--this family is portrayed as a warm-hearted, intelligent, and morally-principled group who are unified by one shared quality: "the Murchisons were all imaginative" (8).

It is her imaginative nature that prevents Mrs. Murchison--however much her opinion conforms with Elgin's on so many matters--from being a representative figure in the town. For Elgin also views the Murchison family as a unified group despite keen observation of the distinctions between its members; however, rather than admiring what it sees, Elgin disdains

it. The narrator reveals the town bias early in the story in a passage Tausky refers to as "perhaps the most severe criticism of Elgin in the book" (*Canadian* 79-80):

Mr. and Mrs. Murchison made no claim and small attempt upon society....[i]t is highly unlikely to have occurred to them that they were too good for their environment. Yet in a manner they were. It was a matter of quality, of spiritual and mental fabric; they were hardly aware that they had it, but it marked them with a difference, and a difference is the one thing a small community, accustomed comfortably to scan its own intelligible averages, will not tolerate. The unusual may take on an exaggeration of these; an excess of money, an excess of piety, is understood; but idiosyncrasy suspectable to no common translation is regarded with the hostility earned by the white crow, modified, among law-abiding humans, into tacit repudiation. It is a sound enough social principle to distrust that which is not understood, like the strain of temperament inarticulate but vaguely manifest in the Murchisons. Such a strain may any day produce an eccentric or a genius, emancipated from the common interests, possibly inimical to the general good, and when, later on, your genius takes flight or your eccentric sells all that he has and gives it to the poor, his fellow townsmen exchange shrewd nods before the vindicating fact.

(34)

Here, again, Duncan makes her point with reference to speech—or, more precisely, the lack thereof—indicating that, no matter how unexceptional the family appears at a casual glance, the Murchisons exist outside the unspoken and almost inexpressible boundaries that define

Elgin's ordinary middle-class. However "inarticulate" the quality of difference in the Murchisons, Elgin senses it and, because it cannot provide a "common translation" for such difference, its response is "tacit" rejection. Even when it feels justified in its intolerance (ironically, the narrator smirks, by displays of brilliance and altruism), only silent nods are exchanged in response among Elgin's average citizens. The narrator's sympathies clearly lie with the Murchisons as she describes their almost imperceptible ostracism as entirely the fault of Elgin's conservative instincts and general lack of imagination.

These are precisely the unattractive qualities exhibited by the Milburn family, the principal foil to the Murchisons and thus the target of many of Duncan's satiric jabs. In fact, Peter Allen argues, it seems that "Duncan has dramatized her fears for the future of Canadian society in the figures of the Milburns, her hopes in the Murchisons" (384).<sup>93</sup> For each of the Murchisons' positive attributes, the Milburns have the corresponding negative ones: the Murchisons are imaginative, genuine, altruistic, contemplative, modest, independent, and open-minded; the Milburns are prosaic, insincere, self-serving, shallow, smug, conformist, and narrow-minded. The tension between the families is voiced by Mrs. Murchison's appraisal of the Milburns' hypocritical behaviour during Lorne's election bid:

"Those Milburns," remarked Mrs. Murchison, "are enough to make one's blood boil. I met Mrs. Milburn in the market yesterday...and she stopped--wonderful thing for her--and had *such* an amount to say about Lorne, and the honour it was, and the dear only knows what! Butter wouldn't melt in her mouth--and Octavius Milburn doing all he knew against him the whole time! That's the Milburns! I cut her remarkably short," Mrs. Murchison added, with

satisfaction. (195)

Despite Mrs. Murchison's power to silence Mrs. Milburn in this exchange, it is clear throughout the narrative that the Milburn family has an influential voice in the community. In fact, as Tausky notes, the Milburns "are acknowledged to be the local aristocracy," a position they attained by slavish adherence to their notions of British customs (*Empire* 163-4). As such, they represent the element of Canadian society that resolutely clings to the insular traditions of British colonialism. These traditions are manifested in their social and political behaviour.

In her focus on the ostentatious practices and trivial concerns of the women in the Milburn home, Duncan satirically undercuts their social position as the last bastion of British sophistication in Elgin. In fact, in most regards, Mrs. Milburn and her sister are ridiculous in their efforts to maintain—and to bequeath to Dora—their cherished connection (through their own Nova Scotian upbringing) to the mother country. The narrator scoffs, for instance, at the fact that Dora had been taught, like her mother before her, to speak with "what was known as an 'English accent'...but was clearly an American product" (39). Dora is also "her mother's own daughter" (39) in that she mimics Mrs. Milburn's appreciation of, and longing for, what she believes to be the customs of England's polite society. When Lorne remarks to Dora that he would like to extend his family's hospitality to his visiting British friend, Hesketh, Dora replies: "'I wouldn't dream of asking an Englishman to stay if I couldn't give him a late dinner; they think so much of it. It's the trial of mother's life that father will not submit to it. As a girl she was used to nothing else'" (136). Dora's apprehension proves unjustified, for Hesketh admits to enjoying high tea. Having proclaimed that "'there can be

nothing like good English society'" (87), Mrs. Milburn is predisposed to admire Hesketh and does so even though it is plain that she would deplore his presumptuous behaviour in any local man; he "pleased her extremely by the alacrity with which he accepted her first invitation to what she described as their very simple and unconventional meal. Later he won her approval entirely by saying boldly that he hoped he was going to be allowed to stay. It was only in good English society, Mrs. Milburn declared, that you found such freedom and confidence" (167).

It is not surprising that Dora should prefer Hesketh to Lorne, especially since she is well aware of her mother's hope that her only child will make a suitable match. When Lorne suggests to Dora that Mrs. Milburn's respect for their privacy was a sign that she approved of him as a suitor, Dora counters: "'Mother's so deep. You can't always tell just by what she *does*. She thinks Stephen Stuart likes me--it's too perfectly idiotic; we are the merest friends--and when it's any question of you and Stephen--well, she doesn't say anything, but she lets me see! She thinks such a lot of the Stuarts because Stephen's father was Ontario Premier once, and got knighted'" (137).<sup>94</sup> Dora's change of heart (if her prudent decision can be so termed) is also predictable in light of her tendency to share her mother's and aunt's opinions. The narrator expounds at some length on the validating effect Hesketh's visits have on these haughty and self-important women:

It will be imagined what pleasure Mrs. Milburn and Miss Filkin took in his visits, how he propped up their standard of behaviour in all things unessential, which was too likely to be growing limp, so far from approved examples. I think it was a real aesthetic satisfaction; I know they would talk of it

afterwards for hours, with sighing comparisons of the "form" of the young men in Elgin, which they called beside Hesketh's quite *outré*. It was a favourite word with Mrs. Milburn--*outré*. She used it like a lorgnette, and felt her familiarity with it a differentiating mark. (167)

Duncan's emphasis on the details of communication throughout these exchanges--in particular, Mrs. Milburn's use of a contrived accent, her unspoken message to Dora regarding her aspirations for her to marry into a prestigious family, her hypocritical approval of Hesketh's overly familiar address, and her condescending adoption of foreign words--contribute to the ongoing argument that all communication is fraught with a complex subtext. In this case, in order to understand Mrs. Milburn, to decode her, readers must observe not only *what* she says but *how* she says it.<sup>95</sup>

Significantly, several of the same narrative comments regarding Mrs. Milburn's habits of speech also point to a double-standard in Elgin's reaction to "difference." The Milburn women are permitted their differentiating marks because they are thought to be the quirky by-products of a superior English upbringing. While a mere five pages earlier the narrator had explained that the elder Murchisons were considered suspect for their quiet reticence to seek out Elgin's society and for their "inarticulate but vaguely manifest" (34) differences of temperament, she now announces that the Milburn women are hypocritically forgiven the same trespasses:

Mrs. Milburn and her sister, Miss Filkin...seemed to have inherited the strongest ideas, in the phrase of the place, about keeping themselves *to* themselves....Crossing the Atlantic they doubtless suffered some dilution; but



all that was possible to conserve them under very adverse conditions Mrs. Milburn and Mrs. Filkin made it their duty to do. Nor were these ideas opposed, contested, or much traversed in Elgin. It was recognized that there was "something about" Mrs. Milburn and her sister—vaguely felt that you did not come upon that thinness of nostril, and slope of the shoulder, and set of elbow at every corner. They must have got it somewhere. A Filkin tradition prevailed, said to have originated in Nova Scotia: the Filkins never had been accessible, but if they wanted to keep to themselves, let them. (38-39)

Paradoxically, both the Murchisons' unconscious possession of an exceptional spiritual and mental fabric and the Milburn women's self-satisfied adoption of what they consider to be superior accoutrements are considered by Elgin to be eccentric. Because it has a loose explanation for the latter behaviour—"They must have got it somewhere"—Elgin rationalizes it, even learns to expect it. For instance, the narrator remarks that Mrs. Milburn deliberately ignores social expectations in matters of formal dress, but that she is not held in contempt as others would be: "For middle-aged ladies high necks and long sleeves were usual; and Mrs. Milburn might almost have been expected to appear thus, in a nicely-made black *broché*, perhaps. It was recognized as like Mrs. Milburn, in keeping with her unbending ideas, to wear a dress cut as square as any young lady's, with just a little lace let in, of a lavender stripe" (44). What Duncan critically implies here is that the Milburns are better tolerated because they are less threatening than the Murchisons; for all of their superior airs, the Milburns prove, finally, to be inferior, while the Murchisons are quietly, natively, and seemingly irrefutably superior.

Mrs. Milburn's husband, Octavius, "had been born in the country, and had never 'gone over' to England; Canada was good enough for him" (42). Nor was he disposed to view the English with a preferential eye; while his wife and sister-in-law are captivated by Hesketh's form, "Mr. Milburn, never so susceptible to delicate distinctions, looked upon the young Englishman with benevolent neutrality" (167). Moreover, the Milburn family's resistance to "slipping into wider and more promiscuous circles with the widening stream" of Elgin's society "was not thought to reside with him" (38). Like his wife, however, Mr. Milburn is given to "unbending ideas," although his are expressed in the political rather than in the social realm. The narrator expounds at length on Mr. Milburn's ultra-conservative nature, remarking that it defined him in every way:

That is what he was—a man of averages, balances, the safe level, no more disposed to an extravagant opinion than to wear one side whisker longer than the other. You would take him any day...for the correct medium: by his careful walk with the spring in it, his shrewd glance with the caution in it, his look of being prepared to account for himself, categorically, from head to foot....There we have the turn of his mind, convertible into the language of book-keeping, a balance struck....His ideal was life in a practical, go-ahead, self-governing colony, far enough from England actually to be disabused of her inherited anachronisms and make your own tariff, near enough politically to keep your securities up by virtue of her protection. (41)

Lorne's dauntless and fervent expression of his dream for the future of the Canadian nation is contrasted throughout *The Imperialist* with Mr. Milburn's smug and dispassionate assessment

of the issues at hand. Tausky observes that the "radical difference in outlook between Lorne and Milburn is explored in a number of complementary ways. They belong to different parties, and disagree totally about imperialism. Lorne disregards economic concerns, whereas for Milburn they are the only basis for political decision"; it is, he concludes, "the ascendancy of the Milburn mentality in Elgin which is ultimately responsible for Lorne's downfall" (*Empire* 163). It proves impossible for Lorne to sway a man who has "not a political view in the world that was calculated to affect his attitude toward a practical matter" (86), and whose "approach is utilitarian without vision" (Peterman, "Humour" 60). Mr. Milburn's eyes are so resolutely fixed on the bottom line that he even maintains his bean-counting perspective when appraising his family: "Her father declared that Dora took in a great deal more than she ever gave out—an accomplishment in Mr. Milburn's eyes, on the soundest basis" (43). In contrast to Mr. Murchison, the father of a half dozen spirited and dynamic children, Mr. Milburn is only the "Father of the Elgin Boiler" (42) and of Dora, "two products," Allen quips, "that have in common a certain hard, commercial quality" (376).<sup>96</sup>

Duncan vilifies Mr. Milburn's political position by characterizing his conservative views as self-serving and hypocritical. Lorne takes good-humoured delight, for instance, in Mr. Williams' tale of catching the hard-nosed Tory in a blatant contradiction. When Mr. Milburn declares that the government "'has no business...to apply taxes in the interest of any company. It oughtn't to know how to spell 'subsidy'," Mr. Williams replies: "'Well, now, Mr. Milburn...you've changed your mind. Thought that was a thing you Conservatives never did...Twenty-five years ago...when you were considering whether you'd start the Milburn

Boiler Works here or in Hamilton, Hamilton offered you a free site, and Elgin offered you a free site and a dam for your water power. You took the biggest subsidy an' came here'" (83-84). Amused at the thought that such an exchange will prevent Mr. Milburn from disparaging subsidies in the future, Lorne and Mr. Williams agree that "'Milburn hasn't got much of a political conscience, but he's got a sense of what's silly'" (84). Readers may share in Lorne's laughter at Mr. Milburn's comeuppance for his vacillating views; however, they will soon be asked to share in his pain when Lorne is hurt by such behaviour in others. First, his friend Hesketh breaks his commitment to help with Lorne's election bid, switching sides half way through the campaign. Then Farquharson and Bingham, the Liberal Party organizers, reveal their lack of faith in Lorne by buying the local Natives' votes; when an ensuing investigation prompts a re-election, they ask Lorne to step down so that they can nominate the moderate Carter in his place.<sup>97</sup> Finally, to add insult to injury, Dora breaks her secret engagement to Lorne in favour of Hesketh's attentions. Lorne is defeated in both the public and private spheres, crushed by others, true, but also by his own inability to anticipate the unscrupulous motives of those others.

Whether they agree with his politics or not, readers are bound to identify with Lorne because he is--almost to a fault--decent, honest, and genuine. In fact, Terrence Craig begins his article, "Imperialism and Morality in *The Imperialist*," with the declaration that "Lorne Murchison is one of the most positive characters in Canadian literature. Lorne is *good*" (417). In this respect, the contrast between Lorne and the townspeople he hopes to represent is quite clear. So too is Duncan's political bias; Lorne's goodness is grounded in his idealism which, in turn, finds its focus in the dream of imperial unity. It is a simple syllogism: Lorne

favours imperialism; Lorne is good; therefore, imperialism is good. Readers witness the inception and growth of Lorne's passion for the project, from the timorous reverence for the mother country he reveals upon being invited to join the Cruickshank delegation ("'But it's the Empire!' said Lorne, with a sort of shy fire" [81]) to his assured confidence in the promise of his native land ("'In the scrolls of the future it is already written that the centre of the Empire must shift--and where, if not to Canada'" [225]).<sup>98</sup> Lorne's "divergent loyalties," as Tausky describes them, to Canada and to England are reconciled in an imperialistic vision that sees Canada claiming its birthright by becoming the centre of the revitalized Empire (*Empire* 165). It is central to Duncan's satiric purpose that Lorne becomes convinced of this course of action only after his stay in England. Indeed, Dooley suggests, Duncan has some fun at the expense of her British readers by juxtaposing Lorne's thrill at the very thought of a trip to London with his dismay at the sight of its grim realities:

Some English readers of Duncan's novel must have derived great satisfaction from her depiction of a character who was so clearly prepared to view the Mother Country as the paragon of excellence; but such readers must have been badly prepared for the ironic defeat of Lorne's expectations. Bus drivers who talk with thick London accents and invariably ask him if he isn't American...the crowds of poverty-stricken people, and the seeming indifference to their existence--to the young Canadian such experiences are shocking and disillusioning. (29)

Suddenly enlightened, Lorne sees an ideal opportunity for Canada to lead a reinvigorated Empire into the twentieth century.

