

The Revolution Will Not Be Satirised:
The Revolutionary Potential of Stephen Leacock's Satire

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Abstract

Is satire revolutionary? This question brought satire theorists Leonard Feinberg and Robert C. Elliott to an impasse. *The Revolution Will Not Be Satirised* uses Stephen Leacock's satire to find an answer. Feinberg would contend that Leacock's underlying conservatism keeps his satirical critique from being revolutionary. Elliott would contend that Leacock's critique is revolutionary because it tears down societal foundations. Revolutions, however, are more than a critique: they hinge upon implementing a new ideology. Because ideology has three components—critique, ideal, and agency—and because satire, as a critique, emphasises only one of ideology's three components, satire lacks the ideological roadmap to guide a revolution.

Arcadian Adventures and *Sunshine Sketches* reflect this: they critique western democracy, but they lack ideological alternatives to revolve into. Given that *Adventures'* and *Sketches'* critiques remain valid, it appears that Leacock's two greatest satires failed to spawn revolutionary change, but succeeded in diagnosing intractable human conditions.

Acknowledgements

Education is the search for truth. That was the lesson from my graduate studies in Education. Graduate studies in English have brought a key insight into this lesson: searches are more fruitful when a generous and skilled search party is there to help. The Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan could not have been more up to the task. Pages could be written to express my gratitude to every classmate and every faculty member. But the search for truth is limited by the constraints of space. This page belongs to my thesis committee, regardless of how far my gratitude extends.

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The search continues...

Dedication

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Chapter One: Let's Talk Leacock

Stephen Leacock is a satirist. But Stephen Leacock is also a political economist. As a political economist, Leacock warns that at its worst, democracy produces the election “of the rule of ‘cliques’ and ‘interests’ and ‘bosses;’... of genial incompetents popular as spendthrifts; of crooked partisans warm to their friends and bitter to their enemies; of administration by a party for a party; and of the insidious poison of commercial greed defiling the wells of public honesty” (*Unsolved Riddle* 113-14). How does Leacock believe this unfolds? Surprisingly, his marquee writing in political economy *Elements of Political Science* is rather silent on the issue. And his complementary writings such as *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice* and *Our Heritage of Liberty* fail to provide comprehensive insights into this belief. To understand how Leacock sees these negative forces of democracy at play requires an examination of his two greatest satires, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914). Both books close with chapters about elections, and neither book is particularly reassuring about the democratic process.

In *Sunshine Sketches*, “The Candidacy of Mr. Smith” and “The Great Election in Missinaba County” chronicle the degeneration of an election into a grotesque orgy of wilful ignorance and self-interest on everyone’s behalf. In *Arcadian Adventures*, “The Great Fight for Clean Government” chronicles the commandeering of an election by the plutocratic class in order to tighten their grip on public mechanisms of power. In the century since Leacock wrote these pervasive critiques, it would seem that—at least at first blush—not much has changed. If not much has changed, what are these works telling us about satire’s revolutionary potential?

In the 1960s, two leading satire theorists gave two different answers to this question. Robert C. Elliott, Professor of English Literature at the University of California, San Diego, says in *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (1960) that satire is “revolutionary” (275) because “instead of shoring up foundations, it tears them down” (275). Leonard Feinberg, Distinguished Professor of Sciences and Humanities at Iowa State University, says in *Introduction to Satire*

(1967) that satire “cannot have any great influence, for its implied alternative is not very different from what it is criticizing” (259). In the half-century since these theorists came to these different conclusions, studies have brought us only a little closer to determining which opinion is on the most stable ground. For example, Frederic Bogel’s *The Difference Satire Makes* suggests that satire produces differences and “othering” in society; Jonathan Gray’s *Watching with The Simpsons* demonstrates how audience interpretation impacts the meaning of satire; and the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s “Stephen Colbert’s Civics Lesson” reveals that satire can be a tool to inform about public policy. While these and other studies are useful and insightful, they fail to build a model that can directly test the overarching impasse between Elliott and Feinberg: is satire revolutionary? *The Revolution Will Not Be Satirised* uses the works of Stephen Leacock in an attempt to answer this question.

The research question “Is satire revolutionary?” will be explored over six chapters. Chapter One lays the groundwork for understanding Stephen Leacock’s red tory conservatism, to introduce the anti-revolutionary thought underlying Leacock’s works. Chapters Two and Three construct a theory of satire and a theory of revolution, and then intersect the theories to develop a specific theory about the revolutionary potential of satire. Chapters Four and Five outline the representation of democratic electoral processes in *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches* in light of these theories of satire and revolution, to understand if Leacock’s satire can be considered revolutionary. Chapter Six looks back at the research findings, and then judges Leacock’s critiques against today’s democratic electoral processes, to consider what—if anything—about democracy has changed since Leacock wrote *Adventures* and *Sketches*. This path allows us to question whether satire is revolutionary, or whether satire is simply diagnosing intractable human conditions.

Although this research is inspired by Robert Elliott and Leonard Feinberg’s theoretical impasse regarding the revolutionary potential of satire, it ultimately focuses on Stephen Leacock. Leacock’s red tory conservatism sets the stage, Leacock’s works in literary and political theory

are incorporated into the theoretical framework, and Leacock's satire is the object of study. This is keeping with satire theorist Kirke Combe's belief that "satire is the 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 literature as a whole" (74). Let there be no mistake that this research will present well-founded ideas that offer guidance for the study of satire in general. However, what is being put forth can only be considered conclusive—to whatever degree any research is conclusive—with regard to Stephen Leacock in general and *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches* in particular.

Stephen Leacock: Red Tory, Anti-Revolutionary, Satirist

Understanding Stephen Leacock can begin by introducing his red tory conservatism, and its relationship to revolution and satire. Leacock began adult life studying at the University of Toronto in 1887. However, financial difficulties forced him to abandon these studies after only one year. Uninterested in returning to the family farm where his English family settled when he was a boy, Leacock sought out teacher certification in Strathroy, Ontario, as a pathway into the waged world. He briefly taught in Uxbridge in 1889, before moving to Toronto's Upper Canada College. There, he was able to re-enroll at the University of Toronto and attend classes after the school day let out. Upon completing a Bachelor of Arts in 1891, Leacock continued to study independently, with plans to pursue higher education. In 1899 he left Upper Canada College to study at the University of Chicago under Thorstein Veblen, the social critic best known for identifying conspicuous consumption. Leacock obtained a lecturer position at McGill University in 1901, had his PhD conferred and attained professorship at McGill in 1903, and was appointed the head of McGill's Department of Political Economy in 1908.

Leacock's understandings of classic liberalism and the imperial order established his reputation as a public intellectual in both Canada and abroad. These understandings also underpinned his red toryism, a uniquely Canadian branch of conservatism. Although political scientist Gad Horowitz was first to identify red toryism by name in 1966, it can be traced back to

Canada's settler foundations. For understanding Leacock's relationship with red toryism, Charles Taylor's 1980 book *Radical Tories* is most useful given that Taylor frequently cites Leacock's influence on the ideology's development. "Unlike the caricatured capitalist," writes Taylor, "Canadian conservatives believe in an organic society and the mutual obligations among all classes. Which is why... they embrace the principle of social justice and even the welfare state" (110). While such a description does not bring the current iteration of the Conservative Party of Canada to mind, it is a reasonable description of many conservatives of the past, such as George Grant, Eugene Forsey, and even New Deal-era R.B. Bennett. It cannot be missed that George Grant, his father, and his grandfather were all acquainted with Leacock, Eugene Forsey studied under Leacock, and R.B. Bennett asked Leacock to run for office in 1935, when he cast off his "iron heel" in favour of ushering in his own New Deal.

Leacock's red toryism is strongly influenced by Victorian liberal intellectuals such as John Stuart Mill. However, conservatives such as Edmund Burke colour Leacock's thought. Burke, an eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish philosopher and parliamentarian, is widely acknowledged as an essential thinker of modern conservatism. Burke's disdain for the disorder of the French Revolution spawned perhaps his most famous work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Leacock shares with—and perhaps acquired from—Burke the belief that the pursuit of justice and liberty requires "the need for continuity in human affairs. But continuity did not rule out change" (Taylor 73). Burkean conservatism, like Leacockian red toryism, is not opposed to change. It is merely opposed to radical transformation rooted in abstract theoretical foundations.

The Burkean rejection of radically transformative ideas is captured well by Joseph Stieb, Ph.D candidate in history at UNC-Chapel Hill over. Stieb interviewed eight conservative historians and two conservative political scientists for a *Quillette* piece, "A Liberal's Case for Conservatives in History Departments." These conservatives' observations have tremendous application to understanding Leacock as both a political theorist and a satirist. As Stieb recounts,

[Independent historian] George Nash told me, “Conservatism tends to see itself as anti-theory in the sense of abstraction and, in the Burkean sense, skepticism about grand schemes of interpretation that don’t get down to earth.” These historians often said that conservatism gave them a stronger appreciation for what Allen Guelzo, a historian at Gettysburg College, called the “irony of results” in human affairs and the potential for defects of human nature to ruin great plans. They wanted more attention to contingency, human error, folly, and the limitations of knowledge as causes of events rather than more leftist emphases on structures of power and economic motives.

Unlike conservatives as Steib sees them, Leacock holds leftist beliefs about the toxicity of economic motives. However, Leacock nicely fits into the rest of Steib’s diagnosis. He holds a Burkean skepticism about grand ideas, and a conservative belief that human nature produces an irony of results. Leacock biographers Theresa and Albert Moritz describe this interplay especially well:

Leacock developed into a thinker always concerned to encourage change only by setting the values he found in tradition against current abuses; thus he liked the puncturing of pious facades and hypocritical motives he found in Veblin as in Marx, but was deeply suspicious of the radical criticisms and remedies found in their work, grounded in the theoretical proposals of individual thinkers rather than the slowly broadened wisdom of an entire people working through its historic institutions. (88)

When understood this way, it becomes immediately obvious that there is nothing *intentionally* revolutionary about Leacock’s politics. Leacock may not always be pleased with western political institutions, but he has no desire to actually overthrow them.

Speaking to Leacock’s red tory desire to fight back the rising socialist tides of the early twentieth century, he authored several rather polemical attacks on socialist revolution. Notable works include *Nonsense Novels’* “The Man in Asbestos,” a parodical takedown of Edward Bellamy’s fictional socialist template *Looking Backward; Afternoons in Utopia*’s “The Band of

Brothers,” a lampoon of a failed Marxist revolution that leads society right back to capitalism; and *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*, a sometimes hot-headed analysis of social problems of the 1920s, and why socialism—or at least Bellamy’s version of it—will fail to remedy these problems.

Leacock’s use of polemics to challenge the validity of socialist revolution is the logical product of his general conservatism, according to Hannah Arendt. In *On Revolution*, Arendt claims in an endnote that conservatives “have always excelled in polemics, while revolutionaries, to the extent that they too developed an authentically polemical style, learned this part of their trade from their opponents” (283). This leads Arendt to surmise that “conservatism, and neither liberal nor revolutionary thought, is polemical in origin and indeed almost by definition” (283). If conservatism is an argument to preserve the old rather than a proposal for something new, then Arendt’s position makes perfect sense. Thus, Leacock’s satire can be understood as distrustful of grand theories, and aware of the irony of results in implementing these theories. Little wonder that, as the University of Ottawa’s Glenn Clever points out, irony is Leacock’s primary method of humour (128).

Painting Leacock as a Burkean-influenced anti-revolutionary with a bit of a polemical streak is strikingly consistent with Leonard Feinberg’s observations about satirists. In *Introduction to Satire*, Feinberg says that “there are several reasons why satirists distrust theory. For one thing... they are painfully aware of the contradictions between logic and fact” (5). In the case of Leacock, Feinberg’s observation applies to both his satirical writings and his writings in political economy. Leacock’s distrust of grand theories, his awareness of the irony of results, and his understanding of the defects of human nature can be traced back at least to his doctoral thesis, to say nothing of his settler family’s failed Ontario farm.

Leacock’s doctoral thesis, *The Doctrine of Laissez Faire*, is a survey of *laissez faire* thinkers. It concentrates on the contradictions within the beliefs of these theorists, and the ironies of how these theories manifest in real-life application. Leacock’s thesis rejects the idea

that the greater welfare of society can be achieved by leaving things alone. His analysis points out that *laissez faire* theorists all prescribe serious qualifications to their theories, so that their ideas may function in the real world. Because theoretical qualification is completely contrary to the very idea of *laissez faire*, this leaves Leacock to acidly declare, “so much then for the general principle itself” (*Doctrine* 58).

Even though Leacock writes off *laissez faire* as truism, he accepts—correctly or not—one grand theory put forth by *laissez faire* thinkers. In a 1932 critique of Adam Smith, Leacock declares that “the classical economists were correct, namely, as to the principle of human selfishness” (“What is Left” 43). Because Leacock accepts that individuals are selfish, he believes that there must be a corrective but not coercive role for the state to ensure social justice and fairness for the weak in a market-based economy. As Leacock puts it,

the economists were all wrong in thinking that the pursuit of the individual’s own interest made for the welfare of all mankind¹—Adam Smith’s “invisible hand.” It does not. The welfare of mankind has got to be achieved against it and in spite of it. But it is an equal error to have public policy on a system which does not acknowledge and allow for this individual selfishness. (“What is Left” 43)

In short, Leacock recognises that individual selfishness cannot be stopped, so while the “vast mass of human industrial effort must still lie outside the immediate control of the government” (*Unsolved Riddle* 142), positive regulation must be used to temper the invisible hand’s shortcomings. To leave things alone would lead to the wreck of Adam Smith, and “the wreck of Adam Smith means the triumph of socialism” (“What is Left” 47). Given Leacock’s belief that socialism presented the greatest threat of revolution to the liberal order in the early twentieth century—notwithstanding some anarchist rumblings and the rise of some powerful fascist

¹Gender-excluding language will remain as it appears in the original text. This generally keeps with Kirk Combe’s belief about “a particular person writing at a particular time for a particular audience within a particular society” (74).

forces—Leacock’s assessment of what would happen if market-based liberal societies collapsed is likely correct.

Although Leacock believes the triumph of socialism would be the triumph of “a criminal” that “feeds upon the wreck of a civilization” (*Unsolved Riddle* 12), he never entirely dismisses the concept. As a red tory, Leacock shares Karl Marx’s belief that the freer the competition, the more likely it is that the poor and weak will be trampled by the rich and strong (*Heritage* 54). However, Leacock has a serious problem with socialism’s solution to this inequality. A socialist society where the means of production are collectively owned is doomed to fail in Leacock’s mind, because self-interested individuals are predisposed towards maximising their own leisure, not working for the advancement of the state:

But what? Such conduct, you say, will not be allowed in the commonwealth. Idleness and slovenly, careless work will be forbidden? Ah! Then you must mean that beside the worker will be the overseer with the whip; the time-clock will mark his energy upon its dial; the machine will register his effort; and if he will not work there is lurking for him in the background the shadowed door of the prison. Exactly and logically so. Socialism, in other words, is slavery. (*Unsolved Riddle* 120-21)

Leacock’s fear of socialism’s prescription of collective state ownership, but agreement with socialism’s critique of unrestrained free-market forces, leads him to support it backhandedly:

It is proper, however, to pay to the *idea* of socialism, not to the practice of it, the tribute which fittingly belongs to it. There can be no doubt of the underlying inspiration which explains its appeal to younger minds, to people entering upon life and cherishing high ideals. The notion of all people working together in cheerful comradeship sounds vastly better, after all, than the stingy maxim, “every man for himself.” The only difficulty with socialism... is that it doesn’t yet work; it is too good; if the day ever comes when we are good enough for such a system, then we shall need no system at all. (*Heritage* 56)

As a political economist, Leacock knows that society needs an overarching structural system. As

a red tory, Leacock knows that extreme inequality is unjust. Instead of socialist revolution, Leacock insists the cure to inequality can and must be found through a fundamentally red tory position: using the power of existing institutions to correct the shortcomings of *laissez faire*. For Leacock, corrective measures must include minimum wages and reduced work weeks, health care and financial maintenance for the infirm and the aged, and education and job opportunities for the young, all paid for through progressive taxation and taxation on accumulated wealth (*Unsolved Riddle* 140-43). Because “only a false mediævalism can paint the past in colors superior to the present” (*Unsolved Riddle* 24), Leacock believes change not only can, but must happen. In fact, Leacock is convinced that without his prescribed reforms, “no modern state can hope to survive” (*Unsolved Riddle* 140). The key for Leacock is that change must be implemented through society’s existent structures.

Leacock the Unsavoury Red Tory

To be sure, Leacock’s support for socially-responsible change does not extend beyond economic reform. In the realms of gender and race—to say nothing of a few instances leaning towards anti-Semitism and homophobia—Leacock’s red toryism is decidedly Victorian and backwards-looking. Leacock is not singularly oppressive on these fronts, but he is not to be celebrated. As historian Margaret MacMillan tells CBC Radio One’s *Ideas*, “history reminds us that deeply held beliefs can often be deeply wrong, and they can often be held by very clever, very powerful people who have sources of all sorts of information and they still get it wrong” (27:51-28:01). No doubt this statement applies to Leacock. However, who is to say it does not apply to each of us today? This being the case, it is perhaps self-defeating in the long term to be singularly absorbed by what people in our past got wrong, lest we wish for our entire body of work to be judged tomorrow by our handful of failures today. Leacock may have been a product of his time, but in one way or another, we all tend to be.

Nevertheless, there is much to learn from what Leacock got wrong and why he got it wrong. Good places to start such learning include Victoria Kuttainen’s *Unsettling Stories*, in its

exploration of Leacock's racial and gendered settler colonial attitudes, particularly in *Sunshine Sketches*. Margaret MacMillan's *Stephen Leacock* is also useful, as it is the most critical of the many Leacock biographies. Another helpful tool is the Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town: The Learning Resource*. Several of its lessons examine how *Sunshine Sketches* both portrays and erases Indigenous peoples. These resources noted and recommended, this research will take a cue from Jon Gordon. In "Comic Heroes and Green Tories," Gordon acknowledges Leacock's problematic views, but posits that "there is more to Leacock than that" (23). Gordon suggests that we can learn from Leacock in a way "that need not repeat his racism and sexism" (24). This research will strive to do much the same.

Looking Towards Theory

Leacock's red toryism is not revolutionary, but this alone does not confirm whether or not *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches* are revolutionary. On one hand, Leacock's politics verify Feinberg's contention that the satirist's implied alternative is not much different than the system being critiqued. On the other hand, by pillorying western democracy, *Adventures* and *Sketches* verify Elliott's contention that satire tears down foundations. Speaking to *Arcadian Adventures*' power of demolition, Gerald Lynch writes in the Afterword to its 1989 New Canadian Library version that the Soviet Union translated and published the book "for its incisive critique of Bourgeois capitalism" (208), though Leacock bibliographer Carl Spadoni has yet to find definitive proof that such an edition exists ("RE: Arcadian Adventures"). All of this is only to say that Leacock's intentions alone do tell us whether or not his satire is revolutionary.

To make any definitive determinations about satire's revolutionary potential thus requires deeper understandings of satire and revolution. What are the specific theoretical components of satire and revolution? How do their components interact? And how exactly do Leacock and his works fit into ideas of satire and revolution? These questions will be turned to next.

Chapter Two: Towards an Understanding of Satire

Defining satire is a fool’s errand. Conal Condren’s discussion of satire and definition makes the point that “a definition at once isolates an essence and provides an idealized form” (376). How do we isolate an essence and provide an idealised form of something that theorists almost universally have come to agree is ill-suited for essentialist definition? With satire, the best we can do is search for an understanding.

The most instructive place to start this search may be what political satire scholar Robert Phiddian calls “the great age for the theory of satire” (44): the formalist era of the 1950s and 1960s. This era brought us the likes of Robert C. Elliott and Leonard Feinberg. In their attempts to “defend [satire] against a style of reading that threatened to erase the distinction between a work and its historical context” (Bogel 6), these theorists explored satire’s roots and its contemporary character. Like most theorists, they, too, struggled to offer a definition. In fact, Elliott’s refusal to define satire in *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* is more instructive than any definition could be. Going only so far as to say that “satire is notoriously a slippery term” (viii), he suggests that the concept of satire should be dealt with pragmatically rather than normatively. His approach, thus, is to use “context and qualifying terms to convey the relevant sense of *satire* at any given time” (ix). Feinberg shares these beliefs. “The more one studies satire,” he reflects in *Introduction to Satire*, “the more likely he is to permit the widest possible latitude in defining terms” (19). Even so, Feinberg reluctantly coughs up “a playfully critical distortion of the familiar” (19) as a working definition for the purposes of his book.

Despite their reluctance to define satire, the two theorists are not afraid to ascribe a purpose to the satirist. When considering the familiar field of “real satire” (100, quotation marks his), Elliott says that the satirist’s purpose is

to expose some aspect of human behavior which seems to him foolish or vicious, to demonstrate clinically that the behavior in question is ridiculous or wicked or repulsive, and to try to stimulate in his reader (or in Roman times, his listener) the appropriate

negative response which prepares the way to positive action. (111)

In this, Elliott sees satire as something that is both diagnostic and an instigator of change.

Feinberg holds a view similar to Elliott about the satirist's purpose:

[The satirist] serves a function that the realist and romantic do not fulfill, by dramatizing and exaggerating objectionable qualities in man and society.... Critics repeatedly demand that satire justify its existence by serving a moral purpose. Why should it, any more than any other form of literature? The test for satire is its success within its prescribed sphere. That sphere is criticism of man and society, a criticism made entertaining by humor and moving by irony and invective. (*ITS* 17-18)

Feinberg agrees with Elliott's contention that the satirist's purpose is to expose objectionable traits, specifically vice or folly. Where Feinberg differs from Elliott is his lesser expectation that the satirist will be an instigator of change.

Broadly, Elliott's and Feinberg's beliefs about the satirist's purpose trace back to the theoretical work of John Dryden, the seventeenth-century English writer and literary critic. In his "Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," he offers that satire "ought to treat of one Subject; to be confin'd to one particular theme; or, at least, to one principally" and that "the poet is bound, and that *ex Officio*, to give his Reader some one Precept of Moral Virtue; and to caution him against some particular Vice or Folly" (qtd. in Griffin 19). Dryden's words, according to Dustin Griffin's *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, "are perhaps the most influential of all modern pronouncements about satire" (19). Griffin calls them "the cornerstone for all subsequent theories of satire's artfulness and its moral purpose" (20). Satire shows us what is not desirable, and elements of this cornerstone are visible throughout Feinberg's and Elliott's works.

