happier in a less commercially individualistic and more communal society such as the Dalmatian, although he also knows that she is not aware of this.

The plot of the story, such as it is, consists of the conversation between Nick and the narrator and of its aftermath. Nick states his sense that something is wrong, and the narrator thinks that Nick may be right but disapproves of his politics. When Nick says that he is a New Zealander, the narrator knows that this is not really true but that Nick is not a Dalmatian any longer either. They agree to talk again, but the narrator is sacked the next day for telling Mrs. Crump that her heart is in the wrong place. (He meant that she should be in Dalmatia.) He goes to town to drink and to get Nick off his mind.

To be a New Zealander, the story implies, is to be relentlessly practical and materialistic, lacking any close relationship with the land and valuing only the money to be made from it. Thus, despite his efforts to adapt, Nick cannot be a real New Zealander because he is too emotional and wants more from life than material success. The story thus implies that New Zealand society, as formed over its first 100 years, is in some ways unnatural, running counter to basic human needs and values. It is not “God’s own country,” as New Zealand would like to believe, but a place where it is “all wrong.”

The narrative method, asking the reader to read between the lines and see what the narrator cannot articulate or even allow himself to feel, makes the meaning all the more powerful. The reader is required to participate to make sense of the story. As in much of Sargeson’s work, less is more.

—Lawrence Jones

**THE MAN THAT CORRUPTED HADLEYBURG**

by Mark Twain, 1900

“’The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg’” is one of Mark Twain’s greatest short stories. A century after it was written, it seems as contemporary as ever. Representative of Twain’s late pessimism and his attacks on the “damned human race,” the story has no specific locale. Theme more than place is to the fore, and Hadleyburg is a representative American town. It is every town. Similarly, the characters are types more than individuals, with the collective more important than the whole. Although broad strokes of Twainian humor characterize the narrative, the ultimate effect of the story is sobering and somber. The story ends by highlighting death, cruelty, and abiding human folly. A companion in some ways to The Mysterious Stranger, “’The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg’” denies readers the perspective of the innocence of boyhood that consistently humanizes the longer work. There are no children in “’The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,’” and Twain has aimed the story at adults.

But the title character of the two works links them. The mysterious stranger is the man who corrupted Hadleyburg, and the stranger in both works is Satan, although he is more lovable in his Austrian than in his American manifestation. For the stranger who returns to Hadleyburg with his “apple” (a bag of “gold” coins) is vindictive, bent on revenge. He is, as New England Puritans had dubbed him, the great deluder, and in Twain’s story he is seeking whomever he may devour. For a time he may also deceive some readers, but he is too clever by far—Twain’s story being not realistic but emblematic—and by the story’s end it is obvious that the gambler Stephenson has been using a pseudonym. On his deathbed Edward Richards says of the checks the gambler left with him, “‘They came from Satan. I saw the hell-brand on them, and I knew they were sent to betray me to sin.’” At the beginning of the story the narrator had identified the gambler as “’the mysterious big stranger.’” Late in his career, Twain was increasingly fascinated by the figure of Lucifer, whose story he knew from childhood, and, perhaps taking a lead from his mother, he came to consider him a too maligned character. It is clear from “’The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg’” that Twain had come to know Milton’s Satan, too, and had found him a somewhat congenial character. Twain seems to have concluded that Lucifer had some important lessons to teach gullible human beings.