Ironically, Lorne's eye-opening experiences in London are matched by a corresponding failure in his vision of Elgin. First, "Lorne is guilty of seeing things in black-and-white terms when he describes the two alternatives as Imperial federation and annexation by the United States" (Dooley 31). In one of his election speeches, Lorne clearly states that Canada must decide between these two potential futures:

"But the alternative before Canada is not a mere choice of markets; we are confronted with a much graver issue. In this matter of dealing with our neighbour our very existence is involved. If we would preserve ourselves as a nation, it has become our business, not only to reject American overtures in favour of the overtures of our own great England, but to keenly watch and actively resist American influence, as it already threatens us through the common channels of life and energy. We often say that we have no fear of invasion from the south, but the armies of the south have already crossed the border. American enterprise, American capital...." (228)

Duncan subtly undercuts this mindset throughout the novel. For instance, she represents the strict division of the issue into opposing camps as an immature, futile and possibly destructive exercise: "Prospective lifelong friendships, male and female, in every form of 'the Collegiate,' had been put to this touchstone, sometimes with shattering effect. If you would not serve with Wallingham the greatness of Britain you were held to favour going over to the United States; there was no middle course. It became a personal matter in the ward schools, and small boys pursued small boys with hateful cries of 'Annexationist!'" (143).

Furthermore, Duncan points out the extent to which American goods and services can

pervade the middle-class Canadian home without altering its politics; she describes the Murchison family and their guests questioning Lorne about his trip:

"I suppose you had a lovely time, Mr. Murchison?" said Mrs. Williams, gently tilting to and fro in a rocking chair, with her pretty feet in their American shoes well in evidence. It is a fact, or perhaps a parable, that should be interesting to political economists, the adaptability of Canadian feet to American shoes; but fortunately it is not our present business. Though I must add that the 'rocker' was also American, and the hammock in which Stella reposed came from New York, and upon John Murchison's knee, with the local journal, lay a pink evening paper published in Buffalo. (120)

It is clear in this context that the mere acquisition of American merchandise and interest in American affairs will not convert otherwise patriotic Canadians into annexationists.

Just as Duncan argues that the willingness to trade with Americans does not signify an anti-British stance, so too does she indicate that an anti-American position is by no means a vote for Imperial Federation. In fact, despite setting up Lorne and Mr. Milburn as opposing forces in the imperialist debate, Duncan blurs the contrast by pointing out the fundamental similarities in their respective visions--especially in regards to their position on the American Republic. In his article, "A Portrait of the Idealist as Politician: The Individual and Society in *The Imperialist*," Francis Zichy summarizes the difficulty Lorne faces in justifying his brand of nationalism over Mr. Milburn's:

Lorne's purpose and Milburn's are quite different, yet they sometimes appear to speak the same language, for Milburn too can say that Canada and the

British tradition are good enough for him, "that he preferred a fair living under his own flag to a fortune under the Stars and Stripes" (41). Milburn is particularly angered by Lorne's campaigning for a new Canada because it radically challenges the manufacturer's moderate and self-serving patriotism. Yet there is no doubt that Milburn's views are also an outgrowth of Canadian history and experience, also a manifestation of Canada's tradition of loyalty and restraint. This may make it unusually difficult for Lorne to combat Milburn's position, since both men call on the same heritage, but to such different ends. (398)

Perhaps in his attempt to distinguish himself from it, Lorne overreacts to the moderate, self-serving, and mercenary nationalism expounded by Mr. Milburn and his ilk; his improvident promotion of a self-sacrificing patriotism entirely divorced from the nation's financial interests reveals the extent to which he has turned a blind eye to the concerns of his electorate.

The constituency is initially transfixed by Lorne's compelling arguments:

He summoned ideas from the obscurity of men's minds, and marshalled them in the light, so that many recognized what they had been trying to think. He wrote with homeliness as well as force, wishing much more to make the issue recognizable than to create fine phrases, with the result that one or two of his sentences passed into the language of the discussion, which, as any of its standard-bearers would have told you, had little use for rhetoric. (144)

And yet, as impressed as his audience is with Lorne's facility with language, they regard him



as a story-teller who weaves fascinating but ultimately fanciful tales: "When he had brought it [imperial unity] forward at the late fall fairs and in the lonely country schoolhouses, his talk had been so trenchant, so vivid and pictorial, that the gathered farmers listened with open mouths, like children, pathetically used with life, to a grown-up fairy tale. As Horace Williams said, if a dead horse could be made to go this one would have brought Murchison romping in" (221). Like Williams, the narrator, and possibly even Duncan's readers, Lorne's audience sees that he is championing a lost cause, beating a dead horse. Thus, however skilled a talker he may be, his defeat is a foregone conclusion.

The results of Lorne's failing vision are particularly unfortunate considering that Duncan presents him at the outset of the novel as possessing a keen awareness of Elgin's priorities. In his survey of the market place from the door of his new law office, Lorne clearly recognizes both the reality and the potential of the town, and by extension of the Dominion—"twisted and unlovely, but holding the promise of all" (65). First, his sharp eye discerns the anxiousness at the centre of the commotion: "It was a scene of activity but not of excitement, or in any sense of joy. The matter was of too hard an importance; it made too much difference on both sides whether potatoes were twelve or fifteen cents a peck" (64). As he watches these transactions, he is also struck by the romantic possibilities in the scene: "A tenderness seized him for the farmers of Fox County, a throb of enthusiasm for the idea they represented, which had become for him suddenly moving and pictorial" (65). As Peterman points out, Lorne's discriminating perception of this panorama momentarily "blends imagination with fact, subjectivity with objectivity, an aesthetic sense with the reality of plain struggle and small margin. For the moment he sees things in balance" ("Humour" 61).

Lorne's passion for the imperial idea gradually obscures this clear and balanced view of his town; the closer he gets to election night, the more imbalanced his vision becomes until his dream of the Dominion's potential completely eclipses his view of the pragmatic, everyday reality of life in Elgin.<sup>99</sup>

Lorne reaches a fever pitch in his final election rally speech which takes place, symbolically, at the town opera-house—a venue as far removed from the sheer practicalities of Elgin's market place as can possibly be imagined. The opera-house scene, which is at once both the triumph and ruin of Lorne's brief political career, reveals Duncan's mastery of multiple perspectives. Lorne's speech is an eloquent, lucid, and powerful expression of his idealistic vision of Canada's future in the British Empire. Through it, she clearly outlines the principal concepts of the Imperialist movement and dramatically portrays its profound emotional appeal. The audience seemingly follows Lorne to the high reaches of his argument; in fact, in its enthusiastic response he finds his cue to proceed: "They cheered him promptly, and a gathered intensity came into his face at the note of praise" (229). However, even as the long speech builds towards its climax, the narrator routinely interrupts to qualify the audience's apparently favourable reaction to it. From the moment Lorne begins, in fact, readers are made aware that his decision to "put the notes of his original speech away in his office desk" (224) was a bad one. The narrator pulls back from the scene and looks at it from a future perspective, as though she has since interviewed those in attendance:

Who knows at what suggestion, or even precisely at what moment, the fabric of his sincere intention fell away? Bingham does not; Mr. Farquharson has the vaguest idea; Dr. Drummond declares that he expected it from the beginning,

but is totally unable to say why. I can get nothing more out of them, though they were all there, though they all saw him, indeed a dramatic figure, standing for the youth and energy of the old blood, and heard him, as he slipped away into his great preoccupation, as he made what Bingham called his "bad break." (224)

And yet, even as they recognize that Lorne has, to borrow Williams' term, "'monkeyed it all away'" (231), his supporters are nonetheless impressed by Lorne's vigour and find themselves caught up in the excitement of the moment: "John Murchison smiled with pleasure, but shook his head. Bingham, doubled up and clapping like a repeating rifle, groaned aloud under cover of it to Horace Williams: 'Oh, the darned kid!'" (225). In addition to noting these particular responses, the narrator also appraises the quality of the general applause that urges Lorne on to dizzying heights. She knows that while the audience seems to sanction Lorne's words, it is their delivery—and not their import—that they celebrate: "There was a half-comprehending burst of applause, Dr. Drummond's was the first clap. It was a curious change from the simple colloquial manner in which the young Murchison had begun and to which the audience were accustomed; and on this account probably they stamped the harder. They applauded Lorne himself; something from him infected them; they applauded being made to feel like that. They would clap first and consider afterwards" (225). Elgin keeps separate its aesthetic and political sensibilities.

Likely mistaking the audience's appreciation of his rhetorical intensity for agreement with his ideas, Lorne goes too far.<sup>100</sup> The narrator notes that he "was hopelessly adrift from the subject he had proposed to himself, launched for better or for worse upon the theme that

was subliminal in him and had flowed up, on which he was launched, and almost rudderless, without construction and without control" (227). His "fatal error in tactics," as Tausky notes "is his refusal to find any economic argument for imperialism that would make it attractive from the standpoint of individual and national self interest. He positively flaunts this disregard for economic considerations" (*Empire* 156-7). Lorne's backers attempt damage control in the ensuing speeches:

The Hon. Mr. Tellier's speech--the Minister was always kept to the last--was a defence of the recent dramatic development of the Government's railway policy, and a reminder of the generous treatment Elgin was receiving in the Estimates for the following year--thirty thousand dollars for a new Drill Hall, and fifteen thousand for improvements to the post-office. It was a telling speech, with the chink of hard cash in every sentence, a kind of audit by a chartered accountant of the Liberal books of South Fox, showing good reason why the Liberal candidate should be returned on Thursday, if only to keep the balance right. (230-231)

It is, however, Lorne's impassioned speech that is printed in full the next morning in both of Elgin's papers, his imaginative vision that is presented to these practical voters in the cold light of day. Despite the promise of Tuesday evening's thunderous applause, Thursday night finds Lorne with a narrow and contested victory. Because there are so many factors to consider, it is difficult for readers to place the blame for Lorne's failure squarely on anyone's shoulders. They must acknowledge that Lorne himself is at least partly culpable for foolishly miscalculating his constituency by asking it to put aside its immediate concerns and share in

feats of imagination that were simply beyond it. At the same time, "the Milburn factor" cannot be so simply excused; Elgin must be censured for allowing its shallow, mercenary interests and narrow-minded conservative instincts to limit its support for such an extraordinary man.

Once again, Duncan complicates the issue further by revealing that the battle lines are not clearly drawn between "Murchison" and "Milburn," between imagination and pragmatism, between Liberal and Conservative. Note, for instance, that Lorne is ultimately defeated by his supporters, not by his detractors: "By allotting Lorne's *coup de grace* to his own friends and political advisers, Duncan shows her shrewd understanding of the tendency in small towns to run away from what is perceived as unrealistic or fanciful" (Tausky, "Writing", 340). Surely readers notice that, long before the vote, Lorne did not have the strong backing of his own family. In fact, the elder Murchisons--the two people from whom Lorne might reasonably expect undivided attention and enthusiastic endorsement--exhibit surprisingly little serious interest in or support for his campaign. While they are not indifferent to the outcome, they are by no means captivated by their son's vision of imperial unity. Mrs. Murchison's lack of interest in Lorne's transforming experiences in London is humorously treated. In her exasperation with Lorne for focusing on politics in his letters home, she betrays her own pragmatic concerns:

"He seems tremendously taken up with Wallingham. It was all Wallingham,<sup>101</sup> from one end to the other....You'd think he had nothing else to write about. There was that reception at Lord What-you-may-call-him's, the Canadian Commissioner's, when the Prince and Princess of Wales came, and

brought their family. I'd like to have heard something more about that than just that he was there. He might have noticed what the children had on. Now that Abbey's family is coming about her I seem to have my hands as full of children's clothes as ever I had." (92)

Later, when reading Lorne's series of articles in the newspaper detailing the imperialist scheme, Mrs. Murchison reveals the superficiality of her support by offering: "'I don't pretend to understand it...but anybody can see that he knows what he's talking about'" (144). Mr. Murchison is more judgmental; he reads the articles "with a critical eye and a pursed-out lip," perceptively noting that his son takes for granted "'[o]ther folks being like himself'" (144). In fact, Mr. Murchison pinpoints the flaw not only in Lorne's character but also in his conception of the Empire. He states his opposition to the loss of Canadian sovereignty that Lorne's proposal of "'common taxation for defence'" (121) implies, by responding, "'[c]ommon interest, yes...common taxation, no, for defence of any other purpose. The colonies will never send money to be squandered by the London War Office. We'll defend ourselves as soon as we can manage it, and buy our own guns and our own cruisers. We're better business people than they are, and we know it'" (122).

Lorne's parents' varying responses to his campaign raise the question: if these two intelligent, imaginative, Liberal (and partial) people show only minimal interest in, understanding of, or agreement with Lorne's imperial vision, how could he have expected the general electorate to do so?<sup>102</sup> As Dooley remarks, *The Imperialist* concludes in a sardonic object lesson, pointing out "the lack of political wisdom and political morality in the typical small Canadian town. For Elgin has chosen the worse instead of the better, and sacrificed the

promise of its future to temporary political tranquillity" (35). Lorne's own future is briefly jeopardized as he suffers a mental and physical collapse in the face of political and romantic treachery.<sup>103</sup> He is rescued, in a sense, by Henry Cruickshank who prevents Lorne from fleeing to Milwaukee by offering him a partnership in his Toronto law firm. Tausky argues that such a conclusion has a symbolic function, that the alliance between Cruickshank and Lorne represents the imperial idea; Cruickshank "is to be revitalized by Lorne's influence, just as an imperial partnership with younger nations would revitalize England. His terms to Lorne are generous, just as England must offer generous terms to secure Canada's total allegiance. The offer is accepted 'not without emotion,' and as Lorne says in his own speech, the decision for closer ties with England is an emotional, not a rational decision" (*Empire* 159). Duncan leaves her readers with the vague promise that Lorne will rise above this early defeat: "We know that his ideal was strong enough to reassert itself...and the thing that could rise in him at that black moment may be trusted, perhaps, to reclaim his fortitude and reconsecrate his energy when these things come again into the full current of his life" (264).

Advena Murchison's story mirrors her brother's in many ways; if Lorne learns "the danger that passion poses to idealism," Advena learns the opposite (Slonim 19).<sup>104</sup> Through the portrayal of Advena's turbulent relationship with the Reverend Hugh Finlay, Duncan not only provides her readers with an entertaining love story to balance the political analysis that infuses Lorne's plot, but she provides herself with another group of satirical targets that complement those that appear in the principal plot.<sup>105</sup> Frank Davey suggests the extent to which these Murchison siblings are cut from the same cloth:

Both have become educated beyond the norms of Elgin, Advena as a teacher,

Lorne as a lawyer. Both have become attracted to idealisms that appear to originate in Britain, Advena to the Scottish Hugh Finlay's Romantic vision of intellectual joys and passions that can render the material world irrelevant, and Lorne to a vision of British political equity that waits to be achieved in an evolving British Empire. Part of the reason for this attraction is that both have outgrown the potential of their home cultural fields--Advena a culture that praises only a domestically skilled woman, Lorne one that values political chicanery far above political principle. ("Narrative" 430)

Just as Duncan invites readers to compare Lorne's character to that of Octavius Milburn in whom she satirizes Elgin's small-minded conservatism, so too does she set up Advena as a "realistic foil to Dora Milburn, in whom Duncan parodies the appearance and manners of the conventional fictional heroine" (Allen 378).<sup>106</sup> Tausky extends the comparison between the families further by noting that Lorne and Advena are motivated by concern for others, whereas Octavius Milburn and his daughter think only of their own self-interest" (*DLB* 102). Even though it is clear that Duncan's sympathies lie with Lorne and Advena, she notes that their unique characters make their lives in Elgin difficult;<sup>107</sup> however, as is the case with Lorne, Advena's own tendency towards extremes renders her partly to blame for her suffering.