Between Feinberg's definition and Elliott's lack of definition, and between Elliot's belief that satire does and Feinberg's belief that satire does not need to positively serve a moral purpose, their theories share one consistency: satire censures, finds fault, and passes

unfavourable judgment upon the qualities or merits of human actions. Thus, satire is critique. Admittedly, this statement runs dangerously close to isolating an essence and providing an idealised form. However, it is not meant to be a reductionist definition of satire, nor is it meant to diminish any other elements that make up satire. It is only meant to draw attention to a nearly-universal observation about the nature of satire. This observation holds true within the theories of Feinberg and Elliott, and holds true across the spectrum of contemporary theories of satire.

Many theorists say outright that satire is critique. Hermann Real's "An Introduction to Satire" states that "satire is a criticism of something" (15). For Real, "attack is [the satirist's] first and foremost, if not his only, business" (12). John Snyder's *Prospects of Power* holds a similar view, claiming that "satire means to criticize, to aim reason at targets" (95). Thomas Jemielity's *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets* forthrightly observes that "criticism is always the content of satire" (85). And Dustin Griffin believes that satire "may make a radical or even subversive critique" (159).

Other theorists do not use the word critique, but they still assert that satire is a form of provocation or attack. When satire engages in attack, it keeps with Elliott's and Feinberg's belief that it censures, finds faults, and passes unfavourable judgment: as Feinberg writes in *The Satirist*, "the satirist is an attacker rather than a defender. Criticism functions by exposing the wrong, rather than praising the right" (253). To this point, Alvin Kernan's *The Cankered Muse* offers that "satire is synonymous with attack" (7). Brian Connery and Kirk Combe contend in *Theorizing Satire* that satire "emphasizes—indeed is defined by—its intention (attack)" (5). And Robert Phiddian says that satire "seeks wittily to provoke an emotional and intellectual reaction in an audience on a matter of public (or at least inter-subjective) significance" (44). Critique or attack is an inescapable feature of satire.

Stephen Leacock's books and articles on literary technique never focus at length on the concept of satire, so his approach is somewhat more difficult to glean. Nevertheless, he offers some useful—if at times contradictory—insights into the nature of satire. Broadly, his insights

also point towards satire as critique or attack. In *Humor and Humanity*, Leacock writes that “satire may be of a dozen kinds and used for a dozen purposes. It may be personal, malicious, diabolical, or political and colourless, just a stick to beat a dog” (188). Here Leacock seemingly agrees that satire is ill-suited for essentialist definition. However, he then complicates matters by adding, “but humour is the very life of it” (188). Since not all satire is humour, his addendum is not accurate. Understanding this addendum is only further complicated when examining Leacock’s approach to humour and satire in *How to Write*. There, humour is no longer the “very life” of satire. Rather, Leacock creates a continuum between humour and satire:

“Good jests,” said King Charles the Second, that most humourous and kindly king who saved monarchy in England, “ought to bite like lambs, not dogs; they should cut, not wound.” The minute they begin to bite and wound that is not humour. That is satire and as it gets more and more satirical the humour dries out of it, leaving only the snarl and rasp of sarcasm. (186)

This statement—a contradiction of his earlier assertion that humour is the very life of satire—may be in some ways Leacock’s more defensible view of satire. It is consistent with Kernan’s beliefs about comedy and satire. “Satire shares with comedy the knowledge that fools and foolishness have gotten out of hand,” says Kernan, “but it lacks the characteristic balance of comedy and the tone of amused tolerance which derive from the underlying certainty in comedy that right reason *is* ultimately the way of the world” (20). So long as the potentially problematic view that comedy and humour are equivalents is taken, there is a commonality between Leacock’s and Kernan’s words: comedy is gentle, satire is not. Further, it is worth noting that neither Leacock nor Kernan delineate exactly where humour and comedy become the bite and wound of satire. This ambiguity reinforces Elliott’s belief that satire should be dealt with pragmatically rather than normatively.

Even though Leacock does not prescribe a hard line between humour and satire, across his writings he holds a consistent definition of humour. In *Humor and Humanity*, he defines

humour as “the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life, and the artistic expression thereof” (3). Evidencing his strong belief in humour being something kindly, he cites this very definition in *How to Write*. Claiming that “I think this the best definition I know because I wrote it myself,” he adds, “students of writing will do well to pause at the word *kindly* and ponder it well” (186). For Leacock, “the fundamental basis... for writing humour is to share in this human kindness, to develop to the full extent what native share we have of it, and to look in that direction for our judgment of our fellow men” (*How To Write* 187). Given that Leacock considers himself primarily a humourist—not a satirist—his works should be understood at least partly through this lens. Even so, the simple problem with Leacock’s attempt to anchor humour to kindness is that according to Robertson Davies’ biography of Leacock, “humour is a razor, and even in the most skilled hand it sometimes cuts” (26). When it comes to kindly ideals, *Sunshine Sketches* is a close shave. *Arcadian Adventures* has its fair share of nicks. And one particular work, the title piece to *The Hohenzollerns in America*, literally ends in a bloody mess when the family patriarch is trampled to death.

As a whole, what can be taken from Leacock’s ramshackle theory is that if he views humour as “the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life,” and if he views satire as humour without the kindly—where the laughs “bite and wound”—then for Leacock satire is a biting and wounding contemplation of the incongruities of life. Since it is fair game to equate biting and wounding to attack and censure, Leacock’s conception of satire can be understood to be a form of critique.

Humour, Invective, Irony: The Tools of Satire

If satire is a form of critique, then how specifically does satire accomplish its critique? Elliott’s point that satire should be dealt with pragmatically rather than normatively makes building a framework of satire somewhat difficult if not arbitrary. That noted, Feinberg points out that satire’s criticism is “made entertaining by humor and moving by irony and invective” (*IS* 18). This statement provides three useful delineations, notwithstanding their lack of mutual

exclusivity. Briefly putting aside irony, and with apologies to Frederic Bogel for entertaining “the long-lived and numbingly reiterated opposition of Juvenalian to Horatian modes of satire” (29), an exploration of satire’s use of humour and invective makes Horace and Juvenal as good a place as any to start. Humour can be most-strongly linked to the satirist Horace (65 - 8 BC); invective can be most-strongly linked to the satirist Juvenal (c. 1st century - 2nd century).

For Horace, satire is mockery and playful wit delivered in a plain, common language. The satirist is not a prosecutor nor armed with a writ against wicked people. Laughing at various forms of nonsense is not done out of malice, because there is no desire to cause pain. This is not to say that the mockery and wit serve no function: ridicule, Horace believes, will more effectively resolve serious issues than severity (Elliott 112-13). Kernan also holds these views, saying that Horatian satire “verges on the comic, and their satirists, without losing their cutting-edge, exude good humor, easy laughter, urbanity” (29). He helpfully adds Ben Jonson’s words that they “sport with human follies, not with crimes” (29). Griffin also agrees, characterising the Horatian approach as “oblique rather than blunt, smiling and hinting rather than attacking directly” (8). Griffin adds that Horace’s satires are marked by “his almost continuous irony, his facetiousness, his pretending not to be a poet, and his claim that his poems are mere trifles” (8). His canonical power indicates that his poems are more than mere trifles. Even so, Feinberg brings up Frances T. Russell’s observation that “Horace was honest enough to say that he wrote satire because he couldn’t write epics. But from Juvenal on, the satirists claim great moral missions” (TS 25). Without doubt, there is a good-spirited element to Horatian satire.

Juvenal is on a moral mission because viciousness and corruption have become dominant in Rome. The deplorable state of society renders tragedy and epic irrelevant, because these forms create heroes in a society where there are none (Kernan 68). In Juvenal’s eyes, Kernan writes, Rome is a place where

excessive wealth and foreign customs had sapped the vitality of the Roman stock;
government had been placed in the hands of incompetents, libertines, or despots; [and]

the functions of citizens had been usurped by clever slaves and freedmen who pursued their own gain rather than the welfare of the state. (66)

This state of affairs leaves Juvenal wanting to bring terror and destruction to his satire's targets (Elliott 115-16), hence his invective. Through lofty and sublime language (Griffin 13), he critiques using “epic catalogues, sonorous meters, archaisms, Helenisms, weird compounds and on the other hand... vulgarisms, obscenities, racy colloquialisms, [and] technical terminology” (Kernan 76). With a righteous anger rife with civic indignation, Juvenalian satire takes a clear and consistent moral point of view.

Elliott perhaps best-contrasts these two forms of satire when he proposes that “Horatian satire seeks to displace the social mask by the flick of laughter; Juvenalian satire would cleanse a rotten society in the fire of its hate” (115). Though not perfectly delineated, it is easy to see how *Sunshine Sketches* can be slotted into a Horatian tradition, while *Arcadian Adventures* can find itself nudging into the Juvenalian tradition. *Sketches'* Mariposa is the Canadian town that Leacock loves. *Adventures'* Plutoria is the American metropolis that Leacock loathes.

Sunshine Sketches keeps with the “chatty, digressive, easily led from one topic to another” (Griffin 22) nature of Horatian satire, as its gently ironic narrator meanders through the lives of Mariposans. “Leacock tried very hard,” claims Robertson Davies, “to keep his *Sunshine Sketches* sunny” (21). By and large, he succeeds. Guy Vanderhaeghe says that “in no other of his works does his gentle humour illuminate human idiosyncrasy with a steadier light, or does the pathos he evokes seem so much a natural outcome of our human journey” (21). Heinz Antor holds a similar view, noting that *Sketches* “presents a mellower world of social cohesion and order, and the foibles of the Mariposans can be viewed with ironic amusement” (54). And Gerald Noonan says “the narrator is determined to enjoy life on its own terms even though he is unrelentingly aware of its many inconsistencies” (916). Undoubtedly, *Sketches'* critique exposes foolishness, but as Horatian satire stipulates, there is no desire to cause pain. For that matter, Leacock’s lifetime of interpersonal kindness and humanity—from setting up a diphtheria camp

on his estate to house a contagious boy no longer wanted in Orillia (McKim) to employing locals with his own make-work projects during the Depression (Anderson 147)—cannot be looked at with the conclusion being that Leacock found pleasure in seeing or bringing pain, especially to his thinly-veiled friends and neighbours who make up the satiric targets in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. He knows these people. He likes these people. There is something Horatian going on in Leacock’s critique.

However, the sunny but ironic nature of *Sunshine Sketches* leads to questions of whether or not it is actually satire. To be sure, Desmond Pacey declares it a satire, though one that is “very mild and gentle” (216), as does Vincent Sharman who tests the book against Kernan’s theories and concludes it is a “mock utopian” and “mock heroic” (262) that exposes “the severity of the limits of the human condition and the futility... of trying to escape or to forget them” (267). But there are other opinions. Claude Bissell says *Sketches* is humour (39). Glenn Willmott pegs the book as sublime humour (56-61), the Leacockian concept that humour mixes with pathos to provide a “prolonged and sustained conception of the incongruities of life itself” (“American Humor” 92). Willmott anchors his claim in J. Kushner and R.D. Macdonald’s theory that *Sketches* represents a political-economic ideal for Leacock: “The political register of *Sunshine Sketches*,” reiterates Willmott, “may be closer to a cliched capitalist fantasy than to a satirical critique or utopian plea” (50). Donald Cameron views *Sketches* as irony (261), a position greatly expanded upon by Gerald Lynch who—while acknowledging its satiric barbs—claims that “the narrator’s ambivalence in the *Sketches* make that book a masterpiece, and not a minor one, of ironic humour” (*Humour and Humanity* 122). As can be seen, there is a wide array of opinions on whether or not the humour and irony in *Sunshine Sketches* amount to satire.

All of the above positions have merit within their frames of analysis. However, satire is more a mode than a genre (Phiddian 44, Bogel 52), and this mode infects other forms (Griffin 3). As Connery and Combe point out, “often, satire’s habituation of other forms is so successful that it is mistaken for those forms” (5). Because satire is something of a chimera, a few key points

about the debate on whether or not *Sketches* is satire must be made. First, irony and humour are tools of satire, so *Sketches'* strengths in displaying these traits does not necessarily exclude the book from the realm of satire. Second, as compelling as the Kushner-Macdonald theory may be to those who are versed in Leacock's political writings—and it is a compelling argument—this stance does not confront the reality that most satirists are conservatives (Elliott 266, Feinberg *IS* 256), nor does it negate the possibility that *Sketches* satirises shortcomings of human nature that appear within Leacock's ideal community. Third, because Leacock believes there is a continuum between humour and satire, sublime humour can function as satire. Such debate about whether or not *Sketches* is satire nicely illustrates Feinberg's perhaps obvious point that “even intelligent readers of satire sometimes reach conflicting interpretations” (*IS* 265). There are going to be varied opinions about the satirical nature of *Sunshine Sketches*.

The numerous opinions about *Sunshine Sketches* acknowledged, the book simply has too many consistencies with satire theory to definitively exclude it from the realm of satire, especially satire of the Horatian variety. Its mild mockery and playful wit—delivered in a plain, common language—come together to provide what is almost undeniably a societal critique that exposes foolish behaviour. There is an intimate and accessible tone of the narrator: “Oh, pshaw! I was not talking about a steamer sinking in the ocean and carrying down its screaming crowds of people into the hideous depths of green water. Oh, dear me, no!” (56). The narrator engages in trifling self-degradation: “To a humble intellect like mine he would explain in full the relations of the Keesar to the German Rich Dog” (32). The book is almost-continuous irony: “he... closed down the infant class for forty-eight hours so that Teddy Moore should not miss the pleasure of flying [the kite], or rather seeing it flown. It is foolish to trust a Chinese kite to the hands of a young child” (63). Finally, *Sketches* emphasises human follies, not crimes: “a grave man with a white tie, who put his whole heart into the work and would take nothing for it except his expenses and a sum of money for each speech. But beyond the money, I say, he would take nothing” (144). *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* hits all the necessary registers of satire.

Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich, on the other hand, is universally agreed to be satire. In suggesting that it drifts into Juvenalian territory, it is important to remember that, as Kernan points out,

to describe the formal characteristics of Juvenalian satire is to describe those of Horatian satire as well. Horace, using to an unknown degree the earlier satiric writings of Lucilius and Ennius, had stabilized the form of Roman satire, and both Juvenal and Persius, though they abandoned the mild Horatian tone, worked within the Horatian forms. (64-65)

Arcadian Adventures envelops concepts of Horatian satire in its fulfilment of the Juvenalian form, but there is no question that *Adventures* is satire. Heinz Antor nails down the book as “satirizing in a harsher, sharper tone the destructive and hypocritical activities of the plutocracy of a big capitalist American city” (54). Davies calls *Adventures* “this very angry book” (30), and though speaking in more general terms about Leacock notes that “there is sometimes also a Juvenalian tinge to his satire. The latter, however, never deteriorates into sarcasm because it is softened by pathos and compassion” (55). And Lynch says that “Leacock’s more militant irony in the *Adventures* makes it the work of a satirist, albeit a relatively kindly and humanistic one” (*Humour and Humanity* 122), thus speaking to Leacock’s underlying sense of humanity.

Even with Leacock’s pathos, the deplorable state of Plutonian society gives a Juvenalian tinge to the satire of *Arcadian Adventures*. Excessive wealth and foreign customs sap the vitality of the Plutonian stock: “Near by is a child of four, in a khaki suit, who represents the merger of two trunk line railways” (7-8). Government is in the hands of incompetents, libertines, or despots: “the grave faces of manly bondholders flushed with pride and the soft eyes of listening shareholders laughed back in joy. For they had no doubt or fear, now that clean government had come” (202-03). The functions of citizens are usurped by freedmen who pursue their own gain rather than the welfare of the state: “People began to realise the needs of the city as they never had before. Mr. Boulder, who owned, among other things, a stone quarry and an asphalt

company, felt that the paving of the streets was a disgrace” (189). It is clear that *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* exhibits a clear and consistent righteous anger, its invective often masked by humour but rife with civic indignation.

Sitting on an ostensibly Horatian/Juvenalian divide, both books lay out their critiques by relying heavily upon Feinberg’s third tool of satire: irony. Verbal irony, as defined by literary theorist Meyer Howard Abrams, is “a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed” (135). Abrams traces irony back to its conceptual Greek origins:

In Greek comedy the character called the *eiron* was a “dissembler,” who characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was, yet triumphed over the *alazon*—the self-deceiving and stupid braggart.... In most of the critical uses of the term “irony” there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. (134-35)

Even if the intention of irony is rhetorical and not deceptive, as Abrams believes, Bogel points out that “ambiguity, with the interpretive uncertainty that accompanies it, is an intrinsic feature of irony” (67). The ambiguity of irony has led to a tendency to categorise irony as either stable or unstable (Bogel 67). According to Bogel, stable irony provides “instances where we think we are reasonably sure that we know the intent of the irony” (67). Stable irony allows for easy comprehension of its surface ambiguity. “Once a reconstruction of meaning has been made,” says Wayne C. Booth in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, “the reader is not then invited to undermine it with further demolitions and reconstructions” (6). Perhaps this is why it is easier to see *Arcadian Adventures* as *bona fide* satire. *Adventures’* irony is relatively stable because its broader targets are easily identifiable: Leacock held a nearly lifelong belief that narrow individualism would lead western society to social catastrophe (see 1903’s “Doctrine,” 1907’s *Elements*, 1920’s *Unsolved Riddle*, 1932’s “What is Left,” and 1944’s *Our Heritage*).

On the other hand, the irony of *Sunshine Sketches* is unstable. Unstable irony rests on the premise that negation begins all ironic play (Booth 244), so “the clear implication [is] that since the universe (or at least the universe of discourse) is inherently absurd, all statements are subject to ironic undermining” (Booth 241). Everything is up for interpretation with unstable irony. Because Leacock “is having fun, but it is fun with something he loves—the life, in all its patterned variety, of a little Ontario town he knows with easy and perfect intimacy” (Carr x), and because Leacock subscribes to a Burkean concept of conservatism that espouses “an organic society and the mutual obligations among all classes” (Taylor 110), it can be sometimes more difficult to understand how Leacock can at once be both amiable to his satiric targets and critique shortcomings of their human nature. This multifaceted nature of *Sketches*’ irony leaves us with a book in which “the decision about which kind of reading is called for is seldom easy and sometimes impossible” (Booth 245). Nevertheless, “wherever there are intentions, however obscure or unconventional, there are invitations to interpret” (Booth 245): Leacock had intentions in writing *Sunshine Sketches* and there is a whole library of literature attempting to interpret these intentions. Fortunately, interpreting *Sketches*’ irony does not always need to hinge upon third-party interpretations and reader-constructed meanings. Leacock’s numerous writings on political economy provide many useful anchor points for interpreting *Sketches*’ unstable irony. Nevertheless, all that can be said with certainty is that because *Sketches* is a masterpiece of irony, the often-contradictory analyses of it nicely illustrate the “interpretive uncertainty” (Bogel 67) that accompanies irony.

Because, as Bogel points out, irony is “one of the literary techniques that lend [*sic*] indirectness and artifice to the element of attack and thus redeem satire from charges of mere aggression” (66), it is an ideal tool for a satirist with a gentle disposition such as Leacock. Irony allows him to expose foolishness, wickedness, or viciousness with an invective and humour that does not completely degenerate into the rasp of sarcasm. This is true for a Juvenalian satire like *Arcadian Adventures* and true for a Horatian satire like *Sunshine Sketches*.

What does Satire's Critique Accomplish?

When satire critiques, what does its critique accomplish? In asking this question, it is useful to first return to the theories of Elliott and Feinberg. Their divergence on what satire can accomplish is stark. For Elliott, satire is revolutionary. For Feinberg, it is not.

Recall that Elliott says satire should “prepare the way for positive action” (111). In making this claim, Elliott is setting the table to establish satire as revolutionary. This belief in satire as revolutionary is most intriguing given Elliott’s belief that a majority of satire is conservative. Satire accepts and operates under the established framework of a society, says Elliott (266, 273). As such it tends not to attack society’s framework but rather attacks perversions of the framework’s institutions (271). For Elliott, satire undermines through synecdoche: for example, when the corrupt judge is attacked, that judge comes to stand for the law itself (272), thus undermining the entire legal system. Consequently, even if predominantly conservative, satire is “revolutionary” (275) because “the pressure of [the satirist’s] art works directly against the ostensibly conservative function which it is said to serve. Instead of shoring up foundations, it tears them down” (274-75).

Feinberg agrees with Elliott on the ideological front. While he claims in *The Satirist* that there are radical, conservative, liberal, and reactionary satirists (252), he too holds in both *The Satirist* and *An Introduction to Satire* that most satirists are conservatives whose critiques focus on the surface of society. As such, they fail to foundationally question the political and economic structures of society (*ITS* 256, *TS* 253). Feinberg also shows some agreement with Elliott on satire’s potential for instigating change, insofar as Feinberg believes that satire holds the potential to change the actions of individual targets (*ITS* 260). But unlike Elliott, Feinberg never calls satire revolutionary. Feinberg suggests that “[w]hen a satirist is in tune with his time and expresses popular dissatisfaction, he may give the impression that he is influencing events. Usually, however, he is a symptom, not a cause” (*ITS* 256). This means satire “cannot have any great influence, for its implied alternative is not very different from what it is criticizing” (*ITS*

259). Satire is not revolutionary but rather a conservative reaction to surrounding events.

Of these two positions, Feinberg's resignation about satire's potential to instigate change shows that his personal attitude is much like the general disposition of satirists. "The satirist," writes Feinberg, "is likely to be skeptical about most social institutions" (*TS* 253). There is a shared skepticism between Burkean conservatism of the eighteenth century and satire, and Bogel traces this skepticism back further to the seventeenth century. He believes that "the structure of rhetorical relations in satire... is deeply connected with a particular skepticism about the possibility of radical historical change that grows up in the period between the English Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution" (19). Leacock's admiration for King Charles II directly links him to the historical relations between satirists and skepticism that Bogel is talking about.

