SUNSHINE SKETCHES: MARIPOSA VERSUS MR. SMITH

Gerald Lynch

One of the principal concerns of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is perception, and the primary subject of the book's perception is Mariposa.[1] Mariposa is the typical Canadian town between city and wilderness; populated with colourful individuals, it is Leacock's qualified ideal of an interdependent community. Mariposa is the place from which many affluent city-dwellers migrated, the community which they have partly forgotten, and the "home" towards which they nostalgically yearn. Mariposa is the past, at once individual and collective. And Mariposa is the temporary location of "JOS. SMITH, PROP."

The focus of the present study is a much-needed intensive analysis of the opposition between Mariposa and Mr. Josh Smith. Although many of Leacock's critics have suggested that Josh Smith plays a central role in the *Sketches*, none has recognized that the primary tension in Leacock's masterpiece arises from the opposition between the individualist Smith and the community. Critical studies of the *Sketches*, from Desmond Pacey's early analysis to recent comparative studies, have shown that this "minor masterpiece" too readily lends itself to personal response, selective analysis, and reductionist conclusions.[2] The present analysis will of course deal also with those aspects of *Sunshine Sketches* already mentioned, particularly with the many connotations and implications of "Mariposa." Because this paper argues that the *Sketches* is a qualified affirmation of Mariposa in contrast to Mr. Josh Smith, it will limit itself to the first three and the last two sketches. The following analysis will show, moreover, that *Sunshine Sketches* is a more highly organized and complex work than has hitherto been convincingly demonstrated.

1. *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (Toronto: Bell and Cockburn; London: John Lane, 1912). Page numbers hereafter given in text.
2. See Desmond Pacey, "Leacock as a Satirist," *Queen's Quarterly*, 58 (Summer 1951), 208-19, and Donald Cameron, *Faces of Leacock* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967), p. 135, who refers to assessment that *Sunshine Sketches* is a "minor masterpiece."

* I am grateful to D.M.R. Bentley and J.M. Zezulka for their advice on an earlier version of this essay.

Before embarking on an analysis of Josh Smith's relation to Mariposa, a few words must be said on the important matter of perspective. Peacock's preface to the *Sketches,* the narrator of the sketches proper, and the narrator of "L'Envoi. The Train to Mariposa" (hereafter called the Envoi narrator) persistently reveal an interest bordering on obsession with the reader's perspective on and knowledge of "Mariposa." This interest arises before the reader is permitted to enter fully into "the present work" (xi), and it persists until the auditor of "L'Envoi" is allowed figuratively to leave "such a book as the present one" (225). A parallel concern with the reader's response to *Sunshine Sketches* as fiction is announced when the prefacer disdainfully disclaims that he is "trying to do anything so ridiculously easy as writing about a real place and real people" (xi). With this disclaimer, the prefacer not only forestalls legal suits for libel, but he also implicitly opposes the relative merits of an imaginative, romantic literature to those of a more documentary realism. Taking over from the prefacer, the narrator of the sketches begins his first story with the doubly doubting remark, "I don't know whether you know Mariposa" (1), and thereby reveals his intention of introducing "you" to Mariposa by showing you around the town (almost as if he were a tour guide). Finally, the Envoi narrator begins his second sentence, "Strange that you did not know it . . ." (225). Five times within the space of the following five short paragraphs, the Envoi narrator presumes upon what his auditor either "knows" or "knew." The Envoi narrator's closing remarks, the last words of the *Sketches,* refer to "the little Town in the Sunshine that once we knew" (264), thus emphasizing that his main concern, evident throughout "L'Envoi," is with memory and imagination in so far as these contribute to self-knowledge. As an imaginative work of fiction, *Sunshine Sketches* enacts that which so concerns its 'narrators': a correct perception of "Mariposa" which is to be achieved by means of sight, knowledge, memory, and imagination.

As a book dealing so insistently with perspective on and knowledge of Mariposa, *Sunshine Sketches* is best approached on its own terms as a treatment of the incongruities between appearances and reality, or illusion and reality. More precisely, the book is a humorous treatment of characters, actions, and themes which illustrate the incongruity between appearances and reality, aspiration and achievement, intention and realization. The humour of the *Sketches* is in most instances self-evident, and it is not the intention of this essay to analyze the book's humour in the sense of what is 'funny'. Because Leacock treats his subjects humourously, ironically, and satirically, much of the tension and many of the questions which arise from the incongruity between appearances and reality must remain unresolved.[3]

3. *Cf.* Claude Bissell, "Haliburton, Leacock and the American Humorous Tradition," *Canadian Literature,* 39 (Winter 1969), 18-19, and Cameron, *Faces of Leacock,* p. 17.

Leacock's irony does not simply reveal to the reader the truth of the opposite to what is stated. (It may be observed that the irony of *Arcadian Adventures* more clearly conforms to this definition of dramatic irony.) Leacock accepts the possibility of truth in both appearances and reality. His insistently ironic attitude implies, in essence, the impossibility of discovering simple truth and reveals the Leacock who admired Charles II because the king saw "things as they are" and knew "that no opinion is altogether right, no purpose altogether laudable, and no calamity altogether deplorable."[4] As will be seen, there are in the *Sketches* repeated movements of appearances towards reality, followed by a falling back.[5] Moreover, there is repeated manipulation of appearances by the prefacer, by the narrator of the sketches, by the Envoi narrator, and by characters in the sketches. In "L'Envoi," Mariposa and *Sunshine Sketches* themselves recede into the realms of illusion, the illusions of memory and literature. When appearances are manipulated by Leacock or his narrators, the result is an ironic truth or insight of the equivocal kind touched upon above. When appearances are exploited by Josh Smith, the product is self-enrichment at the expense of, and frequently to the diminution of, Mariposans. When, on the other hand, the manipulator is an indigenous Mariposan such as Judge Pepperleigh in his 'fore-ordination' of the Pupkin-Pepperleigh romance, the result is humanly and communally beneficial. In short, *Sunshine Sketches* is Leacock's humorous anatomy of the useful illusions by which Mariposans live, whereas the later (1914) *Arcadian Adventures With the Idle Rich* is a dissection of the illusory nature of dehumanizing reality in "the City." The difference between Mariposa and Plutoria is not so much quantitative as it is qualitative.[6] Generally, the illusions of Mariposa sustain a commendable community (though they allow also for Josh Smith's manipulative machinations): the accepted realities of Plutoria "weigh on the other side of the scale."[7] In both books, illusions serve good and evil purposes; in both books, images of transformation and transmutation suggest that magic — a favourite image of Leacock's — can be either white or black.

This final point concerns the utilization of the past, of memory and imagination. "L'Envoi. The Train to Mariposa" finally and firmly underscores the importance of maintaining an enlightened response to

4. Leacock, *Essays and Literature Studies* (London: John Lane, 1916), p. 225.
5. *Cf.* Cameron, p. 136, who also notes these movements in the *Sketches,* although the context of his discussion and his conclusions differs from those of the present study.
6. *Cf.* Douglas Spettigue, "A Partisan Reading of Leacock," *The Literary Half-Yearly,* 13 (July 1972), 173, who argues that the difference between Mariposa and Plutoria is essentially quantitative, that the former is Canadian, the latter American, and that Leacock, in a manner similar to F. P. Grove in his *A Search for America* (1927), preferred Mariposa because "here at least the inevitable evolutionary development has not yet progressed so far."
7. *Essays and Literary Studies,* p. 50; here, Leacock is contrasting "the new moral code. . . the simple worship of success," to "the morality which . . . was essentially altruisic."

"Mariposa" in order properly to incorporate its values into the present. *Sunshine Sketches* demonstrates that Leacock, whose writings emerge from a centre which is the confluence of the two traditions of humanism and nineteenth-century Toryism, believes that such an appreciation of the past is necessary to a full life, a life which develops organically rather than one which is radically cut off from its roots. By means of its imaginative humorous vision, *Sunshine Sketches* enacts that which the Envoi narrator leads his auditor to attempt — a return to Mariposa via the train which is the book itself, a distillation and embodiment of its virtues with an honest appraisal of its faults. There is, of course, shadow as well as sunshine in Leacock's portrayal of the little town. As shrewd and skeptical as he was humane and idealistic, Leacock did not write a wholly laudatory regional idyll.

It will prove rewarding at this point to examine further the structure of *Sunshine Sketches* as it reveals thematic concerns and to attempt to distinguish the three narrative voices of the book with respect to their functions.

I

It would be difficult not to notice that the sketches of *Sunshine Sketches* are framed by Leacock's preface and "L'Envoi." As has been suggested, the preface is concerned with the reader's perspective on the book itself, "L'Envoi" with the reader's/auditor's knowledge of Mariposa in imaginative retrospect. (It should be noted that *Arcadian Adventures* possesses neither preface nor postscript — the implication being that the "affection" which the prefacer evinces for Mariposa and the country which 'inspired' the book [xii] is lacking in the case of Plutoria.) The sketches proper can be grouped into five thematic sections with respect to those aspects of Mariposan life of which they treat: 1) sketches one and two, concerning Josh Smith and Jeff Thorpe respectively, deal primarily with business, the first including a crucial reference to and anticipation of the political concerns of the last two sketches; 2) sketch three portrays in microcosm the social life of Mariposa aboard the Mariposa Belle; 3) sketches four through six deal with the religious dimension to life in the town; 4) sketches seven through nine centre their concern on romance, love, marriage and family; and 5) sketches ten and eleven depict the political life of Mariposans and the practices of their candidates for the national legislature.

Viewed thus in terms of its structure, the two-sketch business and political portions of *Sunshine Sketches* can be seen to contain the social, religious and romantic concerns of the book. This is what might be expected in the fiction of a political-economist, and the exigencies of such a writer's priorities offer a reason why the social-microcosm sketch, "The Marine Excursion," is not the first sketch, as might be expected. In terms

of structure, the first and last two sketches can be understood to function as a kind of frame within a frame. Considered consecutively, *Sunshine Sketches* moves from the authorial concerns of its preface to business (and political) matters, through the social and religious dimensions, to love and marriage, then outward to the political issues and the ambiguous finality of "L'Envoi's" Mausoleum Club. The last sketch, "The Candidacy of Mr. Smith," looks outward to a city (Ottawa), as the Mariposans are forever looking ambivalently toward "the City." The structure of the book mirrors the priorities of life within the town and, in a pragmatic sense, the priorities of its author — the realities of business and politics first and last, and at the heart of the book what may be called the spiritual realities of religion and love.

Excepting for the moment "The Marine Excursion" and the redemptive three-sketch Pupkin-Pepperleigh romance, *Sunshine Sketches* deals humorously with those three taboos of polite conversation: business, religion, and politics. Josh Smith is central to all three in Mariposa and is peripheral only to the love interest. Smith, the principal character of the first and last sketches, can be conceived as straddling the Mariposans, as it were, in a manner similar to his bestriding the stubborn beam of the Rev. Drone's burning driving shed (141). With regard to the practical aspects of Mariposan life, *Sunshine Sketches* is Smith's book; with respect to the heart of the community, it is Peter Pupkin's and Zena Pepperleigh's. Ralph Curry has written that Leacock had intended the Pupkin-Pepperleigh romance to be "the central theme to unify" the *Sketches.*[8] Although the love story is certainly central, it does not serve as a unifying device. Quite possibly it was the attraction of Smith, the hard-nosed realist, which seduced the worldly Leacock away from his intended plans for the romance. For Smith is, as will be shown, a self-serving manipulator of appearances and illusions equal to his author. Only the prefacer and the narrator precede the looming figure of JOS. SMITH, PROP. Only the Envoi narrator figures after Smith's ominously silent appearance on the victory platform. Without the love story and "L'Envoi," *Sunshine Sketches* would of course be a drastically different book — even more Smith's book and less reflective of its author's Tory-humanism and romantic idealism.

