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A Whisper in the Night: Alden Nowlan's Poetry and Journalism

by

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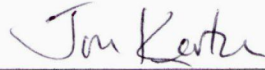
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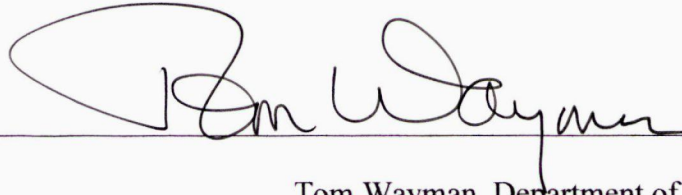
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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A Whisper in the Night: Alden Nowlan's Poetry and Journalism" submitted by Lauren Caines in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



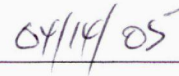
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between Alden Nowlan's poetry and his *Telegraph-Journal* and *Atlantic Advocate* columns. It outlines his careers with both publications and explores his views of the relationship between poetry and journalism. By comparing the two different forms, this study shows that Nowlan is more satiric and more argumentative in his columns, although he does occasionally write satirical and persuasive poems. This thesis also considers critical opinion of and Nowlan's defenses for his prosaic verse, and finally, looks at several instances when Nowlan wrote a column and a poem about the same experience. Nowlan's journalism is deserving of study because of its literary merit and also because of the ties it has to his other works.

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For my parents, Ron and Anne, and for my grandmother, Erma.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BWS- Bread, Wine and Salt

BTL- Between Tears and Laughter

DE- Double Exposure

EG- An Exchange of Gifts

MNM- The Mysterious Naked Man

MNT- I Might Not Tell Everyone This

PJG- Playing the Jesus Game

SG-Smoked Glass

SHM- I'm a Stranger Here Myself

SP- Alden Nowlan: Selected Poems

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

“The Mysterious Naked Man” (*MNM* 1) is a poem critics repeatedly mention when they discuss Alden Nowlan’s poetry, yet no critic writes of the actual inspiration for the poem. Michael Oliver says the poem is “probably the very best of all of Nowlan’s poems. This poem creates a mythical reality that expresses the full dimension of Nowlan’s insight into the problem of realizing one’s individual identity in a stereotyped and often frightening society” (“Dread” 63). Not all critics are as complimentary, but one gets closer to the source of the subject for the poem. Virginia Scott says, “Nowlan’s prosody in this introductory poem is open, prosaic. The enjambment effects a sense of continuity in the wholeness of the scene. . . . There is an ease of tone in ‘The Mysterious Naked Man.’ The narration is like journalistic reportage” (32).

Nowlan explains the root of this poetic-journalistic narration in his *Telegraph-Journal* column, “Streaking started in N.B.” (16 March 1974). He writes:

I don’t admit to being the Father of Streaking, although recently I’ve been hailed as such by several of my acquaintances.

But it’s true that I chronicled the birth of the movement, which took place at Saint John in 1966.

It’s the subject of the title poem in my book, first published six years ago, *The Mysterious Naked Man*. [*sic*]

Reviewers have generally described the poem as a surrealistic fantasy.

Actually, it records a real event, as some Saint John residents will remember. . . .

His achievement was recorded only in my poem and, if I remember

rightly, in a very brief item on the local page of *The Telegraph-Journal* and *The Evening Times-Globe*. (40.80.3.5f1)

How does an actual event that occurred in Saint John transform into a piece of journalism that later transforms into a poem, and finally into a popular legend? In each transformation, the facts are modified, but the embellishments and omissions then illuminate the original event. What distinguishes the poetic version from the journalistic account? How do the two forms overlap for Nowlan? How does a story change when it is communicated through poetry rather than journalism?

Alden Nowlan began his career as a journalist with the *Hartland Observer* in 1952, at age nineteen. He had dropped out of school in grade five and had received no formal training in the art of journalism, but he was an avid reader and closet writer from a young age. In “Growing up in Katpesa Creek,” Nowlan explains how he obtained this position as a reporter. He recounts, “one day I answered an advertisement by a weekly newspaper in northern New Brunswick. Naturally, I said that I was a high school graduate, added a year to my age and pretended to have a year’s newspaper experience” (DE 23-24). This embellishment did not disadvantage him and, in fact, it is similar to what he does in his poetry when he inspects the world around him—he fills in the gaps with appropriate details.

While at the *Observer*, he covered local events of the small town and also those of wider New Brunswick, but after eleven years he grew tired of Hartland and needed a greater income to support his new wife and son. He accepted a post with *The Telegraph-Journal* and *Evening Times-Globe* in Saint John, New Brunswick as the Provincial Editor overseeing various correspondents. He later became the News Editor and his bosses were

continually pleased with his work. In fact, they valued him to such an extent that they maintained his pay and benefits while he was sick with cancer in 1966. The following year he received a Canada Council Grant and, shortly after, a Guggenheim fellowship, but he continued to work part time for *The Telegraph-Journal*. This funding gave him a reprieve from newspaper work; however, he writes to Ralph Costello, the President and Publisher, "It has always been my intention to go back to working for you on a full-time basis as soon as people like the Canada Council and the Guggenheim Foundation stop subsidizing my fiction and poetry -- provided you still want me as a member of the staff when that time comes" (26 August 1968, 40.29.23.16a).

Ultimately, Nowlan never returned to the newspaper full-time due to his subsequent posting as the University of New Brunswick's writer-in-residence, a position that supported him financially until his death in 1983. Nowlan was greatly missed on staff during his years funded by granting agencies, and in the summer of 1968 he began negotiations with Costello about a weekly column. Patrick Toner claims Nowlan did not sever his connection with the *Telegraph* because:

He still needed the security of a permanent job, a legacy of his impoverished childhood. The idea of living purely off his writing, without the safety net of a grant or a writer-in-residency, secretly terrified him, so he arranged with Ralph Costello to provide a column for the Saturday edition of the paper for twenty dollars per week and continued inclusion in the company health plan. . . .

There was his working-class soul to appease, too. Nowlan loved writing poetry, but knew that he could reach more readers through journalism than he could through verse. He liked to think of himself as a salt-of-the earth craftsman,

and in his mind good, solid non-fiction prose was somehow a more honest craft.

(182)

Toner does not supply the source of this information; however, it is clear that Nowlan enjoyed writing “solid non-fiction prose.” As he writes to John Zanes in May 1975, “I get nostalgic for the newspaper. If I could be two people, one of me would be a newspaper man still” (40.33.14.23).