In Leacock's laudatory "A Rehabilitation of Charles II," Leacock touches on the futility of instigating radical change. He says that the king "possessed in an eminent degree that largeness of view, that breadth of mental vision which sees things in their true perspective. He had grasped as but few men have done the great truth that nothing really matters very much" (274). What Leacock goes on to say about humanity is not only relevant to the skeptical nature of Leacock the satirist, but also offers explanation for why Leacock's satire seldom becomes a full-on Juvenalian moral mission. It is worth reading in its entirety:

[Charles II] was able to see that the burning questions of to-day become the forgotten trifles of yesterday, and that the eager controversy of the present fades into the litter of the past. To few it has been given to see things as they are, to know that no opinion is altogether right, no purpose altogether laudable, and no calamity altogether deplorable. To carry in one's mind an abiding sense of the futility of human endeavour and the absurdity of human desire is a sure protection against the malignant narrowness that marks the men endowed with fixed convictions and positive ideas. For the same reason it is found that the man of real enlightenment is inevitably reckoned a trifler and is accused of shallowness and insincerity, while a dull man heavily digesting his few ideas is

credited with a profundity which he does not possess. (274-75)

If Leacock believes that no opinion is altogether right and no purpose altogether laudable, he surely must include his own opinions and purposes in this assessment. Hence his reluctance to enter into Juvenalian moral missions when undertaking fiction, lest he becomes what he has set out to critique. Unlike Jonathan Swift's oft-quoted condemnation that "satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own," when Leacock asks in *Nonsense Novels* "do you ever look at your face in the glass?" the answer—albeit in a work of fiction—is "I do" (80).

Perhaps satire—especially Leacock's satire—is underpinned by belief and disbelief: belief that all views are fragile and disbelief that radical change is possible. Leacock himself meets this criteria. His belief that no opinion is altogether right is coupled with his disbelief in the possibility of radical change: prior to Russia's October Revolution, Leacock was convinced that a socialist revolution was not coming. If satire is underpinned by a dichotomy of belief and disbelief, it lends credence to a notion that satire's critique is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather meant to explore positions and topics. Feinberg opens this possibility by suggesting that as a form that attacks the certainty of our knowledge (271), satire "may also provide a fresh perspective, detachment, or balance" (261). Griffin finds himself in a similar realm, observing that "what we behold in satire is not a neatly articulated homiletic discourse but the drama of an inflamed sensibility, or a cool and detached mind playfully exploring a moral topic" (37-38). If exploring the implications of a moral topic is a task of satire's critique, then Bogel is quite right to add to Griffin's observation that "as a result, readers are also engaged in exploring the question of what it means to take a position at all" (62). Satire seems to be more exploratory than prescriptive.

Nevertheless, even if satire's critique is meant to be exploratory, then it must be acknowledged that many satires contain a prescriptive element. But the problem with satire's prescriptive element is that theorists almost universally believe it is not significant. Elliott points

to Mary Claire Randolph's unpublished doctoral dissertation to drive home this point. Randolph finds that Roman formal verse satire has critical and prescriptive elements: “[in] Part A, the satire attacks a specific vice or folly (sometimes, to the pain of purists, vices or follies) and in Part B recommends an opposing virtue” (Elliott 110). However, Elliott emphasises that “the two parts are disproportionate in length and in importance, for the satirist has always been more disposed to castigate wickedness than to exhort to virtue” (110). Bogel also looks at Randolph’s work, conceding that “satire—however implicitly—makes positive recommendations” (56). The key word in Bogel’s assessment is implicitly. Griffin examines the prescriptive elements in satire from Horace to Swift and concludes that they “do not serve as hortatory models or as blueprints for social engineers; instead, they teasingly hold up an ideal that cannot be obtained” (61). Connery and Combe say that “although a few utopian satirists are noted for construction rather than destruction, their materials are often criticized as insubstantial” (1). Kernan believes that kernels of an ideal can be found in satire, but “this ideal is never heavily stressed.... Consequently, every effort is made to emphasize the destroying ugliness and power of vice” (11). Ruben Quintero says in *A Companion to Satire* that the satirist “either explicitly or implicitly, tries to sway us toward an ideal alternative, toward a condition of what the satirist believes should be” but concludes that “the satirist is not obligated to solve what is perceived as a problem or replace what is satirically disassembled or unmasked with a solution” (3). Feinberg agrees, noting that even if satire has “some vaguely positive ideal” embedded within, “the ideal itself is rarely offered openly as an alternative” (TS 280). And even Leacock himself, though speaking of humour, says that what we have on our hands is “essentially a comforter, reconciling us to the things as they are in contrast to things as they ought to be” (*Garden of Folly* ix). At best, whatever prescriptive offering satire has is obscured by its overwhelming urge to critique. Satirists tend to not be in the construction business.

None of this is to say there is no ideal underpinning satire. It is only to say that—just as Real points out—whatever that ideal may be, it is hiding behind the satirist’s words (15): the

humour, the invective, the irony. In lieu of a prescription, Connery and Combe suggest that satire offers “open-endedness, irresolution, and thus chaos. Closure, in most cases, would turn a narrative satire into either comedy or tragedy and thus contradict the satirist’s representation of evil as a present and continuing danger” (5). Satire’s aversion to closure lends credence to Kernan’s belief that “whenever satire does have a plot which eventuates change, it is not true change but simply intensification of the original condition” (31). The problems presented in satire are only made worse by the work’s closing. This intensification of the original condition is marked, as Connery and Combe claim, by a “low view of human nature” (3). This leaves no other option than to conclude that satire is not a place for ideals or closure. Satire is a place for critique.

Concluding that satire is critique—and a seemingly misanthropic one at that—creates a wrinkle for believers such as Elliott who say that satire is revolutionary. Elliott tells us that satire is revolutionary not because it offers ideals but because satire undermines and tears down foundations. But when satire tears an institution down, it does not prescribe a replacement: it merely creates a void. How can it be certain that the void satire creates will be filled in a revolutionary manner? To answer this question, the concept of revolution will be turned to next. What are the requirements for something to be revolutionary? Does satire’s critique in and of itself fill these revolutionary requirements? The following chapter will examine the concept of revolution, with a goal of understanding how it fits into satire as a form of critique.

Chapter Three: Towards an Understanding of Revolution

Debating revolution is a losing battle. Isaac Kramnick's discussion of revolution and definition makes the point that "revolutionaries, much to the dismay of their sympathizers, have usually devoted as much time and energy debating the nature of revolution as they have in efforts to bring one about" (26). Despite the opportunity cost, debate is a reasonable path to take. It would be lunacy to launch a revolution without knowing what we are fighting against, what we are fighting for, and how we are going to get there. And so this debate will consume more time and energy. *Por ahora.*²

Curiously, a debate about the nature of revolution is not far removed from a debate about the nature of satire. Recall that Robert C. Elliott believes we should use "context and qualifying terms to convey the relevant sense of *satire* at any given time" (ix). Similarly, James Farr's "Historical Concepts in Political Science: The Case of 'Revolution'" states that context and qualifying terms are required to convey the relevant sense of revolution at any given time:

A historical concept is either one whose scope is temporally restricted to a specific historical period or one whose meaning is mutable and changes along with the changing practices and beliefs of political agents. "Revolution" is an example of the latter, though characteristically it is connected with the former. (689)

Though Farr lacks the brevity of Elliott, he makes the same point. "Revolution" is a mutable and changing word, just as "satire" gains its definitions through qualification. Hence, both terms are fluid and thus ill-suited for essentialist definition.

In "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory," Jack Goldstone provides a

² Before Hugo Chávez's 1998 electoral victory in Venezuela, he led a failed 1992 *coup d'état*. In his nationally-televised surrender speech, Chávez told Venezuelans that the Bolivarian movement had failed "*por ahora*," for now. At this point, *por ahora* entered the revolutionary vernacular. For revolutionary supporters, it is a beacon of hope. For establishment supporters, it is an ominous warning.

possible explanation for the problem of revolution being ill-suited for essentialist definition. “The study of revolutions,” Goldstone observes, “may be reaching an impasse at which it is simply overwhelmed by the variety of cases and concepts it seeks to encompass” (140). While Goldstone’s assessment is likely correct, his frustration is nothing new. As the title of his work suggests, three generations of revolutionary theory precede him. And each of these generations suffers from definitional problems. In *States and Social Revolutions*, third-generation theorist Theda Skocpol points out the difficulties in honing a singular definition of revolution. Because “we must look at revolutions as wholes, in much of their complexity” (5), Skocpol finds that there are “enormous disagreements” (12) about their nature and definition. Second-generation theorist Chalmers Johnson acknowledges in *Revolutionary Change* that revolution is an “elusive concept” (1). And the father of modern revolution theorists, Crane Brinton, throws up his hands at the beginning of *The Anatomy of Revolution*. His magnum opus opens with the admission that “revolution is one of the looser words” (3). Even some revolutionaries share this frustration. Marx and Engels’ intellectual and political heir Karl Kautsky believes that “few things are so ambiguous” (5) as revolution.

Of the revolutionaries and theorists who seemingly surrender instead of providing an essentialist definition of revolution, Hannah Arendt best-captures this problem. Her canonical *On Revolution* prescribes “The Meaning of Revolution,” but it takes 14,000 words to do so. Nevertheless, Arendt’s exploration of the meaning of revolution is noteworthy for recounting the term’s history and semantical oddities. The term has celestial beginnings, first appearing in the late fourteenth century to describe how heavenly objects return to an original point. These celestial beginnings gave revolution a restorative meaning, one that began to be applied to political events in the sixteenth century. When a political cycle returned to where it began, it was a revolution. For example, in 1640 England became engulfed in civil war, Charles I was overthrown, and a republic was established. Arendt tells us that these events became a “revolution” not when Charles I was overthrown, but rather when Charles II restored the

monarchy in 1660 (43). It was Leon Trotsky who later re-branded the overthrow of Charles I as a contemporary “revolution.” Revolution as the establishment of a new political beginning—not a restoration of the old—does not become the word’s common acceptance until the eighteenth century. In fact, Arendt pegs an exact date: July 14, 1789. Following the storming of the Bastille in Paris, Louis XVI asks “c’est une revolte?” He is told “non, Sire, c’est une revolution” (47).

Arendt’s overview is historically interesting, but it brings us little closer to settling on a definition of revolution. Fortunately—and despite the oft-stated ambiguity of the term—there are many definitions circling about. Revolution’s most-widely cited definition is by Skocpol. She says revolutions are “rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below” (4). In coming to this definition, Skocpol admits to “rely extensively upon certain ideas adapted from the Marxist and political-conflict perspective” (13). Chalmers Johnson declines to offer his own definition of revolution. Instead, he says that all the elements of revolution are found in Arthur Bauer’s 1908 definition, “les changements tentés ou réalisés par la force dans la constitution des sociétés” (1), the changes attempted or made by force in the constitution of societies. Crane Brinton, despite having thrown up his hands in *The Anatomy of Revolution*, defines revolution for the purposes of his book: “drastic, sudden substitution of one group in charge of the running of a territorial political entity by another group hitherto not running that government” (4). He further adds that “the revolutionary substitution of one group for another, if not made by actual violent uprising, is made by *coup d’etat*, *Putsch*, or some other kind of skulduggery” (4).

Stephen Leacock’s works in political economy also address the concept of revolution. However, nowhere does Leacock explicitly define revolution nor does he focus at length on revolution as a broader theoretical concept. Leacock’s most theoretical approach to revolution is in *Elements of Political Science*. There he considers the events of the French Revolution to be a loose reflection of Aristotle’s cycle of governments in *Politics*: monarchy, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, polity, and lastly democracy (113). In Leacock’s conservative mind, this cycle “cannot

be argued... as a necessary or even as a normal course of political change” (115). When Leacock talks revolution in other works, he usually is pillorying the concept of a socialist society run by “a board of elected officials, generally pictured as wise old men, if need be with flowing beards” (*Heritage* 55). For Leacock, revolutionaries are to be ridiculed, not defined.

However, in *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*, Leacock does come deliciously close to providing a definition of revolution. Describing the Russian Revolution as an “infection,” he writes,

All over the world the just claims of organized labor are intermingled with the underground conspiracy of social revolution. The public mind is confused. Something approaching to a social panic appears. To some minds the demand for law and order overwhelms all other thoughts. To others the fierce desire for social justice obliterates all fear of a general catastrophe. They push nearer and nearer to the brink of the abyss. The warning cry of “back” is challenged by the eager shout of “forward!” The older methods of social progress are abandoned as too slow. The older weapons of social defense are thrown aside as too blunt. Parliamentary discussion is powerless. It limps in the wake of the popular movement. The “state”, as we knew it, threatens to dissolve into labor unions, conventions, boards of conciliation, and conferences. Society shaken to its base, hurls itself into the industrial suicide of the general strike, refusing to feed itself, denying its own wants. (12-13)

While this passage is Leacock writing at a particular time for a particular audience—post-Russian-Revolution North America—it is quite possible to glean a definition of revolution from Leacock’s words. Leacock sees revolution as a struggle for rapid societal transformation that rejects actualising change through traditional and parliamentary methods.

These definitions of revolution from Leacock and from revolution theorists may not be precisely the same, but they all share a commonality: revolution involves a dramatic structural change of governance. But this statement does not fully capture the concept. Given that Jack

Goldstone surveys all the above literature (sans Leacock) and more, it is helpful to turn back to him for a clarified and refined definition of revolution. In examining hundreds of events characterised as revolutionary, Goldstone finds that they share three elements:

- (a) efforts to change the political regime that draw on a competing vision (or visions) of a just order,
- (b) a notable degree of informal or formal mass mobilization, and
- (c) efforts to force change through noninstitutionalized actions such as mass demonstrations, protests, strikes, or violence. (142)

These three observations lead Goldstone to attempt his fourth-generation definition of revolution. Revolution is “an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities” (142). This definition nicely envelops the four previously-cited definitions of revolution, providing an idea of what to look for when labelling something revolutionary.

Does Goldstone’s definition allow satire to be labelled revolutionary? At least at first glance, there is a case to be made: satire’s critique appears to be a noninstitutionalised action that undermines existing authorities. Therefore, satire finds itself under the umbrella of Goldstone’s definition of revolution. That said, fitting under Goldstone’s definitional umbrella of non-institutionalised action is not enough to declare satire revolutionary. Noninstitutionalised action, Goldstone says, is only an *accompaniment* to revolution. Revolution itself is defined by Goldstone as an “effort to transform the political institutions and justifications for political authority in society.” If satirists are most often conservatives, then it is highly doubtful that they are engaged in an effort to actually transform institutions and justifications for authority: as already established, even pro-revolutionary Elliott believes that the satirist’s effort is not to criticise society’s framework. Rather, the satirist’s effort is to attack perversions of the framework’s institutions. If satire’s effort is couched in the defence of existing societal

institutions, it is not revolutionary under Goldstone's definition. It may critique, but it does not advocate for political transformation.

Goldstone's definition provides a *prima facie* case that satire is not revolutionary. However, this is not the place to close the books. If the rejection of satire as revolutionary is hinged upon it being the wrong kind of effort, the rejection needs to do more than just repeat claims about the conservative nature of satirists. That said, there is no need to plunge into the rabbit hole of authorial intention to make the case. Rather, the case that satire is not revolutionary can be made by better-establishing what exactly drives a revolutionary effort.

The Theory of Revolution

The three established generations of revolution theory offer many ideas about what drives a revolution. Each generation varies, and no generation has proven itself definitive. Thus, Farr's conclusion that "no truly general or ahistorical theory of revolution is possible" (690) can be accepted. Nevertheless, a focussed introduction to each generation is useful in any attempt to build a broader understanding of revolution and its convergence with the theory of satire. For each generation, the broader generational theme will first be outlined, and then one of its leading theorists will be honed in on. Specifically, understandings of two things will be built:

1. How does each generation and one of its leading theorists verify or nullify Elliott's belief that satire is revolutionary because it tears down foundations?
2. How does each generation and one of its leading theorists verify or nullify Feinberg's belief that satire is incapable of sparking a major societal reorganisation?

In doing this, the common elements of each generation that are relevant to understanding satire's revolutionary potential will be woven together.

The Masses Do Not Make Revolutions: Crane Brinton and the First Generation.

First-generation revolutionary theory appears in the 1920s and 1930s. Theories of this generation—such as Lyford P. Edwards' *The Natural History of Revolution* (1927), Crane

Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1934), and George Sawyer Pettee's *The Process of Revolution* (1938)—tend to borrow scientific methods of observation to create descriptive analyses. As John Foran puts it in “Theories of Revolution Revisited,” these theorists “developed elaborate descriptions of the stages of some of the major social revolutions up to their day (often surprisingly accurate for later events as well) without a clear theory of why revolutions occurred or what accounted for their outcomes” (2). Brinton’s work, as the most-cited of this generation, deserves elaboration.

The Anatomy of Revolution is a comparative analysis of the French, English, Russian, and American Revolutions. Brinton warns that each revolution has several unique variables at play (226), complicating theoretical generalisation. Nevertheless, he traces revolutions through a five-step process: the structural weaknesses of and discontent with old regimes, the fever of revolution, the accession of extremist authorities, the reaction to new extremists, and finally the restoration of stable power structures. In these processes, he observes certain consistencies across revolutions that are relevant to the theory of satire.

One of the consistencies that Brinton observes is widespread discontent with the existent regime in the years preceding a revolution (79). This discontent manifests itself as “a crescendo of protests against the tyranny of the government, a hail of pamphlets, plays, addresses, an outburst of activity on the part of interested pressure groups” (68). No doubt the hailstorm of discontent would include satire. As Feinberg reminds us, many scholars believe that “great periods of historical change have always been marked by a flowering of satire” (quoting Edgar Johnson, *TS* 302). Pre-revolutionary times are satirical times.

The flowering of satire during pre-revolutionary periods of discontent suggests that there is a similarity between revolutionaries and satirists. In fact, just as Brinton points out that “clearly a man who takes part in a revolution before it is demonstrably successful is a discontented man” (106), Feinberg points out that there is evidence to suggest that “the satirist is a maladjusted, abnormal personality type” (350). That the satirist is maladjusted and the early

revolutionary is discontented makes for a notable convergence, but it cannot be tabled as conclusive evidence that satire is revolutionary. In a state with pre-revolutionary conditions, Brinton points to something else going on that warrants examination in light of the similarity between satirists and revolutionaries. One of “the most reliable of the symptoms” of a society in a pre-revolutionary state, says Brinton, is “the transfer of allegiance of the intellectuals” (251). Clearly, authors in general and Leacock in particular can be included amongst the intellectuals. As members of the intellectual class, satirists would then not be alone in their critique of the status quo. While there is no rule that says intellectuals reflect the popular will, their output must reflect—at least in part—the accepted wisdom that they have heard echoing inside academia. Perhaps, then, even if satire is ahead of popular opinion, its flowering in pre-revolutionary times is not so much leading edge as it is reflective of attitudes inside intellectual circles.

Brinton’s thoughts about the intellectuals of his time and their revolutionary potential deserve brief consideration. After all, *Anatomy* appeared on the back-end of Leacock’s career as satirist and public intellectual. Brinton claims that American intellectuals show no signs of inspiring a revolution despite their critical views. “Most of our widely read writers have been hostile to things as they are in the United States,” says Brinton, “and yet things as they are have remained quite unthreatened by revolutionary overturn” (46). Brinton’s explanation for this societal stability directly channels the belief that the implied alternatives of satirists are not much different than the systems they are criticising:

Perhaps, indeed, it is the lack of any such immediate better world in the minds of American intellectuals that explains why they are not playing now the kind of role that the Voltaires and the Lockes played in the eighteenth century. (47)

For the intellectuals of Brinton’s time, the political ideal is not embedded in Marxism or other revolutionary ideologies but rather in eighteenth-century liberalism (47). By the dawn of the twentieth century, these ideals—ideals that informed Leacock’s conception of political economy—were no longer revolutionary.

Brinton's belief that societal criticisms coming from his American intellectual contemporaries were not about to spur revolution has been proven right. However, criticisms from intellectuals are still capable of sowing discontent. If society is sufficiently primed for change, this discontent moves toward what Brinton calls the fever of revolution. The uprising is either spontaneous, instigated by self-guided people "moved if you like by a natural force, by a hatred of injustice" (80), or instigated by "the work of a scheming and unprincipled minority, freemasons, philosophes, professional agitators" (81). The democratic idealist would suggest that it is the self-guided people en masse who are the moving force in any uprising against the tyranny of power. However—and this is important—Brinton repeatedly states that "the masses do not make revolutions" (154). Once a revolution is underway, Brinton finds that it is coordinated by a guiding force:

This is as true of the Bolsheviks as of the Puritans and the Jacobins. Bums, hoboes, the mob, the rabble, the riffraff, may be recruited to do the street fighting and the manor burning of revolutions, but they emphatically do not make, do not run, revolutions—not even proletarian revolutions. (105)

If we are to accept Brinton's premise, we are brought to an undeniable conclusion. Once the revolts of spontaneous uprising in a discontented society move into outright revolution, the masses are being coordinated by organised groups—revolutionaries—who have a purpose in mind and are manipulating the masses to achieve their purpose. In other words, the leaders of revolutions are acting upon and working to enact an ideology. As Brinton says, revolutionaries are underpinned by philosophies that lead them to champion a "program to change *things, institutions, laws*, not just to convert *people*" (186). For Marxists in particular, the actions of the leadership are key: "Marxism attaches no shame to revolution, and admits the importance of planning and leadership in revolutionary movements" (82). Thus, for Brinton when an uprising or revolt moves into full-fledged revolution, there is sure to be leadership steering the revolution for an ideological purpose.

On its face, Brinton's belief that ideological leadership steers revolutions seems to nullify the possibility of satire being able to direct a revolution. Satirists are generally not political leaders, and even if they are, satire theorists agree that their underlying ideology is generally conservative. It is hard to see how disgruntled conservatives can provide revolutionary leadership and equally hard to see how their conservative critiques can provide revolutionary manifestos that will meet Brinton's requirement of changing "*things, institutions, laws.*" This suggestion will only become more clear in subsequent generations of revolution theory. What will also be seen is the consistency of Brinton's belief that leadership and especially ideology are key to the implementation of any revolution.

Violence as a Change-Maker: Chalmers Johnson and the Second Generation.

