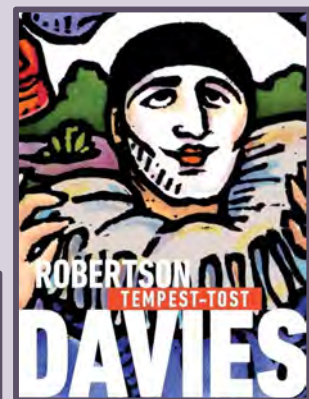
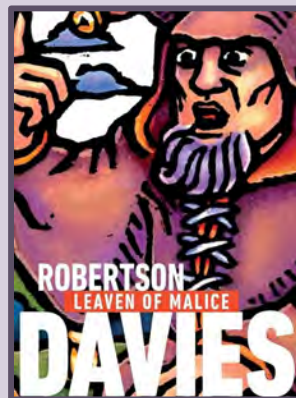


The Importance of Independence: Examining The Satirization of Academia in Robertson Davies' *Tempest- Tost* and *Leaven Of Malice*

Sarah Matthews & Emma Rudback

SEMINAR OUTLINE...

- I. Central Thesis
- II. The Connection of Formal
Education and Social Value
- III. Satire of Academia and Rejection
of Imposed Conventions
- IV. The Importance of Individual
and National Independence
- V. Discussion Questions
- VI. Wrap-up



THESIS...

Through the satirical portrayal of education and academia in *Tempest-Tost* and *Leaven of Malice*, Robertson Davies reveals the humorous absurdities embedded within formal education-based classist hierarchies, where individuals are arbitrarily and superficially assigned value and importance. As such, Davies simultaneously rejects Canada's restricting connection to British traditions and conventions to encourage an independent identity not only the new country but for all Canadians as individuals.

3

THE PERCEIVED CONNECTION BETWEEN FORMAL EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

Davies establishes the connection between an individual's received education and its impact on their identity and perceived value throughout *Tempest-Tost* and *Leaven of Malice* to reveal the social conventions that dictate one's place within social hierarchies.

4

INTERNALIZED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

Solly is “**affronted** by the suggestion that any Shakespearean play was unfamiliar to him” (*Tempest* 92)

“Multiple critiques suggest that institutes [and individuals] of higher education **perpetuate** rather than level the social class hierarchy” (Cattaneo et al. 1)

5

EXTERNALLY PROJECTED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

“This is Solly Bridgetower ... he's just back from **Cambridge**” (*Tempest* 21), “He's at **Cambridge**, you know” (28), “[Solly's the way he is] because [he's] been to **Cambridge**” (20).

“It makes you think, doesn't it? I mean, right here in Salterton, **among university people**—that kind of thing, you only associate with case histories” (*Malice* 159)

6

REJECTION OF CONVENTIONS OF IDENTITY THROUGH THE SATIRE OF EDUCATION

Next, throughout *Tempest-Tost* and *Leaven of Malice*, Davies uses Horatian satire of education to highlight its humorously absurd and superficial nature as a means to reject and challenge the notions and structures of classist hierarchies that impede on one's identity.

7

SATIRIZATION OF EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA

“This was all the more meritorious in her because she had been educated in **private schools. Boarding schools.** He did not approve of private schools. It was a well-known fact that many of the teachers in them were not really qualified to teach” (*Tempest* 68)

“[Griselda] had spoken so—he searched for the right word—well, so *nicely*” (*Tempest* 68)

8

SATIRIZATION OF EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA (CONT.)

Solly wishes that the students “read what they have lifted with greater care and introduced a little artistry” (*Malice* 148).

“He could always award marks between B minus and C plus **arbitrarily**, and **not give the papers back at all.**” (149).



9

RELATION TO CANADA'S PURSUIT OF INDEPENDENCE

Finally, we argue that Davies' satirization of education as a determinant of one's identity and value to society serves to reject and challenge Canadian ties to British customs and traditions and thus support Canada's individual identity as a new country.