Smith remains, nonetheless, the *Sketches'* most convincing argument for a unity of plot. He moves through this time-suspended work seemingly knitting together by his actions and ambitions the frequently fraying fabric of Mariposan life: he purchases eggs from Jeff Thorpe's "woman' and thereby assists financially the bankrupt barber; he "saves" the Mariposa Belle; he burns down the church for the redemptive insurance money; and by championing the cause of protectionism against reciprocity with the United States, Smith by ironic extension saves "the Empire." Of course,

8. *Stephen Leacock: Humorist and Humanist* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), p. 108.

Smith acts in every instance for patently selfish reasons. He moves into Mariposa, exploits its deluded residents, and by the last sketch is on his way out. *Sunshine Sketches* is not, however, a novel, an observation which is often uncritically lamented by Leacock's critics.[9] Only by torturing such accepted definitions as character development and plot can it be claimed that Leacock's superb series of sketches is a novel, or a 'proto-novel,' or something which reveals only the critic's lack of appreciation for the linked series of stories. Like the best story cycles (Joyce's *Dubliners* and Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* for example), *Sunshine Sketches* possesses thematic unity and, as has been shown, an underlying structure which substantiate the prefacer's architectonic claim that such humorous productions as "the present work" are an "arduous contrivance" (xi). And like the best linked series of stories, *Sunshine Sketches* is arguably the first published work to conclude wih a final story, "L'Envoi," which acts as a peroration to the book, restating its central theme in a refrain-like manner, and, in effect, demanding a rereading and re-evaluation of the entire series. The prefacer's use of "contrivance" should alert the reader of *Sunshine Sketches* that "the present work" may be something more than a collection of simply sunny and unconnected "sketches." (It may be noted further that the original edition of the *Sketches,* unlike the popular New Canadian Library edition, designates each "sketch" a "chapter.")

Authorial contrivance first manifests itself in Leacock's preface, wherein he thinks it advantageous to introduce "his work' by introducing himself (vii). Like his narrator, who will insist that the reader learn to see Mariposa properly before proceeding to meet Josh Smith, Leacock contrives that the reader become acquainted with the author's version of himself before proceeding to what he insists is imaginative fiction. The prefacer portrays himself in terms that are by turns equally boastful and self-effacing. In fact, his thumbnail autobiography is as charming as is his narrator's portrayal of Mariposa, as charming and as incongruous. (This is not to say that the biographical details of the preface are inaccurate, only that the ironic tone in which they are related establishes an immediate identification between Leacock and Mariposa.) The prefacer ironically inflates his own importance, thinking it "extremely likely" that there might have been a "particular conjunction of the planets" at the time of his birth (vii). The narrator of the sketches tends also to employ mock-heroic, inflated comparisons, as is evidenced in his opening description of Mariposa (1-3). And like the narrator's Mariposa, which occupies a medial position

9. See the following: Pelham Edgar, "Stephen Leacock," *Queen's Quarterly,* 53, No. 2 (1947), 181-82; Robertson Davies, "Stephen Leacock," in *Our Living Tradition,* First Series, ed. Claude Bissell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 136; Donald Cameron, *Faces of Leacock,* p. 138; Cameron has actually published an article entitled "Stephen Leacock: The Novelist Who Never Was," *Dalhousie Review,* 46 (Spring 1966), 15-28.

between city and wilderness, the Leacock of the preface feels himself to be "singularly fortunate" in his position as university professor because it provides a middle ground of a kind: "the emolument is so high as to place me distinctly above the policemen, postmen, street-car conductors, and other salaried officials of the neighborhood, while I am able to mix with the poorer of the business men of the city on terms of something like equality" (ix). This process of ironic inflation and deflation is a technique shared — if not overworked — by the narrator of the sketches. On a larger scale, it is a method of plot development which Paul Fussell, Jr., has identified as "a pervasive ironic pattern of literary action" in the latter half of the eighteenth century — "the pattern of comic reversal."[10] The psychological and metaphoric implications of Fussell's observations are especially relevant to such sketches as "The Whirlwind Campaign" and "The Beacon on the Hill." For present purposes, it is sufficient to observe that Leacock's primary rhetorical device—ironic reversal, deflation, undercutting — is magnified in the larger movements of his plots and is practiced equally by his narrators.

Before the prefacer will relinquish the reader to the adeptly ironic and overly-concerned narrator of the sketches, he must deny that either Mariposa or its inhabitants are real or based on living individuals. Leacock's remarks in this instance anticipate his defence of Charles Dickens' method of characterization; namely, his claim that caricature and selective (or metonymous) realism are the surest means of achieving universality, a quality which Leacock understood to be one of the chief purposes of literary art.[11] The prefacer insists that not only Mariposa but "the Reverend Mr. Drone, . . . Mullins and Bagshaw and Judge Pepperleigh and the rest" are compilations or types. But it is the prefacer's unapologetic anticipation of Josh Smith which is of especial interest. The remarks occur emphatically last in the comments about the book's characters:

> As for Mr. Smith, with his two hundred and eighty pounds, his hoarse voice, his loud check suit, his diamonds, the roughness of his address and the goodness of his heart — all of this is known by everybody to be a necessary and universal adjunct of the hotel business. (xii).

Certainly Smith learns in the first sketch that a good heart is an asset to the hotel *business.* As the narrator notes following an instance of Smith's self-enriching philanthropy, "Mr. Smith learned, if he had not already suspected it, the blessedness of giving" (21).

In its subtle anticipation of the political concerns of the last two sketches, the first sketch develops most purposefully towards Smith's further

10. Paul Fussell, Jr., "The Eighteenth-Century Traveller as Representatve Man," in *Literature as a Mode of Travel,* ed. Warner G. Rice, (New York: The New York Public Library, 1963), p. 63.
11. See *Essays and Literary Studies,* pp. 159-88.

realization "that the hotel business formed the natural and proper threshold of the national legislature" (34). Smith progresses from a political apprenticeship of sorts in the first sketch to his election victory in the last. In a limited sense, this is plot and character development. Smith develops by manipulating the illusions of grandeur which define life in Mariposa and allow its citizens to be victimized by his adroit handling of appearances. The prefacer's comment on Smith's good heart as it relates to the hotel business should alert the reader to be wary of Smith. (Indeed, in the subtlety of its irony, the prefacer's seemingly innocuous statement should suggest further to the reader that he be wary of appearances in general.) Unguarded readings of the prefacer's comment on Smith have misled many critics to view him as a commendable character, even to regard him, in William H. Magee's opinion, as "the amiable representative of the small town at its best."[12] With all due respect to Magee, nothing could be more wrong. If Mariposa possesses an amiable representative; that role is most fittingly filled by Judge Pepperleigh, Peter Pupkin, or the narrator himself.

Because the preface, the sketches, and "L'Envoi" serve different, though certainly related, purposes, it is necessary to distinguish further the three voices of *Sunshine Sketches:* the prefacer who is nominally Leacock; the narrator of the sketches who is changeable, yet always identifiable as himself, and who is omniscient at times and at other times is limited to a witnessing "I"; and the Envoi narrator, who seems to be neither the prefacer nor the narrator. It would be unwise, however, to push too far these distinctions. Leacock had no compunctions about writing that "Dickens, who could break all the rules of art, as Napoleon broke all the rules of battle, would narrate through a character and still be talking as Charles Dickens," and that *Bleak House's* Esther Summerson "saves her face by now and again using the namby-pamby 'nice' language of Victorian women, but most of the time she is Charles Dickens."[13] Leacock's practice in many of his humorous pieces further complicates this problem of author and narrator. Often his narrator is indistinguishable from Leacock, while in other instances he is evidently an un-Leacockian persona, and yet in the majority of pieces the narrator is and is not like his author. Even when the reader brings a thorough knowledge of Leacock and his nonfiction to bear on the task, discrimination frequently remains elusive. Yet the three voices of *Sunshine Sketches* do reveal different concerns, and a

12. "Stephen Leacock, Local Colourist," *Canadian Literature,* 39 (Winter 1969), 38; in a later essay, Magee, "Genial Humour in Stephen Leacock," *Dalhousie Review,* 56 (Summer 1976), 277-78, praises Smith for keeping the caff open and terms Smith's burning down of Dean Drone's church a "curious altruism." For other mistaken appraisals of Smith, see Pacey, "Leacock as a Satirist," 213; Cameron, *Faces of Leacock,* p. 127; and J. Kushner and R. D. Macdonald, "Leacock: Economist/Satirist in *Arcadian Adventures* and *Sunshine Sketches,*" *Dalhousie Review,* 56 (Autumn 1976), 506.

13. Leacock, *Humour and Humanity* (London: John Lane, 1937), p. 127.

number of pertinent comparisons can be noted, though sharply drawn characterizations of the 'narrators' must remain beyond realization.

The fact that the prefacer is aware of "about seventy or eighty" towns like Mariposa, while the narrator is aware only of a "dozen towns just like it," suggests that the narrator's experience is more limited than is his author's. The narrator begins by wondering whether the reader knows Mariposa, whereas the Envoi narrator is confident that his auditor knows Mariposa, or — since his auditor came from Mariposa — that he once knew it. The Envoi narrator is consistently omniscient, and, though he knows Mariposa, he may or may not have come from what is by "L'Envoi," for all intents and purposes, a symbolic "Mariposa." The narrator of the sketches is a citizen of Mariposa who, for all the reader can induce, remains *in* Mariposa, at times ironically distanced from Mariposa while at other times becoming fully Mariposan. There is, arguably, a greater similarity between the prefacer and the Envoi narrator than between the narrator of the sketches and the Envoi narrator. It may be that the Envoi narrator is a combination, or narrative conflation, of the prefacer and the narrator — in Vincent Sharman's phrase, "the third eye of the *Sketches.*" [14] The Envoi narrator's concern with Mariposa as an abstraction of a kind meaning at once "home" and memories thereof is reminiscent of the prefacer's admonishment that Mariposa and its residents not be taken for the real but as a compilation of numerous towns and many persons. And yet, the Envoi narrator is also similar to the narrator of the sketches in that both share concrete knowledge of Mariposa as a geographically real place. The prefacer and the Envoi narrator share a similar concern about the reader's and the auditor's interpretation and memory of Mariposa. That is, both manipulatively point to the fictive nature of the book and suggest how *Sunshine Sketches* should be viewed. In contrast, to the narrator of the sketches, Mariposa is a more immediately real place, his place. It may be the narrator's familiarity with Mariposa that causes him, in contrast to the prefacer, to think only of a "dozen towns just like it" — if not 'no place,' there are fewer places like home. The narrator desires the reader—"you"—to know his Mariposa (as do the prefacer and the Envoi narrator), but he conveys his knowledge by making you *see* Mariposa, concretely and in proper ironic perspective. The prefacer and the Envoi narrator desire the reader/auditor to *think* about Mariposa, to recollect and to reflect on his relation to it. In "L'Envoi," and to a lesser degree in the preface, the view of Mariposa that is provided is the heightened retrospective perspective which characterizes Leacock's conception of the "humour of sublimity," which "views life, even life now, in as soft a light as we view the past." [15]

14. "Satire of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches,*" *Queen's Quarterly,* 78 (Summer 1971), 266.
15. *Humour and Humanity,* p. 237.