During their negotiations, Costello writes, “I am most anxious to see more stories about people -- stories about places and communities in our province, but written around the people who live in these communities” (23 July 1968, 40.29.23.14). This concept appealed to Nowlan and he replied to Costello with a list of possible subjects for columns. He adds, “I am quite enthusiastic about the idea of the weekly article and I think I have a fairly clear idea of what is wanted -- something with an emphasis on people and likely to interest the average New Brunswick newspaper reader” (26 August 1968, 40.29.23.16). Thus began “Alden Nowlan Reports,” Nowlan’s fifteen-year journey with the newspaper readers of New Brunswick.

The Telegraph-Journal, owned by the Irving family, was what Costello calls “a family newspaper” (23 November 1970, 40.29.23.85), and was the only daily that attempted to cover all of New Brunswick. When I consulted old copies of *The Telegraph-Journal* held by the Harriet Irving Library at University of New Brunswick, I discovered that although the first page of the newspaper always covered important national and international news, the second and third pages featured headlines such as “They’re Ready to Ride In Horse Show Monday,” “Carleton Hospital Board Reappoints Executive,” and “Flying Club Off Ground at Capital” (11 April 1969). In Nowlan’s

essay, “What About the Irvings?” he writes of the transition that took place during his time at the paper: “A newspaper whose editorial policy could be summed up as ‘No comment,’ became at times so critical of the government that in 1979 Premier Richard Hatfield could say, only half-jokingly that Costello’s motto was, ‘If there’s a government here, I’m against it’” (65).

The paper’s editors did not hesitate to criticize the government, and neither did Nowlan who frequently filled his allotted space with political satire. For example, he created two columns in 1972 showing how Pierre Trudeau, Robert Stanfield and John Diefenbaker would respond to a fire and a difficult waitress.¹ In a matter of a few paragraphs he humourously summarizes their domestic policies. His pieces, like others in the paper, usually catered to the average New Brunswick reader, one who was not necessarily well-educated. Costello reminds Nowlan a few years into his career as a columnist, “We sell our newspapers to readers who do not read carefully and intelligently” (16 April 1974, 40.29.24.71). In order to accommodate this audience, the paper adopted a style that Nowlan praises to Costello in 1975: “I like very much The Telegraph-Journal’s emphasis on People. The thought strikes me that New Brunswick is full of very interesting people who don’t ordinarily get their names in the paper, as well, of course, as very interesting people who are more successful and more widely known. People who are Local Characters” (40.29.24.104). People of both categories are very often the subject of Nowlan’s columns.

An example of a characteristic Nowlan column focusing on people is his 1981, “N.B. Couple Embarking on African Adventure” (25 August 1981) about the Keiths, who are moving away. They are not famous, but are not entirely ordinary. Costello explains

why the *Telegraph* appreciates Nowlan's work of this sort: "We've got a built-in readership of hundreds, probably thousands of people, who will read every line of the story because they know the Keiths; and thousands of others who will read it because it is about an unusual couple who have found a way to do just what they want to do" (40.29.25.92). Nowlan describes his journalistic philosophy to Costello in the very early stages of his column-writing:

I think a personal approach is what's needed in presenting the arts to a general audience, through a newspaper. . . .

With a more human, layman-oriented approach, I think it's possible to make a painter or an actor sound interesting to a reader who's not even faintly interested in painting or plays. Just as good sports writers make lacrosse players seem interesting to people who haven't been involved in an atheletic [*sic*] event since they got too old to play hopscotch. (10 November 1968, 40.29.23.27).

Just as Nowlan made poetry accessible to people who thought they could never understand free verse, he wrote prose that earned him a reputation as a journalist of the people. Robert Gibbs, who edited two compilations of Nowlan's *Telegraph* columns,² evaluates:

He continued to write weekly columns for the *Telegraph-Journal* [while he was writer-in-residence], in which he surveyed the passing scene, local, provincial, national and universal, from the perspective of a common man, a classical ironist, naïve, often befuddled or bemused, but always keenly observant. These columns contain his funniest writing, his most unmixd satire. There is, however, strong continuity in stance, in voice, in concern, through all his writing, whatever its

genre. (*Exchange* xvi)

Gibbs elaborates on the idea of continuity through all Nowlan's writing in his introduction to *White Madness*, one of the collections of *Telegraph* columns. He explains:

His love of popular media such as the comics, soap operas and horse operas, fantasies and ceremonials, allowed him to cast his pieces in a great variety of forms and to colour them, whatever their basic subject matter, with apt and surprising allusions, anecdotes, metaphors and extravagant inventions. Such elements and the compassionate vision that underlays them are also the life of his poems, which in many respects are continuous with the prose pieces. He was a man of letters—a journalist, essayist, fiction-writer and poet—but his works in these genres are all recognizably his, emanations from a complex yet simple—as a child is simple—sensitivity. (6-7)

What Nowlan's biographers have failed to notice is that at the time Nowlan began writing for the *Telegraph*, the paper carried very few regular columnists, those being Charles Lynch, Ken Chisolm and Art Buchwald. Chisolm's column was similar to Nowlan's in that Chisolm discussed a variety of issues and wrote about local events and people. There are also some interesting similarities between Nowlan and Buchwald, and it is clear that Nowlan read at least some of Buchwald's writing and may have been influenced by it. He uses a statement of Buchwald's to support his argument in the *Telegraph* column, "Red tape measures are weird" (20 September 1980): "Art Buchwald used to lament that it was impossible to satirize Watergate. The reality of it was so weird that he couldn't make it any weirder" (40.84.3.7f1). Although the two journalists are

very different, there are a couple of notable resemblances. John Giuffo writes of Buchwald:

For the better part of his thirty-five years as a Washingtonian, Buchwald was one of the columnists whose voice helped shape capital common wisdom. Every governmental and cultural idiocy was highlighted and held up for good-natured ridicule. . . . His imagined dialogues distilled the absurdities of the powerful into accessible everyman conversations. (92)

It is possible to substitute the name 'Nowlan' for 'Buchwald', and 'Frederictonian' for 'Washingtonian' in the comment and have it still be applicable. Although Nowlan did not create fictitious conversations as often as Buchwald, who almost always writes in this style, he did write in dialogue on occasion. These columns were among his most popular and Gibbs included them in the selective *Road Dancers*. The previously mentioned column "Our political house is afire" (*Telegraph* 1 April 1972) serves as an example. Nowlan introduces the conversation: "If Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Stanfield were firemen instead of politicians one could imagine them standing together in front of a burning house and talking with a reporter in somewhat this manner" (40.79.1f1). He then parodies what Nowlan sees as the typical responses of both men.

In an interview with Buchwald, Robert Guttman asks, "You write in your book, 'If there's one particular theme to my columns, it was that nothing was to be taken seriously.' Is that true?" and Buchwald replies, "Well, I didn't mean it that way. I said that I took serious things lightly and light things seriously. That was the formula" (47). This formula is remarkably similar to that proposed by John Braddock, Managing Editor of *The Atlantic Advocate* at the time Nowlan began his work for the publication.