Duncan's praise of Advena's imagination, compassion and intelligence is tempered by the satiric treatment of her foibles. Despite her potential to do otherwise, Advena is all too willing to model her behaviour on popular romance novels. As Hammill observes: "Advena's thought patterns are influenced to a rather unhealthy degree by ideals derived from English



literature. She maps out and interprets her life according to the conventions of a certain type of novel, and as she falls in love with Hugh Finlay she begins to project these conventions onto him as well" (159).<sup>108</sup> When he reveals to her that he is honour-bound to marry Miss Cameron, Advena resolves to suffer in silence and her inarticulateness proves to be as self-defeating as Lorne's corresponding loquaciousness. Their situations are paralleled in other ways as well; by deciding to sacrifice their happiness to uphold old-world traditions, the two lovers adopt "heroic roles that are just as naïve as Lorne's case of puppy love" (Tausky, *Canadian* 81). Advena is not prepared for the consequences of her idealistic attempt to stifle her feelings and she—like her brother—comes close to suffering a nervous breakdown (as evidenced by her tendency toward hysterical laughter) when she finds her hopes shattered: "The 'ideal' of self-sacrifice is one that human frailty can only aspire to; like Lorne's imperialist vision, Advena's self-sacrificing role founders on the reality of the new world" (Dean, "'You may imagine'" 192). Unwilling to see his close friends suffer needlessly, Dr. Drummond takes matters into his own hands and provides a simple, practical solution: he will release Finlay from his obligation by marrying Miss Cameron himself. By the novel's end, Advena and Hugh are making plans to take up missionary work together in Alberta.

In the closing pages of *The Imperialist*, the narrator allows Mrs. Murchison a final remark on the contrasting fortunes of her eldest children. She is curt about Lorne's usurpation: "The second election passed only half noticed by the Murchison family; Carter very nearly re-established the Liberal majority...and Mrs. Murchison said they were welcome to Carter" (265). She has rather more to say about the unusual circumstances surrounding Advena's engagement:

As to Advena's simple statement that Miss Cameron had made a second choice of the Doctor, changing her mind, as far as Mrs. Murchison could see, without rhyme or reason, that Mrs. Murchison took leave to find a very poor explanation. Advena's own behaviour toward the rejection is one of the things which her mother declares, probably truly, that she will never understand. To pick up a man in the actual fling of being thrown over, will never, in Mrs. Murchison's eyes, constitute a decorous proceeding. I suppose she thinks the creature might have been made to wait until at least he had found his feet. She professes to cherish no antagonism to her future son-in-law on this account, although, as she says, it's a queer way to come into a family....(265)

While it may seem an ironic contradiction that the same pragmatic temperament that nipped Lorne's dreams in the bud now allows Advena's to blossom, Davey notes that both of these idealistic young people are saved by "apparently rare exceptions to the cultural norms: the practical *and* honourable Dr. Drummond, who finds, by unconventional means, a way for Advena and Finlay to continue together, and an exception even 'rarer, a fastidious politician,' the similarly honourable Henry Cruickshank" ("Narrative" 432). That there *are* such rare exceptions in Canada as Dr. Drummond, Mr. Cruickshank, and Lorne and Advena Murchison themselves, is indicative of Duncan's hope for the future of the young country. Lorne and Advena may have been rejected by the worst of their society, but they are reclaimed by the best of it, a promising sign. As R.D. MacDonald argues: "Duncan answers what she is up against: in the Murchisons and in Dr. Drummond she presents a vital spirit, an earnest and imaginative force for the good, which may yet bear fruit. And in her own free

imaginative play, her undoctinaire and sympathetic play of intelligence, she makes her writing itself a complex and complete embodiment of that lively spirit" ("Re-Reading" 429).

Tausky remarks that Sara Jeannette Duncan's fiction can be seen to form an important part of several lines of development in Canadian prose. For instance, her penetrating analysis of the psychology of exile throughout her work places her at the historical centre of a longstanding Canadian literary tradition stretching from Frances Brooke and Susanna Moodie to Mordecai Richler and Mavis Gallant (*Canadian* 31). Furthermore, her principal theme—the struggle of a smart, passionate, young protagonist to survive the suffocating conditions of his or her small home-town—initiated a prominent tradition of Canadian writing to include the work of Lucy Maud Montgomery, Robertson Davies, Margaret Laurence, and Alice Munro. *The Imperialist* in particular was, Robert Thacker argues, "one of the first real achievements" in the portrayal of small-town Canadian life; as such, it anticipates Leacock's more popular *Sunshine Sketches* in a number of ways, but especially in its inclusion of a detached narrator who is nonetheless emphatically a product of the town he or she criticizes (17). While very few of Duncan's reviewers appreciated her effort in this regard (most suggested, like a reviewer for *The Outlook*, that the realistic portrayal of Elgin and its inhabitants "makes very dull reading" [4 June 1904; qtd. in Tausky, *Canadian Critical Edition*, 315]), "J.G.," writing in *Saturday Night*, argued that Canadians should see themselves in this novel:

The English critic or the United States reviewer may say what he likes about the book, but we know, before we have finished the first chapter, that it is the very life of our people. It is not "about" or "concerning" us, but here is an

Ontario town, with its every-day trials and triumphs, its local ambitions, and its national significance. Elgin...is said to be Brantford, but it might be Guelph, or Stratford or Goderich. We all know the Murchisons. (4 June 1904; qtd. in Tausky, *Canadian Critical Edition*, 317)

When *The Imperialist* was reissued by McClelland and Stewart in 1961, Canadian critics followed J.G.'s lead, though the first remarks were somewhat qualified; for instance, George Woodcock called *The Imperialist* "one of the few mature and sophisticated novels to be written by a Canadian before the Great War" ("Masks" 210), and Gordon Roper suggested that "Canadian fiction had before her no woman writer of such literary skill and range" ("Writers of Fiction, 1880-1920" 317). More recently, critics have contested that Duncan stands among Canada's finest fiction writers and that her work is relevant, not just as a study of pre-war Canada, but also as a study of contemporary Canada: Moss argues that she "displays, in fact, one of the most acute political minds that Canadian literature has yet allowed to flourish in its midst" (*Patterns* 53), while Dooley notes that "[o]ne of the major merits of *The Imperialist* is that it brings...enduring Canadian problems into sharp, clear focus" (31). Joseph and Johanna Jones agree, nodding both to Historicists and New Critics in their assessment of the novel's abiding interest to Canadian readers:

The "imperialism" [Lorne] stood for looks, almost a century later than the supposed time of action, much like the loosely federated cooperation of today's Commonwealth, with Canada a full partner—argued for, then, as a check to the threat of only too genuine economic imperialism from the United States. The issues raised are by no means dead ones yet; students of government, in

addition to readers who simply enjoy good writing, would find much in *The Imperialist* to interest them. (41)

The 1996 publication of a critical edition of the novel by Tecumseh Press, with its accompanying selection of insightful new scholarship on Duncan's work, indicates that, nearly a century after the initial publication of *The Imperialist*, Sara Jeannette Duncan's readers have learned fully to appreciate the definitive, and definitively Canadian, equipoise of her gentle satire and its exacting standards of excellence.

### Endnotes: Confederation Period

1. David Bell and Lorne Tepperman explain that political culture "consists of the ideas, assumptions, values, and beliefs that condition political action. It affects the ways we use politics: the kinds of social problems we address and the solutions we attempt. For political culture serves as a filter or lens through which political actors view the world: it influences what they perceive as social problems and how to react to them" (246).
2. In fact, in Newfoundland, a brief experiment in parties resulted in such bitter Catholic-Protestant conflicts in the 1840s that the Assembly was, by common consent, abolished for six years: "When it was revived, the old divisions remained, but Catholics proclaimed themselves Liberals and Reformers while the Protestant communities along the north coast would call themselves Conservatives" (D.Morton 59).
3. The theory of responsible government appears to place enormous power in the hands of MPs; however, it did not produce hesitant governments fearful of their legislatures because of "party discipline"—another tradition of British parliamentary government, according to which the MPs of a party generally vote as a unified block in the legislature. Stephen Brooks reports that of the thirty-five governments elected between 1867 and 1993, only five fell because of a defeat in the legislature—and in all five cases these were minority governments which depended on the support of another party's MPs (99-100).
4. The colony worked on many fronts to protect the values of Loyalism from Americanization. In addition to limiting American immigration to "a mere handful" in the post-War years, the Assembly also "tried time and again to get rid of American teachers and American textbooks. Religious groups (especially Methodists) suspected of keeping too closely connected with their American counterparts were strongly urged, even forced on occasion, to align themselves with British groups instead" (Bell and Tepperman 81).
5. This was, in a sense, a re-joining of the province already split in two by the British government. George Stewart explains: "Following the conquest and acquisition of Canada during the Seven Years' War (1756-63), the British ran the newly acquired French colony of Quebec as a crown colony with a British governor and, following the Quebec Act of 1774, an appointed council. In 1791, the British reorganized this old colony by splitting it into two separate colonies—Upper Canada (west of the Ottawa River) and Lower Canada (the French-Canadian heartland). This division was made necessary by the influx of thousands of Loyalists who, once they arrived in British territory, displayed deep misgivings about living under the constitutional and legal arrangements of the 1774 Act. Under the 1791 Canada Act, each colony was provided with a governor, appointed executive and legislative councils, and elected assemblies" (6).

6. Brooks explains that the concept of political parties "emerged about the same time that the franchise was extended to males in the lower strata of liberal society (first to the middle classes and gradually to the non-propertied, wage-earning class): between 1800 and 1830 in the United States and between 1832 and 1868 in Great Britain....Parties, with a semi-permanent organization outside of the legislature, gradually developed to enable political entrepreneurs to mobilize this mass electorate" (186-187). The development of the party system in Canada was equally as gradual and its origins are not found exclusively in Upper Canada but in the coalitions between Upper and Lower Canada throughout the 1840s and '50s. John A. Macdonald and George-Etienne Cartier's governing coalition of Conservatives encompassed several distinct groups: moderate Reformers from Canada West, moderate Conservatives (the *bleus*) from Canada East, the commercial and industrial interests of English-speaking Quebec, and the remnants of the Family Compact and the Chateau Clique. The opposition coalition comprised of the Clear Grits of Canada West and the *rouges* of Canada East who were hostile to Macdonald's commercial and banking interests and who advocated free trade with Americans and continued to admire the republican and individualist ideas of the United States. The Conservatives eventually took shape around the unifying vision of Macdonald's nation-building program (enshrined as NP--the National Policy of 1878-9) while the Liberal Party was fraught with divisive ethnic and religious tensions until Wilfred Laurier assumed leadership in 1887" (187).

7. Many influential politicians also signed the manifesto, including Louis-Joseph Papineau and future Prime Minister, John Abbott.

8. The year 1860 was also marked by an official visit to all the provinces of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Newcastle, the secretary of state for the colonies: "Apart from the greater insight into provincial conditions and points of view thereby acquired by the colonial secretary, the visit did much to promote imperial loyalty in the provinces, as well as to provide an opportunity for its expression" (W.M. Whitelaw 152).

9. "Manifest Destiny" is a phrase applied to American territorial expansion throughout the 1800s, implying that both fate and divine will sanctioned the growth of the country. Coined in 1845 by John L. O'Sullivan (editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*), it was originally meant to justify the U.S. annexation of Texas (1845) and was used afterward regarding annexations of Mexico, Oregon, the Caribbean, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam.

10. The notion of a national union of some sort was, of course, hardly a new idea. Desmond Morton rehearses some of the instances in Canada's past when the possibility of such a union was raised: "A British staff officer had suggested it as early as 1783. William Smith, the Loyalist Chief Justice of Quebec, had devised a scheme for a central legislature in 1785. Among the ideas that had cascaded through William Lyon Mackenzie's mind was a colonial union. Lord Durham had promoted the notion when he summoned lieutenant-governors and their councils to meet him in 1838. James W. Johnson, Howe's opponent in Nova Scotia, had been so impressed with Durham's idea that he had pushed the proposition during the 1850s. So had British governors like Lord Elgin and his able successor, Sir Edward Head. It was hardly astonishing. The colonies were all British--Canada East no less than the others--and they all lived in the shadow of the largest, if not necessarily the happiest, federal union in the world" (72).

11. Confederation could not, of course, suddenly enable the new nation to withstand American aggression, but it may well "avert encroachment by appealing for respect as a new North American nation, one not hostile to the American system, though not wholly part of it" (W.L. Morton, *Contexts* 190). W.L. Morton explains that, for its part, the United States would later accept the new Dominion "because it was war-weary and involved in reconstruction, because it had the trans-Mississippi West to develop unimpeded, because it had the profits of the new industrial order to absorb, and because it did not expect the ramshackle structure to endure.... Finally, the United States held the strategic controls on the Pacific--Alaska and San Juan--and on the Atlantic might hope to obtain Newfoundland. Canada was no threat to the integrity of the Union, or to American supremacy in North America" (202-203).

12. Brooks describes a federal system of government as one in which "the constitutional authority to make laws and to tax is divided between a national government and some number of regional governments. Neither the national government acting alone nor the regional governments acting together have the authority to alter the powers of the other level of government. They are coordinate and independent in their separate constitutional spheres" (119).

13. The federal government in Ottawa was given complete authority over trade and commerce, shipping, fisheries, interprovincial transportation, currency and banking, and the postal service; federal and provincial governments shared the responsibility for immigration and agriculture (though Ottawa would prevail in any dispute); and the federal government assumed the duty to build an intercolonial railway linking Montreal to Halifax: "When we consider that promoting economic growth and military defence (also a federal responsibility) were the two chief functions of the nineteenth-century state, there is little doubt that Ottawa was assigned the major legislative powers of that era" (Brooks 124-125).

14. Martin argues that what determined the preference of French Canadians was that "in 1864-67, a negotiated scheme for local autonomy within British North American Confederation was actually on offer, whereas autonomy within a federation of the two Canadas was not" (*History* 19). French Canadians accepted Confederation largely because the provincial governments were given jurisdiction over their education systems, and so the local French majority could safeguard its language, religion and culture.

15. Britain supported Confederation primarily because they hoped to find an honourable way to divest themselves of the responsibility for the defence of the colonies. W.M. Whitelaw remarks: "It is hardly too much to say that before the Civil War was over the provinces had become more insistent on the retention of the British connection than was the mother country herself" (152). The war worried British strategists who watched with alarm as the huge military potential of the United States was mobilized for action: a report in 1864 confirmed that "without efforts no British government could afford, the Canadas were indefensible. This was a secret no colonist could be allowed to know, but it lent harsh urgency to the British determination that something be done about the North American colonies" (D.Morton 50-51). Colonial union seemed to be the answer. (Still, when it became clear that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were reticent to tie themselves to a defenceless interior, a pro-Confederate British governor made "a vague but seemingly valuable pledge that if they would take their own defence seriously, 'the Imperial



Government fully acknowledged the reciprocal obligation of defending every portion of the Empire with all the resources at its command'" [D.Morton 77]). Whitelaw also points out that Britain had been shifting its emphasis from colonial to foreign considerations for at least a decade prior to Confederation. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 marked the beginning of Britain's involvement in a series of military operations in Crimea, India and China. While Britain provided military assistance to British North America during the American Civil War, they were forced to postpone imperial aid towards such projects as the building of an intercolonial railway. Their pervasive domestic economic, military, and political tensions obviously greatly effected their colonial policy (102-103).

16. Canadian self-government was "almost" achieved because several powers were originally withheld from Canadian governments and therefore from the voters who elected them. These included: the power to enter into foreign treaties (the Statute of Westminster transferred this power to Canada in 1931); the power to interpret the constitution (until 1949, when the Supreme Court of Canada became the final appellate court for the country, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council--comprised of members of the British House of Lords--was the highest court); and the power to amend the constitution (this remained unchanged until the repatriation of the constitution in 1982) (Brooks 80).