Although the narrator of the sketches is distinct from the prefacer and the Envoi narrator, the distinctions blur again at the realization that all three share a similar style, especially in their use of inflated comparisons and an ironic voice of a purity that makes discriminations difficult. As already noted, the prefacer, like the narrator, boasts then undercuts. He was head boy at Upper Canada College and is a graduate of the University of Toronto, which education left him "intellectually bankrupt" (viii). He received a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and attained a sort of intellectual closure wherein "no new ideas can be imparted to him" (ix). He is a member of a number of prestigious societies which, "surely, are a proof of respectability" (ix). He has lectured internationally on Imperial organization, the impressiveness of which is undercut by the subsequent conflation/concatenation of the "Union of South Africa, the Banana Riots in Trinidad, and the Turco-Italian War" (x). If such "proof of respectability" has not prepared the reader for fiction written from a conservative point of view, Leacock states plainly, "in Canada I belong to the Conservative party" (x). He then undercuts the value of his political affiliation and the integrity of practical politics generally by ironically complaining that he has received no political patronage and, in so doing, implicitly boasts of his honesty. Such ironic undercutting is here called 'pure' because Leacock, as has been suggested, can only be understood finally as holding to both views — the involved and the disenchanted — though certainly keeping them at arms' length. It can yet be concluded that the preface reveals a Leacock who is, perhaps because ironically aware of the ultimate vapidness of his boasted accomplishments, "deeply conservative in a human sense." This is characteristic of Canada's humorists which Northrop Frye has designated "the prevailing tone of Canadian humour ever since" Thomas McCulloch.[16]

Like the prefacer, the narrator of the sketches maintains his Mariposa and Mariposans at an ironic distance. Perhaps this is because he is guiding "you" through Mariposa and is therefore forced to be more immediately aware of the incongruity between appearances and reality, the incongruity between his Mariposa's mistaken aspirations and achievements. At other times, such as when the Mariposa Belle is sinking, the narrator becomes fully Mariposan. This last point suggests another characteristic of the narrator: he has trouble at times with the chronological development of his narrative. For instance, he prematurely and disingenuously reveals the climax to "The Marine Excursion" sketch:

> But when you write about Mariposa, or hear of it, if you know the place, it's all so vivid and real, that a thing like the contrast between the excursion crowd in the morning and the scene at night leaps into your mind and you must think of it. (73).

16. Introd., *The Stepsure Letters,* by Thomas McCulloch, New Canadian Library, No. 16 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960), p. ix.

What the narrator has in mind is everybody "crowding so eagerly to be in the accident" (70). He reflects on the incongruity: "perhaps life is like that all through" (70). Such attempts to complicate and universalize his story reflect the complexity of the narrator, who can be omniscient, cleverly ingenuous, and frankly disingenuous. Donald Cameron has observed that "Leacock evidently conceived of the narrator as an intelligent man feigning simplicity."[17] Although generally valid, Cameron's characterization is surely an oversimplification, for the narrator of the sketches is chameleon-like, and his changeableness serves a number of authorial purposes, foremost among which is that it prevents the continual ironic undercutting from degenerating, in Leacock's opinion, into one-dimensional caustic satire. The narrator of the sketches, like the Leacock of the preface and the Envoi narrator, is a man among and talking to his fellows (or 'fellers', in Leacock's assumed idiom).

Although the narrator of the sketches is changeable — from sketch to sketch and even within sketches — it can be said generally that Leacock endowed him with a conservative, sympathetic, ironically honest, mature point of view. If satire that castigates with reference to a rigid moral norm had been Leacock's intention in the *Sketches,* then surely an adolescent, naively innocent, or persistently ingenuous narrator would better have served the purpose — Mariposa as seen by a Huck Finn, a Lemuel Gulliver, or even an Incomparable Atuk. But such a narrator would not have suited Leacock's purpose in *Sunshine Sketches,* for the satiric and moral norms which operate within the book are provided, as Northrop Frye has perceived, "by Mariposa itself." Frye writes that the reader often finds

> in Leacock, a spirit of criticism, even of satire that is the complementary half of a strong attachment to the mores that provoke the satire. That is, a good deal of what goes on in Mariposa may look ridiculous, but the norms or standards against which it looks ridiculous are provided by Mariposa itself.[18]

In *Sunshine Sketches* Mariposa is at once the object of much humorous satire and the satiric norm, morally lacking and the moral norm. The foils to these norms are Josh Smith and, to a lesser degree, the auditor in "L'Envoi" — Smith because of his blatant avaricious individualism, the auditor because he has forgotten the worthwhile of Mariposa while developing in himself its faults.

The prefacer is concerned, then, with the reader's knowledge of the author and the correct approach to his fiction. He is concerned to place on view his basically conservative values, his implicit dislike of relentlessly realistic fiction, his affection for the imaginative Mariposa and the country which inspired the book, and his suggestion that the reader be wary of ap-

17. *Faces of Leacock,* p. 134.
18. "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada,*" in *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 237.

pearances, particularly Smith's. In contrast, the narrator of the sketches is primarily occupied by the incongruities between appearances and reality within Mariposa, and he is concerned insistently that "you" do not simply take the appearance for the reality. The Envoi narrator's final emphasis is with his auditor's knowledge of himself in relation to "Mariposa." It can safely be concluded, though, that all three 'narrators' share an essentially conservative orientation and an ironic style that prohibits the assertion of simple or unequivocal truth. With these characterizations and distinctions in mind, it is time to proceed into Mariposa and towards the looming figure of JOS. SMITH, PROP. And immediately the reader of the *Sketches* encounters yet another instance of pre-conditions to entry.

II

Before the narrator will introduce Josh Smith, "you" must have your perspective adjusted. You must learn to see Mariposa properly, with "the eye of discernment" rather than "the careless eye" (3). Seen with the careless eye, Mariposa is a slumbering little town, "but this quiet is mere appearance. In reality, and to those who know it, the place is a perfect hive of activity" (3). What the narrator offers by way of illustration of Mariposa's activity — that is, by way of contradicting its slumbering appearance — seems, however, to prove that the town is not a hive of activity. The "perfect jostle of public institutions" is obviously not "comparable to Threadneedle Street or Broadway" (3); nor do the four men working on the sausage machine in the basement of Netley's butcher shop argue for "a busy, hustling, thriving town" (4). It would be a mistake, though, to assume that the narrator is here satirizing only the affectations of Mariposans. As the sketches to follow prove, Mariposa seen from within *is* a relative hive of activity. The viewer's/visitor's perception of the town depends on perspective or point of view, as the narrator well knows.[19] Of course Mariposa appears to slumber "if you come to the place fresh from New York" (4), but so, too, might London, Ontario, appear relatively languorous in the sunshine if perceived by a visitor fresh from the bigger London. As a consequence of such a juxtaposition, "your standard of vision is all astray" (4). By way of contradicting appearances, the narrator, in a pre-introductory reference to Josh Smith, presents Smith as standing with his eyes closed, presumably slumbering in the sunshine like the town itself. However, as the first sketch will amply demonstrate, Smith's brain never idles and is, if ever anything is, a "hive of activity" buzzing about the main chance.

The narrator proceeds over-cautiously towards the slouching figure of Smith (almost as though he were reluctant to disturb him). All that the narrator mentions concerning Mariposa relates to the incongruity between ap-

19. See Spettigue, "A Partisan Reading of Leacock,' 178: "it's all in the way you look at it, as the opening pages pointed out."

pearances and reality. The Mariposa Local, as opposed to the express train, "is a real train" (7). The shanty-men who come down from the lumber woods are "calculated to terrorize the soul of a new comer who does not understand that this also is only an appearance" (8). In reality, the shanty-men are farmers. After a spell in Mariposa, they undergo a transformation "and turn back again into farmers" (8). Even electricity (which would be, in view of Leacock's reactionary tendencies, a questionable benefit of technological modernity) is "turned into coal oil again" by the time it enters Mariposa (8). It would seem that in Mariposa things are not what they first appear, though in another sense they are what they appear to be. With respect to Mariposa, this must remain in large part the equivocal kind of "truth" which *Sunshine Sketches* portrays. Objective truth, knowable to any rational perceiver, does not exist — Leacock's narrator is not a philosophical realist in that sense. The truth about Mariposa depends upon perspective, subjectivity, or in literary terms, on point of view.

The narrator begins the paragraph that introduces Smith in a tentative vein:

> If, then, you feel that you know the town well enough to be admitted into the inner life and movement of it, walk down this June afternoon halfway down the Main Street — or, if you like, halfway up from the wharf — to where Mr. Smith is standing at the door of his hostelry. (9).

It appears from this that Smith has somehow situated himself at the "inner life and movement" of Mariposa. He and his hostelry are located halfway along Main Street, Missinaba Street. The narrator adopts the Mariposan name for the street and invites the reader to enter Mariposa physically. Having done his best to adjust the reader's perspective to an ambivalent Mariposan point of view, the narrator ironically reveals his acceptance of that perspective and guides the reader/visitor towards the imposing and ominous figure of Smith, that "strange dominating personality . . . that somehow holds you captive" (10). With reference to perspective and the "truth" about Mariposa, the reader/visitor should willingly and courteously suspend his disbelief. The irony and humour of the narrator's remarks knowingly suggests that "you" should however retain your critical faculties. If the narrator of the sketches can be visualized, the reader might picture him as winking at such a rate that from one eye he must forever see his Mariposa as though in the light of a stroboscope.

Smith, like all that is connected to the Mariposa of the narrator's introductory remarks, undergoes within the space of one paragraph a transformation from the appearance of "an over-dressed pirate" to "one of the greatest minds in the hotel business" (10). Smith's facility at manipulating his and his hotel's appearance allows him to undergo a similar transformation in the eyes of the Mariposans (18-22). Simplicity of style and an imposing appearance assist Smith to do so. Having situated

himself at the "inner life" of Mariposa, he is adept at exploiting the residents' respect for appearances. Unlike the former proprietors of the hotel, who affected such names for their transient establishment as the Royal, the Queen's, and the Alexandria, Smith simply hangs a sign bearing the legend, "JOS. SMITH, PROP." Simplicity in the abbreviations coupled with the assertive block lettering help provide "living proof that a man who weighs nearly three hundred pounds is the natural king of the hotel business" (11). In short, Smith's appearance as a hostelry king serves in Mariposa for the reality.

Before proceeding to his account of Smith's present professional dilemma, the narrator refocuses attention on Smith's appearance and contrasts this to "reality":

> His appearance, to the untrained eye, was merely that of an extremely stout hotel keeper walking from the rotunda to the back bar. In reality, Mr. Smith was on the eve of one of the most brilliant and daring strokes ever effected in the history of licensed liquor. (13)

(Note that the relation between Smith and his hostelry — their shared fate — is reinforced rhetorically by the progression of the "extremely stout hotel keeper" from the "rotunda to the back bar," a progression which also conjures up a somewhat nether view of the lumbering Smith.) The narrator desires to keep before the reader the incongruity between Smith's appearance and his secret ambitions. Smith appears to be an "extremely stout hotel keeper." He looks like an over-dressed pirate — which of course he proves himself to be. Yet the narrator's description of the stroke which Smith is contemplating as "one of the most brilliant and daring" is equally a statement of truth, for this stroke is immediately associated with the "Ladies' and Gents' Cafe" (13), which is, indeed, as the subsequent sketches prove, *the* greatest illusion which Smith conjures into reality. The "caff" saves Smith's liquor license and temporarily maintains him in Mariposa. It also awakens his political ambitions and, thus, indirectly opens his avenue out of Mariposa. And as the narrator indicates in the above passage, the caff is but *one* of Smith's brilliant and daring strokes; another is the "stroke!" (141) of his axe on the main supporting beam of Dean Drone's driving shed; and as the arsonist who fires into reality Dean Drone's metaphoric "beacon," Smith is responsible also for Drone's "stroke" (146). Smith's "brilliant and daring stroke" with the caff reflects and resonates throughout *Sunshine Sketches.*

Smith's professional dilemma is itself the result of the Mariposan confusion of appearances and reality. His liquor license is threatened, not because he served liquor after the legal time, but because he locked in the town's dedicated drinkers and locked out a thirsty Judge Pepperleigh. "This," as the narrator ironically remonstrates, "was the kind of thing not to be tolerated. Either a hotel must be run decently or quit" (12). The narrator then illustrates further the importance of appearances in Mariposa.