Braddock writes to Nowlan in 1966, ‘There’s a need for serious-humourous writing, dealing with serious topics humourously and humourous topics seriously, but how hard it is to obtain’ (40.1.59.4). Although Nowlan had not yet begun writing regularly for the *Advocate*, he was later successful in achieving this goal.

Nowlan began a monthly column similar to the one in the *Telegraph* for *The Atlantic Advocate* less than two years after beginning his instalments with the previously mentioned publication. “Alden Nowlan’s Notebook” debuted in April, 1970. The *Advocate*, also owned by Irving Press, incorporated the previous publications *The Maritime Advocate*, *Busy East* and *The Atlantic Guardian* and contained fiction, poetry, notices, and human interest stories. It was quite specific in its boundaries but allowed Nowlan some freedom in choosing his topics. Braddock exposes his publication’s editorial policy while supplying Nowlan with guidelines for his articles:

I think a column on country life or philosophical matters drawn from country life, or comment on the changing rural communities are still popular subjects. We will always be pleased to see them.

I can tell you what we don’t want, although I’m sure you know this already. We don’t want attacks on religious denominations, pornography, too much ‘arty’ stuff, such words as fuck, shit or cunt or any others in that line. We are taking a deliberate stand of being a square magazine for the squares: And these days we find there is a need for such a periodical! (14 January 1970, 40.1.59.46a).

Nowlan’s comment that “Other than the official organ of the Monarchist League, yours may be the only monarchist publication left in the country” (24 February 1982,

40.1.59.108), implies that *The Atlantic Advocate* maintained its conservative values into the eighties, and Nowlan himself freely expressed his Monarchist views in columns such as “The Divine Right of Kings” (February 1971) and “Canada is Not Enough of a Monarchy” (August 1977).

Despite Nowlan’s traditional views on some subjects, his opinions were unpredictable and at times quite surprising. Robert Gibbs explains in his preface to *Road Dancers*, “Nowlan often took stands that today would be considered politically incorrect. He did so because he resisted labels and wanted his readers to be stirred into examining views and values for themselves” (5). He opposed abortion on demand and legislation requiring the use of seat belts, but he was in favour of decriminalizing marijuana possession and was not offended by strip clubs. John Metcalf comments on the difficulty of pinning down Nowlan’s political position: “I was always rather surprised that someone of Alden’s background and struggles in life was not automatically of the political left. I never really did discover where he stood politically but I suspect that his interest in and love of ritual, display, hierarchy, and past splendours suggest an emotional stance somewhere far to the right . . .” (*Kicking* 122). Nowlan acknowledges the mixture of his left and right leaning views and relates in a personal letter to a reader why he likes this apparent inconsistency:

When an opinion becomes fashionable the propaganda on its behalf is so pervasive that people with contrary viewpoints tend to clam up

The pressure is so severe that it affects the morale of those who don’t go along with the latest intellectual fad. I suspect the reason why some of the squares are so violent is their guilt at being squares: they feel cornered.

So the divisions become more and more polarized. I read not long ago that once you've ascertained anyone's viewpoint on toilet training you'll know without asking how he stands on capital punishment and Vietnam. That's pretty close to the truth.

Myself I've been called both a hippie and an 18th century Tory. I find that reassuring. (8 April 1971, 40.22.1.75)

His varying viewpoints (and wit as shown in his comment about squares feeling cornered) earned him a heterogeneous mixture of supporters and he received fan mail and hate mail from both the young and old. Fred Hazel, Editor in Chief of the *Telegraph* in 1980 remarks on this phenomenon: "I keep running into young people who tell me they enjoy your stuff in our newspaper. That puzzles and delights me; puzzles because I didn't know people under 30 had such correct perceptions; delights when I find they have" (20 August 1980, 40.29.25.73).

Many readers wrote to Nowlan to express appreciation or disdain for his work; however, Helen Melnyck reports, "Nowlan had found people are less abusive towards the poet than the journalist. Readers tend to be more charitable toward his verses than his articles. He gets fan mail for his poetry and snit letters about his journalism" (7). Despite the occasional negative comments, Nowlan received many letters of praise. One reader, B.M. Broderick, attempts to capture the essence of Nowlan's popularity as a journalist:

The pleasure your column has for me, stems, in my opinion, from sincerity, truthfulness, and an unabashed facing of what is truly human. In other words from seeing man for what he is: a fine sincere creature. Being such you have

helped us to laugh at our foibles and failings, not in any derogatory sense, and never about any particular human, but you really mirror [*sic*] all of us in one way or another in your writings. (22 May 1971, 40.21.5.65)

Readers of his poetry express similar sentiments; however, Nowlan received more letters from readers of his column than from any other group of fans. In the Inventory of the Alden Nowlan Papers, the section containing correspondence between readers, theatre patrons, radio listeners and Alden Nowlan includes 372 items. Part of the description, written by Jean M. Moore reads as follows: “The majority of comments by readers relate to A. Nowlan’s Telegraph-Journal and Atlantic Advocate columns and to articles in Maclean’s, Weekend Magazine and Atlantic Advocate” (116), although this is the section that also contains letters from readers of his poetry. Toner notes, “journalism, not poetry, made him a household name, and Nowlan knew this despite the awards and recognition for literary achievement that had come his way . . .” (182-183).

Another interesting fact is that very few readers wrote to Nowlan about both his poetry and his journalism. As Nowlan acknowledges to Sheila Cotton, “People who read my verse are inclined to be condescending towards anybody’s magazine articles and fans of my columns hardly know that I’m a poet” (13 July 1978, 40.3.35.27a). Toner says, “There was another way to divide the lot [of letters]: letters to Nowlan the poet/fiction writer and letters to Nowlan the journalist. Many correspondents writing to the one seemed to be unaware that the other existed. Even the old newspaperman was surprised at how few people read his poetry—or any poetry—but how many read newspapers and magazines” (276).

Nowlan had a right to be surprised because he saw similarities in the forms.

Speaking directly about the column writing, Melnyck reports, “Poetry is not that different from journalism says the 44-year old poet [Nowlan]. ‘Both are about people.’ He did make a point of scribbling his poems with a pencil rather than using a typewriter to keep his two professions separate, however” (7). Although Nowlan points out that both are about people, there are many differences between Nowlan’s poetry and his journalism. The following chapters will explore areas where the two converge and where they deviate.

In the first chapter I consider Nowlan’s ideas about poetry and journalism as communication and how he fulfills these in his writing. I also discuss his use of satire. In the second chapter I look at examples of his persuasive writing and examine his rhetorical techniques. The third chapter deals with critical perspectives on Nowlan and I examine several examples of poems that are prosaic. In the final chapter, I perform a case study of six instances in which Nowlan wrote a column and poem on the same topic, and I highlight the differences in the way Nowlan communicates with each audience.