Second-generation revolutionary theory appears in the 1950s and 1960s. It largely relies upon concepts of political violence to create general theories about revolution. Theories of this generation—such as Chalmers Johnson's *Revolutionary Change* (1966), Samuel P. Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), and Ted Robert Gurr's *Why Men Rebel* (1970)—tend to use social psychological and structural functionalist models to explain revolts, uprisings, and revolutions. As Foran puts it, they “address the ‘why’ question, but were subject to the criticism that their causal variables (relative deprivation, subsystems disequilibria, and the like) were vague, difficult to observe, or hard to measure, or were inferred tautologically from a retrospective vantage point” (3). Johnson focusses strictly on revolutions, while Huntington and Gurr look at (and at times conflate) revolutions, rebellions, and riots. Johnson's tighter focus on revolution better-aligns his work with this research, making it more useful for elaboration.

Revolutionary Change considers how internal and external intrusions into a society change societal values. These intrusions can range broadly, from technological advances to climatological conditions to philosophical shifts. The intrusions and the resulting changes create conflicts between the established powers and the rest of society, leading to a state of disequilibrium and quite often, revolution.

Like most theorists of the second generation, Johnson leans heavily on the concept of violence to explain the revolutionary process. In fact, for Johnson violence is key. Non-violent revolution is a “contradiction in terms” (7) because “changes that occur in society without the use or threat of violence are nonrevolutionary” (12). Johnson hinges this distinction between revolutionary and non-revolutionary change on a rather broad-reaching definition of violence.

Violence is antisocial action

that deliberately or unintentionally distorts the behavior of others. Violence is either behavior that is impossible for others to orient themselves to or behavior that is deliberately intended to prevent orientation and the development of stable expectations with regard to it. Violence is not necessarily brutality, or insensitivity, or the antithesis of empathy. (8-9)

In fact, for Johnson the concept of violence is so broad-reaching it “may range in form and intensity all the way from gratuitous insults to lunatic acts or criminal behaviour” (11). When acts of violence disequilibrates the order of the state and the relationships between its actors, these acts are revolutionary.

Johnson’s definition of violence as revolutionary casts a wide net, capturing satire. If distorting the behavior of others through gratuitous insults is violence, then satire is violent. Evidencing this, both Feinberg (*ITS* 260) and Elliott (277) agree that satire has the ability to change the behaviour of its individual targets. As well, Feinberg believes that the richest source of satire is dissimulation, “man’s pretense that he is always motivated by the ideal, the moral, the good, never by the actual, the immoral, the evil” (*ITS* 23). This belief comes head-to-head with the importance that Johnson places on disequilibration of societal values as an instigator of revolution. As an act of dissimulation, satire undermines society’s established institutions, whose role it is to “justify, defend, and glorify the functions of that society. Schools, churches, and governments insist that the society of which they are parts is superior to other societies, that its faults are at the worst venial, and that its way of life is an excellent one” (*ITS* 13). If satire has

any influence beyond individual targets, then the dissimulation inherent in it will distort not only the behaviour of individual targets, but also the attitudes of its readers by disequilibrating their values with the values of their societal institutions.

However, Johnson's theory of violence includes a caveat that may very-well discount the possibility of satire being successfully disequilibrating. "If acts of revolutionary violence are quixotic or inappropriate," Johnson says, "they will not be tolerated by other members of the system, and instead of terminating the system they will be dealt with as forms of crime or lunacy" (12). There are two points to consider here. First, literary theorist J.A.G. Ardila points out that "quixotic fictions are generally satiric" (18). While this is not to claim the inverse—that satire is generally quixotic—when satire uses humour and ridicule it most certainly is at risk of being considered quixotic or inappropriate. Second, Elliott points out that satirists have a long history of not being tolerated by a society's establishment. Often, their criticism of the establishment is even considered a crime (267). Perversely, though, as the establishment tightens its grip, satire tends to improve insofar as it becomes more inventive. Quoting literary theorist Kenneth Burke, Elliott suggests that

we might even say that the conditions are "more favourable" to satire under censorship than under liberalism—for the most inventive satire arises when the artist is seeking to simultaneously take risks and escape punishment for his boldness, and is never quite certain himself whether he will be acclaimed or punished. In proportion as you remove these conditions of danger, by liberalization, satire becomes arbitrary and effete, attracting writers of far less spirit and scantier resources. (265)

While there is great merit to Burke's claim, there is a problem when satirical critique is inventively encoded to avoid being considered a crime. Encoding increases the interpretive subjectivity of the satire while simultaneously decreasing the possibility of it having a literal impact. As such, there is no guarantee that encoded satire will widely disseminate whatever critique it sets out to make. Encoding limits satire's disequilibrating potential.

Nevertheless, Johnson believes that “true revolution is neither lunacy nor crime. It is the acceptance of violence to cause the system to change when all else has failed” (13). But even if we are to accept that satire is not lunacy nor crime—and if we are advocates of freedom of expression we should no doubt accept the latter even if we reject the former—under Johnson’s theory, if satire’s words constitute acceptable violence then they are appearing after a critical mass in society has *already accepted* that the system must change. This means satire is just as Feinberg contends: an expression of popular dissatisfaction that is symptomatic, not causal.

For Johnson, the glue that bonds dynamic elements in a disequilibrated society and “leads to the development of lines of cleavage” (84) between the old order and a proposed new one is ideology. As the old value system falters, ideological competitors emerge (85), then guide a revolutionary process that—if successful—allows for the implementation of their ideological values (88). Johnson sees revolutions much as Brinton does: masses being coordinated by organised groups—revolutionaries—who have a purpose in mind and are manipulating the masses to achieve their purpose. Under Johnson’s theory, exactly where and when ideological actors begin to exert influence is left unclear. Johnson claims ideologues spend their time on the margins of society at times of relative calm, wielding little influence (88). However, he also claims that the disequilibration that precedes a revolution is triggered in part by “intellectual developments” (67). Johnson provides no specific examples of what constitutes an intellectual development, but no doubt the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (as but one relevant example) are intellectual developments that can help spark the disequilibration that leads to revolution.

Regardless of where ideology rears its head in the whole process of a revolution, just like Brinton’s theory of revolution, Johnson’s theory pegs ideology as the player that sees revolution through to the implementation of a new societal value system. As Johnson notes, the seizure of power is more than just a technical problem in a revolution (151): for a revolution to successfully take power, a “general ideological appeal that will bring the revolutionary party the support of the

people” (147) is needed. Regardless of how the system is overturned—be it through elections, military coups, or guerilla warfare—the requirement for ideological appeal remains paramount. Of course, ideology is not the only factor in a revolution. But without ideology, there will be no alternative system, and with no alternative system, there will be no revolution. As will be seen in the third generation of revolution theory, the disequilibrated society and the importance of ideology remain key to the revolutionary process.

Outside Influences: Theda Skocpol and the Third Generation

Third-generation revolutionary theory emerges in the 1970s and 1980s. It largely relies on structuralist models of analysis that explain revolutions by understanding the larger societal systems that frame society. Theories of this generation—such as Jeffery Paige’s *Agrarian Revolution* (1975), Charles Tilly’s *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), and Theda Skocpol’s *States and Social Revolutions* (1979)—advanced upon the knowledge built in the previous generations. As Foran writes, theorists in this generation deepened their analysis of “the macrosociological level of comparing national cases in which the key variables included class relations, the state, the international economy, and the spread of capitalism into the countryside” (2). Skocpol’s work, as the most-cited of this generation, deserves elaboration.

States and Social Revolutions uses comparative history to explain the French, Russian, and Chinese Revolutions. Unlike many theorists, Skocpol tries to marginalise the role of ideological actors as the creators of revolutions. For her, “revolutions are not made; they come” (17). She finds this belief on the premise similar to Johnson’s, that a “crisis of the state” (17) is what spawns revolutions. It is only when a state is in crisis that the door is opened for revolutionaries to actualise their vision of change.

Unfortunately for the examination of literature and satire, Skocpol’s theory is tightly delimited. It stays focussed on the role of state structures and international conflicts. The closest *States and Social Revolutions* comes to considering literature is through Skocpol’s broader observations about how intellectuals and the literati lose legitimacy in pre-revolutionary and

revolutionary times. The loss is largely because this group is dependent upon and intertwined with the state (61, 72, 87). In other words, intellectuals and the literati are not vanguards of revolution; they are part of the failing apparatus that is to be revolted against. Skocpol's placement of the literati in the realm of the (failing) ruling apparatus means that satirists are amongst those losing legitimacy. The loss of legitimacy of intellectuals stands in contrast to Brinton's belief that intellectuals transfer allegiance prior to revolution. If the literati become illegitimate sources of state-sponsored knowledge in a pre-revolutionary and revolutionary society, then it is hard to claim that satire has *any* role in spawning revolutions.

According to Skocpol, a crisis of the state is brought about when state organisations that are susceptible to administrative and military collapse are subject to intensified outside pressures (154). These outside pressures—such as industrial progress and repeated losses at war—intrude into the values and technological systems of the state. Skocpol agrees with Johnson that these intrusions result in a dis-synchronisation of values between the state and its lower classes. “Once dis-synchronization sets in,” Skocpol believes, “people in the society become disoriented, and hence open to conversion to the alternative values proposed by the revolutionary movement” (12). Here, much as with Johnson’s theory, Skocpol offers a sliver of light for contending that satire is a revolutionary force. Because satire is a critique, it may have potential as a dis-synchronising agent.

In suggesting this possibility, it must be repeated that Skocpol believes it is outside pressures such as industrial progress and failed wars, rather than the literati or even revolutionary vanguards, that dis-synchronise society. “Revolutionary organizations and ideologies have helped to cement the solidarity of radical vanguards before and/or during revolutionary crises,” says Skocpol, “but in no sense did such vanguards—let alone vanguards with large, mobilized, and ideologically imbued mass followings—ever create the revolutionary crises they have exploited” (17). Only when the crisis is in place can revolution be launched: ideological actors in the state’s agrarian sociopolitical structures use the crisis to lead widespread peasant revolts

(154). But for a society even to get to the point of widespread revolt, the crisis must be dramatic and the state must be highly disorganised and ineffective; as Skocpol contends, “even after great loss of legitimacy has occurred, a state can remain quite stable—and certainly invulnerable to internal mass-based revolts—especially if its coercive organizations remain coherent and effective” (32).

Thus, for Skocpol revolution happens not because revolutionaries (or satirists) set the table for the state to be toppled. Rather, revolution happens because states experience massive, externally-created values shifts—usually through economic changes and war—that they cannot counteract due to their own structural vulnerabilities. It is only once the crisis is in place that the conditions are created for revolutionaries to move in to try and supplant the existent dominant ideology with their revolutionary ideology. Even though Skocpol dismisses the possibility of ideology taking the driver’s seat throughout the whole process of a revolution, just like Brinton and Johnson, her theory acknowledges the importance of ideology. In fact, she later honed her definition and theory of revolution in “Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell” (1985) to give more credence to the role of ideology. Unlike Brinton and to a lesser-extent Johnson, Skocpol’s theory of revolution puts the revolutionary ideology in play only after the state has self-destructed. Nevertheless, when revolution is successful the end result is the same for all three theories: the implementation of a new overarching ideology. As Skocpol says, “revolutions have transformed state organizations, class structures, and dominant ideologies” (3). The fundamental difference between *States and Social Revolutions* and earlier theories is that ideology comes into play much later in the revolutionary process.

Ideology: The Glue that Bonds the Generations

Across the first three generations of revolution theory, ideology is both ever-present and vital. This is not to say that a revolution is necessarily reducible to ideology, but without a replacement ideology to offer the citizenry, there can be no revolution. As revolutionary theory

moves into a fourth generation, Jack Goldstone maintains that ideology must maintain its prominent role (175). And it is not just Goldstone, Skocpol, Johnson, and Brinton whose theories point to the central role of ideology in a revolution. Virtually every other theorist of revolution understands ideology's importance. Kramnick perhaps says it best when he summarises that in both the great historical and modern revolutions, "one finds a sustained and self-conscious effort to reconstruct society along theoretical principles provided by some vision of an ideal order, an ideology. This is what revolution has meant since the late eighteenth century" (31). Thus, when Goldstone says that revolutions are marked by "efforts to change the political regime that draw on a competing vision (or visions) of a just order," ideology is exactly what he is talking about. Ideology may not offer a moncausal explanation for revolution, but the implementation of a revolution hinges upon ideology.

Is Satire Sufficiently Ideological to be Revolutionary?

If a revolution's efforts to transform the political institutions and justifications for political authority in society hinge upon changing dominant ideology, is satire sufficiently ideological to be revolutionary? To make this final determination, a closer look at the concept of ideology is required. Because Goldstone lays out three requirements for a successful revolutionary ideology, he provides a good place to start a consideration of satire and ideology. For Goldstone, a successful revolutionary ideology must:

- (a) inspire a broad range of followers by resonating with existing cultural guideposts,
- (b) provide a sense of inevitability and destiny about its followers' success, and
- (c) persuade people that the existing authorities are unjust and weak. (156)

Satire can easily fulfill two of these requirements. As established in chapter two, persuading people that existing authorities are unjust and weak is the purpose of satire—especially satire of the political variety: satire is a form of critique. And resonating with existing cultural guideposts is an ingrained feature of satire: satire has a habit of invading already-familiar forms of literature. However, satire runs into serious trouble with Goldstone's second requirement: providing a sense

of inevitability and destiny about its followers' success. With perhaps the exception of a few utopian satires, where does satire offer any suggestion of a successful destiny? No theorist of satire is suggesting that satire provides a destiny. Rather, they are all telling us that satire is characterised by irresolution, a world in which things at best return to the point where they began. Unless we revert back to the fourteenth-century's celestial definition of revolution, it cannot be contended that satire is sufficiently ideological to be revolutionary. It is missing a revolutionary destiny, one of Goldstone's three requirements for a successful revolutionary ideology. As such, satire does not offer up the full ideological prescription to be revolutionary.

Satire's inability to provide a *bona fide* revolutionary prescription becomes more apparent when moving from Goldstone's requirements for a successful revolutionary ideology into actually defining ideology. The term ideology emerged from the carnage of the French Revolution. In Enlightenment fashion, French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy introduced the concept in 1797 as a method of providing a non-religious, rational foundation for analysing and developing ideas about how society could be politically organised (Freeden 14). Destutt de Tracy's conception of ideology remains broadly accepted today. However, the term has been much expanded since its introduction. Terry Eagleton observes in *Ideology: An Introduction* that "the term 'ideology' has a whole range of useful meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other" (1). Ideology's library of sometimes-incompatible definitions has left the term so muddled that Marxist scholar David McLellan believes it may very well be "the most elusive concept in the whole of the social science" (1). Thus, even more so than defining satire or defining revolution, defining ideology is a difficult task. Eagleton's *Ideology* alone offers sixteen introductory definitions, and "to try to compress this wealth of meaning into a single comprehensive definition would thus be unhelpful even if it were possible" (1). Further complicating defining ideology is political philosopher Graeme Duncan's point in "Understanding Ideology" that even definitions of ideologies are ideological. Each definition serves "political purposes, justifying one kind of regime rather than another, expressing particular

attitudes towards reason and passion, liberation and imperfection, towards classes, mass movements and so on” (649). Because any definition of ideology is inherently ideological, Duncan warns that “the theoretical and especially political standpoints of students of ideologies are hence vital in determining what they are about” (650). No research is above this. In this case, the definition of ideology that is chosen must serve—at least to some useful degree—the research purpose: understanding the revolutionary potential of satire in the context of Leacock’s two greatest works of fiction.

To settle on a definition of ideology, looking at Leacock’s writings on the concept is a must. As with the concepts of satire and revolution, gleaning Leacock’s approach to ideology requires close analysis of his words. It is almost in passing that he defines ideology in *Elements of Political Science*. *Elements* views the discipline of political science as “the theory of the state” (12). Subservient to the theory of the state are ideologies, or what Leacock calls the “solutions that have been offered in theory and practice to the open question of government control” (358). This definition reveals something about the general shape of political studies in his time. For example, George Holland Sabine’s widely-used 1937 textbook *A History of Political Theory* is structured similarly to Leacock’s text, beginning with ancient theories of the state and then moving into modern ideologies. This definition also reveals something about Leacock. He is no revolutionary and his definition—one that positions the theory of ideology as subservient to both the theory of the state and the practice of government—suggests that Leacock views the state presupposing the concept of ideology. Thus, his definition of ideology is limited because its subservience to the state excludes the revolutionary idea of overthrowing the very concept of “the state as we knew it,” the warning about revolution Leacock makes in *Unsolved Riddle*. A more encompassing definition of ideology that can accommodate the tenets of revolution is needed.

In searching for a definition of ideology that can accommodate the tenets of a revolution, it becomes apparent that there is a common thread running through almost every conception of ideology. As Duncan points out, every thoughtful definition of ideology “include[s] judgements

and prescriptions for action or inaction” (650). For these research purposes, one particular work stands out. In *The Age of Ideology*, political theorist John Schwarzmantel puts forth what may very well be one of the word’s clearest definitions. Schwarzmantel says that

Political ideologies provide central organizing frameworks for political debate and action. Each ideology contains three elements: critique, ideal and agency. Political ideologies offer a criticism of existing society, which is condemned as imperfect and contrasted with some vision of ‘the good society’ that is to be attained. Each ideology offers a view of agency or the means by which the movement from an imperfect to a better society is to be achieved. Furthermore a political ideology operates with a certain view of human nature, sketching out the potentialities and limitations of the human subject. (2)

Schwarzmantel’s definition of ideology serves this research in two important ways. First, its belief that ideology contains a vision of the good society intersects with Goldstone’s belief that revolutions draw on competing visions of what constitutes a just order, thus verifying the role of ideology in revolution. Second, its three-point taxonomy of critique, ideal, and agency intersects with the understanding of satire as a form of critique. Admittedly, this particular definition serves the research purposes, but it is not a tautological choice. Critique, ideal, and agency are the central components ideology in countless works, including Andrew Heywood’s *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. Heywood confirms that this three-element definition is commonly used and “entirely in line with the social-scientific use of the term” (12).

Schwarzmantel’s three-element approach to ideology is where the notion of satire as revolutionary falls apart. There is no doubt that satire is a critique, and it is fair to say that satire contains a low view of human nature, but satire need not and almost always does not offer an ideal or agency. Therefore, satire is missing two key elements of ideology. Revolution, on the other hand, is dependent upon ideology so that it can transform society. Satire, as an ideals- and agency-less critique, is *incapable of directing* the revolutionary transformation. As such, satire cannot be revolutionary.

In making this claim, how is the door closed on Elliott's belief that by tearing foundations down, satire is revolutionary? As a form of demolition—leading edge or not—satire's critique can help a revolution by preparing the way for positive action. There is evidence of this across all three generations of revolution theory. But as Brinton points out, the people who do the street fighting and manor burning in a revolution—"bums, hoboes, the mob, the rabble, and the riffraff"—"emphatically do not make, do not run, revolutions" (105). They are, as Goldstone reminds us, the accompaniment to a revolution. They exist to serve revolutionary leaders. Satire works in the same way. It may and very likely does have a destabilising effect. But without prescribing ideal and agency, satire's critique does not say *how* an effort should unfold "to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in society," as Goldstone's definition of revolution requires. Satire can be a tool for revolutionaries, but satire on its own does not provide the ideological roadmap to a new society.

Looking Towards Leacock

Feinberg asserts that "satire has not caused any major reorganization of society" (*ITS* 259). By building a theoretical understanding of satire's convergence with and deviation from revolution, we can see that satire has an overwhelming urge to critique, but critique is only one of ideology's three components. The ideal and agency that are needed to implement a new, revolutionary ideology appear to be missing from satire.

This theory established, it can now be tested against Stephen Leacock's two greatest satires, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* and *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. The following two chapters will consider the democratic electoral processes put forth in *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches*. Is Leacock merely critiquing? Or do these books also prescribe an ideal and agency to remedy these problems? Answering these questions will help us understand if Leacock is spurring revolutionary change, or—perhaps more likely—expose Leacock's conservative belief that the problems in our democratic electoral system simply reflect intractable human conditions.

Chapter Four: Arcadian Adventures and Absent Alternatives

Leacock the political economist believes in the principle of democracy. *Elements of Political Science* affirms that “the principle of democratic rule has now become a permanent and essential factor in political institutions” (51). In “The Revision of Democracy,” Leacock reaffirms his belief in democracy’s permanence, stating that “no one supposes that feudal property and feudal rights, clerical control and the heredity order of society are coming back again” (7-8). *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice* reaffirms Leacock’s belief in democracy’s essential nature, stating that “democracy... is the best system of government as yet operative in this world of sin” (111). Leacock believed democracy to be an essential component of western government throughout his life, and an irreversible component up until World War II.

Regardless of Leacock’s lifelong support of the principle of democracy, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* and *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* reveal the unsavoury ways that democracy functions and produces governments. This is not surprising, since Leacock the satirist has a mandate to critique. This chapter and the next will explore Leacock’s portrayals of democracy in *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches*. Each chapter will reveal two major themes:

1. there is an underlying anti-revolutionary thread to Leacock’s critique; and
2. critique of the existent order is ever-present, but alternative ideals and agency to reorganise society are missing from, marginalised by, or ridiculed by these books.

Together, such an analysis will demonstrate that no matter how devastating Leacock’s critiques of western liberal democracy may be, his two greatest satires are consistent with the intersection of the theory of satire with the theory of revolution. Both books reject revolution, and neither book offers a serious ideological ideal and agency for society to implement in place of the existent order.

The examination begins with *Arcadian Adventures*. *Adventures* primarily critiques an insular plutocratic class who commandeer the democratic process to further their own goals.

Such a portrayal broadly circles around Leacock's fear that the insidious poison of commercial greed defiles the wells of public honesty, while concurrently demonstrating how democracy can devolve into the rule of 'cliques' and 'interests' and 'bosses.'

The Futility of Revolution: An Inauspicious Beginning to *Arcadian Adventures*

Democracy, governance, and elections are the focus of "The Great Fight for Clean Government," the climactic chapter of *Arcadian Adventures*. However, this chapter cannot be fully understood without first looking at how Leacock sets the table for the Great Fight. Gerald Lynch rightly summarises *Adventures'* overarching theme and voice by pointing out that "it is the blatancy of the pecuniary motives behind all Plutonian 'idle' action that makes the ironic voice in the *Adventures* relatively easy to understand" (*Humour and Humanity* 125). While Plutarians are obsessed with building wealth, more can be said about their overarching worldview.