Mr. Distone's failure to maintain appearances causes him to be labeled the "'one who drank,'" a mistaken distillation that precludes a raise in his teacher's salary because "public morality wouldn't permit" it (15). An overwhelming respect for appearances is practiced also by Golgotha Gingham, who realizes the importance of dressing the part of an undertaker and knows the value of euphemism for dealing with the reality of death: "'funeral' or 'coffin' or 'hearse' never passed his lips. He spoke always of 'interments,' of 'caskets,' and 'coaches,' using terms that were calculated rather to bring out the majesty and sublimity of death than to parade its horrors" (15). Leacock, who cautioned that death has no place in humour, would perhaps approve the artful use of euphemism.[20] The humorous satire is contained in the word "calculated," which implies that Gingham's decorum is motivated by pecuniary considerations. Appropriately, the sympathetic remarks on Diston and the humorous paragraph on Gingham precede the first section of dialogue in *Sunshine Sketches,* the section wherein Smith demonstrates his knowledge of Mariposan mores and his considerable powers of calculation.

In the conversation of Gingham, Henry Mullins and Smith, the latter introduces what he knows to be the decisive factor in determining Mariposan opinion — the city. "'If I have to quit,'" threatens Smith, "'the next move is to the city'" (16). It is pertinent to note, though, that Smith already has in mind the idea of the Caff, the Rats' Cooler, and the Girl Room: "'But I don't reckon that I will have to quit. I've got an idee that I think's good every time'" (16). Smith's "idee" is to construct an impressive piece of the city in Mariposa, or at least to conjure up temporarily the illusion of a city hotel. Mullins' question to Smith — "'Could you run a hotel in the city?'" (16) — demonstrates the open-mouthed awe which the magical word "city" evokes from Mariposans. It also betrays a 'gosh-Josh' admiration of Smith which betrays the Mariposans' childlike impressionableness and justifies Smith's addressing the assembled as "Boys" (16). As the narrator observes parenthetically in the second sketch, "in Mariposa all really important speeches are addressed to an imaginary audience of boys" (58). Like children, Mariposans are fascinated by appearances, particularly 'biggness,' such as Smith's physical size and the impressive trappings of such urban schemes as a "whirlwind campaign." It is this misinformed emulation of things which are big and related to the city which continually gets the Mariposans into trouble and allows Smith to dupe them. As Desmond Pacey has observed, their desire to "ape" the city is what Leacock persistently regrets by implication.[21]

'Biggness' is in fact the key concept in Smith's reply to Mullins' question: "'There's big things doin' in the hotel business right now, big

20. See *Humour And Humanity,* p. 198.
21. See "Leacock as a Satirist," 214.

chances . . .'" (16). Smith then dangles before the assembled — Mullins, George Duff, Diston, and Gingham — the picture of what they as Mariposans will miss if he moves: the Caff, the Rats' Cooler, and the Girl Room. Smith concludes: "'If I go to the city that's the kind of place I mean to run'" (17). But as Smith has previously hinted to his interlocutors, he has no "idee" of going to the city, at least not yet. The enticing vision of a hotel in the city is employed by Smith as a lure (though he may also be sounding his audience's response to his "idee"). In either case, the open-mouthed fish are hooked when Smith, further enticing his prey, offers a free drink to Gingham: "'What's yours, Gol?'" It's on the house'" (17). It would be galling indeed to let such a "king" slip away to the city.

The negative verdict on his license compels Smith not to leave Mariposa but to carry out his plan for the Caff and the Rats' Cooler. Ordered to "close down" (24), Smith, in one of the book's most significant inversions, expands his business. A further illustration of the incipient childlikeness of Mariposans is that they do not remember Smith's plan for Caff, Rats' Cooler, and Girl Room when he commences the additions to Smith's Hotel. Children have short memories. Compared with Smith, Mariposans are guileless and ingenuous. The contention here that Smith is in full control even at this point in the first sketch — that he knows calculatingly which negative Mariposan illusions will best serve his needs — is substantiated by the flashback which elucidates Smith's dilemma. This flashback concerns Smith's life prior to his arrival in Mariposa and explains how he has come to figure in the "inner life" of the little town in the sunshine.

"But stop—" interjects the concerned narrator as Billy arrives with the telegram (17). As has been his practice to this point, the narrator is worried that the uninformed reader will not fully appreciate the anxiety of Smith and his associates. "You" could not enter *Sunshine Sketches* until Leacock as prefacer had offered his terms for allowing you to do so. You could not proceed into Mariposa and toward Smith until the narrator had adjusted your perspective — that is, until the narrator had taught you to see with the "eye of discernment." And now, "it is impossible for you to understand" Smith's predicament without a fuller knowledge of his background (17). This knowledge makes clear that Mariposa is for Smith but a stopover, a springboard to greater things (if political life in Ottawa may so be termed).

The reader learns that Smith is *in* though not *of* the little town, in and casting a looming shadow. He has come from the north, having risen from a cook in a lumber camp to running a river driver's boarding-house, and, thence, to holding a "food contract for a gang of railroad navvies on the transcontinental," after which "the whole world was open to him" (18). The implications of this latter remark should recall the prefacer's ironical

lament about his "failure" in Canadian politics; though an avowed Conservative, he never received a contract "to construct even the smallest section of the Transcontinental Railway" (x). Thus the echo effectively distances the character of Smith from Leacock and suggests further that Smith is corrupt and already knows something of political patronage. Moreover, Smith's association with the timber trade may suggest the lawless threat to communities which characterized the timber trade along the Ottawa River (and elsewhere) in the mid-nineteenth century (the "river driver's boarding-house" being understood here to suggest vaguely such lumber rivers as the Ottawa).[22] This may be overstating the case, though, for upon first consideration Smith's career may equally appear to be an instance of the 'small' man making good (or big), pulling himself up by the straps of his lumberjack boots. At this point in his mythical rise, Smith arrives in Mariposa and picks from the opened whole world "the 'inside' of what had been the Royal Hotel" (18). Notably, Smith does not want the "loafers and shanty-men" for customers (19). These are the same loafers and shanty-men who — being, as noted, "only an appearance" — are in reality local farmers who have worked in the "lumber woods" and are simply on a binge before returning to their farms. To put plainly what the kindly narrator's account of Smith's past strongly suggests, Smith uses and discards people. From Leacock's responsible and tolerant Tory-humanist's point of view, Smith might more properly be regarded as somewhat pushy, as 'on the make.'

It is Smith's attention to the details of his and his hotel's appearance which drives away the low-lifers and secures the relatively high-class trade. By assuming what was previously described as the appearance of "an overdressed pirate," Mr. Smith had become a local character. Mariposa, like the whole world after his contract with the transcontinental, "was at his feet" (20). Mr. Smith overcomes Mariposa's lingering opposition to him — what the narrator actually terms "this opposition" — "by a wide and *sagacious* philanthropy" (21, emphasis added). By buying ten-dollars worth of free rides for the Mariposan children from a visiting merry-go-round operator, Smith effectively frees their parents and ingratiates himself with them to the extent that they stand "four deep along his bar" (21). The narrator anticipates the reader's mistaken presumption that Smith's original gesture was truly motivated by kindly intentions: "Mr. Smith learned, if he had not already suspected it, the blessedness of giving" (21). If any doubts linger, the narrator removes them by beginning the following paragraph, "the *uses* of philanthropy went further" (21, emphasis added). Not one to store up riches in heaven, Josh Smith proceeds

22. See Michael S. Cross, "A General Interpretation of Social Disorder on the Timber Frontier," in *The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas,* Issues in Canadian History, ed. Michael S. Cross (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1970), pp. 100-03.

to donate to every organization in town, knowing full well that what he gives thus in his "sagacious philanthropy" will be returned at least a hundredfold.

Instead of illuminating the source of Smith's anxiety, the flashback leaves little doubt that he will be more than adequate to any situation. When Billy returns with the negative verdict — the telegram ordering Smith to "close down" — it should come as no surprise that Smith acts quickly, forcefully, and deviously because apparently for the benefit of the town. There is something of the furious in the manner in which the additions to Smith's Hotel take shape, something of demoniacal energy, of the construction of Pandemonium, in the way his "idees' assume form:

> Then the excavation deepened and the dirt flew, and the beam went up and the joists across . . . Spacious and graceful it looked as it reared its uprights into the air. (25)[23]

Smith informs the curious, baffled and forgetful Mariposans that the additions are "'a caff — like what they have in the city,'" a Rats' Cooler and "'a "girl room," like what they have in the city hotels'" (26). The description of the completed additions further presents Smith's Hotel as having undergone a sort of magical transformation:

> Not only was the caff built but the very hotel was transformed. Awnings had broken out in a red and white cloud upon its face, its every window carried a box of hanging plants, and above in glory floated the Union Jack. The very stationery was changed. (26).

The impressionable and sensation-seeking Mariposans fall down, figuratively, before this gilded "caff" which Smith has shaped from their worshipful golden dreams of city life.

Smith achieves his crowning touch when he brazenly reverts to the similarly affected names used by former proprietors. His transformed establishment is now called "Smith's Summer Pavilion" and is advertised in the city as "Smith's Tourists' Emporium and Smith's Northern Hotel Resort" (26). By enticing weekend sportsmen from the city, Smith demonstrates his ability to exploit the illusions of city-dwellers with regard to the benefits of northern holiday as readily as he manipulates the illusions of the semi-rural Mariposans with respect to city life. Smith's ruse of importing the city-dwellers anticipates his ploy in having his election victory prematurely wired from the city — a tactic that assures his victory as surely as the flocking of the city-dwellers for his Tourists' Emporium assures his esteem in the wide eyes of the Mariposans. Smith's successful manipulation of the city-dwellers for his own purposes hints further that Mariposa may ultimately prove to be too small a pond for this swelling toad. And it should be kept in mind that the transformation of Smith's Hotel initiates Smith's transformtion to a political prince of sorts.

23. *Cf. Paradise Lost,* I.688-89: "Soon had his crew / Op'n'd into the Hill a spacious wound"; and I.710-11: "Anon out of the earth a Fabric huge / Rose like an Exhalation."

The transformed hotel is of course false, illusory. "The standing marvel of Mariposa" proves in reality to be as temporary as is Smith's residency in the town. Both marvel and residency serve temporarily but to further the realization of Smith's ambitions. Only Smith, "who knew it by instinct, ever guessed that waiters and palms and marble tables can be rented over the long distance telephone" (27). The French chef is as transient as are the artificially deflated prices of his meals. The Rats' Cooler, into which you "step from the glare of Canadian August to the deep shadow of an enchanted glade" (39), is not only an ephemeral enchantment but a questionable one: "he who entered the Rats' Cooler at three of a summer afternoon was buried there for the day" (30). Golgotha Gingham, ever with an eye on trade, "spent anything from four to seven hours there of every day. In his mind the place had all the quiet charm of an interment, with none of its sorrows" (30). The Rats' Cooler with its "German waiter noiseless as moving foam" (30) momentarily holds the reality of "a Canadian August" and of Mariposan life at bay. But it is a figurative crypt, a place for undertakers and German waiters (the latter being, in view of Leacock's anti-Germanism, suggestively negative[24]). The magic of the Rats' Cooler — the "enchanted glade" whose "charm" is "of an interment" — is decidedly black. Only Smith, who bears the burden of expense for this delusory charm and enchantment, understands the real situation. When he sits down with Billy at the end of the day to assess the situation, his languge with reference to his clientele is revealingly brutal:

> "Billy, just wait till I get the license renood, and I'll close up this damn caff so tight they'll never know what hit her. What did that lamb cost? Fifty cents a pound, was it? I figure it, Billy, that every one of them hogs eats about a dollars worth of grub for every twenty-five cents they pay for it. As for Alf — by gosh, I'm through with him." (30).