In the University of Calgary Special Collections, two copies of most columns are available. Claudine Nowlan, Nowlan’s wife, cut Nowlan’s columns out of the newspaper and pasted them into scrapbooks. These are especially valuable because they include the cartoons that frequently accompanied Nowlan’s column. Where they appear, they illustrate some sort of joke within the article and often show interesting depictions of Nowlan himself. Unfortunately, these scrapbooks are very fragile and the pages fall out when a reader turns them. Also, although Mrs. Nowlan pasted on both sides of each page, only the right sides are numbered, so it is difficult to reference the exact location of an article as there are often more than one on a page.

Because of these complications, I worked from Nowlan's manuscripts. These include the same text as the final product; however they are not visually identical to the columns as they appeared in the newspaper. Despite this difference, there are benefits to working from these documents. The first is that Nowlan's drafts are included with each manuscript so a reader can see the various stages in the writing of the column. The second is that each page of final copy and draft is numbered so referencing specific pages is much easier. I have included samples of both forms in the appendices with permission from Robert Gibbs, Nowlan's literary executor, and Peter Haggert, current editor of the *Telegraph-Journal*.

I have also included a list of dates and titles of Nowlan's *Telegraph* columns in the appendices. I did not include a list of the *Advocate* columns because the University of Calgary Special Collections has made this list available to researchers. I have not created a bibliographic entry for each column and letter I used in the thesis; however, I do provide a parenthetical citation for each. Every item in the fonds is numbered and I included the number in the citation. There are four components to the item number. The first is the collection number, which is always 40. The second is the box number, the third the file number, and the fourth the item number. Where applicable, I also included the date of the document. With both of these pieces of information, other researchers can quickly and easily retrieve the referenced item.

There are inconsistencies in spelling and italics in the letters and columns. I have printed them as they originally appeared in Nowlan's manuscripts without correction and with minimal use of *[sic]*.

CHAPTER TWO – “THE PURPOSE OF LANGUAGE IS COMMUNICATION”

Nowlan felt that poetry and journalism constituted totally different means of communicating. He expresses this idea in a letter to John Zanes: “Years ago when I was a newspaper reporter by day and a poet by night and sometimes vice versa I thought of it as being simultaneously a whore and a nun. Now I’m inclined to think of the journalism as a conversation with a stranger on a plane and the poetry as a whisper in the night” (4 October 1972, 40.33.14.106). Nowlan illuminates his meaning in the poem “Among life’s pleasures” (*SHM* 23) in which he describes an encounter on an airplane:

Having found that,
 unknown to each other,
 the two of us when
 we were much younger
 lived on neighbouring streets,
 this stranger and I,
 drinking gin and tonic
 forty thousand feet
 above the North Atlantic,
 become partners
 in creating a golden age,
 a mythical city
 where everybody we knew
 was either good or funny. (*SHM* 23)

I will come back to the idea of “creating a golden age” (11) but first I will introduce an

aspect of this poem that reoccurs in other poems—the combination of irony and sympathy. Looking back on this memory Nowlan sees that he allowed himself to get into a sentimental state. He implies that alcohol and altitude produce untrustworthy nostalgia and instant camaraderie but he does not berate himself for it; he simply acknowledges this effect. The poem “Argument” (*SHM* 43) shows Nowlan’s attitude toward the persona he creates for himself:

I’ll be as sentimental
 as I want and if you don’t like it
 then to hell with you,
 was what the father told
 the poet who had
 sat down to write
 about their mutual son
 coming home after
 five months in Europe.

Not in my book you won’t, the poet said. (1-10)

The poem provides insight into Nowlan’s battle to balance competing forces within himself. He wants to discuss emotional topics but wants to keep his distance through irony, as expressed in the phrase “their mutual son” (7). This expression indicates that two sides of the same person are debating, or that Nowlan has two inclinations that will find expression in his two careers. The idea of Nowlan’s duality appears later in another poem in which Nowlan mentions a twin brother.

Going back in my argument to “Among life’s pleasures,” Nowlan provides in the

poem an appropriate description of what he achieves in both the *Telegraph* and the *Advocate*. Setting aside his book reviews (approximately 50 columns) and occasional rants, his columns generally contribute to the creation of a “golden age” in three main ways. First, he pays tribute to individuals, both local and national, unknown and famous, thus creating a world where everyone he knew “was either good or funny” (14). As Greg Cook commends, “Alden’s humility is the cornerstone of his humanity. He pays credit where credit is due” (276). To illustrate his point, Cook uses “A CBC flame goes out,” a *Telegraph* column of February 1973 about Robert Weaver’s retirement, but there are many other instances of Nowlan praising the characters of people he knew and loved either through their work or personally.

He writes of Miller Brittain, a painter he never met, but also of Mrs. Charlie Shaw, the woman who ran the boarding house at which he stayed during his time in Hartland. While he feels they are special enough to tell others about, he always presents a balanced portrait. Although the subjects have often died recently, his memorials do not read as conventional obituaries. For example, he writes of Mrs. Shaw, “She was overweight, her laugh was unpleasantly shrill-- and I’ll always think of her with vast affection. . . . No doubt they [airline stewardesses] thought her a very irritable old woman. I thought she was beautiful” (*Advocate* August 1974, 40.86.13.6f5).

He treats his deceased friend and editor Bert Burgoyne in much the same way. He writes of his “corny stories” and his being a “nit-picker,” then cleverly comments, “I never did get to like Bert Burgoyne. Instead, I came to love him” (*Telegraph* 28 May 1982, 40.85.5.7f3). This public praising of individuals is less common and more subtle in Nowlan’s poetry and marks a distinction between the two forms. Nowlan is always

more overt with his audience in his columns.

The second way in which his columns play sympathetically but ironically with the idea of a golden age is that if he does not agree with someone or something, he creates humour by satirizing them. He usually reserves this treatment for politicians or groups. Nowlan is most respectful when dealing with individuals and their individuality, and more critical when dealing with groups of people whose failings are not personal but shared. One example is his *Telegraph* column “You can argue for anything” (31 October 1970). In his satire, he makes up names, quotations, even a chant to parody the attitudes of feminists that he feels go too far in their propaganda. In this case, irony takes the upper hand as the golden age becomes “the Age of Aquarius,” taken from a popular song of the day. He creates the character Garefowl Lazaretto, a pyromaniac, of the Incendiary Liberation League. Nowlan begins, “Smokey the Bear must go. The amicable bruin in the boy scout hat has come to represent the capitalist-racist-sexist oppression of one of the world’s forgotten minority groups: the firebugs” (40.98.4.6f1). He concludes, “This is the Age of Aquarius, Dr. Lazaretto reminds us, the age of freedom. ‘What right does the state have to tell a man what he can or can’t do with his own matches?’” Regular readers of Nowlan’s columns would be aware of his thoughts on unrestricted abortion and its proponents. Since he feels they should be talked about but he cannot praise them, he creates humour by mocking their perspective.