17. Stephen Brooks defines "political community" as a "shared sense of belonging to a country whose national integrity is worth preserving. This is something less than nationalism, which defines a community by its language, ethnic origins, traditions, or unique history. And it is not quite the same as patriotism, which one associates with a more fervent and demonstrative love of country and its symbols than is usually considered seemly in Canada....national identity is essentially political--a sense of common citizenship in a country whose members have more in common with one another than with the citizens of neighbouring states and who believe that there are good reasons for continuing to live together as a single political nation" (44).

18. Bell and Tepperman indicate that more people left Canada than entered it between 1861 and 1901 and only a high birth rate prevented the population from declining in those years. Most of Canada's emigrants headed for the United States: as late as 1910, when the entire world contained fewer than seven million native-born Canadians, almost a fifth (1.2 million) were living in the U.S. (159).

19. The most important and well-known leaders of the commercial union movement were Erastus Wiman, Goldwin Smith and Wharton Barker: "Together they became a formidable force in putting the question of commercial union on the public agenda and, via their influential contacts in politics and the press both in Canada and the United States, they succeeded in creating sufficient pressure to polarize party politics around the issue in the general election of 1891" (Burgess 67). It is interesting to note that Goldwin Smith, who anticipated Canadian annexation to the United States, denied that Canada had a cultural identity. In a Letter to the Editor of *The Week* in 1894, he responds to the query "What is the matter with Canadian literature?" by remarking: "Without any disparagement of our native genius, we must answer that no such thing as a literature Canadian in the local sense exists or is ever likely to exist. 'Canada' is a political expression. There is no literary unity, there is not even unity of language among the several seats

of population, some of them divided up by great spaces from the rest of which the Dominion is made up. A writer in Ontario has hardly any field outside his own Province" (qtd. in Daymond et al, *Towards* 124).

20. The Imperial Federation League in Canada was officially inaugurated in Montreal on May 9, 1885. Burgess explains that, independent of political activity in Canada, the emergence of the League in Canada "can be viewed merely as part of the wider movement in support of imperial federation in Britain and throughout the white self-governing empire. Branches of the League were also formed in the Australian and South African colonies and in New Zealand, Gibraltar, Barbados and British Guiana between 1885 and 1888" (62).

21. Canada First had its origins in the idealistic discussions between five young men in Ottawa in 1868: Col. George Taylor Dennison, William Foster, Charles Mair, Henry James Morgan (whose *Bibliotheca Canadensis; or, A manual of Canadian literature* (1867) was the first major bio-bibliographical study of Canadian literature), and Robert Haliburton (Thomas Chandler's son). Their aim "was to advance the growth of a national sentiment--to make Canada a reality in the hearts of her people as well as on the statute books" (Matthews 81). While they strenuously objected to arguments for commercial union with the United States, they did support such a union with Britain--insisting that only within the Empire could Canada maintain her voice in foreign affairs.

22. Imperialistic thought was not anchored by a blind admiration for Britain and the simple unwillingness to sever colonial ties. On the contrary, Berger insists, one of the most arresting features of Canadian imperialism was how seldom praise was lavished upon the mother country: "from Canada First down to the World War the customary attitude of Canadian imperialists to England was a curious mixture of affection and anxiety, resentment and solicitude. Charges that Canadian interests had been sacrificed by British diplomacy, quick and indignant responses to manifestations of superciliousness, and apprehensive warnings that the insularity and narrowness of Englishmen were jeopardizing the Empire, ran all through imperialist thought" (260).

23. To illustrate the propaganda element in the Loyalist histories of the period, Robert S. Allen points to a few works of a few Maritime scholars: "In his vitriolic 'History of the Loyalists' (1893) [James] Hannay drew a hagiographic-daemonic distinction between Loyalists and rebels. The Loyalists represented the forces of truth and light, whereas the rebels and republicanism were identified with lawlessness and vulgar materialism. Similarly, [W.O.] Raymond, *The United Empire Loyalists* (1893), dealt extensively with the persecutions and sufferings of the Loyalists at the hands of evil Americans" (59).

24. Ramon Hathorn explains that Fréchet's "bitterness at the proposed Confederation of 1867 is apparent in his poem 'La Voix d'un Exilé' (1866), published during his voluntary political exile in Chicago. Praising the rebellious Patriotes of 1837, Fréchet satirizes the 'sordid band' of Cartier and Macdonald as they cynically get drunk on truffles and champagne now that they have succeeded in imposing Confederation on his French-speaking compatriots" (561).

25. Marchand became the leader of the Quebec Liberal party in 1892 and the premier in 1897 (serving until his death in 1900). Perhaps better known for his five plays, he also wrote essays on political and social topics as well as occasional poems—including the satirical "Les Travers du Siècle" and "Nos Ridicules" (Doucette 726).

26. Michael Peterman remarks that McCarroll's literary fame "reached its zenith in the early 1880s with the weekly publication of letters to Thomas D'Arcy McGee from 'Terry Finnegan'; these appeared in several Toronto satiric magazines, notably *The Grumbler*. Writing in a spirited Irish vernacular, Finnegan identified himself as McGee's 'lovin cousin'; his letters paid particular attention to Canadian socio-political conditions and the vulnerable situation of the Irish in the Canadas. McCarroll's Finneganesque attacks on the activities of then-premier John Sandfield Macdonald in the summer of 1863 cost him his Customs position. The 'first series' of the Finnegan letters were published as a book in Toronto in 1864" ("McCarroll" 688). See also Peterman's *James McCarroll, alias Terry Finnegan; Newspapers, Controversy and Literature in Victorian Canada*.

27. Lorraine McMullen describes the significance of *Grip*, a comic and satirical weekly (which usually supported Whig or reformist views) published in Toronto between May 1873 and December 1894: "With its humorous and satirical cartoons and writings on politics—local, provincial, and national—and on religion, literature, and society, *Grip* became Canada's *Punch*" ("Grip" 496). Editor J.W. Bengough boasted that by 1883 weekly circulation was between 7,000 and 10,000 and that the paper was "'perused by fully 50,000 readers every week'" (qtd. in F.Sutherland 74). Fraser Sutherland lists several other comic journals of the period in his *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines, 1789-1989*, including *Punch in Canada*, *Diogenes*, *Grinchuckle*, *The Grumbler*, and *Moon* (16). See Carmen Cummings' recent *Sketches From a Young Country: The Images of Grip Magazine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

28. See Richard Plant's "Chronology: Theatre in Ontario to 1914" for a full listing, often accompanied with a brief description, of all of the plays written and/or performed in Ontario in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

29. Robert Barr was a social critic who satirized Canadian and American public affairs. John Parr argues that Barr "deserves to be remembered...for his comic inventiveness, a primary contribution to the Canadian humor tradition, carries on in the essays and sketches of Stephen Leacock and, more recently, the novels of Robertson Davies, W.O. Mitchell, and Mordecai Richler" (18). Grant Allen sometimes used fiction to promote his views on science and its meaning for society, as in satirical dystopias *Philistia* (1884) and *The British Barbarians* (1895). These works, together with such stories as those in Allen's *The Face and the Mask* (1894) and Barr's *Strange Stories* (1884), are in the tradition of De Mille's work which often combined fantastic literature with a concern for social change.

30. James De Mille added the final 'e' seemingly from personal preference upon entering Brown University. I will use this modified spelling for all references to him, unless quoting from writers who use the original spelling.

31. M.G. Parks notes that although Nathan De Mill's reasons for his break with the family religious affiliation are not on record, his "militant crusade against the demon rum" may help to explain his preference for the Baptist church: "Long before 1842 he may have found the Anglican position on temperance a weak and ultimately immoral compromise" ("Strange" 67).

32. Although most of his contributions were anonymous or pseudonymous, Patricia Monk provides a listing of the items which she is "sure, beyond all reasonable doubt, were written by De Mille." See Appendix A (257-260) in *Gilded Beaver*. Upon his brother's death, De Mille became the unofficial editor of *The Christian Watchman*.

33. Archibald MacMechan concurs that *The Dodge Club* was written "before going to Acadia" ("James De Mille: The Man and the Writer" 413).

34. De Mille's last academic activity was to travel to Saint John, in January 1880, to lecture on satire at the Mechanics Institute. On his return, he was taken ill with a cold that quickly progressed to a fatal bout of pneumonia.

35. Monk points out that the exact date is unknown but that it was between 1869 (when the family was still attending the Granville Street Baptist Church) and 1871, since the 1871 census describes the De Mille family members as belonging to the Church of England (*Gilded* 133).

M.G. Parks, reviewing De Mille's subsequent address to the Church of England Institute, *The Early English Church*, summarizes his attitude toward his newly rediscovered faith: "his conception of a distinct British church adhering to primitive Christianity and resisting as best it could the dominance of highly organized Roman authoritarianism indicates that he saw his church as an indigenous schism from Catholicism dating from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. In other words, De Mille agrees on this point with that earlier staunch Anglican, T.C. Haliburton, who had seen the Reformation in England as reactionary rather than revolutionary, the English church as regaining the purity of doctrine which had long been sullied by Roman domination, and the Anglicanism which emerged from the purging away of long-established Roman heresy and corruption as the best and truest form of Christianity. What is more to the point, De Mille had by 1865 aligned himself with the theological and ethical climate of the Anglican *via media*, with the tradition of Hooker, and had formally repudiated the more uncompromising temper of sectarianism. It is noteworthy that, when he settled in Halifax and became an Anglican, he chose High-Church St. Luke's rather than Low-Church St. Paul's as his place of worship" ("Strange" 70-71).

36. De Mille's brother, renowned Baptist minister Elisha Budd, died a year before his father, in 1863. As devoted as De Mille was to Nathan, he was extremely close to Budd and held him in high esteem. If family loyalty was the principal reason De Mille stayed in the Baptist church, then it was likely as much out of regard for his brother as for his father. Furthermore, De Mille was on the faculty of a Baptist institution until 1865 and married to the daughter of a Pryor.

37. Monk points out that some individuals in the community suspected that "there was some element of social climbing involved in the change [of religious affiliation]" (*Gilded* 133); however, she dismisses this argument, noting that the Reverend I.E. Bill, "with whom De Mille

had had some differences in the days of the *Christian Watchman*, gives no hint in his memorial notice of De Mille's death in 1880 of any ulterior motive on De Mille's part, commenting simply that 'Owing to unpleasant circumstances, he cast his lot in late years with the Episcopalians'" (*Gilded* 133). Furthermore, De Mille appears to have taken his conversion quite seriously, becoming an active member in the Church of England Institute.

38. Monk concurs that De Mille's twin personas as "classical scholar" and "hack writer" produced a "somewhat disturbing" dichotomy: "as disturbing now, in fact, as it was to his colleagues, who barely knew what to make of him, although his students all remembered him with affection. De Mille does not reveal himself easily to the enquiring reader" (*DLB* 92).

39. Before Patricia Monk's comprehensive biography of De Mille, the best source available to critics was Douglas MacLeod's unpublished M.A. thesis "A Critical Biography of James De Mille" (Dalhousie, 1968). MacLeod's research supports Burpee's (De Mille's nephew's) assertion; he points to an article on De Mille in the *Brown Alumni Monthly* which explains that the revision of *Helena's Household* "'was so disagreeable that to avoid a repetition of it, De Mille resolved in future to give the publishers what they would take without question'" (qtd. in Kilian 62).

40. Cogswell did not disparage De Mille's efforts, however "cold-blooded" he considered them to be. To his mind, De Mille's classical education aligned him with Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Chandler Haliburton, who knew "how to construct good sentences and proper paragraphs"; in fact, Cogswell argues that De Mille brought a professional quality to "the novel which, before De Mille, was consistently feeble, wooden, and amateurish" ("Maritime" 119).

Surveying his writing career, Carole Gerson notes that, besides the 'Boys of the White Cross' series: "De Mille paid little attention to his native land. He set two novels in Canada, *The Lady of the Ice* in Quebec and *The Lily and the Cross* in Acadia, and he slipped Canadian references into several others--more, one senses, to expand the territory of his fiction market (and perhaps to tease his American readers) than to contribute seriously to the development of a native literature. The B.O.W.C. novels, in contrast, despite their publication in the United States, depict their region with great fidelity" ("Three" 239-240).

41. The B.O.W.C series, which details the adventures of a group of young boys around the Minas Basin, includes *The 'B.O.W.C.'* (1869), *The Boys of Grand Pré School* (1870), *Lost in the Fog* (1870), *Fire in the Woods* (1872), *Picked up Adrift* (1872), and *The Treasure of the Seas* (1873). The Young Dodge Club series, which recounts the European adventures of four teen-age boys, includes *Among the Brigands* (1871), *The Seven Hills* (1873), and *The Winged Lion; or, Stories of Venice* (1877).

42. *A Strange Manuscript* was first published anonymously in *Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization*, 32, nos. 1620-1638 (January 7-May 12, 1888). It appeared as a volume later that same year in both New York (Harper and Brothers) and in London (Chatto and Windus). It was not until 1910 that the first Canadian edition of the novel appeared (Macmillan).

43. See Linda Lamont-Stewart's "Rescued by Postmodernism: The Escalating Value of James De Mille's 'A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder'" for a review of the history of critical commentary on the novel.

44. David Ketterer, author of *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy*, concurs with Crawford's estimation of *A Strange Manuscript*, noting that there is "a growing consensus that this provocative philosophical work is not only the best nineteenth-century Canadian novel but one of the best Canadian novels *period*" (8).

45. Gerson suggests that De Mille fashioned this symposium of readers, in part, to mimic the literary critics and reviewers who panned his work throughout his career: "Adam More's manuscript is more farfetched than any of De Mille's sensation novels, and as repetitious and carelessly assembled as some of De Mille's serial tales. But De Mille cleverly forestalls adverse external criticism by providing the commentary of the characters aboard Featherstone's yacht" ("Three" 230). For instance, note Melick's conclusion that "this writer is tawdry; he has the worst vices of the sensational school—he shows everywhere marks of haste, gross carelessness, and universal feebleness" (228).

46. Janice Kulyk Keefer suggests that De Mille may have drawn on his surrounding landscape to conceive of this strange arctic world: "Although the Kosekin themselves cannot really be compared with Bluenoses, it may not be altogether fanciful to discern a likeness between the paradoxical regions each people inhabits. The lush valleys and green plains of Kosekin Land are ringed by islands whose jagged coast and shattered rocks recall William Cobbett's disparaging description of Nova Scotia's shores; the one trace of life and food these rocks offer Atam-or and Almah are shellfish—chief among them lobsters. Beyond these superficial similarities, however, is a conceptual bond: the Maritime mythos with its crazy quilt of golden words and iron ages, of Happy Valleys and Nova Scarcities, of communal bliss and mass emigration" (132).

47. Kenneth Hughes proposes alternate allusions contained in the names of the frame tale characters, focusing on their possible religious implications: "The name Dr. Congreve would recall the [Richard] Congreve who left Anglicanism for positivism. Oxenden is close enough to recall [Henry Nutcombe] Oxenham, who left the Anglican Church for Catholicism. Melick's German Christian name 'Otto' and his self-proclaimed function as textual critic would be enough to recall the Higher German Criticism which helped bring about the religious crisis" (122).

48. Woodcock suggests, further, that Featherstone acts "as a foil to the argumentative extremities of the other three discoverers" ("Vision" 99).

49. Gerson adds that De Mille may have had ulterior motives in his characterization of Otto Melick: "By attributing to this obtuse fictional man of letters the kinds of comments he was used to receiving on his own work, De Mille took a barbed parting shot at his awareness of its triviality, that he was capable of burlesquing both his potboilers and his critics, and that his decision not to produce sophisticated, philosophical, realistic fiction was not due to a lack of ability" (*Purer* 55). Such comments echo Woodcock's suggestion that Melick voices most readers' opinions of the novel: "two-thirds of the way through *A Strange Manuscript*, one's

criticism of the manner in which More's narrative is written is at least partially disarmed by De Mille's voicing--with a certain donnish mischievousness and through Melick's mouth--precisely the same criticism" ("Vision" 102).