10

CONNECTION TO CANADIAN CULTURE AND IDENTITY

“It would be a fine thing for [Ridley] to **have** a doctorate. A very nice **crown** to [his] career” (*Malice* 192)

Queen’s University, the parallel to Waverley University, was established in 1841 in a “Royal Charter issued by Queen Victoria... and the Presbyterians of Upper Canada” (Queen’s University 2024).



11

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY AND WAVERLEY UNIVERSITY

“To say that the **architecture** of Waverley revealed its spirit would be a gross libel upon a centre of learning which has dignity and, in its high moments, nobility... the university had the misfortune to do most of its building during that long **Victorian period** ... and what had been done in England was **repeated, clumsily** and a quarter of a century later, in Canada” (*Tempest* 10)



Arial photo of Queen's University, 1919

12

LET'S DISCUSS!

Why do you think education is specifically written as a topic of satire in these novels? What role do you think Davies' experiences at Queen's plays in this, if any?

In what ways does education play a role in the conflict of *Tempest-Tost* and/or *Leaven of Malice*? Do you think that the plot of these novels would drastically change if every character were given the same educational background?



13

CONCLUSION...

Throughout the novels *Tempest-Tost* and *Leaven of Malice*, Robertson Davies satirizes education and academia to reveal reject and challenge imposed British traditions and conventions within Canada. Thus, Davies establishes not only the importance of cultural and independent evolution and growth, but also of achieving said growth with independence to form a genuine identity not only for a country, but for ourselves as well.

14

WORKS CITED

- Cattaneo, Lauren B., et al. "Elaborating the connection between social class and classism in college." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 63.3-4, 2019, pp. 476-486.
- Davies, Robertson. *Leaven of Malice*. 1954. Penguin Canada Books Inc., 2015.
- Davies, Robertson. *Tempest-Tost*. 1951. Penguin Canada Books Inc., 2015.
- Thorburn, H. G. "Universities and Development: The Canadian Experience." *Policy Studies Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1986, pp. 478.
- Queen's University. "A History of Queen's: An Overview". Queen's University Encyclopedia, 2024.



**Thank you for your
engagement!**

Group Discussion



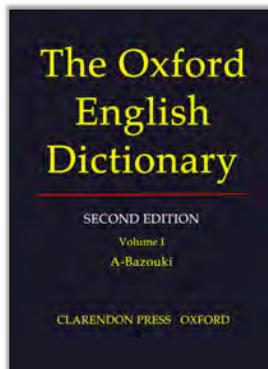
Instructions

- Divide into groups of 4.
- Collect a Discussion Question sheet from Dr May.
- Write your full names (first and last) on the Discussion Question sheet.
- Discuss and take informal notes on the Discussion Question.
- Select one person to summarize your discussion to the class.
- We will reconvene in 10 minutes.

1. Monica thinks England will be “quaint”

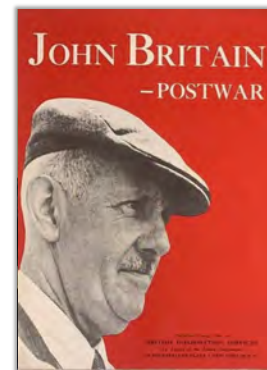
England would be very quaint, and the people—though not so go-ahead and modern as the Canadians—would be exceedingly polite, honest, and quaint as well. The Cockneys would be especially quaint, because they were so quick-witted, and so full of independence and courage. Cockneys might be expected to wear suits with hundreds of pearl buttons on them, on Sundays, just as they did in the photographs sent out by the British travel agencies; there would be splendidly uniformed soldiers, as seen in whisky advertisements; people in official positions were very likely to wear little wigs; there would be innumerable quaint customs—beating the boundaries, flinging the pancake, chewing the gammon, and the like, as described by the British Information Service; children might be expected to talk like grown-ups; it would rain most of the time, and this would be borne with immense good-humour; coffee would be awful but tea would be drunk in bucketsful; and there would be a lot of culture and gracious living and characteristic English understatement in evidence everywhere. (83)

quaint



- attractively unusual or unfamiliar in character, especially in an old-fashioned way
- in Middle English, used to mean wise, cunning, out of the ordinary
- from the Old French *cointe* from the Latin *cognitus*, past participle of *cognoscere*, meaning “ascertain” (OED)