He also creates a recurring fictitious character, Dromedary Boop, MLA. Nowlan wrote twelve columns for the *Telegraph* on the invented representative. In his article, “Voice as a Determinant of Literary Journalism: Use of Fictitious Literary Characters by American Newspaper Columnists,” Sam G. Riley comments, “A journalist could, of

course, poke fun at political leaders in his or her own voice, but creating one's own senator [or MLA] and letting him do the job from the inside is something that only columnists can get away with" (41). Nowlan develops Boop into a multi-dimensional character who exhibits many attributes of local politicians. In "The French problem in plain English—as seen by Dromedary Boop, MLA" (*Telegraph* 25 March 1972), he gives a physical description and personal history saying, "I happened to run into Mr. Boop this week in the River Room of the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel in Fredericton. He was wearing a purple shirt and a very wide blue and green tie, and had replaced his hornrims with grannie glasses, presumably in an attempt to modernize his image," and "he entered the Legislature 20 years ago, where he occupies the Catamount County seat previously held by his father, the late Petronel Boop" (40.78.21.6f1). Much like Stephen Leacock, he creates numerous other fictional acquaintances of Boop's, all with equally ridiculous and suggestive names, such as Lubberly Quern and Gratuity R. Muffineer.

Nowlan always depicts Boop in extremes, presenting an over-the-top parody of politicians. For example, the column, "Boop is top banana" (*Telegraph* 15 April 1972) informs us:

Mr. Boop proposes that the province establish a banana plantation and processing complex on the Tantramar Marshes. Such a development, he says, would not only abolish unemployment, but put an end to pollution, control the birth-rate and make it unnecessary for the government to proceed with its plan to open a topless and bottomless combination gambling casino and opium den at Napadogan.
(40.79.1.5f1)

Boop's claims are so outrageous that it is difficult to determine if Nowlan is satirizing a

recent political event or rather mocking the ludicrousness of politicians' claims and actions in general. Regardless, Nowlan creates hilarious situations and dialogue to allow his audience to laugh at the state of politics rather than be frustrated, at least for the few moments while they read his column. In this way, he offers a golden moment in the present, a short break from reality.

The third way Nowlan works at creating a golden age is by repeatedly talking explicitly about it: the "golden age of radio drama," "Once we knew who we were," "Too much isn't worth fixing"—to suggest a few examples. Perhaps the most explicit is his column, "Modern 'convenience'? Ha!" (*Telegraph* 13 August 1977). He complains, "It's enough to make a man pine for the good old days when nothing short of a derailment halted the trains, the mail carriers behaved as if they were performing a religious trust, and you knew the telephone operators by their first names" (40.82.4.2f1). Sam Riley explains the effect the juxtaposition of old and new has on an audience: "This 'then-and-now' approach is a non-pedantic way to make readers think about enduring values, or lack of same" (38).

Although he is not working with the audience to create this golden age as he does with the stranger on the plane in his poem, he clearly envisions a partner in dialogue as he addresses, "my friend" and "My children." However, he more often makes himself one with his audience. For example, in "His patience is over-taxed" (*Telegraph* 12 April 1969), he says, "Like everybody else I was dismayed by the government's blitzkrieg-style attack on our pocketbooks," "We all of us want modern schools and hospitals," "we average voters might be just as poor as we are now, but most of us would be happier" (40.77.11.2). This type of identification occurs most frequently when Nowlan is trying to

be persuasive, which I will discuss in another chapter.

Compared to the sociable relationship Nowlan builds with his newspaper readers, his rapport with his poetic audience is even more intimate. He assumes greater familiarity with his audience because, as he says in the *Advocate* column “A writer has to know what he’s talking about” (February 1975), “When it comes to poetry and fiction he [a writer] has a right to demand much of his readers” (40.86.15.3f4³). In an interview with John Metcalf he explains, “You see I don’t write poems for an audience. An audience is a crowd. I write poems for one person at a time” (13). This correlates with the notion of poetry as a whisper in the night, since a whisper implies a private message and close contact.

Nowlan is intentionally making sure the reader feels this effect. In his introduction to *White Madness*, Robert Gibbs praises, “Alden Nowlan as both man and writer had that rare gift of establishing closeness to whomever he was addressing” (5). The most obvious example of this intimacy is the title of one of his collections: “I might not tell everybody this.” Gibbs continues, “That gift of closeness enabled him as a poet to touch his readers; it won, and still wins, from them a trust, an exceptional credence. From very early on, his audience became not the general reader but you or me, sitting one on one with the poet and hearing him confide in us his loves, his hates, his struggles, his follies” (5).

An example of a poem that both assumes familiarity and implies a whisper is “This is What I Wanted to Sign Off With” (*EG* 31). He begins, “You know what I’m / like when I’m sick” (1-2), making it clear that he is writing to one person or a couple of loved ones who are familiar with his behaviour; he does not need to go into detail

explaining it. He ends by saying, “Bend / closer, listen. I love you” (13-14). This rhetorical whispering also appears in “Star light, star bright” (*MNT* 45). In the poem he shares a secret and makes the reader feel as if he or she is the only one Nowlan is telling:

46 years old—and I still wish
on the evening star.

If I’m alone I even recite the rhyme
under my breath
as I did when I was five.

I’ve never told this before.
I’m telling you because
you’re like me: silly
and afraid of the dark.

Bend closer.
I know a far greater secret:
everyone else is too. (1-12)

He begins with a confession, which makes the reader feel as though Nowlan is already being intimate, and he furthers this impression by saying, “I’ve never told this before” (6). The reader feels as though Nowlan has personally selected him or her to break the silence on this issue for the first time. Nowlan is not afraid to admit his age, nor is he afraid to acknowledge his immaturity in certain areas— “I even recite the rhyme / under

my breath / as I did when I was five” (3-5)— because he is comfortable with his reader and trusts him or her not to make fun of him. He then creates a bond with the reader by stating what they have in common: “you’re like me: silly / and afraid of the dark” (8-9). He tells the listener to “Bend closer” (10), which can only suggest that he does not want others to hear. The poem effectively creates a private space for intimacy.