50. Kilian rehearses the chief characteristics of the Utopia and notes that De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript* contains many of them: "The Utopia is marked by use of the dialogue or symposium, in which a number of listeners hear and discuss a traveller's account of a distant land....The anatomy, especially as Utopia, has other qualities as well. Chief among them is the use of a morally significant language, often synthetic, as a satirical device....Another convention of the Utopian satire is a setting on an isolated, womblike island wherein the hero discovers the truth about the Utopian society only after a hazardous entry....Finally, the Utopia is often shown as existing outside the normal sequence of time....All of these conventions can be found in a *Strange Manuscript*" (62).

51. Hughes asserts that *A Strange Manuscript* "is a positive Utopia which satirizes an aristocratic class that serves no useful function--neither, on the one hand, producing material wealth, nor, on the other, adding to the share of human knowledge by assisting in the moral and intellectual development of man" (123).

52. Watters describes the text as "a satirical anti-utopian commentary on contemporary life with a swiftly paced narrative of travel, romance, and fantastic adventure" (Introduction vii).

53. Parks compares *A Strange Manuscript* with More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, arguing that both "depict imaginary societies which reflect back upon the actual societies in which they were written; both are anti-Utopias in which the good elements of the imagined societies are counter-balanced by the bad and in which utopianism as an ideal is implicitly repudiated; both are presented by narrator-characters, Hythloday and Gulliver, who are more or less naive and imperceptive of the implications of what they see and experience. Similarly, De Mille's imaginary society is a distorted reflection of his own, his Kosekin have evolved a society that is at first glance better but ultimately as bad as actual Western society, or even worse, and his narrator, Adam More, like Hythloday and Gulliver, brings an ordinary and relatively imperceptive mind to the task of understanding and judging his strange hosts. *A Strange Manuscript* is therefore squarely in the 'classic' line of English anti-Utopias, and its general conception need not be sought for in minor fantasies of the nineteenth century" ("Strange" 64).

54. Kulyk Keefer coins a term by arguing that "De Mille's work might best be described as an 'unutopia' which conflates the utopia and the dystopia to sabotage the very possibility of envisioning social systems radically worse or better than our own. Satiric it certainly--and heavyhandedly--is, but the most interesting and enduring feature of *Strange Manuscript* is not so much the ideas it throws out as the responses De Mille's fictive treatment of those ideas creates in the reader" (132).

55. Woodcock takes on the argument that *A Strange Manuscript* is a utopia: "the satirical process is one of moral reform and not of utopian social reconstruction. This brings one to the general question of Canadian utopias. *A Strange Manuscript* is one of the few Canadian books that have

ever been regarded as utopian, and, as we have seen, in any strict sense the claim must regretfully be dismissed as invalid. It is a satire on our own world, not a proposal for an ideal commonwealth or a warning of its opposite. Our only true utopian writer...has been Marshall McLuhan, who proposed to us a new view of existence and, to go with it, a new world constructed by a new technology. The reason we have had no utopias before the Global Village is a simple one. We were until recently in the process of making our own new world, and pioneers have little need of utopian visions since they shape afresh as they go. But they do have need for the moral correctiveness of satire, and in providing it *A Strange Manuscript* was entirely appropriate to its time and country" ("Vision" 110).

56. La Bossière also asserts that De Mille did not conceive of the Kosekin within a utopian framework: "It is certain, among other things, that the book is not a positive utopia. De Mille, surely, did not imagine the Kosekin way of darkness and death so that others might be tempted to take it up....Nor is *A Strange Manuscript* an anti-utopia, for its author surely did not worry that the materialistic Western world was in any great or immediate danger of practising asceticism after the manner of the society he set in deepest tropical Antarctica" (43-44).

57. A related debate concerning the novel's date of composition throws some of these observations into question. Scholars initially assumed that *A Strange Manuscript* was one of, if not the last work De Mille wrote before his death in 1880 and that it was therefore consciously modelled on Lytton, Butler, and Mallock whose works created something of a vogue in English literature. However, in 1972 Crawford Kilian, drawing on Douglas MacLeod's thesis, argued convincingly for a composition date in the late 1860s, meaning that De Mille was actually a frontrunner to this trend (Harper's simply cashed in on it). Furthermore, the fact that Fred Cogswell, writing for *The Literary History of Canada*, could argue that *A Strange Manuscript* "is indebted to Rider Haggard ...[for] the technical device of telling a story by means of a chance-recovered manuscript" ("Maritime" 127) even though De Mille had been dead for seven years by the time that Haggard's *She* (1887) was published indicates how shaky any allegations of influence are.

Yet, for some critics, this "chicken and egg" quarrel is a moot point since it is not distinct allusions which interest them, but interesting comparisons—even if these comparisons are obviously anachronistic. For instance, Janice Kulyk Keefer suggests that *A Strange Manuscript* reads like an anticipatory parody of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, "with its framing device (the group of yachtsmen leisurely listening to a horrific tale unfold), its description of a journey down a dangerous, dark river into a land of death, and its exposure of its European protagonists to the worst excesses civilized man can imagine and commit" (131). Joseph and Johanna Jones concur that the "technique in places is Conradian (the yacht scenes especially) years before Joseph Conrad," adding that it is also "Huxleyian and Orwellian decades before Aldous Huxley and George Orwell" (36-37).

58. Guth remarks that the reference to Adam here "betrays on More's part at least a passing familiarity with the Bible, and thus necessitates a re-scrutiny of the earlier Biblical echoes in his manuscript" (49).



59. Almah and Layelah's ultimate similarity of character is supported by their similar appearance; both are described as beautiful dark-haired women. Here, De Mille deliberately defies the literary convention of setting a dark lady against a fair one for the love of the hero.

60. In the Eastern Church, Epiphany commemorates the Baptism of Christ.

61. Consider the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758) by Carolus Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist who established the principles for naming and classifying plants and animals. He divides *Homo sapiens* into six varieties: Wild, American, European, Asiatic, African, and Monster. Notice the racist attitudes which underpin his summaries: "(c) European--white, sanguine, muscular; long, blond hair; blue eyes; gentle, most intelligent; a discoverer. He covers himself with clothing suitable to the northern climate. He is ruled by religious custom. (d) Asiatic--yellow, melancholy, rigid; dark hair; dark eyes; austere, arrogant, greedy. He covers himself with loose clothing. He is ruled by opinion. (e) African--black, phlegmatic, lax; black, curly hair; silky skin, apelike nose; swollen lips; the bosoms of the women are distended; their breasts give milk copiously; crafty, slothful, careless. He smears himself with fat. He is ruled by authority" (qtd. in Burke 267).

62. Though thoroughly un-Christian and un-enlightened, Adam More's name is nonetheless apt in light of its imperialistic associations; it "invokes both the first practitioner of imperialism, the biblical Adam naming the animals in the Garden of Eden, and Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, the first widely disseminated alternative social vision based on a redistribution of property to emanate from modern Europe" (Gerson, "Contrapuntal" 230).

63. More's manipulation of Kosekin culture to accord with his own values is especially ironic in light of the fact that he appreciates the disturbing nature of such a violation. After an evening of playing the violin and singing Celtic songs for a large Kosekin crowd, it suddenly occurs to More that they might appropriate the tunes into their own culture: "a grisly thought came to me: it was that they would learn these sweet strains, and put their own words to them so as to use them at the awful sacrifices. After that, I would play no more" (108).

64. Almah and Layelah may be said to represent two opposing view points on the imperialist mission, based solely on a casual remark each utters. Suggesting that More stop disrupting the Kosekin sacred hunt, Almah asserts: "'It is useless for you to interfere in their ways. You cannot change them'" (102). Later, when More asks Layelah how such tremendous monsters as the athalebs can be tamed, she replies "'Oh, man can tame anything'" (186).

65. Hughes also argues that the Featherstone's yacht symbolizes "nothing less than Britain itself": "To be becalmed is to be without control and to be at the mercy of every tide or political upheaval; it is to be without direction....The ship is the British State and its name, 'The Falcon' suggests a reduced Anglican Church, just as the falcon is a small version of the eagle" (122).

66. In the extensive explanatory notes to the CEECT edition of *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, Malcolm Parks identifies references to Capt. James Clark Ross, James Bruce, John Cleves Symmes, Charles Wilkes, Sir Charles Lyell, Richard Owen, James Ivory, H.E.

Strickland, and Hugh Miller (see pp. 271-303).

67. For discussions on the novel's ending, see Guth, La Bossière, Wilson, Monk (*Gilded*), Parks ("Strange"), and Woodcock ("Vision").

68. For recent scholarship, see Klay Dyer's "Parody and the Horizons of Fiction in Nineteenth-Century Canada," which devotes Chapter Three to a discussion of De Mille's *The Dodge Club* and other works.

69. Few of these women, however, wrote satire. Dustin Griffin offers a comprehensive explanation: "the organization of culture has made it difficult for women to write and publish satire. Tentatively, one might assign several reasons: because women historically lacked access to a classical education (and thus to the conventions and traditions of satire); because women were long permitted little knowledge of the world outside their own domestic domain; because until recently women have been trained not to develop or display aggressiveness; because hostile images of gossip, nag, complainer, termagant, and virago may have discouraged women from cultivating a public form that deals in grumbling and railing. To discover how women writers sought to evade or overcome such discouragements might not only expand our sense of the range of satire from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen but might also enhance our sense of how satire functions within a culture" (190).

70. Carole Gerson summarizes Duncan's doomed attempts to reform the literary tastes of her audience: "Through characters like Lorne Murchison and Vulcan Miles (*The Burnt Offering*), Duncan (like Scott in *Waverly* and Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*) exposed the inability of the romantic temperament to cope with the complexities of real social and political experience, and in her literary structures she frequently rejected the novel of plot in favour of the novel of idea. But her efforts to push Canadian fiction in the direction that she identified as the mainstream of serious literary artistry were powerless against the renewed tide of romance that swept the English-speaking world in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The few turn-of-the-century Canadian writers who attempted to pursue Duncan were ignored by readers and periodicals in favour of the slick romances of popular authors like Gilbert Parker and Robert Barr, the latter crowned by *The Canadian Magazine* as 'the Prince of Canada's storytellers'" (*Purer* 64-65).

71. Marjorie Lang points out that "Duncan was among the few women in Canada who were able to make a living in journalism because they wrote what a large number of people wanted to read. With her talent and ingenuity, Duncan stood out in the contemporary press, but she was not the only woman to write for newspapers in Canada. The imprecision of contemporary surveys, combined with the anonymity and pseudonymity of newspaper writing, bedevils attempts to pinpoint exactly how many women writers were practising journalists in late nineteenth-century Canada. The first census for which any estimates are available, 1891, recorded thirty-five women editors, reporters, and journalists. A few years later, the National Council of Women of Canada described the careers of fifty-five editors, contributors, and correspondents" (78). She cites, for example the fact that "Alice Lemmon Keeler wrote for and then ran her husband's paper in Brantford in the 1830s; Agnes Maule Machar was writing articles under the *nom de plume* of Fidelis in the 1870s...Kate Massiah was covering the House of Commons for the Montreal

*Herald* in 1879" (79).

72. Like her friend and travelling companion Lily Lewis, who wrote for the *Montreal Star* and *The Week* signing herself Louis Lloyd, Duncan assumed a masculine pseudonym. Both "wore their disguises lightly, more as daring accessories than as veils. Theirs was not the dilemma of female talent forced to parade itself as male in order to get an audience. When, on a few occasions, Sara Jeannette Duncan had to correct the misapprehension of less-than-discerning readers, she firmly identified herself as a woman. Correspondents to her Women's World department in the *Globe* addressed Garth Grafton as 'Dear Madam.' (Nor did Louis Lloyd make any attempt to camouflage her female identity in her travelling articles for *The Week*") (Lang 77).

73. Duncan's fiction will later reveal her conception of the ideal "New Woman" as one who uses imagination--not militant politics--to distinguish herself within society. Tausky notes that in each of Duncan's five successful novels, one of the principal women characters--Mamie Wick in *An American Girl in London*, Mrs. Perth Macintyre in *The Simple Adventures of a Mem sahib*, Rhoda Daye in *His Honour, and a Lady*, Advena Murchison in *The Imperialist*, and Mary Trent in *Cousin Cinderella*--resists or at least scorns conventional behaviour without venturing into radicalism: "Each of these characters is given a distinctive personality, but each, in her own way, is superior in imagination to her environment. In each case, the plot, the dialogue and the narrator's comments all serve to reinforce the reader's consciousness of the qualitative distinction between the heroine and her uncomprehending milieu" (*Empire* 81).

74. Misao Dean notes that references throughout Duncan's journalism and fiction indicate wide reading interests: in addition to Howells and James, she obviously read Kipling, Arnold, Browning, J.S. Mill, Thomas Carlyle, Goldwin Smith, George Parkin, European novels in translation, and classic eighteenth-century English writers (*Daughter* v). To this list of potential influences, Tausky adds Jane Austen (for the amused witty narrator dissecting the foibles of a small-scale community) and Joseph Conrad (for his attitude toward the Indian setting) (*Canadian* 27-30).

75. Gerson adds that before "Duncan made a brief, concerted effort to broaden the cultural horizons of her fellow Canadians during the mid-1880s, Susanna Moodie had proved the most radical mid-century Canadian commentator when she argued that social realism was permissible in fiction if directed at moral ends. Approaching the same topic from a different direction, Thomas Chandler Haliburton used his famous character Sam Slick to advocate fictional writing that was 'true to nature.' This phrase did not refer to the detail of the social anatomist but to the satirist's deployment of exaggeration and caricature to present his analysis of and solutions to current economic and political problems....In Haliburton's own practice, instruction preceded amusement. While Sara Jeannette Duncan was primarily interested in fiction as an art, Haliburton's motive was to exploit its popularity to advance specific causes" (*Purer* 52-53).

76. Tausky points out that Duncan's first two novels, *A Social Departure* and *An American Girl in London*, "were probably Duncan's most popular books. A 1903 advertisement indicates that they had sold sixteen thousand and eight thousand copies respectively in their American editions

alone" (DLB 99).

77. Gerson comments that Duncan created "the most memorable New Women in early Canadian fiction--not by expounding a particular thesis but by creating literary projections of her own lively, adventuresome personality, her flippant dedication of her first novel to Mrs Grundy signalling her willingness to question convention" (*Purer* 148). She qualifies Duncan's brazen approach, however, noting: "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" (*Purer* 148-149).

78. Bissell notes the connection between Duncan's journalism and her novel, *The Imperialist*: "Her point of view as a novelist is prefigured in her journalism. In her column in *The Week* she displayed an Arnoldian distaste for the philistinism of the solid Ontario burgher, and a genuine pride in a standard of manners and social behaviour that she thought promised a new and happy synthesis. She exulted in the fact that Canadian society was free of 'the aristocratic code of insular dictation of the English, and of the somewhat lax and liberal system that prevails among our cousins of the Republic.' It is this combination of pride with sharp critical outlook that enables her to give substance to the provincial society that she describes....In her social analysis she moves easily and effectively from generalization to specific example, so that the book becomes, without losing its power of fictional representation, a revealing social commentary" (Introduction vi).