British Information Services



- a propaganda organization established by the government of the United Kingdom
- initially formed in 1941 as an organization to promote British interests in the United States during the Second World War
- later expanded to have a presence in around 40 countries attached to British embassies, including Canada (*Wikipedia*)

2. Monica sees Revelstoke “utterly naked”

Nothing in Monica’s previous experience had prepared her for such a spectacle, and it was the most shocking sight, within the bounds of nature, that could have confronted her. The Thirteeners, and everybody else with whom she had ever been intimately acquainted, thought very poorly of nakedness. Courtships, even when carried to lengths which resulted in hasty and muted weddings, were always conducted fully dressed. The intimacies of married life were negotiated in the dark, under blankets. Shame about nakedness was immensely valued, as a guarantee of high character. It is true that, when in Paris, Monica had been taken to the Louvre several times by Amy Neilson, and she had learned to look at naked statuary—even the Hermaphrodite—without betraying the discomfort she felt in the presence of those stony, bare monsters; but that was art and idealized form—no preparation for what she now saw—a naked man, not especially graced with beauty, coloured in shades which ranged between pink and whitey-drab, patchily hairy, and obviously very much alive. (135)

3. Revelstoke tells Monica to stop learning “like a parrot”

“I know what you mean,” said he, “but I wish you wouldn’t use words like ‘educational,’ which have grown sour from being so much in the wrong people’s mouths. What we are doing isn’t really educational. It’s enlightening, I suppose, and its purpose is to nurture the spirit. If formal education has any bearing on the arts at all, its purpose is to make critics, not artists. Its usual effect is to cage the spirit in other people’s ideas—the ideas of poets and philosophers, which were once splendid insights into the nature of life, but which people who have no insights of their own have hardened into dogmas. It is the spirit we must work with, and not the mind as such. For ‘the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.’” . . . Thus, rather quickly, all things considered, Revelstoke persuaded Monica to give up her determination to learn like a parrot, and to imitate her masters without really understanding what they did, and brought her to a point where she could feel a little, and understand, respect, and cherish her own feeling. (146-47)

“The Sleeping Hermaphrodite”



I Corinthians 2.9-11

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

I Corinthians 2.9-11 KJV

4. Monica reflects on her sexual experience with Revelstoke

By the laws of literature which meant so much to Ripon, her first experience of sex should have been painful, dispiriting, and frightening. But it had been none of these things. She had been too confused and surprised to take great heed of the physical side of the encounter; it had all been so strange—the nearness, the intimacy of the posture, the inevitable and natural quality of the act itself; though new to her, it did not seem utterly unaccustomed, but rather like something dimly but pleasurably remembered from the past—and this in itself was strange. What had moved her more than these things were the endearments which Revelstoke had whispered, and the kindness and gentleness with which he had carried out his purpose. Nobody had ever spoken to her in such a fashion before. She had been kissed once or twice in a very tentative way, but that was nothing; this had touched the tender places of her spirit, caressed and stirred them, bringing her a fresh consciousness of life. And again this was not utterly strange, but like the resumption of something once cherished, and lost for a time.... She should feel evil, depraved—she knew it. But, miraculously, at this moment when she should have stood in awe of her mother, and Pastor Beamis and the whole moral code of the Thirteeners, she felt, on the contrary, free of them.... (169)

Queen's University Official Statement of Copyright: *This material is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in courses at Queen's University. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in courses at Queen's University. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate's Academic Integrity Policy Statement.*