Patrick Lane and Lorna Crozier do not refer to this specific poem, but their commentary on “The Grove Beyond the Barley” applies to the whisper effect found in “Star light, star bright”: “Each line moves with the phrasing of speech, forming a kind of music that bears down upon the way we talk intimately to one another. The lines become more concentrated and distilled, forcing us to pay attention, as if someone were speaking in a voice as close to the soul as it can get. Nowlan makes us want to listen closely” (xiv). The poems I previously referenced are comprised of concentrated and distilled lines that act as Lane and Crozier describe. These short lines, each one offering another thought, also give the impression of deliberation, and invite the reader to concentrate. He also forces us to listen closely by inviting us to “Bend closer” and by signposting that an important message is coming up. In “This is What I Wanted to Sign Off With” his preamble ensures the reader/listener is paying attention by warning three times that the message is coming: “So I’ll say it now. Here it is. / . . . / This is what I wanted to / sign off with” (6, 12-13).

It is interesting that the message he whispers is “I love you,” as this secret appears in other poems. He conveys it in “Another Poem” when he talks about his love for his son: “I could never tell you / how much I love him / except in a poem / where everything is secret. . . .” (20-23). Ironically, the poem is not secret but public; poems are public

secrets. Again in “Full Circle,” Nowlan explains that as a young boy he would say “I love you” (23), that he “Whispered it, painfully, and was laughed at” (23). He also says, “In my youth, no one spoke of love / where I lived, except I spoke of it, / and then only in the dark” (1-3). “In the dark” implies night time and what he whispers at night is “I love you”. By saying he thinks of a poem as a whisper in the night, it follows that he views a poem as a declaration of love.

This romantic suggestion agrees with some of his other expressions of what poetry is and what it should contain. He offers in his advice to young poets, “You put into poems only what you feel deepest, and hardest”⁴ (*Advocate* January 1971, 40.86.3.1f3), although he himself violates this rule as I will discuss later. He also recalls the advice of Scott Fitzgerald: “you can’t make literature out of the kind of story you can tell at a dinner party; you must offer the reader your raw and bleeding heart” (40.86.3.1f3). Even more metaphoric—even if the metaphor is mixed—is the definition he provides in “Poet in Hiding,” an essay originally published in 1960: “I think that a poem is a fist and a kiss whirling together in a mirage of happiness dotted with little shining stars of sadness” (11).

This Romantic idea of poetry clashes with the routine practice of journalism; however, Nowlan’s recording of the world around him in his poetry is journalistic and it is important to consider influences that drew him toward both the romantic and the prosaic. Many critics have noted the similarities between Nowlan and the New England poets. Sandra Djwa points out, “The persona of the poet changed radically through the years. Like the early Fred Cogswell, Nowlan was at first content to speak through his characters in the manner of Edward Arlington Robinson” (180-181). Nowlan confirms

this statement in an interview with John Metcalf. Metcalf says, “I remember you saying to me once that Robinson was a great influence” and Nowlan says, “Yes, Robinson was a big influence on me when I was about twenty-five” (9).

Although Nowlan denied consciously imitating anyone, there are obvious, and some less obvious, influences that he cites. In an interview with Robert Cockburn in 1969, Cockburn asks if there are any poets who have shaped his approach to poetry and Nowlan says, “Not in the sense of conscious imitation—not anyone, no. I’m sure I haven’t” (81). On other occasions he lists several writers that have influenced him. He tells Metcalf, “there have been dozens and dozens of poets that have influenced me either a little or a great deal at various period. . . . One of the important influences on me when I got to be reasonably mature, say seventeen or eighteen years old, was D. H. Lawrence” (9).

In another interview, this one with Lesley Choyce, Choyce asks, “If it’s safe to assume that we all continually borrow bits of style, ideas, parts of images planted in our brain, etc., who do you borrow from?” (3). Nowlan provides an extensive list: “I’ve borrowed from everybody, I suppose. D. H. Lawrence, Thomas Hardy, William Carlos Williams, Sherwood Anderson, Robert Frost, Wordsworth, Chekhov, Robinson Jeffers, Whitman – and, most of all, the King James Version of the Bible” (3). Some of these are repeated in Nowlan’s *Fiddlehead* interview, but under the category of Nowlan’s favourite writers: “D. H. Lawrence, William Carlos Williams, . . . Thomas Hardy and Yeats and Normal Mailer—Henry Miller; Kenneth Rexworth. I like him—and Irving Layton and Morley Callahan. Chekhov” (11), and the list goes on.

Like William Carlos Williams, Frost and Robinson, Nowlan wrote in a colloquial

style. His poetry is poetry of the working class, of the country, of small-town, ordinary life. Fred Hazel says, “Alden Nowlan’s great gift as a writer was to size up ordinary events and make them meaningful to ordinary people” (21). And like those other poets, Nowlan does not write found poetry,⁵ in that he does not pull direct lines verbatim from the world around him; however, his poetry is reminiscent of that genre, because he takes tidbits from his surroundings and shapes them into art. Nowlan records everyday events, much like a journalist writing for a small-town newspaper and he positions himself as just another member of the community. In fact, Nowlan often transfers items he reads in newspapers into poems. For example, he takes the newspaper headline, “RCMP raid Cape Breton cockfight” (*SG* 35) as the title for one of his poems, and the poem “In the desert” (*BTL*) describes an event and says, “That is how it / was reported in *The New York Times*” (8-9).

Nowlan talks about how his training and experience in journalism help him in writing poems. Lesley Choyce asks him, “Does newspaper/magazine writing have anything to do with poetry?” and Nowlan replies, “Working for newspapers and magazines you’re never allowed to forget that the purpose of language is communication, and I think it’s good for a poet to remember this” (2-3). Another interviewer asks, “You worked for newspapers in Hartland and Saint John for a number of years; do you think newspaper writing has coloured your own creative writing at all?” He says, “Oh, I think perhaps it has. It’s made me more aware that when you write something someone is going to read it, you know. You learn a great respect for the audience when you do newspaper work. And another thing, it made me very aware of people” (Cockburn 11-12). Although they are referring to Nowlan’s work as a reporter rather than as a

columnist, these comments are still applicable.

Although Nowlan acknowledges that his foundation in journalism has coloured his creative writing, he notes in his poem “Fair Warning” (*BTL* 13) that he has much more freedom in his poetry:

I keep a lunatic chained
 to a beam in the attic. He
 is my twin brother whom
 I’m trying to cheat
 out of his inheritance.
 It’s all right for me
 to tell you this because
 you won’t believe it.
 Nobody believes anything
 that’s put in a poem.
 I could confess to
 murder and as long as
 I did it in verse
 there’s not a court
 that would convict me. . . . (1-15)

The poetic freedom that comes, paradoxically, from disbelief also appears in a letter to Ralph Costello (30 April 1974). He had written a controversial column that his editors and he decided should not be published. He says, “I was dubious about it at the time that I sent it to you and, as I told Bert, was quite willing to have it left out rather than have

careless readers decide that I, or the paper, or both of us, were anti-black or anti-American. Maybe I'll put it into a poem instead" (40.29.24.72). In this case, Nowlan's column was satiric, but he faced the problem of readers who were sometimes unable to tell when he was being honest, and when he was distorting the truth for humour. He must carefully consider what he writes in journalism as his expectations of his column readers are lower than those he has of his poetry readers.