Adventures begins in the Mausoleum Club, a social club on Plutoria's quietest and wealthiest street. Almost immediately the "great national questions" (3) that concern the Plutarians who frequent the club are laid out. For them, these questions are "the protective tariff and the need of raising it, the sad decline of the morality of the working man, the spread of syndicalism and the lack of Christianity in the labour class, and the awful growth of selfishness among the mass of the people" (3). For a work of irony, these concerns are peculiar: every one of them to some degree reflects Leacock's conservatism. He supports targeted use of protective tariffs (*Economic Prosperity* 163), is a private non-believer in god (Staines 235) who publicly asserts that religion, as the source of society's moral code, is in decline ("Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" 45), holds that selfishness is an innate human trait that must be constrained ("What is Left" 43), and is greatly concerned across many of his writings about the spread of socialism. It is not unreasonable to imagine Leacock discussing very similar questions in the University Club of Montreal, his favourite social spot in that city. Because Leacock is possibly serious in laying out these "great national questions," it appears that there is room for plutocrats in Leacock's conservative conception of society: they do not need to be overturned so much as they need to be

put in check. As *Adventures* unfolds, it becomes clear that moral decline and selfishness are not restricted to the great masses. Plutoria's upper crust are also selfish and in moral decline. However, they are too blind to see it.

The first of the blind Plutorians we meet is Lucullus Fyshe. Fyshe does not see himself as selfish but rather believes himself to be so “democratic” (4, 6, 15-16) he is “more or less a revolutionary socialist” (6). This “revolutionary socialist” views the British class system as tyranny, worthy of being revolted against. Much like how the great national questions of the plutocrats find commonality with Leacock’s views, Fyshe’s concern with the tyranny of Britain’s class system also finds commonality. Leacock reveals in *The Boy I Left Behind Me* that as a child he came to believe that the American Revolution was justified, insofar as the British class system delivered “the burning injustice of tyranny” (58) to the American colonies. “The theory of a republic, and the theory of equality, and the condemnation of hereditary rights,” Leacock continues in *Boy*, “seemed obvious and self-evident truths” (58). Despite the general agreement between Fyshe’s words and Leacock’s beliefs about British class-based tyranny, Fyshe’s concerns with British tyranny are not being used to suggest that revolution is altogether useful. Rather, Fyshe—as the embodiment of America’s wealthy upper class—is being presented as an illustration of the *futility* of revolution.

Adventures illustrates this futility by painting Fyshe as no less tyrannical than the hereditary British upper class that the American Revolution replaced. As Fyshe wonders “how the working-class, the proletariat, stand for such tyranny [of the British hereditary class] is more than I can see” (7), a waiter serves him half-cold asparagus. Outraged, Fyshe berates the waiter, sends the asparagus back, and proclaims that he would fire the whole staff and put them on the street if he was in a position to do so. The mismatch of Fyshe’s words and actions make the irony—like almost all irony in *Adventures*—obvious. It is not difficult to imagine a petulant British lord acting just like Fyshe. What must not be missed, though, is how in a republic founded on the theory of equality the ruling class still mistreat the lower classes. The American

Revolution did nothing to halt class-based tyranny: it simply replaced a hereditary aristocracy with an economic aristocracy. While *Adventures* acknowledges that it is conceivable to join the economic aristocracy—Mr. and Mrs. Newberry rose to their positions of wealth in Plutoria—Plutoria’s economic aristocracy is almost entirely a heredity class: *Adventures*’ describes the children of Plutoria Avenue as all being born into unearned positions of unthinkable wealth and power. That tyranny and unearned power exist in both a hereditary monarchy and a capitalist republic embodies Leacock’s point that “it is silly to break away from established institution on the ground of a purely theoretical fault” (*Boy* 58). Leacock points out that it is not aristocracy but rather power hierarchies that create tyranny and promote heredity. What is the point of overthrowing any system in the name of equality, when the end result is simply a different privileged class that still disrespects the lower classes?

Just as *Adventures* establishes early on that revolution may be pointless, so too does *Adventures* live up to satire’s tendency to not offer much in the way of alternatives. This lack of alternatives is largely accomplished through Leacock’s habit of keeping his critical narrative eye on the rich. He turns away from them only long enough to offer a peek at counterbalancing views. The scant attention paid to the Waiters’ International Union and their organisation of a strike, the only direct mention of organised labour and socialism in *Adventures* aside from a single line in “The Love Story of Peter Spillikins,” demonstrates the book’s lack of alternatives. The reader knows that labour action is looming over the club, but is left almost entirely in the dark regarding the details. Nowhere does *Adventures* spell out the demands of the workers, nor does it explore the relationship between organised labour and revolutionary socialist forces. Rather, a few anticlimactic lines about a looming “social catastrophe” (7, 20, 21) are bandied about, in Leacock’s masterful style of creating humour by overselling then under-delivering. When the strike happens, the social catastrophe is nothing more than a dinner party for the rich coming to an unceremonious end. The oversell/under-delivery marginalises labour action as a potent form of social disruption. Making matters worse from a revolutionary perspective, even

though Leacock agrees with many of the demands of socialists and organised labour—Leacock’s red toryism is well known but less-well known is his very supportive articulation of socialist demands in a 1910 *Montreal Standard* feature that reviews and often endorses positions of socialist parties across the western world—*Adventures* paints unionisation as suspect and corrupting. When Mausoleum Club staff sign union cards, they experience a “wonderful transformation from respectable Chinese to slouching loafers of the lowest type” (19). While this is likely the plutocratic view of unions, even if read as ironic overstatement it is hardly a glowing endorsement of unionisation. Regardless, while the rich being left without a meal is satisfying, *Adventures* virtually ignores the substance and effectiveness of the socialist alternative.

As *Arcadian Adventures* moves closer to its climactic election, its focus remains on exposing the flaws of the rich. Counterbalancing portrayals are not intended to spell out the ideal and agency of alternative ideologies, but rather they are used to highlight the undesirability of the plutocrats. Nevertheless, one of these counterbalancing portrayals comes close to offering a full-on alternative to Plutonian society: “The Wizard of Finance” and “The Arrested Philanthropy of Mr. Tomlinson” idealise a life of working the land, living as a nuclear family. Tomlinson, a farmer who accidentally becomes rich when a vacationing geology professor discovers gold on his farm, moves to Plutoria. However, he holds “infinite regret” (29) that his farm has been overtaken by mining speculators. This inability to become accustomed to the plutocratic life allows Tomlinson to avoid *Adventures*’ prophecy that “once grown used to [the life of the rich], it is... impossible to go back” (3). Determined to return to an agrarian life, Tomlinson sets his mind to ridding himself of his fortune. But the plutocratic cog is powerful, making Tomlinson’s task difficult.

Tomlinson’s strategy to rid himself of his fortune is simple: make bad investments. Unfortunately, the plutocrats have assigned Tomlinson the moniker “The Wizard of Finance,” so every purchase he makes is viewed as an indicator of good judgment. Every rickety stock, lousy security, or fraudulent bond he buys leads to a speculative surge in its value, rendering it

impossible for him to go broke. While it is never entirely clear why Tomlinson does not simply pick up and leave Plutoria, he is able to free himself from Plutoria only when it is discovered that the gold samples from his land were salted, leaving the mine worthless and thus ruining his “Wizard” reputation with the plutocrats. Upon returning to his farm, Tomlinson destroys the mining infrastructure and ruptures the dam. As a result, “Nature reached out its hand and drew its coverlet of green over the grave of the vanished Eldorado” (65), taking back Tomlinson’s land. The closing scene paints nature as supreme over the plutocracy, their only defeat in *Adventures*. Tomlinson’s rejection of plutocracy in favour of living off of the land is the strongest articulation of a counterbalancing ideal and agency in all of the book.

However, Tomlinson’s return to rural life is not a revolutionary proposal for a better society. Rather, it is a conservative look backwards. Tomlinson embodies a passing way of life, pushing against the tide of industrialisation and urbanisation. In fact, Leacock is quite definitive in works such as “The Woman Question” (54) and *The Unsolved Riddle* (20-23) that rural life has largely been swept aside in favour of cities and the machine age. Further suggesting there is nothing revolutionary about Tomlinson’s return to the farm, he has no agency once in Plutoria. His exit is not his to make, but rather dictated by the plutocrats: Tomlinson is only able to leave Plutoria when the plutocrats reject him and his fortune is rendered worthless, not when he rejects the plutocrats. Finally, in the way that satire theory says that alternatives are marginalised, Tomlinson is shuffled off not even halfway into *Adventures*, never to be spoken of again.

Any discussion of Tomlinson cannot be complete without a brief consideration of how in a handful of ways, he is the character in *Adventures* most like Leacock. Both men, after all, share a love for the land. Leacock returned to his beloved Old Brewery Bay estate at the earliest opportunity every spring, where he wrote, fished, and grew produce. Leacock even took great pride in trying to live off the land. He ate and served food that was grown on his estate and sold the excess in Orillia’s markets. Given their shared ideals, it is little wonder that Tomlinson’s return to his farm contains *Adventures*’ only victory over the plutocrats. Somewhat darkly,

though, the Tomlinson/Leacock connection also plays into the conservative worldview of the irony of results. Much like how the plutocratic ruling class holds all the cards as the ones able to reject Tomlinson, Leacock was rejected by the ruling class of McGill University when they forced him into retirement in 1936. Even more ironic, unlike nature's reclamation of Tomlinson's land, Leacock's Old Brewery Bay estate was largely bulldozed to make way for a condominium development in the years following his passing.

Nature may triumph over the plutocrats with Tomlinson's misadventure, but its triumph is short-lived. When *Adventures* next returns to nature—a visit to the Newberrys' Castel Casteggio in "The Love Story of Peter Spillikins"—the land is all private property, "as all nature ought to be" (101). Castel Casteggio's countryside is landscaped, the bush is cleared out, and the lake is raised ten feet with stone-banked sides. And just as on Tomlinson's land, there is gold-digging going on: Mrs. Everleigh successfully seduces the wealthy but myopic Peter Spillikins into marriage, for no other reason than to backfill her and her lover Captain Cormorant's ailing finances. Tossed aside is The Little Girl in Green, the poor cousin of the Newberrys who saw "such wonderful things about [Peter Spillikins] as nobody had ever seen before" (108). Of course, mergers based solely on financial principles are par for the course in Plutoria. The Spillikins-Everleigh merger is merely a prelude to the merger of St. Osoph's and St. Asaph's Churches, also done for financial reasons. In this case, the Plutorians toss aside Reverend McTeague, who holds a genuine and life-long interest in theology. As Gerald Lynch observes in the Afterword to the 1989 New Canadian Library edition of *Adventures*,

Those in *Arcadian Adventures* who are close to the values at the centre of Leacock's tory-humanist norm.... are subsumed by the ascendent plutocracy in a final triumph of darkness. These "good people," as Leacock calls them, offer but an ineffectual opposition to the empowered plutocrats: they and what they represent are rejected, defeated, or vulgarized beyond recognition. (211)

In its critique of the ascendancy of the rich, every single alternative that *Adventures* offers is

marginalised and then rejected, just as satire theory dictates it will be.

The tendency of the rich in *Adventures* to reject and dispose of people blocking their path to ascendency suggests that there is something theoretically going on beyond the book's oft-repeated connection to Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (see, for example, Bentley xiii; Bissell 14; Doyle 195; Lynch *Humour and Humanity* 150; Nerbas). Indeed, Plutorians consume for display, but Plutorians are also lousy human beings with unearned privilege, bent on controlling society. This suggests that *Arcadian Adventures* has a secondary theoretical parallel: John Stuart Mill's *Chapters on Socialism*. Mill's outline of socialist objections to society generally follows the same trajectory as *Adventures*. *Adventures* and *Chapters* both open by pointing out that there is a disproportionate number of working poor people in society, an injustice "made only more grating by contrast" (262) to the lives of the rich. The rich, Mill adds, attain their privilege primarily through little more than the circumstances of their birth (265). Mill's outline continues like the progression of *Adventures* when he points out that, like the plutocratic rise of Tomlinson, "next to birth, the chief cause of success in life is accident and opportunity" (265). While Mill does not then specifically trace moral and religious decline as *Adventures* does, Mill seemingly summarises the players in *Adventures* when he says that the rich prosper "by severity [sic] and sycophancy, by hardhearted and close-fisted selfishness, by the permitted lies and tricks of trade, by gambling speculations, not seldom by downright knavery" (266). Is there any better way to describe a band of individuals who purchase stocks based on nothing more than a buyer's reputation, who chase off a senior minister in their quest to merge two churches, who marry for financial gain while adulterously carrying on second lives, and who salt mineral samples to spark a mining boom? And this just scratches the surface of their knavery. Rounding out the parallels between *Chapters* and *Adventures*, Mill concludes his recounting of the socialist critique by pointing out that "society, in short, is traveling onward, according to these speculators, toward a new feudalism, that of the great capitalists" (267). It is no small coincidence that *Adventures* concludes with the rich taking absolute control of the

church and then the civic government. The parallels between *Chapters* and *Adventures* are made only more curious by the fact that Leacock must have been very familiar with Mill's *Chapters on Socialism*: his aforementioned 1910 *Montreal Standard* feature "Socialism and the Future" reads like an abridged and updated version of it.

Between the suggestion that revolution is futile, the virtually-ignored alternatives, and even the hint of legitimacy in some of the plutocratic societal critique, *Arcadian Adventures* is not a manifesto for change. Just as satire theory states, *Adventures* critiques what exists but does not propose an alternative. Thus, when it is finally time for the Great Fight for Clean Government in *Arcadian Adventures*, it should come as no surprise that the election is not a conflict of ideologies. Rather, the election is a continuation of *Adventures'* tight focus on the hypocrisy of the rich. It unfolds as an exposé of plutocratic desires to secure a stronger grip on all things in society, so that they may advance their financial positions.

The Great Fight for Clean Government: The Genesis of the Plutonian Critique

"The Great Fight for Clean Government" opens with Mr. Newberry and Mr. Dick Overend lamenting government corruption. The two believe that the city, state, and federal governments are all deplorable. However, the focus of their lament is Plutoria's civic administration. Local aldermen's names, they claim, are "simply a byword throughout the United States for rank criminal corruption" (169). That said, the plutocrats make this claim with no idea of who their aldermen are. A search through the papers to find their names reveals something infuriating:

Alderman Schwefeldampf was an undertaker! Think of it! In a city with a hundred and fifty deaths a week, and sometimes even better, an undertaker sat on the council! A city that was about to expropriate land and to spend four hundred thousand dollars for a new cemetery, had an undertaker on the expropriation committee itself! And worse than that! Alderman Undercutt was a butcher! In a city that consumed a thousand tons of meat every week! And Alderman O'Hooligan—it leaked out—was an Irishman! Imagine it!

An Irishman sitting on the police committee of the council in a city where thirty-eight and a half out of every hundred policemen were Irish, either by birth or parentage! The thing was monstrous. (170-71)

At first blush, there is little that is inherently monstrous with these conflicts. Yet there is truth in what is being said. *Adventures* reveals the simple fact that every elected representative is going to be connected to certain constituencies within society. This means that no matter who is voted into office, there is a risk of the rule of interests. However, the Plutarians are not frustrated with city council due to a higher principle about the rule of interests. Their frustration is because the city's public office holders do not rule for plutocratic interests. Any public office holder not part of the plutocratic class, after all, could impede their single-minded desire to advance their financial gain.

Frustrated as they are, the Plutonian frustration with local government is not the dawn of a fresh realisation: “The fact was that their conversation reflected not so much their own original ideas as a general wave of feeling that was passing over the whole community” (169). This general wave of feeling is not even restricted to the city: the wave is crashing over the entire country. Every region has put its own spin on it—from a revival of William Penn’s Quaker values in Philadelphia to a western revolt against the spirit of the east—but as a whole “it was not just clear how and where this movement of indignation started” (170). Adding to the wave’s inexplicable nature, not only is its source unknown but its direction has no ideological bearing: “When this wave of feeling struck the city, nobody knew or cared who were aldermen, anyway” (169). The wave’s inexplicable origin and direction is anti-revolutionary in its discounting of the central Marxist belief that prior organisation creates revolution. Even if the wave is the result of Marxist organisation—and *Adventures* provides no indication of this—the varying regional spins about the wave’s origin suggest that people will credit dis-synchronisation between the voters and the ruling class to whatever fits their preferred narrative. That everyone is clamouring to take credit for the wave channels Theda Skocpol’s belief about the role that ideology plays in a

revolution. Recall her contention that revolutions are not made, they come. Society enters a state of dis-synchronisation and only then can revolutionary forces take advantage of the situation to overthrow the state and implement their own ideology. Broadly, this is what unfolds in the Great Fight. The Plutocrats bumble into the realisation that society is dis-synchronised and then they successfully exploit the situation for their own ends. The Mausoleum Club may have helped cement Plutonian solidarity prior to the wave breaking out, but the Plutorians did not create the crisis they are about to exploit.

To be sure, it is difficult to definitively assert that *Adventures'* Great Fight is a revolution. Nevertheless, the question nicely illustrates the contested nature of revolution theory. Plutoria's election envelops certain revolutionary characteristics. The violence that occurs in the campaign fits into prescriptions of how revolutions unfold, especially under Chalmers Johnson's theory of revolution. As well, the plutocrats' backroom organising to put a new group in charge of Plutoria makes the election something of a putsch, thus fitting into Crane Brinton's theory of revolution. If the Great Fight is a violent putsch, then the Great Fight is a revolution that comes from the right. Kushner and Macdonald make this point when they claim that the violence and the plutocratic rule it produces marks the creation of a totalitarian and fascist state (504).

However, there are a few wrinkles in declarations of Plutoria's election as a revolution. Foremost, the Great Fight does not appear to truly transform Plutoria's political institutions into something new, as required under Goldstone's definition of revolution. The election merely changes the hands on the existing levers of power. The one institutional transformation that could be considered revolutionary—the state legislature's promise to move Plutoria along with all other communities in the state from council government to board government—is completely legitimate under the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. States have the power to structure local government as they wish. Switching local government from council to board would appear to be the state using its existing powers in a brazenly opportunistic and perhaps counter-revolutionary way: board governance staples on a veneer of change to satisfy a dis-

synchronised public's appetite for change, while acting as a breakwater before the “general wave of feeling” hits state-level elections. Besides, *Adventures* is thin on details about what board government means in practice: the only character who may know is Fyshe, and he is either tight-lipped or ignorant when asked. Ostensibly, though, the only change that will come is an increase in civic politician pay. Civic government’s core functions—“the creation and control of such tangible utilities (roads, bridges, water supply) as are of general benefit in their particular area” (*Elements* 297)—must remain intact with Plutoria’s board government, because the plutocrats are jockeying for better control of the dispensation of contracts related to these core functions. The plutocrats already have many of these contracts locked up before the election, and the election is their chance to use public office to skim more off the city.

Further complicating any revolutionary declarations about the Great Fight are Leacock’s hints that the plutocrats already have defacto control of the state government, where true constitutional authority lies. Look at the places Fyshe and Boulder have state politicians meet them when they demand a switch from council to board government:

- The Democratic State Committee chairman meets them at the Buchanan Club, a statement about ineffective politicians: James Buchanan is widely considered America’s most inadequate president.
- The Republican State Committee chairman meets them in a box at the Lincoln Theatre, a darker statement about the life-and-death power that the plutocrats hold over politicians: Lincoln was shot and killed in a theatre box.

The downward creep of plutocratic control from state government to local government makes the Great Fight an illustration of the intensification of plutocratic power. Because local governments are constitutional creatures of the state, the plutocrats would already have considerable but indirect influence over civic government.

The case for the Great Fight being a fascist revolution is compelling, but the lack of details in *Adventures* leaves doubt. Are Plutoria’s civic institutions structurally transformed, or

is plutocratic control of government—something Leacock believes already exists (“Tyranny” 64)—simply intensified? Either way, Leacock is illustrating just how tight the plutocratic grip on society is. *Adventures* already paints the plutocrats as having control over nature, well-illustrated by Mr. Newberry’s ability to “command dynamite and control the forces of nature” (113), and *Adventures* already paints the plutocrats as having control over religion, well-illustrated by the merger of St. Asaph’s and St. Osoph’s into a shareholder corporation where “points of doctrine, belief or religious principle may be freely altered, amended, reversed or entirely abolished at any general annual meeting” (161). Revolution or not, the Great Fight is an intensification of plutocratic control of all things in society. Leacock’s satirical mandate remains the same: to critique this control and put the plutocrats in check.

Completing the Plutonian Ideology: The Plutonian Ideal and Agency

The Great Fight may not be a fascist revolution, but it is an election campaign and the plutocrats do have a fully-developed ideology on offer. Once the plutocratic critique of civic government as a group of corrupt grafters is established, the plutocratic ideal and agency follow to complete their ideology. In laying out a plutocratic ideology, Leacock is not laying out a serious proposal for how society ought to be. Rather, Leacock is laying bare the plutocratic ideology so that he can satirically critique it.

The plutocrat’s ideological vision is Leacock’s jab at blind faith in classical *laissez faire* economics. Leacock had been developing a critique of *laissez faire* since at least his doctoral thesis, in which he correctly calls such theories “ill work preaching a creed of half-truths and qualified propositions” (28) that function as quasi-religious guidelines for society. A similar critique of *laissez faire*’s advocacy of unrestrained, self-interested individualism is seen in the plutocrat’s ideological vision. With a nebulous wave of change crashing through Plutoria, the plutocrats believe that “what was needed now was a great moral effort, to enable them to lift the city up and carry it with them, or, if not all of it, at any rate as much of it as they could” (173). This vision—a society controlled by the rich, whose only moral guidepost is economic self-

interest—exposes *laissez faire* economics as doctrine that is bound to leave some people behind. Further, the “lifting” in this vision hints that unrestrained plutocratic greed is theft. Curiously, the “lifting” even functions as satirical prophesy. The lift-and-carry plitorian vision is a foresighted jab at the economic aphorism that “a rising tide lifts all boats,” a statement of dubious origin but popularised in the mid-twentieth century by John F. Kennedy (Sorensen 227).