It has cost Smith dearly to appear as a lamb. But in terms of the relation between Mariposa and Mr. Smith, the Mariposans are the lambs and Smith is the wolf in "shepherd's plaid trousers" (9). His calling them "hogs" is in marked contrast to that other, most frequently employed term of Mariposan derision, "skunks." And as the last sentence of the above speech again demonstrates, Smith thinks nothing of using and discarding people — in this case, Alphonse, the "French Chief" (27).

Aware as the reader has been made of Smith's manipulative skills, aware, too, as the reader is of his exploitive practice of using and discarding people, it is to be expected that the illusion of the caff with its bargain-priced lamb and the Rats' Cooler will vanish when they have served their purpose, leaving behind but a rack of their former selves. Although the primary purpose of the additions had been the renewal of Smith's license, the successful illusion inadvertently endows Smith with

24. See, for an example of Leacock's anti-Germanism, *The Hohenzollerns In America* (Toronto: S. B. Gundy; New York: John Lane, 1919).

an aura of prestige which transforms his vision of himself. At the height of his hotel's popularity, some of the awed and excited Mariposans "wanted to make him the Conservative candidate for the next Dominion election" (33). Their reason for so wishing is associated, not with Smith's political acuity, but with his having "done more to boom Mariposa than any ten men in town" (33). This blind boosterism — and the "boom' may also suggest demolish, as there may be a pun on "hostelry" in the sketch's title — is not lost upon the perceptive Smith, though its ramifications could be missed by the uncritical reader. For, to repeat, Smith's transformation of his hotel effects nothing less than a transformation of Smith and sets the stage for the events of the final two sketches:

> There was a quiet and a dignity about his manner that had never been there before. I think it must have been the new halo of the Conservative candidacy that already radiated from his brow. It was, I imagine, at this very moment that Mr. Smith first realized that the hotel business formed the natural and proper threshold of the national legislature. (34).

"Halo" and "radiated" imply that Smith here attains an ironic apotheosis, or, at least, a political canonization of sorts.

If the disappearance of the caff and the Rats' Cooler should come as no surprise to the reader, Smith's candidacy and election in the last two sketches should equally be expected, especially so in the light of the hints given in the first sketch. The eight sketches which come between "The Hostelry of Mr. Smith" and "The Great Election in Missinaba County" deal with what is destined to become Mr. Smith's constituency. These eight sketches, which humorously anatomize Mariposan business, religion, and romance (along with what is revealed about Mariposa in the first and last two sketches), provide the norm against which Smith is to be judged. But Smith *does* become Mariposa's elected representative, and not simply because the electors are blind to their own interests. As was remarked earlier, Mariposa does not absolutely or obviously provide a referential moral. The moral norms of the book can be induced only from a careful consideration of the events portrayed, from an appraisal of what motivates its characters and from a thoughtful assessment of the narrator's relentlessly ironic commentary. Mariposa is anatomized humorously *and* satirically, with a kindly and discerning eye. Its ambitions are Smith's writ small, and its reflective faults are heightened by Mariposan ineffectuality. Put simply, if Mariposans did not possess serious shortcomings reflective of Smith's glaring faults, he would not be able to manipulate and exploit the townsfolk as he does. What Mariposans do possess in opposition to Smith is a concern for their community and a frequently nagging conscience which enable the reader to pass judgment on Smith's rampant individualism and materialism. It might also be said that Smith brings out the worst in the Mariposans, the shadows. Granted, the first sketch does not fully reveal these aspects of the Mariposans; here, they emerge as

children playing in the sunshine and living on dreams of grandeur. Smith is portrayed as clever, exploitive, and deceptively energetic in his own interests — characteristics which point toward bigger things. (It is worth opening a lengthy parenthesis here to remark that Smith's competitive individualism and insistent pecuniary motivations suggest that his surname alludes to the material individualism upon which Adam Smith's economic theory was based. In many of his non-fictional essays and books, Leacock dismissed Adam Smith's theory and the policy of *laissez-faire* because such economics is antithetical to a just and increasingly interdependent society.[25] It should be noted, though, that in the *Sketches* Smith is Josh Smith, which name suggests further that he is Leacock's burlesque of the sort of individual who is encouraged by the free play of Adam Smith's *laissez-faire* economic system. And it may be noted still further that Adam Smith is mentioned in the *Sketches* in the title of Mr. Dreery's lecture, the "Great Humorists from Chaucer to Adam Smith" [117].)

Before proceeding to the election and Smith's campaign, it will prove illuminating to examine first an instance of the direct opposition of Mariposa to Mr. Smith. The second sketch, "The Speculations of Jefferson Thorpe," makes obvious this pattern of contrast and reveals the stance of Leacock's narrator with respect to Smith and Mariposa.

III

Whereas the first sketch deals with real business, the second deals with illusory business. The parallel and opposition is suggested at the beginning of "The Speculations" by the location of Jeff Thorpe's little barber shop "just across the street from Smith's Hotel" (37). The eighth paragraph of the sketch, comprising one sentence, repeats and emphasizes the relation between Thorpe and Smith: "the barber shop, you will remember, stands across the street from Smith's Hotel, and stares at it face to face" (39). By implication, Jeff's barber shop, like Smith's Hotel, is located at the centre or "inner life" of Mariposa, "halfway down the Main Street — or, if you like, halfway up from the wharf" (9. However, in contrast to the guardedly taciturn Smith, Jeff is distinguished for his loquacity, and conversation is "the real charm" of his barber shop (41). This "real charm" — leisurely communal intercourse — bespeaks opposition to the delusive, dark enchantments of Smith's Rats' Cooler. Unlike Jeff, who loses all the money he makes from mining speculations, Mr. Smith profits by the boom. Smith, the realist, is not seduced by the romance of northern riches: "you see, Mr. Smith had come down from there, and he knew all about rocks

25. See *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice* (New York: John Lane; Toronto: S. B. Gundy, 1920), pp. 36-41, 127-31, and "What Is Left Of Adam Smith?" *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science,* 1 (Feb. 1935), 41-51. Leacock's doctoral dissertation was entitled "The Doctrine of *Laissez-Faire,*" Diss. University of Chicago, 1903.

and mining and canoes and the north country" (46). Rather than speculating wildly, Smith realizes a tidy profit by shipping potatoes to the northern speculators. Jeff, on the other hand, "had looked at so many prospectuses and so many pictures of mines and pine trees and smelters; that . . . . he'd forgotten that he'd never been in the country" (46). The opposition between Smith, the real businessman, and Jeff, the speculative dreamer, is made plain: "Mr. Smith, I say, hung back. But Jeff Thorpe was in the mining boom right from the start" (46).

It would be naive, though, to assume that this opposition between real and illusory business is simply for the purpose of exposing the baseless fabric of the former and chastising the ruthlessness of the latter. In business matters, the relation of the real to the illusory is more complicated than simple opposition. In "The Speculations," the illusion, Jeff's dream of riches, moves towards and becomes reality, only to revert at the end to the illusive reality operative in Mariposa. This movement from illusion to reality and back again parallels that of Smith's caff, which briefly materialized only to dissipate. And it should be kept in mind that the illusive Mariposan reality to which Jeff and his dream return contains the faults that allow Smith to operate as successfully as he does. With respect to the opposition of real and illusory business, it is Jeff's and Mariposa's mistaken desire to emulate big business and the city which makes both appear deluded.

Jeff's barber shop is falsely fronted, the type of building which Sinclair Ross will later employ in his *As For Me and My House* to symbolize small-town affectation (though perhaps 'hypocrisy' would be the better word for Ross's Horizon). The narrator describes Jeff's false-fronted shop as "a form of architecture much used in Mariposa and understood to be in keeping with the pretentious and artificial character of modern business" (39). It is to be doubted, however, that the Mariposans 'understand' their architecture in this evaluative sense. No doubt they take the appearance for the reality, feeling that they require chimerical buildings to accomodate their inflated census figures (5-6). Rather, the assessment of "modern business" as "pretentious and artificial" is a statement which stands out stylistically from the page. It is satiric without a trace of gentle irony or kindliness. Here, Leacock's narrator states as flatly as he ever allows himself to do that it is big business, not the mistaken Mariposans or their pathetically affected architecture, that is truly "pretentious and artificial." In effect, this stylistically incongruous remark is a statement of theme. The plot of this sketch — the rise and fall of Jeff's financial fortunes — is relatively unimportant. The narrator has already revealed the central action of the sketch: "as I say, it was when Jeff made money that they saw how gifted he was, and when he lost it—" (38). Here, the narrator subverts the development of his story to allow his readers to concentrate on the contrasted aspects of *"The Speculations"* — on its characters and its theme.

This is a narrative strategy which he will employ again for similar reasons in "The Marine Excursion." "But, dear me," he will disingenuously lament, "this is no way to tell a story" (73). Leacock cared little for plot.[26]

With the exception of "L'Envoi," no other section of *Sunshine Sketches* so insistently contrasts Smith and the city to Mariposa as does "The Speculations." In each instance of contrast, the narrator favours Mariposa: "in Mariposa, shaving isn't the hurried perfunctory thing that it is in the city. A shave is looked upon as a form of physical pleasure" (40). City-dwellers do not even have time to read their newspapers, "but in Mariposa it's different" (41). Not only is Mariposan life distinguished for its pleasures and leisurely pace, Mariposans are individuated to an extent unknown in the city. The city financiers whom Jeff imagines to be working his undoing are lumped together as "that unseen nefarious crowd in the city" (49). And the narrator remarks with only a hint of condescending, mitigating irony, "after all, the capitalists of the world are just one and the same crowd" (53). Although the Mariposans (like most people) judge a man by his material possessions, the pleasurable, leisurely atmosphere of the small town more than compensates for this human failing of its distinctive residents. Furthermore, it is merely the reputation of being a wealthy man that Jeff truly covets: "what Jeff liked best of it all was the sort of public recognition that it meant" (50). In contrast to the pathetically insecure Jeff, Smith's business practices are motivated by unqualified avariciousness.