Nowlan speaks to this point in the *Telegraph* column "Red tape measures are weird" (20 September 1980). He writes, "The trouble with writing a column that occasionally attempts to be satirical is that readers tend not to believe you when you tell the truth, especially if the truth is as ludicrous as anything a satirist could invent" (40.84.3.7f1). This quotation brings up the question of the relationship between truth and satire—one that plays into both Nowlan's columns and his poetry.

As Gilbert Highet explains in *The Anatomy of Satire*, the satirist "pretends rather convincingly to be telling the truth" (15), and "although it [satire] pretends to be telling the complete truth about life—in fact presents a propagandist distortion" (158). When reading Nowlan's columns, I occasionally have difficulty deciphering whether Nowlan is telling the truth, half-telling the truth, or being entirely whimsical. One example appears in the *Telegraph* column, "They know what time it is in Hartland" (6 May 1978). He begins with apparent honesty: "As usual I forgot to turn my watch ahead on Saturday night. I suspect that comes from having lived in Hartland during the '50s" (40.82.13.1f1). His writing then quickly takes on a fanciful tone beginning, "Once upon a time, my children, every New Brunswick city, town and county council decided whether the community it represented would go on daylight saving or stay on standard

time throughout the summer. Regularly, the urban areas opted for daylight saving and the rural areas for standard” (40.82.13.1f1). He proceeds to explain that every year Hartland divided itself between the Farmers and the Golfers and he claims to “remember hearing one of the Farmers say that daylight saving time ‘violated the laws of God and upset the equilibrium of the universe.’ He wasn’t joking” (40.82.13.1f1). Despite its foolishness, this quotation is plausible and makes Nowlan’s report almost conceivable.

His credibility is questionable, however, when he says, “It finally came to the point where the town councillors threw up their hands and declared that it was every man for himself.” He claims to recall, “I went to work one morning and found that, together with half of my fellow employees, I was an hour late. The other half had secretly conspired to put the operation on daylight saving time. Similar conspiracies had been carried out in every sizable place of business in town” (40.82.13.1f2). Although Nowlan’s story cannot be true, it is not clear what he is satirizing. The account is humorous, but makes those outside of Hartland feel as though they are missing the joke, and this may be the point.

Nowlan is much more successful in his parodies. Because of his skill at observation, he is an excellent imitator. His *Advocate* column, “Our doctors are a bunch of spoilsports” (March 1978), is an example. He opens:

Atlantic Canada’s medical doctors are a bunch of spoilsports. They may be equipped to cope with the frailties of the flesh but they’ve no appreciation for the needs of the human soul. In this respect, the doctors employed by the various provincial departments of health are the worst of the lot.

They need to take lessons from their colleagues in the United States.

(40.87.8.6f1)

In these first two paragraphs, Nowlan does not indicate that he is being facetious, and if a reader stopped there, he or she would think that Nowlan's column is a serious critique of the Canadian medical system in comparison to the American one.

However, it quickly becomes apparent that Nowlan is mocking the American system. He says that every year when there is a flu outbreak in the U.S., "The president calls a television press conference and announces that the nation is being attacked by, say, the Black Formosan Corruption. . . . Almost immediately, the disease becomes popularly known by its initials, BFC." He continues explaining how *Time* magazine will publish a chart to explain the virus: "From the chart, it appears that BFC sends miniature Kamikazis [*sic*] into the mouths and nostrils of its victims, whereupon the sufferer's antibodies set up ground-to-air missile systems in the mouth and throat. It looks a good deal like the last half-hour of Star Wars" (40.87.8.6f1). Nowlan contrasts this with what happens in Canada when there is a flu outbreak:

In Ontario, there's a half-hearted attempt to deal with the influenza crisis. CBC Toronto produces a television special, featuring Patrick Watson, and billed as an in-depth study of the comparative effects of BFC on Canada's native peoples and the South African government's apartheid policies, Maclean's interviews Malcolm Muggeridge again. (40.87.8.6f3)

Although parody usually "takes an existing work of literature or literary form and makes it look ridiculous by exaggerating its aesthetic devices" (Highet 13), in the case of this parody, Nowlan exaggerates and makes up imaginary details, but simply by describing the reaction of American media, Nowlan reveals its absurdity.

Nowlan's satirical poems differ from his satirical columns in depending less often on parody and more often on other forms of irony, especially sarcasm. Two particularly sarcastic poems are "Treasures on earth" (*MNT* 83) and "I have a friend" (87). Both poems are quite short and divided into two sections. The clever first poem is made more witty by Nowlan's use of rhyme and alliteration. The first half of the poem is a list of orders from doctor to female patient: "Put on pajamas, go outdoors / and join the joggers. Do not eat / butter or eggs. Beware of drink" (1-3). The orders appear in a list of nine with full-stop punctuation following each instruction, thus giving the impression that these instructions are not open for debate and must be closely followed. The rhyming and metre also reflect the strict order that the doctors impose on the woman's life.

The second stanza exposes the irony of the title of the poem:

That is what the doctors told her.

The lady did as she was told.

In return for her exertion,

she knows the joys of being old.

Instaled [*sic*] in Sunset Manor House,

she now partakes of such delights

as crosswords, paint-by-number kits

and semi-monthly Bingo nights. (9-16)

He counteracts the words "treasures," "joys" and "delights" with "exertion" and "Instaled" for comedic effect. By using the first three words sarcastically, Nowlan suggests that sacrificing certain pleasures and strictly following orders in order to prolong life are foolish endeavours.

He expresses this opinion without humour in the *Telegraph* column “Joggers have odd goal” (6 September 1980): “Speaking of losers, let’s look at the exercise freaks. . . . They tell us they’re exercising in order to prolong their lives. That’s why I call them losers. There has never been a time in history when old age is so despised as it is today” (40.84.3.3) He does not talk about the “joys of being old” that he mocks in his poem, but mentions other negative aspects of old age:

Today, the old are the only people we’re permitted to ridicule. . . .

Where earlier generations put the old on pedestals, we shove them aside. ‘Old’ has become such a term of contempt that we don’t even speak of ‘old’ men or ‘old’ women. We call them Senior Citizens.

Let’s assume it’s possible to add years to one’s life by dressing up in rompers and jumping up and down in the street. . . .

Where does that leave us? It leaves us with a pack of poor sods tormenting themselves in hope of living long enough to join the Great Unwanted.