The extent to which wealth acquisition dominates all things to the plutocrats is demonstrated by their ideology’s agency. To lift up the city, they begin by rethinking three issues in front of the civic government: the expropriation of the People’s Traction and Suburban Company, the franchise renewal with the Citizens’ Light Company, and the land purchase for the city cemetery. Soon other plutocrats get in on the rethinking as “people began to realise the needs of the city as they never had before” (176): coal baron Mr. Rasselyer-Brown realises he could be selling the city coal at \$5 as opposed to the current rate of \$3.50; quarry and asphalt company owner Mr. Boulder realises the city streets need work; and Mr. Skinyer of the law firm Skinyer and Beatem realises that a \$15,000 per year city solicitor is needed because the current \$6,000 per year solicitor is paid too little to be good at his job. None of these ideas are rooted in securing the best deal for the civic government. Rather, they are all rooted in extracting the most money from the civic government for the plutocrats’ own benefit.

Once *Adventures* spells out how the plutocrats will achieve their vision of society, the full plutocratic ideology is laid bare. The Plutocrats critique corrupt aldermen from a different class of society working for their own self-interest; their ideal is a society where the rich carry the burden of ruling and profit greatly from it; and the agency to accomplish this ideal is further tightening plutocratic control over the dispensation of public contracts. Just as Kernan says about change in satire, the change that will come with plutocratic victory in the Great Fight is not true change but rather intensification of the original conditions: the already-powerful rich will become more powerful, and the conflicts inherent in democratic rule that the Plutorians realise when they look up the names of the city’s aldermen will reach new levels. This intensification is

demonstrated well with the cemetery land purchase.

The fifty-acre plot of land originally slated for purchase by the city's cemetery land expropriation committee seems perfect with its "growth of cypress and evergreens and weeping willows" (175). Nevertheless, when the plutocrats learn about the deal they believe it is the wrong type of land. The \$400,000 earmarked for cemetery expansion would be better-spent on Mr. Furlong's twenty-acre plot of barren, sandy land on the other side of the cemetery. Its adjoining tanneries and chemical factory make it "an ideal place.... for the dead" (175). Suggesting the depth to which partisans fail to see their own hypocrisy, the plutocrats even seem to believe Furlong's claim that he is selling the land as an act of altruism. They agree with his claim that the price does not even matter, so long as it is from "four hundred thousand up.... We didn't regard it as a commercial transaction at all. Our reward lay merely in the fact of selling it" (174). There is no doubt that the plutocrats' preferred land is the inferior option. However, the inferiority of this land deal is not to say that the original land deal is conflict-free. The superior fifty-acre plot is owned by Alderman Schwefeldampf, the undertaker who is on the cemetery expropriation committee. It is never revealed how Schwefeldampf came to own this land, nor is it known if the \$400,000 price tag is reasonable, but it is wrong to simply accept that the original \$400,000 land purchase—the equivalent of \$10 million today—is above reproach. Here we see echoes of Leacock's point in "The Woman Question" that "the privilege of a vote confers nothing but the right to express one's opinion as to which of two crooks is crookeder" (150). Furlong's proposed deal is definitely crooked, but Schwefeldampf's is crooked too.

With all the problems that are spawned by the plutocrats and their ideology, how is it possible that these obviously "crookeder" crooks win the Great Fight for Clean Government? The answer is at least in part because Plutoria's election is no time to discuss serious issues. When *Arcadian Adventures*' final chapter moves from plutocrats speculating about city government to plutocrats organising and campaigning to take control of city government, ideological proposal of any kind vanishes: the plutocrats halt articulation of their ideology, there

is no portrayal of the incumbents' ideology, and there is no revolutionary third-party alternative whatsoever. In ideology's place comes political gamesmanship and backroom organising.

Plutoria's Democracy in Action: There is No Alternative

When the Great Fight for Clean Government moves into formal organising and campaigning, Leacock's narrative eye never budges off the rich. The absence of any consideration of political alternatives in the climactic pages of *Arcadian Adventures*—from the incumbents and especially from revolutionary socialists—speaks volumes about why *Adventures* cannot be considered revolutionary. As much as Leacock dislikes the hypocrisy of the rich, he is even more afraid of the socialist alternative. As Leacock warns in “What is Left of Adam Smith,” “the wreck of Adam Smith means the triumph of socialism—a system even more impractical than free competition” (47). To Leacock, *laissez faire* free competition liberalism is flawed, but selfish human nature leaves no practical alternative to it. The election is an opportunity to satirically demonstrate plutocratic excesses without giving oxygen to socialist forces, and perhaps without being forced to take the side of the plutocrats over the socialists.

Curiously, this no-alternative election can also be understood as a satiric continuation of a long line of *laissez faire* thought. Margaret Thatcher may have made “there is no alternative” a conservative maxim in 1980 (McPherson), but it has been part of the libertarian vernacular since at least 1851. Then, Victorian philosopher Herbert Spencer invoked “there is no alternative” a dozen times (see, for example, 105) in his dogmatically individualistic *Social Statics*, a book Leacock pillories in his doctoral thesis. *Arcadian Adventures*, with its extremist plutocrats, satirically marks the midpoint between Spencer and Thatcher.

The Great Fight cements its no-alternative narrative when the plutocrats form the Clean Government Association. The Association—a vehicle to achieve the plutocratic electoral program—is created in a secret meeting to determine “exactly what they wanted to do and how they meant to do it” (177). With Fyshe as chairman, the plutocrats secretly assemble alongside members of the bar and university president Dr. Boomer, who comes with three of his most

business-friendly professors. The general public is only invited in to a second meeting after their “very simple” platform is settled:

As Mr. Fyshe and Mr. Boulder said there was no need to drag in specific questions or try to define the action to be taken towards this or that particular detail, such as the hundred-and-fifty-year franchise, beforehand. The platform was simply expressed as Honesty, Purity, Integrity. This, as Mr. Fyshe said, made a straight, flat, clean issue between the league and all who opposed it. (180)

The Clean Government Association’s three-word platform marks the end of the already-limited ideological proposals in *Arcadian Adventures*. There is no alternative and anyone opposed to the Association is on the opposite side of virtue. Now the task is to win the election.

The way that the plutocrats hide their initial meeting and their program is to be frowned upon. However, they are not Plutoria’s only political actors guilty of hiding. Earlier, when city council becomes aware that a wave of change is about to sweep the city, Mayor McGrath advises aldermen to “keep pretty dark and go easy” (171). Once again, Leacock paints the plutocrats’ failings as universal. Further evidencing Leacock’s tendency to paint everyone as suffering the same moral failings is his illustration of the allure of power over the decency of principle. Mayor McGrath, the man whom Newberry calls “the biggest grafter of the lot” (167), joins with the people McGrath’s supporters call “them stiffness [who want] to make trouble” (172) to become the Association’s mayoral nominee.

McGrath’s cooperation deal with the Association contains what appears to be the final sliver of *Adventures*’ anti-revolutionary rhetoric. It also can be seen as *Adventures* only revelation—as indirect as it may be—of Leacock’s preferred alternative to American republicanism: the British imperial system. In a jab directed at Irish Home Rule, McGrath agrees to toss three aldermen overboard but he “must find a place for O’Hooligan. The Irish, he says, don’t care for clean government; they want Irish Government” (182). Leacock the imperialist sees Britain as the high water mark of governance. Keeping with Feinberg’s contention that

satire's implied alternatives are not very different than what the satire is criticising, it is useful to keep in mind that imperial Britain and revolutionary America are in many ways two sides of the same free-competition coin. Neither country is intrinsically opposed to market-based economies.

With the platform settled and the deal-making with the politicians in place, four factors bring home plutocratic victory in the Great Fight. First, the plutocrats set up a committee to determine whether or not they need to buy up the newspapers or simply their editorial staff to “elevate the tone of the press” (179). The need for direct media interference falls to the wayside, however, when the press realises that there is money to be made from jumping on the clean government bandwagon. Much like the plutocrats, the media’s highest principle is profit. Second, Mrs. Buncomhearst, who claims to represent Plutoria’s fifty thousand women voters, “though it had never been made quite clear how or why she represented them” (185), hops on the clean government bandwagon. She rallies local women to the Association’s cause. Unlike the plutocrats and the media, Mrs. Buncomhearst’s followers appear to have no principles at all: the scarf they make to show their political allegiance “would go with anything” (185). The third and fourth aspects are perhaps the most disturbing elements of the plutocratic victory. A Students’ Fair Play League is formed at the university in support of the Association. Students riot and assault candidates to “put down all the hoodlumism and disturbance on the street that has hitherto disgraced our municipal elections” (186), while the police give them a free pass to do so. Their efforts lead various non-League candidates to drop out. Then on election day, anyone wishing to cast an “unclean vote” (187) is kept away from the polls by both the students and other upper-class professionals in the community. With the support of Plutoria’s media, women, and students, the plutocrats take their campaign for “Honesty, Purity, Integrity” to victory.

Irresolution and Intensification: So Much for Revolution

Brian Connery and Kirk Combe suggest that satire offers “open-endedness, irresolution, and thus chaos” (5). Alvin Kernan proposes that “whenever satire does have a plot which eventuates change, it is not true change but simply intensification of the original condition” (31).

The closing of *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* exemplifies both of these observations.

Arcadian Adventures hints at irresolution through its circular use of setting. It opens on Plutoria Avenue “in the softer hours of the morning” (1) and closes on Plutoria Avenue “when the slow day broke” (189). The descriptions of the poor on these two mornings show a degree of open-ended irresolution. Plutorians will continue to ignore the needs of the poor. “You would never know that the slums existed” (2) as *Adventures* opens, and as it closes the poor continue to “[rise] to their daily toil” (189). Clean government has done nothing for poor people, except expose democracy as an abject failure.

At the same time that there is open-ended irresolution shared by the opening and closing morning of *Arcadian Adventures*, there is an intensification that differentiates these mornings. The plutocrats have gained newfound political power to further their pecuniary interests:

And as they talked, the good news spread from group to group that it was already known that the new franchise of the Citizens’ Light was to be made for two centuries so as to give the company a fair chance to see what it could do. At the word of it, the grave faces of manly bondholders flushed with pride, and the soft eyes of listening shareholders laughed back in joy. For they had no doubt or fear, now that clean government had come. They knew what the company could do. (189)

The plutocrats have furthered their pecuniary interests at the direct expense of the common good. This intensified plutocratic power, combined with the poor not seeing their situations advance, should feed into a proletariat desire to overturn the bourgeoisie. When viewed this way, *Arcadian Adventures* seems revolutionary.

However, even if the critique in *Arcadian Adventures* in general and the Great Fight for Clean Government in particular feed into a belief that the structures of and actors in western democracy are flawed and must be overturned, the Great Fight cannot be viewed as revolutionary. The book may read like a proletarian critique of the bourgeoisie, and in fact closely resembles John Stuart Mill’s outline of that critique in *Chapters on Socialism*. However,

there simply is no ideological alternative offered within *Adventures* to be revolved into. Socialism or any other alternative is virtually absent throughout the book. When they are briefly present, they are ridiculed just as harshly as plutocracy. Perhaps the only revolutionary seed planted by *Adventures* is that it could be read as a blueprint for a revolution from the right. However, that is not *Adventures'* purpose and that is not the thrust of its critique. Only the most daft or perhaps Machiavellian reader could view Leacock's takedown of plutocrats and their guiding ideology as aspirational. *Adventures* is an ideals- and agency-less critique, incapable of directing a revolutionary transformation. Just as the convergence of the theory of satire with the theory of ideology suggests, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* does not guide revolutionary change.

Leacock's solution-less portrayal of democracy's problems is also evident in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Unlike *Arcadian Adventures'* narrative eye that remains locked on Plutoria's idle rich to expose the poison of commercial greed and the rule of cliques, *Sunshine Sketches'* narrative eye peers over the shoulder of every person in Mariposa. This broader portrayal of democracy's problems allows an understanding to be developed of just how far-reaching Leacock sees the problems of democracy.

Chapter Five: *Sunshine Sketches* and Sweeping Self-Interest

Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* are often said to be companion volumes. While the books are not without their differences, such claims are largely correct. *Arcadian Adventures* picks up where *Sunshine Sketches* leaves off, in the Mausoleum Club. Both books deal with the economic, political, religious, and personal lives in Mariposa and Plutoria. And both books satirise, although with different ironic tilts, the economic and political self-serving nature of the inhabitants of their respective communities. As this chapter will establish, there is another connection between *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches* to add to the list: in their critiques of western democratic systems, neither book can be considered revolutionary.

There should be no surprise that *Sunshine Sketches* is not a revolutionary screed. It is widely agreed that Mariposa comes close to an ideal for Leacock, with a strong undercurrent that validates Canada's existent system of government. Further, unlike *Arcadian Adventures*, which is virtually built around a socialist/red tory critique of the rich, *Sunshine Sketches* is more based in a critique of what Leacock believes the classical economists got right: humans—all humans—are self-interested. Consequently, Leacock's brush paints everyone in society with some equivalence, spreading the blame for society's democratic failures. The exploration of *Sunshine Sketches* will reveal the omnipresence of self-interest in *Sketches*, how it richly colours the critique of democracy, and how it largely undermines the specific ideal of a democratically-controlled socialist society. Further, just as with *Arcadian Adventures*, it will be seen that the critique in *Sunshine Sketches* offers no alternatives.

Sunshine Sketches' Structural Validation of Western Governance

Sunshine Sketches' anti-revolutionary nature can be seen in its structural frames. As Gerald Lynch outlines in "From Serial to Book: Leacock's Revisions to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*," *Sunshine Sketches* is built around two frames. The opening preface and the closing sketch, "L'Envoi," form an exterior authorial frame, allowing *Sunshine Sketches* to begin with

Leacock's personal introduction and to close with Leacock's moralising about how we relate to our roots. Internal to the authorial frame is the thematic frame. Sketches 1, 2, 10, and 11 construct the economic and political systems of Mariposa. These four sketches exhibit a central belief of Leacock's: the importance of the economic and the political to framing society (Lynch "From Serial to Book" 105). Nestled within these two frames are seven sketches about the personal and religious lives of Mariposans.

Looked at another way, the outer frame is Leacock's seal of approval, the inner frame seals the lives of Mariposans around a stable structure of market-based western liberal democracy. Safely inside, Mariposans are free to live, love, work, and worship as they please. Especially in their interpersonal relationships, Mariposans are decent people who—while not without folly—more often than not avoid major interpersonal conflicts. Judge Pepperleigh genuinely cares for his wife; Zena Pepperleigh and Peter Pupkin genuinely court one-another; Dr. Gallagher and Dean Drove respectfully though perhaps not productively navigate their genuine interests in conflicting narratives of history; and even the narrator, when given the chance to speak ill of Jefferson Thorpe, genuinely believes "there's no need to go into that" (30).

The interpersonal decency of Mariposans noted, the town exists in a peculiar stasis. While there is much going on in Mariposa, not much actually changes. This is consistent with satire's tendency towards irresolution. As R. D. Macdonald observes, "Leacock consistently celebrates the villagers' unintended return, their circling back to their point of origin" (95). While Leacock is just as much critiquing as he is celebrating these unintended returns, Macdonald is right. Mariposans are not going anywhere. The interior goings-on are stable and the exterior frames offer stability. To the point of revolution, nowhere in *Sunshine Sketches* is the economic and political frame put under serious threat, nowhere in *Sunshine Sketches* does the economic and political frame seriously threaten Mariposans, and nowhere in *Sunshine Sketches* do Mariposans seriously threaten to break out of the economic and political frame. If judged solely by its frames, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is not a revolutionary book. It represents

a stable society.

Nevertheless, *Sunshine Sketches* does exert serious satirical pressure on democracy. The critique is broad-based. Mariposa's member of parliament stands for everything, his main opponent is an illiterate opportunist, and the voters are only moved by ignorant self-interest. Whereas *Adventures* primarily focusses on the rule of cliques and interests and bosses, alongside the insidious poison of commercial greed, *Sketches* goes further. It puts particular emphasis on genial incompetents popular as spendthrifts, crooked partisans warm to their friends and bitter to their enemies, and administration by a party for a party. With much of *Sketches* revolving around one economically self-interested man—but concurrently painting all individuals as economically self-interested—understanding its approach to democracy requires an understanding of its predominant character and Conservative candidate for parliament, Josh Smith.

Josh Smith: Illiterate Saloon-Keeper, Candidate for Parliament

If there is anything resembling a story arc in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, it is Josh Smith's rise to prominence in Mariposa. Smith, *Sketches'* predominant character (aside from the intrusive narrator), is a shrewd but illiterate businessperson. This 280-pound “over-dressed pirate” is established early-on as “no ordinary man”:

It is not merely his costume, though the chequered waistcoat of dark blue with a flowered pattern forms, with his shepherd's plaid trousers, his grey spats and patent-leather boots, a colour scheme of no mean order. Nor is it merely Mr. Smith's finely mottled face. The face, no doubt, is a notable one,—solemn, inexpressible, unreadable, the face of the heaven-born hotel keeper. It is more than that. It is the strange dominating personality of the man that somehow holds you captive. I know nothing in history to compare with the position of Mr. Smith among those who drink over his bar, except, though in a lesser degree, the relation of the Emperor Napoleon to the Imperial Guard. (13-14)

Smith's bigger-than-life leadership role in Mariposa makes *Sketches* something of a picaresque narrative. As M. H. Abrams observes, the picaresque is episodic and often satiric, typically

concerning “the escapades of an insouciant rascal who lives by his wits and shows little if any alteration of character through the long succession of his adventures” (191). Picaresque Smith has a role in or is the focus of many sketches, succeeding in Mariposa’s temperately-veneered business community, saving the town’s sinking steamer and financially-floundering church, and ultimately leveraging his wits to take a seat in parliament under the Conservative banner.

Josh Smith’s character is rooted in two real-life people. According to Gerald Lynch, he is a representation of Orillia hotelier Jim Smith, as well as a “joshing” representation of Adam Smith (“From Serial to Book” 109). The connection to Jim Smith is indisputable, since Leacock’s draft notes on *Sketches* connect the two men (Spadoni 180). The connection to Adam Smith is on stable ground. Leacock put considerable academic efforts into deconstructing Adam Smith’s theory of markets and self-interest, and Josh Smith is the self-interested representative of Mariposa’s business community. Further evidencing that Josh Smith is meant to be a joshing representation of Adam Smith, the character is one of only a few that did not experience a name change when the book was adapted from its original serialisation in the *Montreal Star*. Most others were given new names, to obscure their real-life inspirations (Lynch “From Serial to Book” 109). If the Adam Smith-based character of *Sunshine Sketches* is a picaresque “hero,” this does little to cement the narrative as revolutionary.

To call Smith a “hero,” even in quotation marks, may not please all analysts of *Sunshine Sketches*. Smith is characterised by Lynch as a “masterfully-deceptive interloper: he moves into Mariposa, exploits its deluded residents, and by the end of the eleventh sketch is on his way out” (*Humour and Humanity* 61-62). Antor’s characterisation is kinder, calling Smith a “shrewd pragmatist” (56). Davies is perhaps the kindest, characterising Smith as “plainly the ablest man in Mariposa... the leader who will always rise above the commonality, whatever his want of education or principle” (21-22). Within their frames of analysis, each of these perspectives holds validity. Yet, given the Horatian nature of *Sunshine Sketches*, Antor’s interpretation of Smith as a shrewd pragmatist may be the most applicable to the present analysis. Even if Smith cannot be

held up as a paragon of virtue, and even if Smith is something of an outsider to Mariposa, his exploits are relatively harmless and most of them offer some economic benefit to Mariposans.

To be sure, Smith, alongside all the actors in Mariposa's market-based democracy, are ridiculous. But it is difficult to contend that they are evil people, and the system that they are in seems to work for them. Viewed this way, *Sketches* is not so much satirising Mariposa as it is satirising how self-interest manifests itself in Mariposa, primarily with concern to the political and the economic. As the book progresses, Smith succeeds largely through his ability to intersect his own self-interest with the self-interest of all Mariposans. The success of Smith's brand of self-interest for all underpins an anti-revolutionary current in *Sunshine Sketches*, standing in direct contrast to the socialist belief in the toxicity of self-interested business interests.

The Universality of Self Interest in Mariposa

Josh Smith's method of advancing his own self-interest by catering to the self-interest of others begins when he arrives in Mariposa and takes over a hotel. Smith does not resort to naming his hotel with "feeble" (14) names like the Alexandria, the Queen's, or the Royal Hotel. Smith merely puts up a sign that reads "JOS. SMITH, PROP." and then stands "underneath in the sunshine as a living proof that a man who weighs nearly three hundred pounds is the natural king of the hotel business" (14). Smith, as the public face of his business, functions as a symbolic throwback to when the concept of the market in practice generally meant that the players had personal relationships with one another. In this sense, "JOS. SMITH, PROP." is not just the name on the hotel: it is disclosure to the community of with whom they are dealing. That said, in a town of 5,000, most would know the hotel proprietors whether or not their names are on the buildings, so Smith's move is more a manipulative act of ego and personal image-building than it is an act of fair-minded disclosure. Regardless, given the symbolic relationship between Adam Smith and Josh Smith, the parallel remains a noteworthy endorsement of business being open and accessible to its customers.

When setting up shop, Smith comes under pressure from the clergy and other Mariposan

prohibitionists for serving liquor. The scorn is hypocritical: these same opponents accept the beverage rooms at the Mariposa House and Continental as “a necessary and useful evil” (19), sometimes drinking there themselves. To win over Mariposa, Smith resorts to seeming philanthropy. His first philanthropic act takes place when a steam merry-go-round sets down in a lot next to the hotel. Smith gives the operator \$10 to provide children with free rides all evening. The result is \$40 in lager sales alone, as parents drop off their children and drink at Smith’s. This scheme is how Smith learned “the blessedness of giving” (20). From here, Smith’s giving grows. Smith joins every local board and association, especially those which “needed premises to meet in and grew thirsty in their discussions” (20). In fact, when a half-baked whirlwind campaign sweeps through Mariposa to raise funds for the church, Smith is Mariposa’s biggest benefactor—church included—when he donates on the condition that the fundraising committee holds their meetings in his hotel. But Smith also engages in “secret benefactions, the kind of giving done by stealth of which not a soul in town knew anything, often, for a week after it was done” (20). His “secret” benefactors include the church and the Conservative party. Let there be no mistake: such schemes are foremost designed for the interest of Smith’s business, not the interest of the community. However, community interest is corollary to Smith’s self-interest, as Mariposans benefit from his giving. Further, Mariposans choose with free will to be participants in these benefactions. Parents *choose* to drink at the hotel while their children ride the merry-go-round; community groups *choose* to meet and eat at the hotel; politicians *choose* to accept Smith’s donations. Scheming? Absolutely. But so transparent are these schemes that it would be—or at least *ought* to be—obvious to Mariposans that they are being played. Leacock’s satire is thus double-edged: Smith’s giving is self-interested, but Mariposans accept this giving out of self-interest, failing to raise objections or express any critique of its nature. In other words, Leacock is painting everyone as equivalents. Nobody in Mariposa is virtuously selfless.