The stranger’s effort to teach a lesson to Hadleyburg structures Twain’s story, which recounts a perfect revenge. The mysterious stranger is avenging a slight, an insult from the leaders of Hadleyburg, and he wants to expose all of them. (Like Milton’s Satan, Twain’s is a proud being.) He plots his strategy carefully. As in Poe’s “’The Cask of Amontillado,’” that other American short story classic of revenge, timing is all. The stranger waits patiently for some years until Goodson dies, for he had a decency that might have thwarted the stranger’s plan. But when the moment is ripe, the stranger puts his huge temptation before the leaders of Hadleyburg. The love of money is the bait that will expose the hypocrisy of the community. For a perfect revenge there must be considerable duration to the agony. Thus, waiting is central to the action of the story, and the Committee of Nineteen has three weeks to wait between the inciting incident and the public gathering at which truth, or much of it, becomes manifest. As in Poe’s story, the victims must have ample time to ponder what is being done to them and who is doing it. The avenger knows his victims’ weaknesses and counts on these weaknesses to lead them into his trap. Finally, there is the satisfaction of the victims’ agony, which in Twain’s story is made palpable in the painful deaths of Mary and Edward Richards. When the stranger leaves Hadleyburg, it is utterly changed. The survivors are east of Eden, as it were. Satan has reversed the petition from the Lord’s Prayer, and Hadleyburg adopts a new model: “’Lead Us Into Temptation.’” The motto strikes a Miltonic note, for in “’Areopagitica,’” Milton avows that he cannot praise a cloistered virtue.

As in Paradise Lost, Satan has some of his most impressive moments in a public arena. Twain creates his own Pandemonium when the citizens gather on the appointed Friday (perhaps Good Friday) to learn who deserves the “reward” left by the gambler. Each of the illustrious Committee of Nineteen has submitted a statement claiming that he meets the stipulated test identifying him as the one who did the mysterious stranger the deserving good deed. (Twain’s naming of the citizens—Billson, Wilson, Thompson—underscores how much of a piece they are.) The town’s citizens enter into the fun of the exposures that follow. As is usual for Twain, there is a “’hoss sense’” character useful to the exposure. He is Jack Halliday, “’the loafing, good-natured no-account, irreverent fisherman, hunter, boys’ friend, stray dogs’ friend, typical ’Sam Lawson’ of the town.’” The humor is most raucous in this section of the story, the longest of its four parts, and the satire seems pointed at American institutions. Twain exposes the folly of American elections in the speeches that follow, known as spin control today, for Hadleyburg is in the midst of a political campaign. Not surprisingly, the advantage in spin control and the ensuing election go to the so-called Dr. Clay Harkness, who has
become wealthy from a popular patent medicine and who is able to turn disgrace into triumph through negative campaigning and to win the election. Crowds in Twain’s work are typically fooled by clever oratory, and Hadleyburg gets the politicians it deserves. Here, as in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, there is not much to love in humankind, the species.

Like Milton, Twain ends his account of lost innocence with focus on a pivotal couple, not on the assembly. When the town meeting ends, in the community’s view Mary and Edward Richards are the uncorrupted ones. They have escaped exposure because the Reverend Mr. Burgess wished to save them, remembering that Edward had done him a kindness. Edward knows how minimal that kindness was, how cowardly he had been in letting Burgess bear a punishment he did not deserve. Mary and Edward know that they are no more virtuous than the other council elite. Satan is not, it turns out, ready to leave the Richardses alone, for he wants to make sure that their innocence is real. His new plan completes the revenge, as the Richardses expose themselves publicly. From the beginning of the story, Twain has presented them as an aged Adam and Eve. They meet temptation, succumb to it, and fault each other. They regain no paradise, and Twain’s story darkens considerably as the old couple realize the wages of sin. Their final despair is existential. Edward confesses to Mary, “I—I wish I were dead, Mary. I wish I were out of it all.” Darkest of all, the couple concludes that free will is only an illusion: “We—we couldn’t help it, Mary. It—well, it was ordered. All things are.”

Hadleyburg proclaims the importance of individual integrity, individual choice, and individual responsibility. But Twain’s story shows its citizens to be all of a piece, doomed to hypocrisy and deceit and finally to despair, the essence of the damned human race.