79. Gerson outlines the ways in which these two light novels play with readers' anticipation of a conventional ending: "Both recount the European adventures of Mamie Wick, a bright young lady whose ingenious spirit exposes the limitations and prejudices of her British and American acquaintances. In her first narrative Mamie is courted by Mr Mafferton, a proper young Englishman whose attentions augur a wedding-bells conclusion. As *The Week's* reviewer remarked, 'we feel we shall not be surprised if the usual fate which pursues pretty American girls overtakes our heroine. That it does not is perhaps the cleverest thing in the book'....In *A Voyage of Consolation* Duncan again parodies popular literary convention. The marriage ending that Mamie rejects at the beginning of the book is affirmed with a vengeance at its conclusion. After a series of coincidental encounters across continental Europe, Mamie and all the unattached characters (including Mr Mafferton) terminate their adventures with three, possibly four marriages....Duncan, like James De Mille before her, understood that one way to come to terms with the conventions of the popular novel was to treat them ironically. Rather than seek new narrative modes, Duncan in these two books moulded currently popular structures to her own purpose, much to the delight of her readers. As *The Dominion Illustrated* observed in 1890, 'Those who deny women humour must go to Miss Duncan's pages to be cured of their heresy'" (*Purer* 62-63).

80. *The Imperialist* first appeared in *The Queen* in thirteen weekly instalments from October 3 to December 26, 1903. It was then serialized in the *Toronto News*, appearing daily from November 28, 1903, to February 17, 1904. The American edition of the book (D. Appleton) appeared in February, 1904 and the British edition (Constable) followed in April, 1904. The

Canadian edition (Copp Clark) was printed in England—it is identical, apart from the imprint, to the British edition—and was likely distributed in Canada a few weeks after its publication in England.

81. Tausky's Canadian Critical Edition of *The Imperialist* reprints ten reviews of the novel published in 1904 in New York, London, and Toronto (312-318).

82. Gerson notes that Duncan was initially regarded by the Canadian critical establishment solely as a comic novelist: "In Pierce's *Outline of Canadian Literature* (1927), Logan and French's *Highways of Canadian Literature* (1924, 1928), and Rhodenizer's *Handbook of Canadian Literature* (1930), Duncan is not treated as a serious novelist but is given several pages in a chapter on humorists" ("Canon" 205-6, n.7).

83. In a 1902 letter to her friend, John Willison, from her home in India, Duncan admits "I feel a little helpless so far from my material," and asks if he might send her some documentation: "I want a week's issues of the *Globe* preferably numbers dealing editorially with the question of *Imperial federation*, and I want, if they are to be had in pamphlet form, all *Sir W. Laurier's speeches* on the subject, or any others that may be useful....If you know of anything...occupied with the practical intricacies of the question, will you send it to me, and I will pay up by return" (qtd. in *The Imperialist*, Canadian Critical Edition, 306).

84. While *The Imperialist* was also published in the United States, it does not address Americans in any significant way. Tausky, in his article "The Audiences of *The Imperialist*," notes that "Duncan's letter to the American magazine publisher R.W. Gilder shows her as an author selling her work to a particular market, and trying, rather desperately, to find an American 'angle'" (467). Duncan writes: "It should have a keen interest for Americans as it traces the contrasting political fate involved in the parting of the ways in '76, and will be full of a sense of difference. Please let me know if it in any way appeals to you" (1903; qtd. in *The Imperialist*, Canadian Critical Edition, 307).

85. Sara Jeannette Duncan, *The Imperialist* (1904; rpt. Ed. Thomas Tausky. Ottawa: Tecumseh-Canadian Critical Edition, 1996) 160. All further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

86. The gender of the narrative voice remains unspecified; however, as Frank Davey argues, "the range of characters offered by the novel does operate to gender the narrator as female. Only two characters in the book speak in styles as breezy and confident and as politically unengaged as the narrator, and both are young women: the Murchison sisters Stella and Advena. And only one woman character—Advena—shares in any way the narrator's ability to stand outside the action and perceive its ironies and humiliations" ("Narrative" 424). Wayne Booth describes the effect of an ironic narrator: "As soon as an ironic voice has been used to any extent in any work of any kind, readers inevitably begin to take interest and pleasure in that voice—in the tasks it assigns and the qualities it provides; it thus becomes part of whatever is seen as the controlling context. I am not thinking here of the mock voices that the ironist may take up for a time—the various unreliable narrators that may be given a single poem or part of a novel or play to tell. Rather

I am thinking of the reliable but ironic authors who convince us that they are pretty much the real man or woman speaking to us: the Henry Fielding, the Laurence Sterne, the Jane Austen, the George Eliot, the Max Beerbohm, the Mark Twain, the E.M. Forster, the Henry James, the Emily Dickinson, the W.H. Auden who stand behind each ironic stroke as warrantors of the continuing validity of what we are about" (176).

87. Dean discusses the manner in which Duncan generally wields irony in her fiction to highlight the relativity of one's perspective: "Duncan expresses her '(ambiguous)' commitment to the colonial point of view in the literary form of her novels, adopting strategies that allow her to covertly criticize the assumptions of the ideological centre without betraying her own or her reader's allegiance to them. Chief among these strategies is the ironic narrator, who explains and qualifies the colonial 'point of view' by directly addressing the way that it differs from that of the centre. The narrator of the 'international novel' compares and contrasts the British reader's assumptions about social and political conventions with those standards prevailing in the colonies, concluding that in the material realm at least such truths are relative to a person's point of view" ("You may imagine" 188).

88. Duncan includes a corresponding scene in the romance subplot: Advena attempts to welcome Finlay's betrothed and his aunt from Scotland, but makes the "mistake" of being too familiar in her address. Dooley remarks: "She is friendly, warm, and open; she is greeted with dourness and reserve which turns to hostility....After she has gone out, the two Scottish ladies agree that they can well do without her friendship. Advena herself, on the sidewalk, shakes with laughter, and we can be sure that her creator laughs with her—she found it most amusing to write this scene contrasting New-World openness with Old-World stuffiness and snobbishness" (32-33).

89. Zetzka expounds on Hesketh's transformation: "After an initial attempt to help Lorne's campaign by advocating the imperial tie, Hesketh quietly abandons the field and eventually adjusts his sights more realistically to the opportunities open to him in Canada. Furthermore, he undergoes a political education which divests him of his previous snobbery, inverts it, in fact, so that he assumes a stance not unlike that of Leacock's Mariposans in its assertive provincialism....Hesketh succeeds, as Lorne does not, in reconciling the claims of an old, idealized allegiance with those of the present moment and the present place. He is able to temper his idealism and to assume a point of view which most Canadians, in and out of fiction, assumed in regard to the imperial idea" ("Passionate" 90).

90. For various interpretations of Old Mother Beggarlegs as a symbol see Davey (424), Dean (*Different* 29), R. Douglas MacDonald (437), Peterson (59), Thomas (39), Zetzka (86), and Zichy (400).

91. Marian Fowler suggests that there is a biographical element to Duncan's depiction of Mrs. Murchison's disapproval of her children playing with those of the lower class; Duncan's "mother, too, stressed social forms, particularly those which etched the fine lines of class distinctions. The prosperous merchants and factory-owners of Brantford formed its aristocracy just as surely as British peers did England's, and Jane Duncan saw to it that her children never played with lower-class ones, nor were they allowed to play in the streets, though they longed

to" (20-21).

92. Fortier points out that Duncan imitated Henry James in her references to reading throughout her novels: "She uses the image of diversified reading in her work to suggest cosmopolitanism ....The cramping circumstances of Elgin, Ontario in *The Imperialist* (1904) were not able to stunt the imaginative development of a girl like Advena Murchison, given the access she had to her father's book-cabinet, stocked with English periodicals, the classics of English literature, and masterpieces from around the world" (198).

93. Allen rehearses the critical reaction to these dichotomous families: "Clara Thomas points to the racial element in Duncan's thought and suggests that the 'pretension, time-serving and prejudice of such neo-colonialists as the Englishman, Octavius Milburn...are clearly to be vanquished by the rising generation' of Scotch-Canadians represented by the young Murchisons (360). For Thomas Tausky the novel is more ambiguous: 'she seems to have the Murchisons and Milburns in mind as two alternative directions for the evolution of a more advanced culture,' and her conclusion is highly uncertain (*Novelist of Empire* 163, 171). Yet another possibility is that these families represent two contending social principles, neither of which can entirely prevail over the other" (381).

94. Indeed, class consciousness is so much a part of Mrs. Milburn's character that the usually astute narrator suggests that this women has a superior understanding of the social hierarchy in Elgin: "smaller trades made smaller pretensions; Mrs. Milburn could tell you where to draw the line. They were all hard-working folk together, but they had their little prejudices: the dentist was known as 'Doc,' but he was not considered quite on a medical level; it was doubtful whether you bowed to the piano-tuner, and quite a curious and unreasonable contempt was bound up in the word 'veterinary'" (37).

95. Duncan continually analyzes the complexities of simple communication by drawing attention to the way something is said and the spirit in which it is heard. When, for instance, Lorne is asked if he will assist in the Ormiston case, he responds negatively—"If I get a bit of grubbing to do, under supervision, they'll consider I ought to be pleased"—but the narrator qualifies his cynical remarks by describing his intonation: "It was the sunniest possible tone of grumbling; it enlisted your sympathy by its very acknowledgement that it had not a leg to stand on" (32). Similarly, when Dr. Drummond announces an upcoming funeral, the narrator describes his voice and its effect on his audience: "The minister's voice changed with the character of its affairs. Still vibrating with the delivery of his sermon, it was now charged with the official business of the interment. In its inflections it expressed both elegy and eulogy; and in the brief pause before and after 'invited' and the fall of 'attend' there was the last word of comment upon the mortal term. A crispation of interest passed over the congregation; every chin was raised. Dr. Drummond's voice had a wonderful claiming power" (26). Such explication underscores Duncan's implicit argument that if one is fully to understand what is said, one must appreciate the character of the speaker; the unspoken words that qualify both Lorne's and Dr. Drummond's remarks are to be found in the sunny grumbling and claiming power that temper them. It could be said that the same applies to reading satire.

96. The few references to books in the Milburn home highlight the contrast between the two families. Hammill points out that while John, Lorne, and Advena Murchison "manifest a taste for Old World myths and legends, traditional romances and English novels....Dora Milburn, by contrast, reads only 'the Toronto society weekly-illustrated,' and her father, prefers his own biography 'in a sumptuous work entitled *Canadians of Today*" (157). Rather than delighting in reading for its own sake, the Milburns display books, magazines, and newspapers as objects that project an appropriate image. For instance, to disguise the fact that the entire family had worked feverishly up to the last minute to prepare for their party, they arrange themselves in the sitting room with an air of casual refinement. Dora plays the piano, her mother cross-stiches, Miss Filkin reads from *Selections from the Poets of the Century*, and Mr. Milburn peruses the Toronto evening paper: "Mrs. Milburn had objected to the evening paper in the drawing-room. 'Won't you look at a magazine, Octavius?' she said; but Mr. Milburn advanced the argument that it removed 'any appearance of stiffness,' and prevailed" (43).

97. Notably, Carter was not nominated in the first place because the party leaders did not trust that he would be capable of pitching the notion of preference trade with Britain to South Fox: "'The objection to Carter is that he's only half convinced; he couldn't talk straight if he wanted to, and that lecture tour of his in the United States ten years ago pushing reciprocity with the Americans would make awkward literature'" (162).

98. Even before Lorne has his rude awakening in London, Bissell suggests, readers may well suspect that Lorne's adoration of the mother country is as likely to come to grief as his corresponding adoration of Dora: "there is something, we are led to believe, a little feverish and uncertain about Lorne's patriotic admiration of the Old Country. It is perhaps of a piece with his romantic devotion to the exquisite but superficial Dora Milburn" (Introduction viii-ix).

99. Notably, Lorne's romantic passion also affects his ability to read people; for instance, he is wrong, the narrator laughs, to read so much into Mr. Milburn's meaningless gesture of holding the garden gate open for him: "Alas! the significance that lovers find! Lorne read a world in the behaviour of Dora's father in holding the gate open. He saw political principle put aside in his favour, and social position forgotten in kindness to him. He saw the gravest, sincerest appreciation of his recent success, which he took as humbly as a dog will take a bone; he read a fatherly thought at which his pulses bounded in an arrogance of triumph, and his heart rose to ask its trust. And Octavius Milburn had held the gate open because it was more convenient to hold it open than to leave it open" (86).

100. Lorne's misjudgment is especially clear, as Tausky points out, when readers consider the extent to which Lorne echoes Hesketh's disastrous speech of a few weeks earlier: "Hesketh's election address, in its crude appeal to Canadian self-sacrifice, parodies and ominously prefigures Lorne's subsequent speech which, however superior in grace and intelligence, nevertheless uses some of the same arguments" (Introduction [1988] xxv).

101. Wallingham "is a very thinly disguised version of Joseph Chamberlain, the chief advocate of imperialism in reality....*The Imperialist* was written at a time when the fate of Chamberlain's fervent crusade for imperialism was completely unknowable. For some years, Chamberlain had



been the most outspoken imperialist in the Conservative cabinet. In the summer and fall of 1903...he deliberately made his differences with his Cabinet colleagues public, seeking to make his policy prevail through the weight of popular opinion. He resigned from the Cabinet, and also weakened it, contributing thereby to the Liberal landslide victory of 1906, and therefore to the total collapse of imperialism" (Tausky, *Empire* 160-161).

102. Zichy suggests that herein lies part of Duncan's theme: "John Murchison's heart is in the right place, yet he feels obliged to maintain a cautious attitude towards Lorne's attempt to argue the imperial cause. The event seems to justify his caution, yet perhaps this lack of confidence, even in John Murchison and others like him who are alive to the deeper appeal of imperialism, is one of the major obstacles to Lorne's success. It is a large part of Lorne Murchison's importance that he strives to outgrow his father's caution" ("Portrait" 394).

103. Catherine Sheldrick Ross points out the connection between Lorne's political and romantic misjudgments: "Duncan's irony emphasizes the disparity between Dora's exterior loveliness and her poverty of character. Seeing the physical beauty, Lorne ascribes to Dora all those absent moral and spiritual qualities which the reader has always gladly supplied for the heroine of romance. Duncan's literary point here--that the old-time heroine represents a false ideal--comes to the aid of the social and political themes of the novel. In presenting Dora, Duncan parodies what she considers an outmoded literary convention to criticize the dying Colonial tradition--the 'Filkin tradition'--that Dora represents. Lorne's misperception of Dora, moreover, parallels his misjudgment of the Imperial question, which misjudgment itself results from the same misplaced idealism" (44-45).

104. Leon Slonim suggests that, throughout *The Imperialist*, Duncan's ambivalent irony is aimed particularly at notions of idealism and passion, "as we can see when we turn to the novel's three major plots....(a) Lorne Murchison's infatuation with Dora Milburn; (b) Lorne's parallel infatuation with the 'Idea' of Imperial Federation and, concomitantly, with Great Britain; and (c) the romance between Hugh Finlay and Advena Murchison and Finlay's consequent infatuation with the idea of sacrificing Advena for the sake of principle" (15).

105. For a discussion of the narrative parallels between Lorne's and Advena's stories, see Allen (378ff).

106. Ross points out that Advena "forms the greatest possible contrast to Dora, for Duncan, in presenting Advena according to the conventions of realism, systematically overturns most of the established conventions of romance. Dora is to be found sitting prettily at her piano; Advena always has her nose in a book. Dora accepts male adoration as her due; Advena's mother 'would have been sorry for the man if he arrived [to court Advena], but he had not arrived'" (45).

107. In contrast to the sentimental portrayals of life in most fictional small towns at turn of the century--including Adeline Teskey's Mapleton, L.M. Montgomery's Avonlea, R.L. Richardson's Ontario 'Scotch Settlement,' and Ralph Connor's Glengarry--Gerson reiterates that "Life in Elgin is no idyll for those with 'horizons' and intellectual ambition" (*Purer* 149).