Prior to his favourable comparisons, the narrator ironically *regrets* the distinctiveness of Mariposans: "that's the trouble with the people in Mariposa; they're all so separate and so different — not a bit like the people in the cities" (51). Here, though, he is referring specifically to the "trouble" that they present him as narrator, for he is thinking of an overlooked character who bears on his story. In this instance, the individual relevant to Jeff's story is his daughter Myra, whose recitation of the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* is so well done that "everybody in Mariposa admitted that you couldn't have told it from the original" (52). The humour of this comment should not be allowed to obscure the allusion to a play which contrasts vengeance and monetary avariciousness to humane mercy. Shylock adequately demonstrates in the "hath-not" speech that he, too, is motivated partially by a need for recognition. It is, therefore, pertinent to note that Jeff wears "a little black skull cap" (39). It may be that Leacock is implying that Jeff, the only native Mariposan obsessed with monetary riches, is a Jew. If this is the case, Leacock's anti-Semitism is unfortunate,

26. Leacock remarked of *Sunshine Sketches,* "such feeble plots as there are in this book were invented by brute force, after the characters had been introduced." Quoted in Peter McArthur, *Stephen Leaock* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1923), p. 136. See further, Leacock *Charles Dickens* (New York: Doubleday, 1934), p. 109.

unfortunate in itself of course, but unfortunate also because it implies an insupportable reason for the good-hearted barber's obsession. Of course, it may be that Jeff is obsessed with getting rich *and* a Jew, not because he is a Jew. Leacock was, however, quite capable of suggesting the cause and effect relation. In the global range of his racism — taking in just about all nationalities but English-speaking peoples — there is, within my knowledge, but one other suggestively anti-Semitic remark.[27]

Apologies aside, the more relevant aspect of the reference to *The Merchant of Venice* — that Leacock's theme is one of equal seriousness — is substantiated indirectly by the mention of "young Fizzlechip's" suicide. The aptly named Fizzlechip (a gamble that 'fizzled' out) also made a fortune in the mining boom, then "shot himself in the back of the Mariposa House" (45). The only motive suggested is that Fizzlechip found himself with nothing to do (45). The third reference to Fizzlechip occurs immediately after Jeff strikes it rich: "and the queer thing was that the very next afternoon was the funeral of young Fizzlechip" (50). Although the name Fizzlechip tends further to obscure the serious intention, the references to his suicide gain in significance in light of Leacock's admonition on the relation of death to humour:

> Nor can humour, even where it is meant to be merely comic and harmless, venture to associate itself with images or recollections of pain, cruelty and death. . . . . We must not jest over death.[28]

The intrusion of Fizzlechip's suicide argues that "The Speculations" is not intended to be appreciated only in a "merely comic and harmless" sense. It is consistent with Leacock's Tory-humanist satiric norm that he dislikes the gambling aspect of financial speculation: for every winner there must be a loser, perhaps a suicidal one. Consider by way of contrast Leacock's humorous treatment of Peter Pupkin's 'suicides': "suicide is a thing that ought not to be committed without very careful thought" (187).

With the exception of the actual sinking of the Mariposa Belle, where the narrator becomes for the moment thoroughly Mariposan, in no other sketch of *Sunshine Sketches* is he so completely *in* Mariposa as in "The Speculations." He is shaved by Jeff, whose greatest business asset is the way in which he suits his banter to the interests of his customer (42). It is worth noting, then, what Jeff talks about with the narrator: "to a humble intellect like mine he would explain in full the relation of the Keesar to the German Rich Dog" (42). Presumably, the narrator has an interest in international affairs and political economy, as does the Leacock of the preface (ix-x). This presumption is supported by Jeff's asking him, "Did you ever *see* this Rockefeller?" (57). If such a possibility exists, then the narrator has not only travelled but he has perhaps moved in social and financial circles

27. See *The Hohenzollerns In America,* p. 15.
28. *Humour And Humanity,* p. 198.

which would warrant Jeff's inquiry (and the context of Jeff's question argues that he is not referring to a photograph). It may be argued, therefore, that the narrator of "The Speculations," though certainly not completely identifiable with the Leacock of the preface, does share interests with the political economist and international lecturer. (And again the business of the "Keesar and the German Rich Dog" suggests Leacock's anti-Germanism.)

These parallels are noteworthy because the narrator of "The Speculations" reveals a patronizing interest in keeping Jeff in his barber shop and content with his life in Mariposa. The narrator "liked it about Jeff that he didn't stop shaving" after he made his killing in the market (55). What the narrator does not like is the seeming shift in Jeff's interests, a threatened transformation in self-regard reminiscent of that which elevated Smith in the first sketch. The narrator notes

> a sort of new element in the way Jeff fell out of his monotone into lapses of thought that I, for one, misunderstood. I thought that perhaps getting so much money, — well, you know the way it acts on people in the larger cities. It seemed to spoil one's idea of Jeff that copper and asbestos and banana lands should form the goal of his thought when, if he knew it, the little shop and the sunlight of Mariposa was so much better. (56)

Jeff does not 'know it' — the value of his life in Mariposa — but the relatively sophisticated narrator knows it. Of the many ironies in this sketch, perhaps the greatest is that Jeff's failure and loss is, from the narrator's point of view, his salvation. Although the conclusion *is* somewhat pathetic, the narrator is justified in admonishing, "pathetic? tut! tut! You don't know Mariposa" (60). But by this point, the careful reader does know Mariposa and can view Jeff's situation wih an ironic vision which approaches that of the narrator. That is, the reader can view Jeff's situation as both pathetic and acceptably resolved — in Leacock's understanding of the word, as *humorous.* [29]

Jeff is much better off in his leisurely-paced environment, where people are individuated. The small-town barber, with his commendable if unsophisticated notions of advertising for "incurables" and giving "an acre of banana land in Cuba to every idiot in Missinaba county" (59), would have lasted neither long nor happily in the outside world, where philanthropy — as seen from Smith's use of it — is a euphemism for self-interest. Jeff ends where he began, poorer though not significantly worse off, unlike young Fizzlechip, alive in Mariposa. The emphasis of the conclusion to "The Speculations" is on the brave face with which Jeff and his family accept their lot. Jeff must work a longer day but he is accustomed to such work; his daughter Myra bravely and admirably relinquishes her former affected ambition of becoming an actress (61). Perhaps it is Jeff's work

29. See *Humour And Humanity,* p. 233; "pathos . . . keeps humour from breaking into guffaws and humour keeps pathos from subsiding into sobs."

habits — his communal function which is associated with his sense of familial responsibility — which, in contrast to the indolent and lonely Fizzlechip, save him from suicidal despair. The ethic of work and duty aside (those Carlylean-Victorian virtues), it must be faced that Jeff is also aided by Mr. Smith.

The final irony of "The Speculations" resides in its closing reference to Josh Smith's caff. The reader learns here that Jeff's rise and fall has been concurrent with Smith's threatened fall and rise. Jeff is helped financially when Smith contracts with "Jeff's Woman" for seven dozen eggs a day: "You see it was just at this time that Mr. Smith's caff opened" (61). The coincidence of events suggests much, not the least of which is that Mariposa at this time, when experienced from within, must indeed have been a "hive of activity." Real business, as practiced by Smith, transpires concomitantly with the illusion of business (market speculation) as practiced by Jeff. The caff, which was itself finally an illusion, served to further Smith's real business and latent political ambitions. Jeff's paper fortune, which was an appearance that moved towards reality only to vanish, served to effect his financial undoing and to return him to where he began. The final reference to Smith and his caff contrasts Smith's progress to Jeff's stationary position in Mariposa. Smith is outward-bound; Jeff, like the accident-prone Mariposa Belle, returns to where he began. It may be that Smith's progress is contingent upon Jeff's stability. It may also be that Leacock is suggesting that some good — the helpful egg contract, results from Smith's rampant individualism and crass materialism. As for Smith's motives, however, it is most probable that his seeming benevolence in the matter of the egg contract is further evidence of his exploitive selfishness, his desire to keep Mariposa relatively stable for his own purposes.[30] Moreover, Smith knows, even as he contracts for the eggs, that the caff will remain in full operation and in need of extra eggs only so long as it is useful to him. Jeff and "the Woman," like the shanty-men, the German waiter, and the "French Chief," will soon have to fend for themselves.

Again, this is not to say that Mariposa is guiltless. It will be recalled that Jeff is obsessed with riches because that is one standard of value in Mariposa: "it was *a* favourite method in Mariposa if you wanted to get at the real worth of a man, to imagine him clean sold out, put up for auction, as it were" (58, emphasis added). Not only is Smith, the realist, unwilling to pay Billy the desk clerk his back wages when Billy wants "to put it into Cuba" (59), but Henry Mullins, the bank manager, similarly anticipates Jeff's collapse and makes "a fuss about selling a draft for forty thousand on New York" (59). Nevertheless, for all of Mariposa's faults, Leacock's narrator bears it an obvious affection that is seldom withheld. (And it may be that Mullins desires to save Jeff as well as himself and his community's

30. *Cf.* Spettigue, "A Partisan Reading of Leacock," 174.

bank, whereas Smith simply does not want to pay Billy.) Smith is the only character in *Sunshine Sketches* who is never treated with affection. Smith does not belong *to* Mariposa and only temporarily resides *in* Mariposa. Although Mariposa may not provide a clearly-defined moral standard against which Smith can be measured, Smith embodies a selfishness in the shadow of which the virtues of the community shine and can generously be assessed. The reader would be mistaken to slight Jeff's intention to use part of his illusory fortune for charitable purposes. In terms of philanthropy versus selfishness, Jeff's humanitarian motives count for everything, his mistaken method and misplaced ambitions count for little (if the source of such rich humour can be called "little"). As was shown in the discussion of the first sketch, every instance of Smith's "philanthropy" illustrates his self-serving material ambitions. If Smith's exit is to be accomplished by his election to the national legislature, the reader of the *Sketches* is meant to feel that such is the inevitable consequence of the relation between business and politics, and that political office is but the tacky laurel for those who are ambitious, energetic, and cunning enough to exploit this relationship.

IV

Smith's election victory, "the crowning triumph of Mr. Smith's career" (244), is of a piece with his previous triumph in the matter of the caff, itself "one of the most brilliant and daring strokes ever affected in the history of licensed liquor" (13). Like the earlier triumph (though presumably not much earlier), Smith's election victory is the product of his industrious manipulation of Mariposan illusions and delusions of grandeur. But the narrator, who insisted in the opening sketch that the reader could not meet Smith until he had learned to see Mariposa properly (that is, until "you" had discarded the mere appearance in favour of the inner reality), cautions in "The Great Election" that "you can't understand the election at all . . . unless you first appreciate the peculiar complexion of politics in Mariposa" (214).

The narrator adopts the Mariposan perspective from the opening of "The Great Election." It is a perspective which may be termed a determinedly 'Maripocentric' point of view: "I saw it all [the election] from Missinaba County which, with the town of Mariposa, was, of course, the storm centre and focus point of the whole turmoil" (213). Having thus identified himself with the Mariposans, the narrator reasons that in "the great election Canada saved the British Empire, . . . " and so inward until he concludes "that those of us who carried the third concession, —" (214). The narrator arrests the tendencies of his Maripocentric thinking, realizing that he is about to imply that Mariposa "saved the British Empire." He then reveals the basis of Mariposan political opinion in the following: "as soon as they grab the city papers out of the morning mail, they know

the whole solution of any problem" (215). Once the reader knows this, he can begin to "appreciate the peculiar complexion of politics in Mariposa," for it is this fact of city-orientation which Smith exploits for victory. And yet, the narrator can remark, fully cognizant, as he is, of the derivation of Mariposan political opinion, that politics in Missinaba County "is not the miserable, crooked, money-ridden politics of the cities, but the straight, real old-fashioned thing that is an honour to the countryside" (219). This is, as is soon revealed, the truly ironic or backhanded compliment. Leacock harboured no illusions about practical politics, whether urban or rural.[31] In 'The Great Election," his narrator proceeds to illustrate that politics in Missinaba County is nothing but bribery and patronage (219), where voting is a simple matter of herd mentality: "nobody cares to vote first for fear of being fooled after all and voting on the wrong side" (244). Although the herd mentality is but one face of the coin whose reverse is the commendable sense of community, it must be conceded that in political matters Mariposa gets the M.P. it deserves.

Employing a narrative strategy which parallels the movement of the opening sketch, the narrator of "The Great Election" concludes his general analysis of Mariposan politics with the statement, "so now, I think, you understand something of the general political surroundings of the great election in Missinaba County" (221). Reminiscent of the way in which the circumlocutions of the first sketch centered finally on Smith, here the ironic anatomy of political life leads to an introduction to "John Henry Bagshaw, . . . the sitting member, the Liberal member, for Missinaba County" (221). In many respects, and in a manner which typifies Leacock's paralleling techniques, Bagshaw is Smith's mirror image. Whereas Smith has situated himself at the "inner life" of Mariposa and is moving towards the politically representative, Bagshaw is the representative returning involuntarily to the inner life. Both characters are adept at manipulating Mariposa's respect for appearances, Mariposans' illusions, delusions, and appetites.