—Joseph M. Flora

THE MAN WHO INVENTED SIN
by Sean O’Faolain, 1947

“The Man Who Invented Sin” is the title story of Sean O’Faolain’s 1948 collection, first published as Teresa and Other Stories in 1947. In his own view it represented his first proper adjustment to the realities of Irish life after the comparative romanticism of his earlier collections. In the preface to the 1959 edition he outlined the dimensions of the problem, “By the time I had more or less adjusted myself to the life about me, it suddenly broke in on me that Ireland had not adjusted herself to the life about her in the least little bit.” Irishmen, he said, were still thinking about themselves in romantic terms, while at the same time making good hard cash and carefully compiling another contradictory image composed of terms like “pious, holy prudent, sterling, gorsoons . . . ancestors, deeprooted, olden, venerable . . .” This “double-thinking or squint-thinking” mode was used as a means of dodging “more awkward social, moral and political problems than any country might . . . hope to solve in a century of ruthless thinking.” O’Faolain’s task, as he perceived it, was thenceforth to chart this ambivalence, though he was aware that to succeed he had to devise a totally new fictional approach. But he wanted to avoid both satire and anger. For all his wonder that he could bear to return to a country that he described in the spring 1976 O’Faolain issue of Irish University Review as “run by a cowardly, priest-bullied, ignorant, bigoted mob of bourgeois, gombeen-men,” he was aware that he did not begin to write until he had suffered “enough mortal shocks to shatter those three refracting lenses, Family, Fatherland and Faith, that up to that moment of time prevented me from seeing with my own eyes at least some little bit of the nature of life as it is really lived.” He admitted that he loved Ireland and its people too much for satire: “All any artist should ask of his country is his freedom, and all he should promise it in return is his disloyalty. If he achieves both, he will serve his country well.”

O’Faolain can be seen, no matter what genre he is working in, to be the most balanced and intelligent of the analysts of the malaise of post-1922 Ireland. He has been described as working “all his life to bring a parochial, nationalistic and clerical Ireland into the mainstream of modern culture.” Since this was his aim, he rarely adopted the narrative stance of the innocent and naïve child but chose rather the mature, detached, knowledgeable, retrospective view. “The Man Who Invented Sin” is a story of innocence corrupted, of spontaneity perverted in the interests of clerical dominance and social conformity. The impact depends crucially on the tone of the narrator, on his ability both to re-create the lost Eden of innocence and to realize the significance of what has taken place. The note of nostalgic reminiscence is struck immediately, “in our youth” the young people of Ireland were in a mood of energetic idealism. A newly created state was reestablishing its own sense of identity, and thousands of people flocked to the Irish-speaking areas to learn to speak their own language and to debate pressing questions of national identity. The natural setting is beautiful, and the predominant mood is one of merriment, with a pagan undertone. The story centers on two sets of monks and nuns, forced by overcrowding to lodge somewhat apart from the other summer visitors and drawn by proximity and shared interests and background into openness and communication with one another. They are presented throughout mainly as children, their ludicrously inappropriate clerical names transformed into childish nicknames (Chrysostom to Chrissie, Majellan to Jelly), and they are often lonely and homesick. Their spontaneity, naturalness, and gentleness are emphasized. Brother Virgilius is “a countryman with a powerful frame and a powerful voice, round red cheeks, and no nerves.” Brother Majellan is “a gentle, apple-cheeked man with big glasses, a complexion like a girl’s, teeth as white as a hound’s, and soft, beaming eyes.” In sharp contrast is the local curate, who, by misinterpreting their behavior, invents sin and, by creating a sense of guilt, irremediably corrupts everyone. In keeping with the central irony of the story, he is presented throughout as satanic. He is physically violent, fat, pompous, and cocksure, with a “black barrel of a body,” and is nicknamed Lispeen (frog). As he walks away at the end, surrounded by respectful salutes, the narrator sees “his elongated shadow (waving) behind him like a tail.” Although the curate laughs off the effect of his actions, the narrator is aware that he has not only destroyed the natural, wholesome, and consolatory interaction among the four young people, creating in them a puritan suspicion and concern for rigid social observance at the expense of personal growth, but has also corrupted the natural world, changing it from benign to threatening. He has ultimately negated the possibility of creating an Edenic world that can nurture idealism and creativity. As the story ends, the mountains are empty, and Majellan is stooped and gray, existing in a “smelly slum” and denying the truth of his own memories, while the curate, elevated in