Smith’s scheming delves into the illegal when it comes to liquor laws. His practice is to “close” the bar not at the legislated hour, but rather when the bar is “properly full” (15). The bar

is not properly full bar until Judge Pepperleigh and the prosecuting attorney Macartney are inside it. Smith not respecting the law is on some level problematic. But Judge Pepperleigh is not respecting the law, either, nor are Smith's other patrons. It is worth remembering here Leacock's vehement anti-prohibitionist stance. When Leacock claims that with regard to liquor laws, "Mr. Smith's moral code was simplicity itself,—do what is right and take the consequences" (21), Leacock is saying that Smith (and the townsfolk) are morally right to circumvent liquor laws. Judge Pepperleigh's presence only adds weight to this perception. But even if Mariposans are doing what is right, they are not motivated by what is right. Rather, they are motivated to *take the consequences* of doing what is right: for Smith it is profit; for Mariposans it is liquor. Even on a matter of principle, self-interest strikes again.

Leacock, on the other hand, is motivated in at least some small part by a sense of what is right. Of course, as a drinker Leacock's self-interest in laying out the town as morally right to imbibe cannot go unmentioned. However, Leacock views excessive liquor regulation in general and prohibition in particular to be inherently illiberal. He points out in a pamphlet *What Prohibition Does* that "it violates the first principles of individual freedom on which the greatness of British institutions has been based." Leacock's more detailed "The Tyranny of Prohibition," written after the United States passed the Eighteenth Amendment that banned alcohol, explores the illiberal nature of prohibition. Leacock is broad-minded enough to acknowledge that within the prohibition movement, there is a subset of good people who actually believe that "they are doing the work of Christ on earth" (66). Wryly, Leacock invokes the Spanish Inquisition when adds that they are entitled to do religious work, "along with Torquemada and Philip of Spain" (66). Foundationally, though, Leacock sees in the Eighteenth Amendment the victory of a tyrannical minority. His critique of prohibitionists' political mobbing of the majority is still relevant:

Thus in the matter of real rule the politician is nowhere. His only aim is to give the public what the public wants or at least what the public seems to ask for. And the

politician has heard apparently only a single voice. On the one hand were the prohibitionists—articulate, strident, fanatical, highly organized, amply supplied with money, with the name of religion upon their lips, ready at a moment's notice to lash themselves into a fit of hysteria, and to attack with overwhelming force the personal fortunes and the political position of anyone who should dare oppose them. On the other side was the general public, the vast majority of whom were, and are, opposed to national prohibition, but among whom no individual, or at best only one or two in thousands, were prepared to take the risk of open opposition to the relentless and fanatical minority. (65)

Leacock sees in the prohibitionist movement a direct threat to liberalism, because he believes societal consensus is being overridden not by reason but by fear. Smith, as the man willing to stand against liquor regulation—admittedly in an act of self-interest—thus becomes a champion of liberalism, and by extension the upholder of principles that Leacock says underpin the greatness of British institutions. If the “hero” of *Sunshine Sketches* is a defender of British-style liberalism, he is an anti-revolutionary in his own right.

When Smith faces the loss of his liquor license—not from the temperance movement but rather from a temperamental judicial decision—he is able to use the universality of self-interest to overcome this tyranny. On a fateful night, Judge Pepperleigh and the prosecuting attorney Macartney are accidentally locked out of the hotel. Within days, Smith receives a three-month notice of the revocation of his liquor license. Prior to this, the harshest Pepperleigh had ever been on Smith was a \$100 fine for serving after hours, after discovering Smith donated to the Liberal party. Realising he needs to curry monumental favour with Mariposans to save the license, Smith quickly adds facilities onto the hotel that “no one in Mariposa had ever seen” (23): a French café he calls the “caff” and a German ratskeller he calls the “Rats’ Cooler” (22), staffed with a French chef and German waiter brought in from the city. Smith proceeds to obscenely under-charge for food and drink. Mariposans eat (and drink) it up: “men would sit in the caff at lunch perhaps for an hour and a half and talk about the licence question in general, and then go

down into the Rats' Cooler and talk about it for two hours more" (25). Public opinion—ranging from the newspaper editors to prohibitionists and even to Judge Pepperleigh—becomes that out-of-town liquor commissioners have no business taking the license from such a fine local establishment. That, as Smith points out to his assistant Billy, "every one of them hogs eats about a dollar's worth a grub for every twenty-five cents they pay on it" (25), certainly incentivises public opinion. A massive lobbying effort ensues, saving Smith's license. With the license saved, Smith raises prices, sends the chef and waiter packing, and "temporarily" closes the Rats' Cooler for repairs. Once again the satire surrounding Smith is double-edged. Surely these self-interested "hogs" ought to have seen through Smith's actions. Smith, however, is able to exploit other people's self-interest to advance his own self-interest, even in a community that houses prohibitionists who had preached against Smith's liquor sales when he first arrived in town. Thus, in the first of the sketches, Smith's scheming benefits the town, booms his own business, and keeps liquor flowing. Smith, in other words, is the ultimate liberal genius.

Smith's scheming moves deep into the realm of criminal when he saves Mariposa's Church of England church from creditors. The Reverend Dean Drone's vanity project of replacing the old stone building with a large wooden structure drives the church to the financial brink. Little attention to or understanding of the cost of the replacement is exhibited by Drone or Mariposans. Leacock brilliantly captures their inabilities by piling up mixed metaphors:

I don't think that at first anybody troubled much about the debt on the church. Dean Drone's figures showed that it was only a matter of time before it would be extinguished; only a little effort was needed, a little girding up of the loins of the congregation and they could shoulder the whole debt and trample it under their feet. Let them but set their hands to the plough and they could soon guide it into the deep water. Then they might furl their sails and sit every man under his own olive tree. (68)

As Dean Drone and Mariposa at large blunder through a series of failed fundraisers, interest piles up on the debt until it becomes unmanageable. Salvation comes, but not from the people of

Mariposa. Nor does it come from an act of God. Salvation comes from arson. With the church burned to the ground, insurance resolves all of the Church of England Church's financial woes.

While the cause of the fire is never officially determined, Smith was seen walking towards the church on the night of the fire, tin of kerosene in hand. This leads the insurance company to dispute the claim, but the allegations against Smith are "amply disproved by the proceedings of the court... and that anyway it was the rottenest kind of kerosene he had ever seen and no more use than so much molasses" (90). Judge Pepperleigh rules in favour of the church, and "I am quoting here the text of the decision—against the intrigues of a set of infernal skunks that make too much money, anyway" (90). The fire not only saves the church from bankruptcy, but it also makes Smith the town's hero—not through the virtue of being an arsonist, but as a result of his frantic firefighting skills that keep the blaze from spreading from the church's driving shed to the rest of town. Of course, Smith would be highly motivated to keep the fire contained to the church, lest he be the man who burned down all of Mariposa, his own hotel included.

The arson departs from Leacock's previous satire of Smith's schemes in many ways. Unlike Smith's earlier schemes, the real target of the arson—the insurance company—does not part with its money through free will. As well, Leacock moves beyond the running satire about Mariposans who *ought* to be aware. Mariposans *are* aware. Smith, after all, is seen walking towards the church with a tin of kerosene the very night it burns down. Yet everyone—the church's Dean, the town's judge, and Mariposans in general—*choose* to ignore the facts. They collectively act in the community's self-interest at the expense of "skunks that make too much money anyway." Why does Leacock let Smith off? There are at least two reasons. First, in contrast to how the churches in *Arcadian Adventures* fall to financial interests, the arson prevents Mariposa's church from coming under the control of its creditors and, by extension, financial interests. Given Leacock's belief that religion forms the basis of society's moral code ("Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" 45), Smith's act of arson keeps pecuniary hands from controlling

Mariposa's moral code. Second, Mariposa's bond as a community in a moment of crisis speaks to Leacock's belief in organic community. To Leacock, self-interest can extend beyond individuals, since the "plain assertion that every man looks out for himself (or at best for himself and his immediate family) touches the tender conscience of humanity" (*Unsolved Riddle* 40). Mariposa, as a community and family, uses its collectivity to protect its own and deliver a comeuppance to the insurance company, an outside institution that makes too much money on their backs. As a whole, Smith being let off for torching the church is consistent with Leacock's longstanding intemperance for narrowly individualistic greed and exploitative accumulation of wealth, along with his red tory belief in organic community.

The insurance fraud also acts as a corrective to an earlier episode of Mariposa being burned by outsiders. When "everybody went simply crazy" (29) over mining stocks, barber Jefferson Thorpe becomes rich by stubbornly holding onto Northern Star mine stock. However, just as quickly as Thorpe becomes rich, he loses his fortune on an obviously-fraudulent Cuban plantation investment scheme that "made no rash promises, just admitted straight out that the enterprise might realise 400 percent, or might conceivably make less. There was no hint of more" (38). When the Cuban scheme goes bust, it is not just Thorpe who loses out. In an atypical act of financial selflessness, Thorpe says his plan is to donate much of his windfall to charitable causes, most likely a home for incurables. The donation's failure to come to fruition is perhaps a statement about the unattainability of true, selfless charity.

For Smith, the Cuban plantation episode finds him at his most paternal. He saves his clerk Billy from falling prey to the scheme by refusing to pay back wages that Billy wants to invest in it. Further, when Thorpe goes bust, Smith contracts with Thorpe's hen-raising wife to buy eggs for the hotel, ensuring that "things are not so bad" (42) for them. Keeping with *Sketches'* anti-revolutionary undercurrent, Thorpe's financial misadventure demonstrates the positive role that private business plays in societies where people have mutual responsibility. While Mariposans are burned by outside business interests, Smith looks out for his own.

Josh Smith is the master manipulator of mutual self-interest. His successful business tactics, centred on building his own self-interest by serving the self-interest of others, work as a potent counter to the socialist solution of collective ownership to ensure fairness in society. Smith does “more to boom Mariposa than any ten men in town” (26), preserving and promoting liberalism all while keeping liquor flowing, helping the Thorpes in their financial recovery, salvaging the church from financial ruin, and supporting virtually every charity and community organisation in Mariposa. This is to say nothing of Smith saving the Mariposa Belle when it sinks to the shallow bottom of Lake Wissanotti, a rescue coloured by pecuniary motives: Smith does it on twenty-five dollar bet (58). Ostensibly, Smith causes no positive harm to Mariposans, but rather delivers them benefits while achieving his own self-interest. Unlike the plutocrats of *Arcadian Adventures*, who use liberalism to pursue their own goals at the expense of broader society, it is difficult to build a case for overthrowing Smith’s brand of liberalism.

Josh Smith’s positive attributes noted, let there be no mistake that all the schemes in *Sunshine Sketches* are worthy of ridicule. After all, satire’s purpose is to critique. Is it really charity if a hotelier donates on the condition that the donations be spent at his private business? Probably not. Can it really be okay for almost an entire town—judiciary included—to openly flout liquor laws? Doubtful. Should eyes be turned away when a church is burned to the ground for the insurance money? Of course not. Mariposans may be better than Plutorians, but they are not selfless. This is the satiric frame—if not the satiric heart—of *Sunshine Sketches*: even in Leacock’s supposedly ideal community, people navigate political and economic realms with self-interest. As Feinberg says, satire exposes the folly in believing that humans are “motivated by the ideal, the moral, the good, never by the actual, the immoral, the evil” (ITS 23). Mariposa may be an ideal for Leacock, but it is not a moral utopia.

Between its strong anti-revolutionary undercurrent and its almost-laudatory critique of self-interest in a liberal society, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is not a manifesto for change. Just as satire theory states, *Sketches* critiques existing conditions but does not propose an

alternative. Keeping with this aspect of satire theory, when it is finally time for “The Great Election in Missinaba County,” the election is not a conflict of ideologies, but rather an orgy of self-interest. Facts are thrown aside in favour of meaningless statistics, candidates embrace shady electioneering tactics, and voters neglect the public interest. *Sketches*’ exposé of elections casts a darker hue on self-interest’s ubiquitous nature, but continues with the book’s tendency to avoid proposing alternatives.

An Orgy of Self-Interest on Everyone’s Behalf: The Great Election

The two climactic sketches of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, “The Great Election in Missinaba County” and “The Candidacy of Mr. Smith,” recount the election in Mariposa and the surrounding Missinaba County. For simplicity’s sake, both sketches will collectively be referred to as the Great Election. Although it is a federal election—historian Jack Granatstein describes it in *Yankee Go Home* as the “definitive analysis” (43) of Canada’s 1911 reciprocity election—the narrator paints it as representative of almost any election. “Don’t ask me what election it was, whether Dominion or Provincial or Imperial or Universal,” the election narrative opens, “for I scarcely know” (127). From the get-go, Leacock’s suggestion is that the antics in Mariposa’s Great Election are universal to any election campaign.

In the Great Election, there are three categories of voters: Liberals, Conservatives, and those who are both. People who are both “vote Liberal or Conservative according to their judgment of the questions of the day. If their judgment of these questions tells them that there is something in it for them in voting Liberal, then they do so” (130). Declared Liberals and Conservatives are more partisan, able to “decide the most complicated question in four seconds: in fact, just as soon as they grab the city papers out of the morning mail, they know the whole solution of any problem you can put to them” (130). Partisans are worse than those who shop around to serve their self-interest, insofar as they fail to reach across divides in heated political moments, in what is otherwise a community of decent people. During campaigns, partisans leave their church pews if the preachings are contrary to their politics. Even close relationships falter

in the face of partisanship: Dr. Gallagher and dentist Joe Milligan stop sharing their motorboat, and Pete Glover and Alf McNichol split apart their hardware and paint selling operations. The town's most notorious partisan, however, is Judge Pepperleigh. His politics deeply colour him in and out of writ periods. There is no shortage of partisan offences committed by Pepperleigh, and perhaps the worst is when he lets his son Neil off "without a stain on upon your name" (95) for smashing the face of Peter McGinnis, the Liberal organiser. Though tribal, Liberal and Conservative partisans still work towards their own self-interest. Leacock himself touches on this as early as the preface, when he claims that despite his own membership in the Conservative Party, "as yet I have failed entirely in Canadian politics, never having received a contract to build a bridge, or make a wharf, nor to construct even the smallest section of the Transcontinental Railway" (4). Even the few Mariposans with no politics whatsoever are not left off the self-interest hook, for their position leaves others to "wonder what it is that he is 'out after'" (132).

Self-interest is the basis upon which Liberal incumbent Henry Bagshaw hopes to fight the campaign. Bagshaw fancies himself an everyman, owning farmland and town property, subscribing to pews at several churches, and even keeping a "little account in one bank and a big account in the other, so that he was a rich man or a poor man at the same time" (132). When Bagshaw learns that the Liberals in Ottawa want to frame the campaign around trade reciprocity with the United States, he laments "Why they can't fight it merely on the question of graft?" (134). If the ballot question is graft, Bagshaw's plan is to leak to the papers that "we bribed all the voters in the county, and that we gave out enough contracts to simply pervert the whole constituency.... we poured the public money into this county in bucketsful and... we are bound to do it again" (134). Leaving Mariposans to believe that he will fill every constituent's pocket, Bagshaw contends, is a certain path to victory.

Henry Bagshaw's main challenger is Josh Smith. Even though Smith represents the Conservatives, he falls into the category of those who are both Liberal and Conservative. Smith, after all, donates to both parties. It is never revealed why Smith chooses the Conservative

banner, though it must be due to the difficulties independent candidates face, the fact that there is a Liberal incumbent, and simply because Smith is the book's ironic hero and Leacock is a Conservative. When Smith decides to run, he replaces American drinks in his hotel with British beer and Irish whiskey, he drapes the building with Union Jacks, and he orders fifty pictures of King George, fifty pictures of George's father Albert, and "while you're at it, get some of the old Queen, Victorina" (137). Best illustrating Smith's directionless political allegiances, once the Union Jack is flying over his hotel, "he stood and watched the flag fluttering in the wind" (137).

Broadly, Bagshaw and Smith represent Leacock's beliefs about democracy's tendency to elect people who are not the most upright actors. As he says in *Elements of Political Science*,
Election is apt to favor the candidates who possess in a high degree the more popular arts, who have a readiness, or even a ready buffoonery in speech, who are not sensitive to political abuse, and who have a reputation (military, for example) calculated to appeal to the imagination of the crowd. (165)

In contrast to this pessimistic diagnosis stands the election's independent candidate, Edward Drone. Edward, the brother of Dean Drone, runs on a platform of "just simple honesty and public morality" (134). Drone's interest in and respect for the theoretical roots of democracy leads Mariposans to believe that with "his political ideas Edward Drone was and, as everybody in Mariposa knew, always had been crazy" (135). While Drone's independent candidacy represents change, the change is not an all-out revolutionary proposal for systemic, institutional reconstruction. Rather, Drone is interested in bringing honesty and morality into public life. His periodic appearances in the campaign illustrate Leacock's belief that "there are in every community many men of very great talent, conspicuous perhaps in science or literature, who would never be elected at the polls" (*Elements* 165). His campaign represents an unachievable ideal that actors in a democracy will serve nothing but the public interest, and his defeat is treated as a foregone conclusion.

In addition to Edward Drone's candidacy, there is one truly revolutionary political

alternative that receives a marginalised appearance in *Sketches*. The sketches just prior to the election campaign follow the courtship of Peter Pupkin and Zena Pepperleigh. Pupkin—a teller at the Exchange Bank—is unable to marry due to a peculiar rule held by banks of the day. Employees could only marry if their salary was a minimum level. With Pupkin’s salary \$200 shy of the Exchange Bank’s \$1,000 marriage threshold, he views himself as a victim of capitalism’s grinding tyranny. Despondent, Pupkin takes interest in revolutionary movements: “Russian Anarchism, German Socialism, the Labour Movement, Henry George, Lloyd George,—he understood the whole lot of them by thinking of his two hundred dollars” (108). Pupkin’s flirtation with revolution, however, is brief.

As *Sketches*’ closest encounter with revolution, Leacock discounts Pupkin and his revolutionary zeal in four ways. First, Leacock puts Pupkin’s judgment in question. Pupkin tends to jump to conclusions, such as his incorrect belief that Zena is falling in love with a visiting poet; he is unable to win intellectual debates with Mallory Tompkins, the *Times-Herald* reporter who was “so intellectual that he was, as he himself admitted, a complete eggnostic” (98); and he is constantly on the verge of suicide though lacking the will to act. Second, Pupkin finds himself achieving the \$1,000 salary threshold not long after he starts at the bank. This quick resolution suggests that time and not revolution is what will resolve perceived tyrannies of capitalism. Third, Leacock uses Pupkin to plant a seed about the danger of revolutionary movements on the impressionable young. During the peak of his frustration, “Pupkin read *Memoirs of the Great Revolutionists* and even thought of blowing up [bank manager] Henry Mullins with dynamite” (108). That said, Pupkin’s fear of death makes him ill-suited to lead a violent revolution. Fourth, Leacock uses Pupkin to undermine the idea that revolution is about social solidarity. Pupkin’s motivations are firmly planted in self-interest, and not in a broader perception of societal injustice. Never does Pupkin consider anybody but himself and his own plight in his revolutionary thoughts.

As a whole, there is a message in Pupkin’s ordeal about capitalism pushing people too

far. However, *Sketches* does not portray capitalism as a purveyor of grinding injustice, needing to be overturned. Instead, Pupkin's revolutionary rumblings are a simplistic young man's grumblings, whose problems are resolved within the existent political and economic system. As *Sketches'* revolutionary, Pupkin embodies Leacock's belief at the time that "there is no socialist peril.... Society is moving neither to a revolution nor a catastrophe" ("Socialism and the Future" 5). And just as Pupkin's fleeting revolutionary feelings fade away, so too does the idea of revolution in *Sunshine Sketches*. Where Pupkin's story ends, the Great Election begins. In this election, there is no truly revolutionary candidate on offer, despite the scattered appearance of radical third parties on Canada's federal electoral scene in the early 20th century. The election, rather, is an examination of the temperament and self-interest of voters and politicians alike.

In the Great Election, Leacock goes out of his way to portray voters as pliable and politicians—especially Bagshaw and Smith—as manipulative. When Bagshaw arrives in Mariposa, where he spends no more than two months a year, he buys "nails and putty and glass in the hardware store, and harness in the harness shop, and drugs in the drug store and toys in the toy shop, and all the things like that that are needed for a big campaign" (133). Each candidate's promotional banners indicate the angles they will use to harness and ply the voters: "SMITH AND BRITISH ALLEGIANCE" read the Conservative banners, "BAGSHAW AND LIBERTY, BAGSHAW AND PROSPERITY, VOTE FOR THE OLD MISSINABA STANDARD BEARER" read the Liberal banners, and "DRONE AND HONESTY" reads the single Drone banner that the wind carries away into the lake. Even though the election's main issue is trade reciprocity with the United States, never does substantive or informed discussion on reciprocity—or any other issue, for that matter—take place.

Trade reciprocity is initially framed as a zero sum game of resistance or capitulation to the United States. Even though Leacock is a protectionist and imperialist, *Sketches* happily points out the hyperbolic nature of the protectionist side of the debate, claiming that it was a huge election and that on it turned issues of the most tremendous importance,

such as whether or not Mariposa should become part of the United States, and whether the flag that had waved over Tecumseh Township for ten centuries should be trampled under the hoof of an alien invader, and whether Britons should be slaves, and whether the farming class would prove themselves Canadians. (127)

Hyperbole, it is shown, is more suited to capturing public imagination than any substantive, fact-based debate. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the way trade statistics are bandied about. It is blazingly obvious that no Mariposan has the slightest idea what any statistic really means, including the candidates. What everyone does know, however, is that “people lived on figures of this sort, and the man who could remember most of them stood out as a born leader” (142). Further, the bigger the statistic, the better. When Bagshaw delivers a parochial speech on local barley and hay prices, absurdly framed as a speech about the national interest, “it was felt that a Liberal vote in Tecumseh Township was a foregone conclusion” (142). Seeing that Bagshaw’s campaign is “beating us on them statissicks. Ourn ain’t good enough” (142), Smith simply jacks up his numbers to regain momentum.