Perhaps Bagshaw loses the election because he has been away from Mariposa for too long (twenty years interrupted by intermittent, campaigning returns) and so has lost touch to some extent with the pulse that fancies itself a throbbing metropolis. In any event, the Liberal Bagshaw, running on the issue of trade reciprocity with the United States, attempts to win only through traditional patronage. (Leacock held that protective tariffs within the British Empire were necessary for its economic and political unity.[32] Smith, the conservative champion of protectionism and "the Empire," stands upon a somewhat wavering platform. But Smith

31. See "Greater Canada: An Appeal," *University Magazine* (Montreal), 6 (April 1907), 136.
32. See, for example, *Economic Prosperity in the British Empire* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 149-79.

knows that the small Canadian town of Mariposa will unseat a Liberal who threatens the British connection. Smith wins, though, not because of his changeable policies or his opportune Imperialism, but because he has his victory prematurely telegraphed from the city. (Leacock, a Conservative and public defender of protectionism in the 1911 general election,[33] must ultimately have held as little hope for the possibility of integrity in politics as he as prefacer implies and as the portrayal of the virtuous, though ineffectual, Edward Drone would suggest.) By exploiting Mariposan awe of the city, Smith assures the overly cohesive electorate that a vote for him will not be a vote "on the wrong side," the losing side. Bagshaw, "the old war horse" and "old jackass" (221), fails to exploit this perhaps-recent, ambivalent city reverence and so loses the election.

As might be expected, Smith's campaign draws much of its incidental credibility from things civic and from references to 'bigger' things. He answers the question on Imperial defence by claiming that he is "'fer'" whatever "'the Conservative boys at Ottaway think'" (236). He inflates impressive "'statissicks'": "'Shove it up to four,' said Mr. Smith, 'And I tell you,' he added, 'if any of them farmers says the figures ain't correct, tell them to go to Washington and see for themselves'" (241). And he imports "a special speaker from the city" (243), though in this instance the appropriate tactic backfires, as the speaker is a prohibitionist and Smith has uncharacteristically miscalculated the extent to which Mariposans wish to appear "dry." By contrasting the success of Smith's political strategy to Bagshaw's failure to realize the importance of "the city," Leacock may be suggesting a shift in Mariposan orientation that is even more biased towards the city. Since this presumed shift allows for Smith's election, it follows that the figurative movement away from provincial self-sufficiency, or Maripocentrism, is not a commendable development.[34] The implication is certainly there in the tactics of the two campaigns and in Smith's telling coup. Yet such an interpretation is finally beside the point. Partisan politics is an unseemly business, complete with the mathematical trappings of business — "statissicks" and "figures" (240). In the final analysis, there is little to choose between Smith and Bagshaw.

Bagshaw is presented as a formidable candidate and adversary. In a Maripocentric sense, he is "one of the greatest political forces in the world" (221). The illustrations of his political prowess which follow this childish superlative concern Bagshaw's 'Smithian' manipulation of appearances. He maintains the appearance of residency in his riding while being in reality an absentee farmer. He sends hogs to the "Missinaba

33. See Ralph Curry, *Stephen Leacock,* p. 88, and David Legate, *Stephen Leacock,* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1970), p. 59; for Leacock's account of the bitterly-fought 1911 election, see "The Great Victory in Canada," *National Review,* 58 (Nov. 1911), 381-92.
34. See J. M. Zezulka, "Passionate Provincials: Imperialism, Regionalism, and Point of View," *Journal of Canadian Fiction,* No. 22 (1978), p. 86.

County Agricultural Exposition and World's Fair" (Maripocentrism), accompanying them in his corduroy breeches with a straw in his mouth. "After that," observes the narrator, "if any farmer thought that he was not properly represented in Parliament, it showed that he was an ass" (222). Bagshaw's tokenism extends equally to business, religion, and education, and it is capped by the revelation that he keeps "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" (223). If Bagshaw's dress (223) and behaviour are illustrative of his facility at manipulating appearances, his very presence in Mariposa is equally significant: "you could see, if you knew the signs of it, that there was politics in the air" (224). The narrator's observation is revealingly to the point: in many respects *Sunshine Sketches* is an encyclopedia of signs, the significance of which "you" are taught to read. With regard to Missinaban politics, the reader might well prefer to remain charmed by the humorous display of these signs rather than to peer painstakingly into the dark areas which they indicate.

Bagshaw's political strategy is one of the more striking instances of inversion in the Sketches, though even it is surpassed by that flexible secondary plank in Smith's platform — "temperance and total prohibition" (230). Bagshaw would rather not run on the tariff question but on the issue of graft — not because he can prove that the Conservatives are corrupt but in order to *publicize* his free use of political patronage (226). His reasons for so desiring reveal the limits of his manipulative skills relative to Mr. Smith's. Bagshaw's desire for an opportunity to have his corrupt practices publicized also provides one of the more damning indictments of Mariposan political life: "Let Drone have plenty of material of this sort and he'll draw off every honest vote in the Conservative party" (226). That is, Drone will lose by a landslide.

If *Sunshine Sketches* has a climax with regard to the opposition between Mariposa and Mr. Smith, it occurs at Golgotha Gingham's timorous announcement to Bagshaw that the Conservatives "are going to put up Josh Smith" (228). Bagshaw, nobody's fool, realizes immediately the Herculean task before him, and so he comes "as near to turning pale as a man in federal politics can" (229). Appropriately, it is Gingham, the undertaker, who informs Bagshaw of Smith's candidacy, figuratively sounding Bagshaw's death knell (or the 'tones of his interment'). The news is a blow to Bagshaw and of such import that the narrator, in a manner reminiscent of Fielding, Sterne, and Dickens, announces that he must close his chapter. What follows in the eleventh sketch, "The Candidacy of Mr. Smith," is the opening of a new chapter in Mr. Smith's life. In this final sketch, Smith is insistently called "Mr. Smith." To some extent, the 'joshing' is past, and the change to the formal "Mr." further distances the familiar narrator from this apparently transformed, "over-dressed pirate."

It is crucial to an appreciation of Mr. Smith's progress to realize that he risks his standing in Mariposa by running for federal office. Before the reader learns that Smith is "put up" by the Conservatives, the narrator notes that "hotel keepers," along with "office holders, and the clergy and the school teachers," are "allowed to claim to have no politics" (216). The implication is that they must appear—"claim"—to be disinterested in order to maintain their sinecures. Smith's profession is remarked upon twice when Bagshaw learns that he is to be the Conservative candidate: "'Smith! the hotel keeper,'" exclaims Bagshaw (228); and the narrator, following a few mock-heroic metaphors, remarks redundantly "that the Conservatives had selected Josh Smith, proprietor of Smith's Hotel" (229). Bagshaw and the long-empowered Liberals either have not learned or have forgotten what Smith realized in the first sketch: that "the hotel business formed the natural and proper threshold of the national legislature" (34). The election is, then, a must-win and, because Smith is so successful in the hotel business, a will-win competition for Mr. Smith. As hotel-keeper, he displays his facility for a broad bribery and patronage, knowing that he must contribute covertly to both political parties if his business is to flourish. In fact, it was Judge Pepperleigh's discovery that Smith had also contributed to the Liberal party which dealt the first of the two telling blows to Smith's operator's license (23). But in Mariposa Josh Smith is self-licensed, his cunning and greed, in service to his will, providing the only license the licentious Josh requires.

Smith's solution to the problem of his revoked hotelier's license was the illusion of the caff and the Rats' Cooler, an illusion which temporarily inhabited reality and then receded to the realms of Mariposan appearance. But the caff—an idea imported from the city to awe the impressionable Mariposans—served Smith well: it returned his license and demonstrated that he could exploit the illusions of Mariposans and the 'back-to-nature' longings of city-dwellers. As a result of accrediting Smith with having done more to "boom Mariposa than any ten men in town" (33), the entire scam brought about mention of his running for political office and transformed Smith's vision of himself. The scam and its effects prove the validity of the narrator's observation on the relationship between business and politics. It is appropriate, therefore, that Smith's ace in winning his greatest gamble — the telegram from the city announcing his victory — is an extension of his scheme for getting back his hotel license. Mr. Smith is a quick study, a taker of calculated risks, and a gambler who is uncaring of the loser's fortune (a suicidal loser such as Fizzlechip). Displaying a subtle symmetry, the sketches proper begin and conclude with telling telegrams: Smith is victimized by the first, the victor with the second. Furthermore, the telegram from the city which proclaims Smith's victory is a more sophisticated version of the caff. Both caff and telegram depend for their effectiveness upon the awe with which Mariposans view things

metropolitan; neither caff nor telegram has a basis in reality. Both are illusions of sorts which are conjured up by Smith and are based upon a nebula of Maripocentric characteristics, most prominent among which are affection, envy, physical appetite, and the provincial herd mentality. This may sound like an indictment of Mariposa equal to that notoriously ungenerous assessment of Robertson Davies.[35] It is not intended as such.

The crucial distinction to be made between Smith and Mariposa is that the negative characteristics just rehearsed are evoked, cajoled, and exploited by Smith for the gratification of these same and apparently sole attributes of himself. Smith possesses no redeeming features. Mariposa does. Particularly, and in opposition to Smith, Mariposa's most obvious virtue is its nature as an interdependent community. This opposition was made clear in the contrasting first two sketches, a contrast between real business as practiced by Smith — for his own enrichment — and the illusory business speculations of Jeff Thorpe, whose evanescent fortune was to be used partially for local philanthropic purposes, and whose real business, barbering, provides a meeting place for leisurely communal intercourse. To suggest an indecent, rather un-Leacockian *double entendre,* Smith's rapacious relation to Mariposa can best be surmised from his instructions to his supporters to hold back their votes: "'Wait till she begins to warm up and then let 'em have it good and hard'" (245).

As has been stressed in this analysis, Mariposa is an ironically idyllic community, not an ideal one. Smith is successful in his machinations, not merely because of the concentrated greed within himself, but because similar faults exist and persist within the community. These glaring human foibles are the source of Leacock's humour: the incongruities between aspiration and achievement, between appearances and reality. The seven middle sketches of *Sunshine Sketches* treat the social, religious, and romantic dimensions to life in this riding which Mr. Smith carries before him and leaves behind him. But the removal of JOS. SMITH, PROP., does not threaten Mariposa with collapse. If anything, Mariposa 'props up' Smith, or Smith is a 'prop' in the theatrical sense of the word — he is a colourful villain in the melodrama of Mariposan life. Smith is also, as this discussion has shown, a foil.

Smith's removal to Ottawa brings about the return of his mirror image, the equally effectual and explosive Bagshaw. It is to be wondered, though, whether Bagshaw's twenty years in "Ottaway" would enable the former encumbent to raise, as Smith does, the periodically sinking

35. Davies, "Stephen Leacock," in *Our Living Tradition,* p. 147, concludes that the Mariposans are a "self-important, gullible, only moderately honest collection of provincial folk; they cooked their election, they burned down a church." But it is Josh Smith who 'cooks' the election and burns down the church (though the Mariposans are implicated in this latter crime).

Mariposa Belle. But there is no call for a Maripocentric kind of alarm. The following analysis of the third sketch,"The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias," will conclude this paper, demonstrating once again the opposition between Mariposa and Mr. Smith. It will further show that Smith is in the final analysis unnecessary to the life of the community.