108. By expecting her life and love to unfold in storybook fashion, Advena's romance-constructed mind imperils her own happiness in a way that anticipates Margaret Atwood's satiric fiction some seventy years hence. In *Lady Oracle* (1976), Atwood explores the impact of Gothic narratives on the female psyche in her portrayal of Joan Foster, a woman who continually puts herself emotionally and physically at risk by constructing her life as a Gothic text.

## CONCLUSION

Upon meeting Lorne Murchison for the first time, Arthur Hesketh "listened to him, with steady, critical attention," and heard, in his vital, intelligent and optimistic voice, the promise of Canada itself: "Lorne seemed in a way to sum it all up in his person, all the better opportunity a man had out there; and he handled large matters of the future with a confidence and a grip that quickened the circulation" (Duncan, *The Imperialist* 112-113). In response, Hesketh's "own blood stirred with the desire to accomplish, to carry further; and as the scope of the philanthropist did not attract him, he was vaguely conscious of having been born too late in England. The new political appeal of the colonies, clashing suddenly upon old insular harmonies, brought him a sense of wider fields and chances" (112). By the novel's end, Hesketh has resolved not only to make Canada his home, but "to make a good Canadian" (262). Thomas McCulloch, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, James De Mille and Sara Jeannette Duncan were all seemingly motivated by the desire to stir the blood of their readers just as Lorne does Hesketh's, to inspire in them "a sense of wider fields and chances" so that they too will determine to become productive members of their colonies and, later, of their new nation. Together, *The Stepsure Letters*, *The Clockmaker*, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, and *The Imperialist* present and represent a varied picture of these "wider fields and chances"--that is, of the geographical, philosophical and imaginative spaces open to colonists/Canadians, and of the attendant social, economic, and spiritual opportunities, risks, and responsibilities to be encountered there.

Each of these satirists encourages morally decent, socially acceptable, and intellectually sound human behaviour, and explores the extent to which such behaviour contributes to the larger scheme--to the region, the province, the colony, the nation, the

Empire, and/or the global community. Not surprisingly, given the rapidly changing face of British North America and then Canada over the course of the nineteenth century, these writers also examine the notion of progress in their portrayals of wider fields and chances. In *The Stepsure Letters*, McCulloch disparages those who believe that the city is the site of New World progress. He argues that colonists need look no further than the lush Nova Scotian farm lands for wider fields, and that, by opting instead to seek easy money in the depraved metropolis, they are taking imprudent chances with their physical, spiritual, and financial health. Castigating those who recklessly scramble to attain the material trappings of prosperity, he reminds readers (in Calvinist-Presbyterian fashion) that hard work is doubly rewarded by a comfortable living and by God's grace. Haliburton supports McCulloch's basic principles in his *Clockmaker* sketches; however, he is not as interested in God's plan as he is in the plans of the Nova Scotian legislature and the British Colonial Office. Indeed, Haliburton has a more cosmopolitan vision of the province's wider fields and chances; he casts a watchful eye southward to the dubious progress of the American republic and eastward to the beloved, but frustratingly inactive mother lands. In an argument that would come to characterize Canada's position as a middle ground between Uncle Sam and John Bull, Haliburton urged his fellow Nova Scotians to recognize that their best chance for financial success lay in emulating the "go-ahead" work ethic of Americans, but that their only chance for moral (if not military) victory over American depravity lay in strengthening the colony's ideological and political ties to Great Britain.

De Mille's novel, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, is a philosophical allegory that implicitly questions many of these principles. In his satiric attack

on Victorian values, Christian doctrine, and the imperialist mission—and in his portrayal of the inept Adam More and the blundering yachtsmen as typical Britons—De Mille challenges the received opinion that the British Empire represents reassuring progress. In fact, he subtly argues, the Empire's civilizing mission is ignorant and immoral: Canada has neither need nor right to lay claim to the wider fields that lie beyond its ever-growing territory. Writing as the provinces stood on the uncertain brink of nationhood, De Mille may also, like Haliburton before him, have had one eye fixed on America, the other on Great Britain. However, he encourages his readers to reject the binary assumptions that underpin the rhetoric of imperialism; to disapprove of the monarchy, then, is not to sanction the republic. Readers have the chance, De Mille intimates, at this crucial point in Canada's history, to define "progress" on its own terms and to determine the moral direction of the young country. In her realistic novel, *The Imperialist*, Duncan portrays a turn-of-the-century small town that is well aware of its capacity to so choose. Like Haliburton, Duncan satirizes the short-sighted townspeople and farmers who reject the promise of imperial unity; unlike him, she anticipates the defeat and trusts the country to hold its own against American influence. In fact, though the nation now stretches "from sea to shining sea," the real wider fields and chances, Duncan insists, are to be found in the hearts and minds of imaginative and passionate Canadians who will pull the country up by its colonial bootstraps and lead it into the twentieth century. Whereas Haliburton attacks the British administration for its lethargy, and De Mille derides it for its ideology, Duncan disdains its ignorance. If Britain is to have any role in the future of this promising nation, she implies, it will have to learn to understand and to appreciate the unique Canadian character that is flourishing here.

There is a temptation, in the initial stage of constructing any literary history, to arrange a series of representative texts chronologically and then to impose upon them a narrative of evolution. In many ways, the present survey of these four satiric fictions seemingly invites just this kind of exercise. One might argue, for instance, based on this survey, that Canadian satiric fiction becomes increasingly refined as the nineteenth century unfolds, to keep pace, perhaps, with the growing sophistication of the reading public. The satiric norms informing these texts do change from the beginning of the century to the end; whereas physical strength and perseverance—or the mere willingness to perform hard labour—are championed in *The Stepsure Letters* and *The Clockmaker*, mental strength—or the ability to read perceptively and to speak effectively—is upheld in *A Strange Manuscript* and *The Imperialist*. Similarly, McCulloch and Haliburton offer rather easily ascertained recipes for success in their sketches; there is a moral maxim or piece of wisdom presented that can be (and in Haliburton's case actually is) summed up in a line or two. De Mille and Duncan, on the other hand, challenge their readers to interpret more complicated narratives in order to discover their satiric themes. Furthermore, the themes themselves become increasingly ambiguous as the century progresses: in preaching the dogma of personal responsibility, McCulloch and Haliburton rarely argue, as Duncan does, that there are complex mitigating circumstances to consider when judging relative success or failure. Similarly, although Haliburton urges his readers to demand action from the province's politicians and administrators, he does not, as De Mille later does, insinuate that readers should question authority, rethink the status quo, and re-examine centuries' old traditions. In short, what seems to characterize Canadian satiric fiction through the nineteenth century is the general

movement away from the militantly satiric exposure of vice and folly toward a more gentle, ironic inquiry into moral, social, and political responsibilities.

However, while it is reasonable to note that such a movement reflects change, it is unreasonable to argue that it signifies maturation—that Lorne Murchison, for example, was the product of a more intelligent and sophisticated mind than Sam Slick was, or that *More* was designed for a more perceptive audience than *Stepsure* was. The most obvious explanation for the *apparent* evolution of satiric fiction in nineteenth-century Canada lies in the authors' choice of genre; the innovation and rise in popularity of the novel form allowed De Mille and Duncan to develop longer, more complex arguments than McCulloch and Haliburton could in the popular sketch format of their time. Carole Gerson remarks that the narrative complexity of Haliburton's *The Old Judge* indicates that he "was capable of a degree of subtlety and restraint not present in the Sam Slick books and suggests that had he cared to do so, he might have applied his sense of literary realism to the creation of fuller works of fiction in line with the critical principles later articulated by Sara Jeannette Duncan" (*Purer* 54).

While all of the works studied were collected for publication after being serialized in local journals, *The Stepsure Letters* and *The Clockmaker* were not conceived as single, uniform volumes and therefore do not develop sustained plots. Given this dramatic difference in form, and the obvious effects it has on the complexity of content, it is more interesting to trace the similarities between these works than it is simply to review their differences. Note, for example, that all of these writers distance themselves from the anticipated impact of their satiric attacks by creating within their works fictional authors who are ostensibly responsible



for them. McCulloch uses the epistolary form, inventing prolific letter-writer Mephibosheth Stepsure to bear the brunt of the public's indignity; in this way, McCulloch is doubly removed from the people Stepsure quotes, including the hot-headed Scantocreesh and the pontificating Drone. Haliburton uses a similar technique; the Squire is the alleged author of *The Clockmaker* since the sketches are ostensibly transcripts, copied from his journal, of his conversations with Sam Slick. By placing his judgements in the mouth of a vulgar Yankee pedlar—a figure who could hardly be more unlike a respected Nova Scotian magistrate—and then by creating a character who is responsible for publishing those attacks, Haliburton also doubly distances himself from his satire.

De Mille uses a different tactic to distance himself from his satire; he places readers in the position of overhearing his condemnation instead of having it aimed directly at them. In fact, they must first decipher his critique, which is expressed between the lines of the titular manuscript and its reception on board the *Falcon*. De Mille's inclusion of an ostensible author and several dim-witted readers doubly separates him from the satiric messages that, readers will discover, underpin the romance adventure tale. Unlike McCulloch, Haliburton, and De Mille before her, Duncan does not masquerade her fiction as someone else's letters, journal entries, or manuscript. In fact, she is the only one of the group to publish the work in question under her own name (the initial anonymous authorship of the men's texts providing the most obvious distancing technique). Still, Duncan's invention of a highly intrusive narrator—who is practically a full-fledged character *à la* Henry James—serves to place her as implied author at one remove from the reproachful irony that informs the story. Regardless, readers soon come to recognize that the underlying satiric themes of the novel are to be

located in the narrator's constant interjections to explain or qualify the characters' actions and attitudes. Interestingly, this narrator's voice echoes that of Stepsure, the Squire, and More in its authoritative, highly literate, well-bred and urbane quality. So, while these satirists may have produced fictional personas to create diversions in order to guard themselves from public backlash, they have also clearly located some of their satiric norms in the polite and cosmopolitan voices of their respective "authors."

McCulloch, Haliburton, De Mille, and Duncan also use language in similar ways throughout their works. In addition to creating fictional storytellers who are comparable not only in their purpose but in their style of speech, all four writers use their characters' facility (or lack thereof) with language as a satiric device. The characters who possess great verbal energy and the capacity for a quick-witted observation or reply are the likeliest mouthpieces for the authors' satire, while the inarticulate characters are sure to be objects of ridicule. For instance, Scantocreesh's and Slick's protracted outbursts in the face of their neighbours' baffling behaviour contrast sharply with More's dumb silence in the strangely inverted world of the Kosekin. Similarly, Lorne's capacity to inspire his audience both with his compositions and his orations contrasts sharply with the corresponding failure of Reverend Drone, whose very name alludes to his tedious habits of speech. Finally, all four authors use idiomatic language both to suggest the origins and class of their characters and to punctuate their narratives with humour; in their distinction from the voices of the alleged authors, Scantocreesh's Scottish brogue, Slick's Yankee twang, Featherstone's British lisp, and the Crow family's coarse vernacular all strike discordant and often comic notes in their respective narratives. Duncan dwells especially on these kinds of comparisons, insinuating throughout

her novel that even the less conspicuous qualities of speech—such as diction, cadence, and tone—provide as much information about people as their statements do.

As their inclusion of various kinds of speech indicates, McCulloch, Haliburton, De Mille and Duncan all coax their readers to perform a comparative analysis on the characters that inhabit their respective fictional worlds, to seek out and separate the satiric agents from the satiric objects. At first glance, it appears that the principal figures in these fictions are the ideals against which the antitheses are readily spotted: Stepsure's and Slick's hard work and good sense point up the lazy and stupid Nova Scotian farmers, More stands in horrified contrast to the cannibalistic Kosekin, and Lorne's passionate idealism is quashed by Milburn's calculating pragmatism. It becomes evident, however, that all of the apparent satiric agents in these texts exhibit vice and folly even as they judge those around them. In fact, to varying degrees, each man is blinded to his own faults and blunders by his wrong-headed belief either in his own moral superiority or in the wisdom of his behaviour: Stepsure's burgeoning pride finds him obliviously committing some of the same sins he admonishes in others; Slick's ignorant display of crude American traits warns readers against looking to him for moral guidance; More's obtuse reading of the Kosekin culture and the revelation of his own unpalatable beliefs render him an object of satiric attack rather than its agent; and Lorne's pathetic failure to keep the everyday priorities of Elgin in clear focus leads him to make ruinous strategic errors in his political campaign. Thus, none of these writers adheres to the simple bi-polar pattern of *laus et vitupero*, praise and blame, that traditional satire (read simplistically) invites.

Despite an arguably reformist intent, these satirists reveal a common unwillingness to

be excessively didactic. Instead, they all complicate their fictions by qualifying their satiric visions; to some extent, all of their characters earn both praise and blame if in varying measures, just as readers undoubtedly do. In fact, by investing their characters with the very flaws they hope to make their readers aware of in themselves, these authors humanize their fictional creations, making them more applicable to the real world. This technique allows readers to identify (or, better, identify with) and therefore to learn from ambiguous—and often laughable—figures such as Stepsure, Slick, More, and Lorne. This observation lends credence to Northrop Frye's argument, quoted on the opening page of this study, that "McCulloch is the founder of a genuine Canadian humour: that is, of the humour that is based on a vision of society and is not merely a series of wisecracks on a single theme" (Introduction ix). These writers share a similar vision of society, as evidenced in their mutual appreciation of the wider fields and chances that promise a bright future for those colonists and Canadians who are of sound mind and morals. While, in most respects, it is obvious that McCulloch, Haliburton, De Mille and Duncan lived very different lives, there are, nonetheless, interesting parallels between them which may help to explain their like-minded vision of society and their shared determination to express it in satiric and ironic terms.

Surveying the literature produced in nineteenth-century Canada, Fred Cogswell remarks that "only a very small segment of the population had the education, the interest, and the leisure to write. Literature was almost exclusively the property of lawyers, schoolteachers, clergymen, journalists, and their wives and daughters" ("Maritime" 117). The preceding representative sample of nineteenth-century satirists, admittedly small though canonical, certainly supports at least part of Cogswell's observation; in addition to being

prolific creative writers, McCulloch, Haliburton, De Mille, and Duncan each occupied one or more of these professional posts. Besides achieving remarkable success in their respective careers, they were all well-educated and well-read, and they all travelled, worked, or studied abroad in their youth. The combination of formal schooling and life experience likely provided these fledgling writers with the necessary tools for producing successful satire: an astute appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre and an expanded awareness of the larger scheme of things. While they are best remembered for their satires, these authors each expressed their views in other writing as well—not only in different types of fiction, but also in non-fictional pieces such as religious tracts, pamphlets, letters, histories, and journalistic pieces. And, although they met with varying degrees of success, they were all interested in publishing or distributing their works in the United States and Great Britain. So, while it is arguable that extensive leisure time was a luxury enjoyed by any of them (especially by the men who were the sole support of their families), education and interest, Cogswell rightly points out, were clearly significant factors in their ability and resolve to produce satiric fiction.

Informed and careful readers can see the details of these writers' personal and professional interests reflected in the scope and approach of their respective fictions; for example, McCulloch's roles as a Scots Presbyterian minister, a social reformer, and a committed educator are evident in the various voices of *The Stepsure Letters*; Haliburton's political crusades—ranging from passing a motion to build a local bridge to fighting the call for representative government—are arguably the *raison d'être* of *The Clockmaker*; De Mille's difficult financial situation may explain his decision to write *A Strange Manuscript* as a

fantastical romance-adventure tale; and Duncan's personal experiences in India and England may well have provided the insight, expressed in *The Imperialist*, that the scheme for imperial unity was bound to fail. While universal values are upheld in the satiric moralizing and rationalising of these narratives, they are nonetheless peppered with references to historical and geographical particulars that fix them in their own specific spatial and/or temporal places. Again, despite the fact that they vary greatly in the degree and kind of referentiality, the general correspondences between these texts are compelling. They all ponder the uncertain future of the colony/nation in their allusions to the dominant issues of annexationist versus imperialistic schemes, and to related minor concerns, such as the distressing profusion of undesirable citizens and the alarming loss, through emigration, of potentially desirable ones. Similarly, in their inclusion of pointed discussions about education, religion, law, politics, commerce, and the public press, these satires all scrutinize the efficacy of the institutions that formed—and continue to form—the substructure of civilized society. For such reasons, *The Stepsure Letters*, *The Clockmaker*, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, and *The Imperialist* remain pertinent and deservedly canonical texts late in the twentieth-century.