Smith is equally daft with “statissicks” as he is with the substance of any issue. At best, he finds himself on all sides of almost everything. He gives vapid answers to local reporters, which they spin to their own suiting, influenced no doubt by Smith plying them with alcohol; his position on imperial defence is to defer to the federal party; and he is both for and against trade reciprocity, depending upon the audience. But Smith’s greatest flip-flop comes with his position on temperance and total prohibition. Saloon-keeping Smith running on prohibition is a damning statement about politicians exchanging their principles for power, and his ever-changing position shows just how willingly politicians change their positions to gain power. When Smith brings a prohibitionist speaker to Mariposa, the speaker warns his audience that Bagshaw’s campaign meeting is stocked with whiskey, and “every single man that attends that meeting,—mark my words, every single man,—will drink his fill of the abominable stuff at the expense of the Liberal candidate!” (144). The news empties out the room, and Smith sees the flag fluttering in the

wind. He abandons his manifesto's prohibition plank:

in favour of such a form of restrictive license as should promote temperance while encouraging the manufacture of spirituous liquors, and by a severe regulation of the liquor traffic should place intoxicants only in the hands of those fitted to use them. (144)

Smith's new position ensures that prohibitionists are appeased, and drinkers' concerns are eased, a move typical of the equivocation that marks so much of *Sunshine Sketches*. Recall Griffin's and Bogel's beliefs that satire can allow for the exploration of what it means to take any position whatsoever. Smith in his election campaign and the narrator in general demonstrate how difficult it is to take a firm stance, hence their equivocations. There are loud echoes here of Leacock's admiration for Charles II, particularly his understanding that no opinion is altogether right and no purpose is altogether laudable.

While Josh Smith busies himself equivocating on most every issue, Henry Bagshaw busies himself casting shade on Smith. His conjecture-filled speech pillorying Smith makes for good reading, and Bagshaw would want it repeated. But there's no need to go into that. The speech should "go down in history, and so it will,—ever so far down" (141). Bagshaw's willingness to be un-Mariposan and disparage Smith shows that his long absences from Mariposa have left him out of touch with the community. Conversely, Smith's electoral victory demonstrates that he knows Mariposans better than Bagshaw. That said, Bagshaw's speech should probably be understood above all as Leacock's diagnosis of the toxicity of partisanship. As Leacock says in *My Discovery of the West*, "we need first of all an ardent purpose to make things better. I do not think this can be done by intensifying party politics" (255). In Mariposa, those who are neighbours and friends outside of writ periods turn into polarised partisans during campaigns. Degenerating into polarised camps is hardly an ardent purpose for a community, and Bagshaw's partisan speech does nothing to make things better.

The exception to this whole sorrowful display of ignorance, muckraking, and self-interest is Edward Drone. Of course, Drone is the candidate whom voters reject en masse:

Here and there you might see Edward Drone, the Independent candidate, wandering round from farm to farm in the dust of the political buggies. To each of the farmers he explained that he pledged himself to give no bribes, to spend no money and to offer no jobs, and each one of them gripped him warmly by the hand and showed him the way to the next farm. (141)

Drone's campaign stays consistent with Leacock's satire of Mariposan self-interest. When given the ballot-box option of a moral alternative who wishes to eschew dispensing favour, Mariposans choose to reject it out of narrow self-interest.

Come election day, Drone and Bagshaw are each briefly thought to be winning the polls. Drone is the first reported to be in the lead. The reports cause Mariposans to inundate Drone with requests for favours, jobs, and other sinecures dispensed through public office. Here, Leacock hints at the inescapably corrupting nature of power and politics. Even though Drone insists to his suitors that he "had to consult his colleagues and not merely follow the dictates of his own wishes" (147), already he "was beginning to feel something of what it meant to hold office and there was creeping into his manner the quiet self-importance which is the first sign of conscious power" (146). Perhaps, then, Mariposa's rejection of Drone—the only hope for changing government for the better—may have been the right decision. Why should self-interested Mariposa miss out on government largesse in the short-term, if in the long-term a return to the status quo is inevitable? For Mariposa, there really is no alternative. Nevertheless, Drone's self-importance is short lived. Bagshaw is soon reported to be in the lead, sparked by not much more than a report of him taking the second concession poll with six votes to two for Smith. The report of a four-vote lead in one poll triggers a similar rush of public displays of support for Bagshaw.

Knowing that most voters are holding back their ballots until they have a good feeling of who is going to win, Smith keeps his election-day machine at bay until the final hour of voting. When the hour arrives, Smith sends his supporters out to vote "and keep on voting till they make

you quit" (147). Meanwhile, he has fraudulent telegrams sent throughout the riding suggesting that Smith is carrying other polls. The result is a last-minute bandwagon-style stampede to the polls. Voters want to be on the winning side and thus be on the receiving end of patronage.

With Smith the victor, Mariposans surround him to pledge their affinity and loyalty. Even Bagshaw's volunteers Golgotha Gingham, Alf Trelawney, and Jefferson Thorpe confess to Smith their long-held misgivings about supporting Bagshaw. Leacock uses this opportunity to paint women—who had yet to fully achieve the right to vote—as equally duplicitous as men. "To think that Mrs. Gingham and Mrs. Trelawney and Mrs. Thorpe had known all about this for six months and kept quiet about it!" (149), gripes the narrator. "I think there were a good many Mrs. Ginghams in the country. It is merely another proof that no woman is fit for politics" (149). *Sketches'* unstable irony makes determinations about this jab debatable. No doubt any suggestion that women are unfit for politics because they act with equivalence to men is patently absurd, especially from a classic liberal perspective. Yet, Leacock's classic liberalism is both coloured by and at times tainted by his conservatism, suggesting Leacock is serious in this remark: as but one example, in *Elements of Political Science* he claims that women being "as well qualified as men" to vote is "still a debatable point" (227). Regardless of whether or not there is ironic intention in this jab, that wives were acting with duplicity equivalent to their husbands echoes Leacock's belief that while the suffrage movement is inevitable, very little about politics will change once women gain the right to vote ("The Woman Question" 56-57).

In the end, the Great Election is nothing more than a display of ignorance and self-interest, on *everyone's* behalf. Facts are thrown aside, principles are tossed out the window, reputations are besmirched, and relationships are trashed, all in a blind quest for power and patronage. Yet, the ends does not justify the means. Government will not change for the better, even though Leacock's preferred candidate proves victorious. Henry Bagshaw vanished from Mariposa once elected, and it is clear that Josh Smith will do the same. Upon victory, "Mr. Smith, of course, said nothing. He didn't have to,—not for four years,—and he knew it" (150).

Just as Kernan says about satire and change, “constant movement without change forms the basis of satire, and while we may be only half aware of the pattern as we read, it, more than any other element, creates the tone of pessimism inherent in the genre” (33). The Great Election does nothing more than leave Mariposa in a state of political irresolution, thus creating a lingering tone of pessimism about democracy’s ability to actualise substantial change.

Curiously, Leacock’s attack on all of democracy’s players in *Sunshine Sketches* works in an unseen but powerful anti-revolutionary way, with specific regard to socialist revolution. Leacock’s rejection of socialism is largely due to its program of democratic control of all realms of society. But democracy, as *Sketches* shows, is unable to exclusively serve public interest, so long as its individual human actors remain self-interested. As Leacock says about socialism in *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*,

Let anyone conversant with modern democracy as it is,—not as its founders dreamed of it,—picture to himself the operation of a system whereby anything and everything is controlled by elected officials, from whom there is no escape, outside of whom is no livelihood and to whom all men must bow! Democracy, let us grant it, is the best system of government as yet operative in this world of sin. Beside autocratic kingship it shines with a white light; it is obviously the portal of the future. But we know it now too well to idealize its merits. (111)

Sunshine Sketches does not idealise democracy’s merits, but rather it satirically blows apart the ideal of democracy. Democracy in *Sketches* is an exercise that channels the worst of self-interest. In this sense, Leacock is not just critiquing how the west is governed. He is also undermining the democratic structure of a socialist order.

Social Solidarity and Collective Action: So Much for Revolution

Just like *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* serves as an alternative-less critique. *Sketches* picks at the economic and especially the political frame that holds Mariposa together, but as Francis Zichy says, “with all its faults the world of

Mariposa is, or was, the best world after all” (52). Despite its shortcomings, politically and economically, Leacock’s Mariposa still works. Nowhere in *Sketches* is there something better than liberal, market-based democracy for its self-interested actors to revolve into.

Curiously, what ultimately makes Mariposa work so well is not so much its unobstructed liberal freedom, but rather the interventions placed on its freedom. Just as often as Josh Smith freely exploits self-interest, Smith intervenes in freedom to keep liberalism from harming the community. He fights the vocal minority forces of prohibition to keep liquor flowing. He saves both his clerk Billy and the Thorpes from financial catastrophe in the Cuban plantation scheme. And most notably, with the help of Judge Pepperleigh’s judicial intervention, he keeps the church—an institution that Leacock believes forms the basis of society’s moral code—in Mariposan hands. These interventions reflect how Leacock knows full-well that the classic economists are wrong to suggest that “the only rule of the game needed was to let things alone” (“What is Left” 43). Yet, the successful interventions in Mariposa, with the exception of Judge Pepperleigh’s actions, take place absent the state. For that matter, Mariposa does not even have a civic government. The lack of successful government intervention in Mariposa is perfectly consistent with Leacock’s conservative belief that society must be allowed significant control outside the immediate control of the state (*Unsolved Riddle* 142). Mariposa is primarily in individual hands, not collective state hands.

The success of intervention to correct liberalism’s shortcomings in Mariposa lends credence to Leacock’s observation in *Our Heritage of Liberty* that “whether this [liberal system] is really a doctrine of liberty, or a rather different doctrine of social solidarity, or collective action, is not so certain” (49). *Sketches* reveals that unrestrained liberalism alone cannot hold together a society, making social solidarity and collective action vital to keep its liberal system afloat. Could Mariposa still function had the church fallen to pecuniary interests, the Thorpes and Billy been left bankrupted, or liquor been taken away? Most likely not. Had these situations been allowed to unfold without restraint, the revolutionary rumblings of the Peter Pupkins of

Mariposa would be given oxygen. Just as Maynard Mack says in *The Muse of Satire*, satire often comes “from the angle of social solidarity.... assert[ing] the validity and necessity of norms, systemic values, and meanings” (84). In this sense, Leacock’s Mariposa is Leacock’s ideal: western society’s already-existent classic liberal system, where social solidarity and collective action buttress liberalism’s flaws.

Mariposa may be Leacock’s ideal, but any suggestion that he is prescribing an attainable ideological ideal and agency with Mariposa is destroyed by *Sketches*’ closing. Keeping with Dustin Griffin’s point that satire’s prescriptive elements “do not serve as hortatory models or as blueprints for social engineers; instead, they teasingly hold up an ideal that cannot be obtained” (61), Leacock makes it clear that Mariposa is unattainable in an age of industrialisation and urbanisation. In the final sketch, “L’Envoi,” the book’s closing cry of “Mariposa! Mariposa!” is left to “[grow] fainter and fainter in our ears, and we are sitting here again in the leather chairs of the Mausoleum Club, talking of the little town in the Sunshine that we once knew” (156). Whatever higher ideals can be found in the town we once knew—a town, it cannot be missed, that ultimately found itself in an electoral orgy of ignorance and self-interest—are no longer possible. Mariposa’s unattainability is *Sketches*’ final piece of satirical irresolution. Just as there is no ideological alternative in *Sunshine Sketches*, Mariposa itself is not meant to serve as an tangential reorganisation of classic liberal society.

In the end, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* largely does what satire is said to do. It critiques, but fails to offer an articulated alternative to its critique. The very fact that Mariposa’s underlying anchor is liberal democracy reinforces Feinberg’s point that satire “cannot have any great influence, for its implied alternative is not very different from what it is criticizing” (ITS 259). *Sunshine Sketches* supports the existent western liberal democratic system of government; *Sunshine Sketches* does not spell out a reasonable alternative to this system of government; and *Sunshine Sketches* discounts any revolutionary alternatives to this system of government. There can be no doubt that *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is not a revolutionary book.

Chapter Six: Looking Backward

More than a century has passed since Stephen Leacock penned *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*. Nowhere else than these books did Leacock better articulate “the unending conflict between business and politics, between the private gain and the public good, [that] has been for two generations the despair of modern democracy” (*Unsolved Riddle* 114). Yet, as pervasive as his writing has been—Leacock was the English-speaking world’s best-selling humourist from about 1910-1925 (Lynch “From Serial to Book” 96)—with perhaps the exception of Irish independence, no country in the English-speaking world has fallen to an “effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities” (Goldstone 142). Put more plainly, there has been no revolution. *Por ahora*. Even though Robert C. Elliott is correct to contend that satire “eats its way in implication through the most powerful-seeming structures” (274), as Dustin Griffin observes, “the social and political order... is more resistant to whatever power satire possesses than Elliott and others urged thirty years ago” (159). The structures of western liberal democracy have been nibbled at, but they are still standing. This is true of Leacock’s time, and it is true in the years that have passed since.

Of course, asking any single book or even any single literary mode or genre to spawn a revolution is a tall order. But who can deny that satire in general and Leacock’s works in particular are poor conduits of revolution? Satire’s inability to guide revolution is due in some part to Feinberg’s point that satire’s “implied alternative is not very different from what it is criticizing” (*ITS* 259). In Leacock’s case, he believes that “on the whole, the rule [of western liberal systems] is not bad: it is free at least from the arrogance of caste and the power of hereditary aristocracy that disfigures still the governments of the older world” (“Tyranny of Prohibition” 64). Leacock is not interested in ideologically changing the western liberal order, and his satire reflects that.

However, satire's inability to effect change goes beyond Feinberg's beliefs about implied alternatives. Just as the intersection of the theory of satire with the theory of revolution suggests, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* critique the existent system of government, but neither book proposes an alternative to the system. There is no revolutionary ideal, and there is no revolutionary agency accompanying the critique. Critique without ideal and agency, quite simply, lacks the ideological guidance to revolve into something new. Under the pen of Stephen Leacock, western liberal democracy is safe.

Yet, concluding that satire does *nothing* is too sweeping. It could be said that Leacock's critique is meant to preserve western institutions, not eat through them. Leacock's diagnosis of the need for vigilance in a democracy would suggest that preservation is one of Leacock's purposes in writing such books:

The difficulty has been that the world, especially the English-speaking world of Britain and America, too quickly accepted democracy, liberty and equality, as a closed chapter of history, a permanent advance from which no retrogression need be feared. We did not realize that for these great things there is a price to be paid, a constant vigilance which is the price of liberty and, for democracy, the constant presence of the inspiration which first inspired it. Without vigilance liberty is suppressed. Without inspiration democracy is just a form, an empty and deserted house for thieves to meet in. (*Heritage* 56-57)

If Leacock's satire is out to encourage vigilance, it is completely consistent with Ruben Quintero's belief that the satirist is a watchdog. Quintero tells us that "no one expects a watchdog to do the double duty of alarming others that the barn is on fire and of putting out the blaze. Satirists, that is, rouse us to put out the fire" (4). We may have been roused, but we have not put out the flames. Every democratic fire in *Sketches* and *Adventures* remains either burning or healthily smouldering today.

Is the democracy of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* or *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* much different than democracy today? Has the graft of Mayor McGrath come to an

end? Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney secretly accepting cash-stuffed envelopes from German lobbyist Karlheinz Schreiber (Canada 33) tells us that the answer is no. Have the suspicious land deals of Alderman Schwarzmantel or Mr. Furlong ceased to be? Former Saskatchewan Economy Minister Bill Boyd's threat of expropriation to buy nuns' land, then paying nearly twelve times the price for party supporters' neighbouring land (Leo) tells us that the answer is no. Have Lucullus Fyshe and Mayor McGrath's deals with sworn enemies to keep power stopped? Former Liberal cabinet minister David Emerson's appointment to the Harper government's cabinet two weeks after proclaiming himself "Stephen Harper's worst nightmare" (Akin A11) tells us that the answer is no. Has the simplistic election sloganeering in Plutoria or Mariposa been replaced by substantive policy debate? Former Prime Minister "Kim!" Campbell's infamous statement in the 1993 general election that "an election is no time to discuss serious issues" (Ferreira) tells us that the answer is no. Have plutocrats lost their ability to get the public policies they want? Finance Minister Bill Morneau's 2016 repeal of nearly a billion dollars in student tax credits (Fraser) all while leaving the capital gains exemption for the rich untouched tells us that the answer is no. Have reporters and media outlets eschewed partisan bias? Mike Duffy's appointment to the senate as a Conservative only three months after using his daily CTV News show to help sink the 2008 Liberal campaign ("CTV broke ethics code") tells us that the answer is no. Have Josh Smith's fraudulent election-day communications come to a halt? Conservative staffer Michael Sona's jail sentence for orchestrating misleading robocalls on election day 2011 (Payton) tells us that the answer is no. And this is just the beginning. Echoes of Mrs. Buncomhearst's sweeping claim that she represents "50,000 women voters in this city" are heard in the National Organization of Women's claim to protect the rights of "all women" (About). Judge Pepperleighs of all stripes are still being accused of politicising the courtroom. Physical intimidation may not be commonplace during elections, but social media mobbing is the norm. The list goes on...

The seeming inability of Leacock's satire to effect systemic political change—especially

change of the revolutionary variety—is a trait that appears to have been carried into contemporary satire. Today’s satire is omnipresent and hyper-topical. From satirical news websites to relentlessly political cable and late-night television programs, it quickly reacts to daily political events and, in doing so, often contributes to discussions about these events. In fact, contemporary political satire has become a primary source for learning about and understanding the present state of the world. As Sophia McClellan and Remy Maisel point out in *Is Satire Saving Our Nation?*, “contemporary satire has played a central role in shaping public debates and in fostering productive engagement with society” (7). Productive political engagement is a good thing, but contemporary satire’s rush to cast judgment on the political malfeasance of the day is rarely accompanied by a truly *revolutionary* prescription for change. This should come as no surprise. Keeping with Theda Skocpol’s observation about the literati being dependent upon and intertwined with the ruling elite (61), the bulk of contemporary political satire is ultimately the product of global media corporations. These corporations, as media historian and theorist Robert McChesney has amply proven, are deeply embedded elements of the ruling structures of power (see, for example, *The Political Economy of Media*). While these corporations’ satirical products may be seen as radical or subversive, it is wise to put such views through the lens of Leonard Feinberg’s stance on satirical radicalness:

Because every society offers innumerable opportunities for criticism, the satirist is more likely to seem liberal or radical than conservative or reactionary. In practice, however, few satirists have been sufficiently courageous, or sufficiently radical, to attack the basic economic or political organization of their society. (TS 253-54)

As products of the ruling structure, how radical can contemporary political satire be?

Nevertheless, what appears to be true about satire today may be demonstrably false tomorrow. The internet’s end-run around traditional gatekeepers of mass communication has allowed green shoots of independent satire rooted in more radical polities to sprout. Indigenous satirical news sites *The Walking Eagle News* and *The Feather* nicely illustrate this new growth.

However, as *The Feather*'s founder Ryan Moccasin believes, "at the end of the day, satirical news is helping people find laughter through all the madness" (qtd. in "Saskatoon Satire Site"). It appears that even in communities that have largely existed outside the established structures of power, there are still open questions about how much change satire can accomplish.

Ryan Moccasin's belief about satire's use as a therapeutic is consistent with Stephen Leacock's view that humour seldom is a corrective. For Leacock, the laughter it generates should function as "a relief from pain... a consolation against the shortcomings of life itself" (*Humor and Humanity* 60). These words intersect with Feinberg's belief that despite satire's aesthetic appeal, nothing will actually be done with it:

One of the reasons why we get more pleasure from satire than from a sermon, even when the satire is making the exact same point as the sermon, is that we have an uncomfortable feeling that the minister expects us to do something about it. We enjoy the satire because we know that nobody really expects us to do anything about it, and that we have no real intention of ever doing anything about it. It may not be the moral reaction, but for most human beings it is the reaction. (*ITS* 7)

Satire, if viewed in this therapeutic way, does not rouse us into action. Rather, it rouses us to laugh and let the fires burn.

Even if Leacock is resigned about the possibilities of creating change in the present—a position largely consistent with his conservative outlook—there may be a slow heuristic purpose to satire, that can lead society to eventual improvement. Leacock was a teacher, after all. Hermann Real reminds us that "as a teacher, [the satirist] also knows that in order to achieve his goal, 'methods of indirection' are likely to be more successful than frontal assaults" (17). Viewing satire as a method of indirection is compatible with satire's absent prescription of ideal and agency. To this point, in "The Revision of Democracy," Leacock discusses how the problems of democracy will not be solved by coercion or prescription. Rather, Leacock believes the problems will be solved once society realises on its own that democracy is flawed:

as soon as the mass of the people come to see that what is needed is honest government, efficient government, technical government, entrusted to people who make it their work in life, the change will come itself. We cannot frame it first, like an American party platform. First must come the “ideal,” then as a consequence the fact, and last of all the legislation. (15)

The belief that people cannot be made good by legislation is a long-standing tenet of conservative thought. Individuals must each come to their own conclusions about what constitutes goodness and honesty, and only then will change manifest itself. Maybe satire such as Leacock’s has a long-term heuristic purpose, yet to be achieved.

Regardless of whether or not satire is a preserver, a comforter, or a long-term heuristic tool, satire—or at least Stephen Leacock’s satire—is not revolutionary. The problems of democracy that Leacock diagnoses in *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich and Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* still remain. Satirical critiques such as Leacock’s do not sketch out utopias, but rather expose what appear to be intractable human conditions. In the words of British Conservative Member of Parliament Jacob Rees-Mogg, “conservatives understand human nature as it is, not as it might have been hoped for in the Garden of Eden” (3:26-32). With views like this, it is little wonder that most satirists are conservatives.



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