V

There are repeated hints throughout "The Marine Excursion" that the sketch should be considered as presenting a microcosm of social life in Mariposa. The narrator remarks that "the Mariposa Belle always seems to me to have some of these strange properties that distinguish Mariposa itself" (68). One of these properties is, like the town's population figures, ths steamer's variable size as a function of perspective: "after you've been in Mariposa for a month or two . . . she gets larger and taller" (68). The image of the steamer as a kind of floating Mariposa is further suggested by the behaviour of the passengers aboard her: they occupy themselves exactly as they would at home, particularly the older women who "all gravitated into the cabin on the lower deck and by getting round the table with needlework, and with all the windows shut . . . soon had it, as they said themselves, just like being at home" (74-75). It should be remembered, moreover, that in both the preface and the first paragraph of the opening sketch, Mariposa was established as *the* small Canadian town. That the steamer, symbolic of Mariposa, also represents something essentially Canadian is indicated by the Pythian band's departure song, the "Maple Leaf for Ever" (74), and by the recurrent singing of "Oh Canada." Most notable is the politically telling, "I think that it was just as they were singing like this: 'O-Can-a-da,' that word went round that the boat was sinking" (83). And there is of course the final block-lettered transcription of the singing as the boat "steams safe and sound to the town wharf"—"O-CAN-A-DA" — the last syllables of the sketch (93). "The Marine Excursion" suggests in these ways that *Sunshine Sketches* was indeed the only fiction that Leacock wrote on commission for a specifically Canadian audience.[36] Pertinently, it is during the sinking of the Mariposa Belle — which craft, by extension, becomes a symbolic 'ship of state' — that Leacock's narrator becomes most fully Mariposan. By so revealing himself, the narrator fictionally affirms Leacock's later patriotic reply to an invitation to retire to England, "I'll Stay In Canada."[37]

There are, in fact, a couple of seeming narrative inconsistencies in "The Marine Excursion." The first occurs when the narrator reveals the climax to his story (70). Here, though, the supposed blunder allows the

36. See B. K. Sandwell, "Stephen Leacock: Worst-dressed Writer Made Fun Respectable," *Saturday Night*, April 1944, p. 17.
37. "I'll Stay In Canada," in *Funny Pieces* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1936), pp. 290-92.

narrator to divert the reader's attention from the fated sinking and to direct it to the interaction of the steamer's passengers, "the contrast between the excursion crowd in the morning and the scene at night" (73). The incongruity between intention and achievement is to be the focus of attention. As the narrator remarks earlier with reference to the ironies which arise from the incongruity between aspiration and realization: "perhaps life is like that all through" (40). The narrator's seeming blunder also disarms the reader in preparation for the true, climactic humour of the sketch — the fact that the steamer sinks ironically in less than six feet of water: "What? Hadn't I explained about the depth of Lake Wissanotti?" (85). This piece of information the narrator has cleverly withheld from his story-spoiling blunder: "But, dear me, I am afraid that this is no way to tell a story" (73). In these ways, the narrator's revelation of the climax to "The Marine Excursion" also effectively 'torpedoes' — parodies and exposes — the melodramatic suspense of conventional romance stories of disaster and rescue. It is typical of Leacock to undermine (or watermine) the literary romance and simultaneously to elevate its inspiration.

The second purposeful narrative inconsistency occurs when the steamer is actually sinking. Here the narrator, despite his knowledge of the lake's depth and the periodic recurrence of these sinkings, grows alarmed. "Safe!" he exclaims. "I'm not sure now that I come to think of it that it isn't worse than sinking in the Atlantic" (86). He proceeds to work himself into an identifiably Mariposan state of excitability:

> —safe? Safe yourself, if you like; as for me, let me once get back into Mariposa again, under the night shadow of the maple trees, and this shall be the last, last time I'll go on Lake Wissanotti.
>
> Safe! Oh yes! Isn't it strange how safe other people's adventures seem after they happen? (87).

Such frenzy must indeed be seen as a lapse from the narrator's usual ironic composure and earlier omniscience with regard to the lake's depth. But this change serves three important functions: firstly, the narrator has dramatically and personally illustrated his continuing insistence on the crucial matter of perspective or point of view; secondly, by so exposing himself to the reader's laughter, the narrator has identified himself wholly with the Mariposans in this microcosmic sketch of community and country; and thirdly, his immediately following remarks contrast himself and the alarmed Mariposans to a composed Mr. Smith:

> I don't see how some of the people took it so calmly; how Mr. Smith, for instance, could have gone on smoking and telling how he'd had a steamer "sink on him" on Lake Nipissing and a still bigger one, a side-wheeler, sink on him in Lake Abbitibbi." (87)

When the steamer settles down on the reed bank, the narrator with his fellow Mariposans dismisses the previous alarm: "Danger? pshaw! fiddlesticks!) everybody scouted the idea" (88). He soon reverts to his

characteristic ironic self. But the momentary, complete identification with the imperilled Mariposans, coupled with the contrast to Smith's calculated calm, subtly underscores the central tension of *Sunshine Sketches* — the opposition between a cohesive, interdependent community and an isolated self-contained and self-serving individual. This desire on the part of Leacock's narrator to identify himself with the Mariposans in opposition to Mr. Smith (here achieved by manipulation of the narrator's character) has been evident from the beginning of "The Marine Excursion."

The Narrator begins this sketch with exclamatory praise for "Excursion Day!" (63) and proceeds to a series of inflated comparisons between things Mariposan and lesser wonders of the world. He cares for none of these other spectacles: "Take them away," "I don't want them," "I'd shut my eyes." He concludes his introduction with a somewhat petulant demand: "I want to see the Mariposan band in uniform . . . "(64). His reason for desiring to be part of the excursion is one that he has noted before in the *Sketches*, the sense of community: "that's the great thing about the town and that's what makes it so different from the city. Everybody is in everything" (66). Everybody may well participate in everything in Mariposa, but everybody's motivation for so doing in "The Marine Excursion" is different from Mr. Smith's.

The narrator remarks particularly on the apparent oddity of Smith's participation in the excursion: "Do I say that Mr. Smith is here? Why, everybody's here" (65). The suggestion would appear to be that Smith somehow does not belong in the communal outing. Yet he is there, with generous helpings of liquor and food and the services of "the German waiter from the caff" (65), indicating once again that "The Marine Excursion," like "The Speculations," transpires before the end of the first sketch). There should be little doubt, however, concerning the motivation behind Smith's generosity. His largess is either for the benefit of his hotel business, as the first sketch has demonstrated, or it may already be in service to his fledging political ambitions. Although the other passengers are roundly and humorously satirized for the self-obsessiveness of their pastimes aboard the steamer, they are nonetheless presented as a viable community enjoying a sociable outing. The gambler Smith, in contrast, plays "freezeout poker with the two juniors in Duff's bank" (79). As the reader must suspect, Smith's winning is assured.

When enough passengers have been 'rescued' from the grounded steamer, Smith raises her and wins a twenty-five dollar bet from Mullins, the head of Mariposa's other bank. This is Smith's only motive for 'saving' the Mariposa Belle (though by inference, he may also be concerned for his own physical comfort). Smith, "who has had steamers sink on him in half the lakes from Temiscaming to the Bay" (93), stays atop the Mariposa Belle. He manages to steer her safely into dock because he is, as the narrator

has pointedly remarked, "shrewd" (92). Smith's monetary motivation for raising the steamer places him in marked contrast to the Mariposans who put out heroically in lifeboats to attempt a rescue. For all the reversals, inversions, and ironies of the rescue attempt, Leacock's narrator is sincere in his appraisal of the rescuers: "after all, the bravery of the lifeboat man is the true bravery,—expended to save life, not to destroy it" (90). Although Donald Cameron fails to take account of the central tension in *Sunshine Sketches* — the opposition between Mariposa and Mr. Smith — his rewarding study of the book correctly perceives the essential values evinced by Mariposans: "the recognition of each other's humanity is an impulse which Mariposa consciously values."[38] There is perhaps no justification for attributing a consciousness of their values to Mariposans. It is more than enough that they possess an ingrained instinct for communal life.

The Mariposans are, as usual, ineffectual in their rescue attempt, though not completely so. They do manage to get enough passengers off the steamer to allow Smith to effect the raising of the Mariposa Belle. As is their habit, the Mariposans work their own undoing — in this instance, their diminution and Mullins' loss of twenty-five dollars. All results in the greater glory of, the 'propping up' of Josh Smith, *whom the Mariposans do not need.* The Mariposa Belle periodically "sinks every now and then" in Wissanotti's six feet of water and is somehow raised, presumably before Smith's arrival in Mariposa (85). The Mariposans' shouts for a new pilot to steer them safely into dock — "'Smith! Get Smith!'" (93) — is a cry which has been shrewdly orchestrated by Smith. It is, moreover, a cry which echoes forward to their election of Smith in the last sketch, after which, Mr. Smith goes to "Ottaway" to help guide the ship of state. The view of the Mariposa Belle — the incongruous Beautiful Butterfly[39]— as a microcosm of both community and nation make it quite likely that Leacock is deliberately employing the traditional 'ship-of-state' trope. Men such as Josh Smith who understand the emboweled mechanics of the ship of state — the nether parts of the Beautiful Butterfly — opportunely exploit

38. Cameron, *Faces of Leacock,* p. 128.

39. Leacock, *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future* (Montreal: Privately printed for the House of Seagram by the Gazette Printing Co., 1941), p. 36, writes that "foreign words were now and then dropped in to our map without trace of origin; as witness the Spanish 'Orillia' that fell mercifully out of the sky as an improvement over Champlain's 'Cahiagué.'" It is generally accepted that Orillia, Ontario, provided the inspiration of Mariposa. *Mariposa* is the Spanish word for "butterfly," which is inarguably a favourable image, suggesting, as it does, an organism that is colourful, beautiful, and delicate. *Sunshine Sketches* at once partakes of, 'explodes' the conventions of, and is the artistic fulfilment of the local-colour literary tradition of the turn of the century (as the Sketches of the title implies). Although not especially delicate, the *organic* integrity of Mariposa is, as has been shown in this study, threatened by brutalities which are personified by Josh Smith. See David Legate, *Stephen Leacock,* p. 62, who has discovered that Leacock took the name of "Mariposa" from "a little-known settlement, a stone's throw from Orillia, which had existed before he had come to Canada as a child."

the ignorance of the citizens/passengers who are not so ready to plug and pump and pilot. Such ignorance permits over-dressed pirates aboard the ship of state.

"The Marine Excursion" concludes, appropriately, with a resounding 'O-CAN-A-DA!" There is no doubt an authorial intention of concerned and qualified patriotism here. But the syllables might better be considered in the sense of F. R. Scott's homonymic and wearied lines on the state of his country's literary culture:

> O Canada, O Canada, Oh can
> A day go by without new authors springing
> To paint the native maple, and to plan
> More ways to set the selfsame welkin ringing?[40]

Leacock, arguably Scott's equal in political acuity, fully understands how the would-be politician opportunely capitalizes on the weaknesses of the ineffectual. It would be extremely unkind, however, to suggest that Mr. Smith, in opposition to the heroic rescuers, expends his energies to "destroy" life. There is ample evidence in Leacock's writings to suggest that he knew the value of a Smith and held a grudging respect for the type, if not for the individual.[41] It may be that Leacock intended to infuse Smith with some of what he remarked of *Pickwick's* Alfred Jingles: some of the "extraordinary magic by which [Dickens] turns a cheat and a crook into a charming character."[42] Nonetheless, in a metaphoric sense and by subtle means, *Sunshine Sketches* presents Smith in opposition to the life of the community. If it were not for the cohesive vitality of the community and for Mariposa's childlike resilience, the little town in the sunshine would wilt in the shadow of such a presence.

University of Western Ontario

40. F. R. Scott, "The Canadian Authors Meet," in *Selected Poems* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 70.
41. See Leacock, "Business in England — Wanted: More Profiteers," in *My Discovery of England* (London: John Lane, 1922; rpt. New Canadian Library, No. 28, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), pp. 122-130, and *My Remarkable Uncle* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1942), pp. 14-20.
42. *Charles Dickens,* p. 32.