The intervening years have seen the continual production of satiric fiction that owes a good deal, both artistically and ideologically, to these nineteenth-century texts. Stephen Leacock's work dominates the early decades of this century. In its use of the sketch format and stock characters, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) recalls the work of McCulloch and Haliburton. Its kindly humour, on the other hand, is reminiscent of Duncan's gentle irony; in Leacock, as in Duncan, "an appreciation of the local scale precedes

commentary on it. In fact, without that appreciation, ironic humour becomes caustic satire and interpretive portraiture degenerates into caricature" (Zezulka, "Passionate" 86). Several critics have drawn similar specific parallels between Leacock's narrative voice and satiric humour and those of his literary forebears. For instance, Beverly Rasporich suggests that the "literary and literate gentlemanly comic personas adopted by Stephen Leacock" are part of a tradition initiated in *The Stepsure Letters* by "McCulloch's paternal voice of conservative morality and intellectual idealism" (229). Although Duncan was not, primarily, a humorist, Clara Thomas contends that the clever attention to the details of Elgin's "well-developed social hierarchy" provides "the antecedents of Leacock's humour" ("Mythologies" 45). In fact, Thomas adds, in "portraying their towns, Duncan and Leacock overlap enough in their selection of detail about persons or events so that each provides a check on the validity of the other" ("Mythologies" 48).

In addition to these particular correlations, Leacock's broader themes revisit those that preoccupied several of his predecessors. His concern that Canada was transforming, to its detriment, from a rural, agrarian society into an urban, technological one is an extension of McCulloch's fear of the consequences of Pictou farmers leaving the land to find their fortune in the city. In many ways, Leacock supports McCulloch's--and, later, Duncan's--contention that the mercenary motives and lack of vision exhibited by a growing portion of the Canadian population threaten the moral fabric of Canadian society at large. Carl Berger notes that

Leacock located the main misfortune of his day in the penetration of the business spirit into the church, the university, and politics....In his most biting satirical work, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914), Leacock paid

his respects to the hustling ministers who no longer cared for religion, the university folk who no longer cared about learning and scholarship, the deceitful political reformers, the mindless wizards of high finance, and the inane social habits and mores of the rich in general. (195)

The belief that business values were demoralizing and corrupting, Berger explains, "ran deep in imperialist thought" (195). Like Haliburton and Duncan before him, Leacock was an imperialist. His attack on the American ideology of liberal individualism and unrestricted capitalism in *Arcadian Adventures* is another version of the warning that was a familiar refrain to readers of nineteenth-century satiric fiction: it is imperative for colonists and Canadians to be keenly aware of their political, economic, and ethical positions *vis-à-vis* America and Great Britain. However, while many of the same norms that ground Colonial and Confederation satiric fiction are evident in Leacock's work, he was more troubled about the threat posed to human dignity than to organized religion, financial prosperity, or burgeoning nationhood. Nevertheless, in his equally voluminous non-fiction he appealed to his readers to embrace a version of imperialism that is strikingly similar to that which Lorne Murchison champions in *The Imperialist*. This was arguably the last time such sentiments were forwarded earnestly--that is, in the style and temper that suggests some hope that they might effect change.

Largely because of its involvement in World War I, Canada came into its own in the first decades of the twentieth century as a distinct and potentially powerful nation; as a result, both the threat of American annexation and the appeal of British imperial unity dissipated. Subsequent twentieth-century satiric fiction became an increasingly literary, rather than



political, exercise. A prime example is Paul Hiebert's *Sarah Binks* (1947), which is a typically modernist ridicule of Canadian cultural nationalism and intellectual pretensions with none of the underlying political critique that informs De Mille's similar jabs at the exegetical profession in *A Strange Manuscript*. In some respects, the principal fiction writers producing satire during the Modern and Contemporary periods in Canada—Robertson Davies, Mordecai Richler, Timothy Findlay, and Margaret Atwood—can be seen to continue the attack on the same targets that inform not only Leacock's fiction but that of his nineteenth-century precursors: ignorance and lack of imagination, the resulting dearth of Canadian cultural development, and the failure to uphold moral codes of behaviour in the face of rising commercialism. In their tone and plots, however, works such as the *Salteron Trilogy* (1951-8), *The Incomparable Atuk* (1963) and *Cocksure* (1968), *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984), *Lady Oracle* (1976) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) mark a discernible shift in the Canadian satiric temperament: there is a perceptible lack of expectation apparent in these narratives that ridicule will convince where reason has failed. For instance, Richler impugns vice and folly and yet concedes that it is nearly impossible to avoid, perhaps anticipating post-modern literature's proclivity for positing irony—if not absurdity—in all levels of existence. But even this deep undercutting of the very notion that one can define and defend a code of values by which to live in the modern world finds its origins in the nineteenth-century propensity to satirize the satirist.

Like their nineteenth- and early twentieth-century counterparts, modern and contemporary Canadian writers have often displayed an uneasy balance between a profound emotional allegiance to their native land and a keen awareness of the critical perspectives

afforded by international models and standards—the very duality that underlies our most successful satire. In the Introduction to *The Canadian Novel: Beginnings*, John Moss argues that the distinct point of view developed in early Canadian fiction resonates in our best contemporary writers: "Haliburton, Moodie, Duncan, and Leacock all address a specific readership, not necessarily Canadian, from a fixed perspective which is at continual variance with their works' narrative point of view. The effect might be described as didactic ambiguity, a very Canadian trait found in such pre-eminent novelists...as Kroetsch, Wiebe, Cohen, Atwood, and Laurence in *The Diviners*" (12). And, he adds, there are other ways in which nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian satiric and ironic writing anticipates the trends of some of our best mid-to-late twentieth-century fiction. For instance, the comic vision of our early writers has become a national literary characteristic: "Duncan writes with vivacious wit. Leacock is, of course, one of the great humorists of literature. Haliburton does not transcend time so well, but in small doses his humour is still amusing, astute, and diverting....Humour, satire, wit, effervescent vitality, these are the strengths of the Canadian tradition, which continue today in writers as diverse as Robert Kroetsch and Margaret Atwood" (*Beginnings* 10). While it is, of course, difficult to argue that nineteenth-century Canadian satiric fiction directly influenced and continues to influence the satiric, ironic, and comic fiction subsequently written in Canada, such observations bring to mind Northrop Frye's oft-quoted assertion from the Conclusion to the *Literary History of Canada*: "I keep coming back to the feeling that there does seem to be such a thing as an imaginative continuum, and that writers are conditioned in their attitudes by their predecessors, or by the cultural climate of their predecessors, whether there is a conscious influence or not. Again,

nothing can give a writer's experience and sensitivity any form except the study of literature itself" (361).

The study of nineteenth-century Canadian literature is the study of the birth of a nation--politically, socially, and culturally. This is especially true of the study of nineteenth-century Canadian satire because, as Dustin Griffin points out, "satire and history are often thought to be near allied" (115). Even if, as P.K. Elkin argues, the justification for satire lies in its art (*Satire* 8), a good deal of its appeal lies in its connections to reality. In order to appreciate to the fullest possible extent how these satiric fictions work, readers must not only perform close critical analyses, but must also attempt to situate the texts in relation to the historical, geographical, and biographical particulars of their production. By doing so, such engaged readers will recognize that McCulloch, Haliburton, De Mille, and Duncan responded passionately and intelligently to the fundamental concerns of their times. While the smaller issues vary from the beginning of the century to the end, all of these writers address one basic dilemma: the difficult necessity of establishing and preserving a moral code that will balance the best elements of an Old World heritage and a New World neighbour. By tackling this quandary, these satires give voice to the "moral imperative" which has, as A.B. McKillop argues in *A Disciplined Intelligence*, informed Anglo-Canadian thought for centuries:

despite its inevitable twists and turns, its different intellectual shapes and emotional shadings, the basic lesson has nevertheless remained constant from generation to generation, and it has also been given sustained voice. The Anglo-Canadian intellectual elite, whether living in a God-centred British

province or in a state-centred North American nation, has consistently urged that it is necessary to reach a *modus vivendi* between intellectual inquiry and conventional wisdom, between individual autonomy and the social good, between the myth of freedom and the myth of concern. (231)

Satire provides an ideal form for reconciling belief and inquiry, tradition and innovation, concern and freedom. In their satiric fictions, McCulloch, Haliburton, De Mille and Duncan alternately employ a rhetoric of provocation and a rhetoric of persuasion, leading their readers to ponder specific questions and arguing, sometimes, on behalf of certain answers. While McKillop uses the term "moral imperative," it is clear from his own definition that satiric rationalism plays a large role in determining how best to bridge the large ideological gap between monarchical-parliamentary and republican forms of government. Ultimately, these satirists balance or conflate moral satire and satiric rationalism, arguing in various ways that the use of one's God-given intelligence is a moral act. That argument persists, having become an integral part of the tradition of Canadian satiric fiction.

The presence of multifaceted and interrelated norms grounding these texts is just one way in which Thomas McCulloch's *The Stepsure Letters*, Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*, James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, and Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist* reflect the elements of satire discussed in the Introduction to this study. Together, these works demonstrate the remarkable versatility of the satiric mode to varying forms, voices, and plots; they cover the comic spectrum between Horatian smiles and Juvenalian savagery; they balance "laughter *with* knives" by blending humour and criticism in such a way as to render the resulting laughter responsible; and they raise age-old

questions about the reformist intent and effect of the work itself, prompting readers to wonder, as William Cowper once did: "'What vice has it subdued? Whose heart reclaim'd / By rigour, or who laugh'd into reform?'" (*The Task* 2. 66-67, qtd. in Griffin 38). At least in one respect, reader response to these satiric fictions can be accurately assessed: they were all instant or eventual successes, earning appreciative international audiences that continue to grow since the works remain in print and stand among the country's foremost canonical texts.

Nearly 180 years ago, Mephibosheth Stepsure proclaimed his resolve to continue subjecting his fellow townspeople to the castigation he felt they richly deserved: "as I am the only writer who has attempted to make our people see and be ashamed of themselves, my credit is pledged to stick to the point till a better appear" (Letter 21, 226). Since then, many of the most critically and popularly acclaimed Canadian writers have taken a page out of Stepsure's letters and produced memorable satire. In doing so, they have contributed to the national imaginative continuum: as W.J. Keith notes, the fact that McCulloch "anticipates Leacock in having a 'Rev. Mr. Drone' as his local minister may perhaps be attributed to coincidence, but it could represent an early example of the continuities of cultural tradition" (16-17). If the birth of the tradition of Canadian satiric fiction in early nineteenth-century Nova Scotia was the happy result of dire circumstances finding expression in a popular Augustan art form, now, nearly two hundred years later, Canadian satirists further and expand the satiric tradition in their continuing explorations of the promise of wider fields and chances inherent in a much-changed but still uncertain nation.

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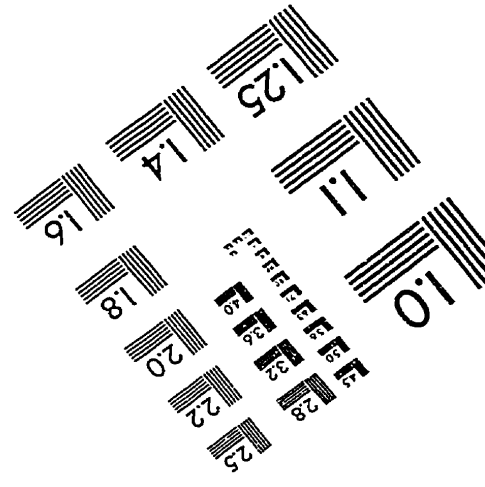
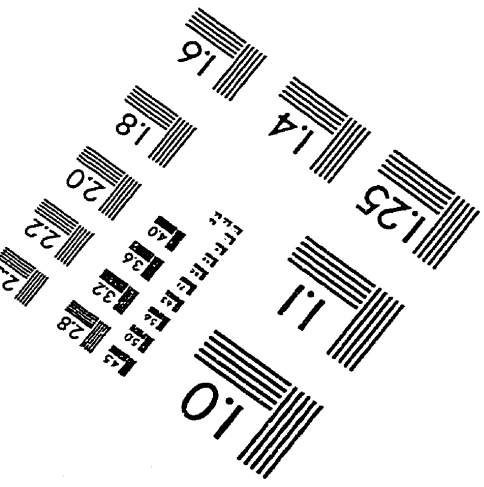
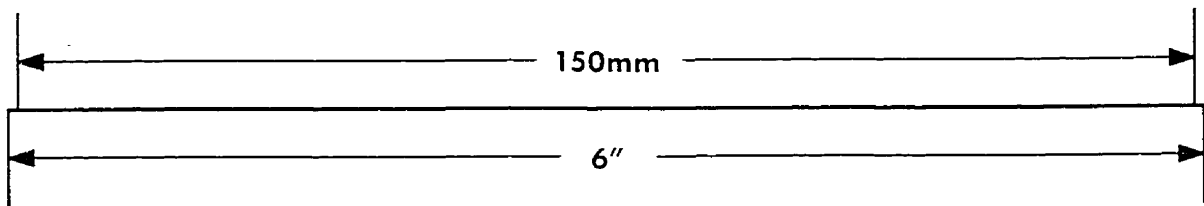
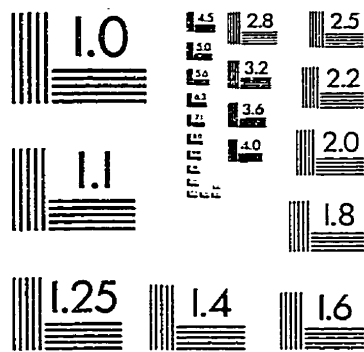
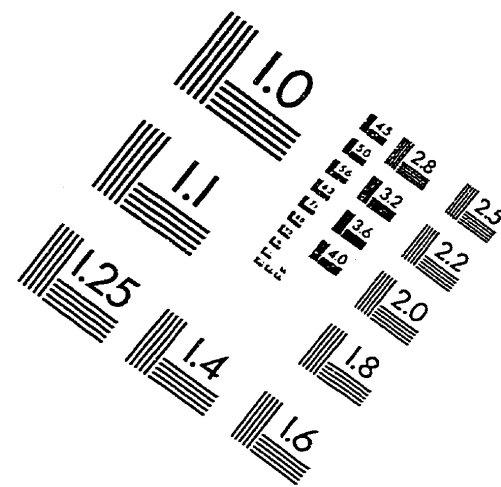
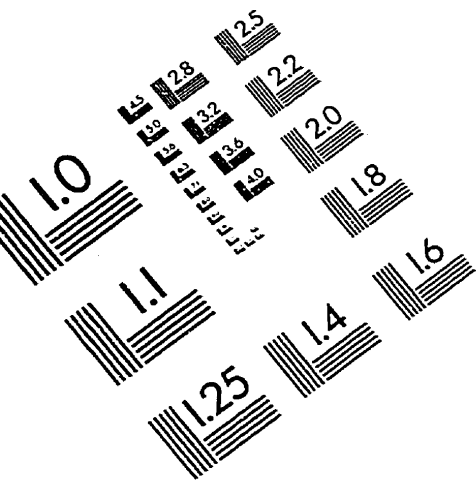


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