Who in his right senses would want to live into old age in the last quarter of the 20th century? (40.84.3.3f2-3f3)

In both the column and the poem, Nowlan’s point is obvious, but in the poem he lets his readers figure it out for themselves. Although he pretends to leave the conclusion up to the audience by asking them a rhetorical question, he is not leaving them with any other real option: “By inducing the audience to make the appropriate response, the rhetorical question can often be more effective as a persuasive device than a direct assertion would be” (Corbett and Connors 405). In this case, the satirical poem is more enjoyable and convincing than the persuasive column.

In the column, Nowlan comes across as someone who hates exercise and is looking for an excuse not to jog. He first claims that some joggers jog because “it’s done in California.” Then he suggests that others do it because they are masochists who “like to suffer.” He also mentions “the joggers who drop dead from heart attacks” (40.84.3.3f1-3f3). His focus is obviously not on the quality of life these life-prolongers will have in their old age, but on ridiculing the people for jogging. In the poem, however, he stays focused on the one central irony. The rhyming creates a light, playful feel that contrasts with the depressing quality of life the poem actually describes. This juxtaposition alarms and disconcerts the reader, but it also causes a smile.

“I have a friend” is not as sophisticated, and its sarcasm is more bitter than humorous:

I have a friend who loves me so much
 that he apologizes on my behalf
 to people I’ve only just met
 for acts of mine they’ve never seen me commit.
 He wants to make sure they won’t be offended
 by anything I do when they get to know me better.

He loves me that much.

The same friend makes certain I find out
 what others say about me.

If they’re unkind, then he makes excuses

for them, as he does for me
and asks me to forgive them.

He loves me that much. (1-13)

Although Nowlan is obviously satirizing this person by implying that he is not really a friend at all, he does not show anger. This tolerance appears in another poem, “On being detested by a friend” (*SG* 4). The poem begins:

I know of only one person I like
who detests me. There could be others.

I like him better
each time I learn
that he’s tried again to injure me. (1-6)

Highet points out that the emotion the satirist feels and wishes to evoke in his readers is often “a blend of amusement and contempt” (21), and he adds that satire “always contains some trace of laughter, however bitter” (22). Nowlan’s motives are not entirely clear, although we can assume that the subjects of the poems might read them and recognize their behaviour. Nowlan also wants to create humour out of an otherwise annoying situation, and he is able to vent frustrations about personal acquaintances that he cannot vocalize in his column because it would come across too harshly. Although Highet says the satirist “is always moved by personal hatred, scorn, or condescending amusement” (Highet 238), Nowlan does not seem to be motivated by either of the first two.

Highet also notices that “A noticeably large number of satirists have been impelled by a rankling sense of personal inferiority, of social injustice, of exclusion from a privileged group” (240). This sense is present in several of Nowlan’s satiric poems including “A Mug’s Game” (*PJG* 78). Nowlan expresses his sense of exclusion from a privileged group in the first lines of the poem: “At the party that followed the poetry reading, / one girl kept telling me how thrilled she was to meet / someone who hadn’t gone to university” (1-3). Nowlan seems to be putting himself down, but he puts the snobbish academics even lower by deflating them with their own snobbery. He shows his exclusion from the group again at the end, although the words suggest the opposite:

The man from the CBC, who said: “Of course, you’re staying
at the YMCA” and thought he was humouring me
by acting impressed when he found out I wasn’t,

explained: “The purpose of such readings is to give writers
from unlikely places like Hartland, New Brunswick,
the chance to communicate
with others
of their own kind.” (10-17)

In this case, Nowlan’s exclusion is by choice. He does not wish to be part of the condescending, elitist academic world and depicts them as insensitive. Nowlan was highly critical of professors in both his poetry and prose. Biographers of Nowlan document his anti-establishment tendencies and Lane and Crozier warn, “Woe to those who speak from a lofty place, whether from the privilege of class or a higher education,

as in ‘The Social Worker’s Poem’ and ‘A Mug’s Game’” (xvi). Thomas Smith says of Nowlan, “In all periods of his writing, from the early story-telling poems set in rural Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, through his last in which he courageously and often humorously grapples with his own psychological complexities, Nowlan is keenly aware of an inherent cruelty in human relationships, a great many of which are informed—or deformed—by class differences” (61).

One of his *Telegraph* columns, “Some PhDs are dumb” (3 November 1979), talks about a federal commission that claims that adults with education below grade eight are illiterate. Nowlan says, “I suspect there’s a good deal of snobbery involved in these assumptions. No doubt the commission was made up largely, if not exclusively, of university professors. Some of the dumbest people I’ve ever met have held PhDs. I’ve known Doctors of Philosophy who were scarcely able to tie their own shoes” (40.83.11.1f2). Nowlan clarifies that he is not making a generalization about all professors but is “simply pointing out that there’s a difference between schooling and education and that learning is not always synonymous with knowledge” (40.83.11.1f2).

Nowlan makes fun of academics again in “On uniforms and decorations” (*MNT* 74), although this time in a more light-hearted and playful way. The poem, like the other satiric ones, is short and divided into two sections:

While sitting opposite an American soldier
in an airport departure lounge, it occurred to me
that it would be helpful sometimes if we all wore
ribbons and badges and stripes to show where we came from
and where we had been and what had happened to us there.

“But we’d have to wear uniforms then,” objects a friend,
 a professor of English in corduroy pants
 and an old tweed jacket with leather elbows. (1-8)

Nowlan’s “it occurred to me” (2) conveys that this poem captures a passing thought and experience, one that is worth recording for its subtle humour. Nowlan trusts his readers to recognize the irony that the educated professor cannot.

Both this poem and “A Mug’s Game” conform to Highet’s definition: “The type of subject preferred by satire is always concrete, usually topical, often personal. It deals with actual cases, mentions real people by name or describes them unmistakably (and often unflatteringly) . . .” (16). Highet also describes two main types of satirist, and Nowlan belongs to the first category: “One likes most people, but thinks they are rather blind and foolish. He tells the truth with a smile, so that he will not repel them but cure them of that ignorance which is their worst fault” (235).

Nowlan confirms that he belongs in this category in a letter to Lesley Choyce. Choyce tells Nowlan he is compiling an anthology of Canadian satire and asks for some of Nowlan’s, especially if Nowlan has some in the Swiftian style. Nowlan replies:

Most of the satire I’ve done has been a weekly column that I do for The Telegraph-Journal in Saint John. Very light, newspaperly stuff. . . . I could never be anything like as savage as Swift. My anger tends to be momentary rather than ingrained. I usually rather like the people I satirize—old-fashioned New Brunswick politicians, for instance, a vanishing breed. Swift was a good hater—but I much prefer Samuel Johnson who was a great, sometimes angry, lover of life and of humanity. (40.25.71.13)

In describing Samuel Johnson, Nowlan provides an apt description of himself as a great, sometimes angry, lover of life and of humanity. While he turns his anger into satire on occasion, there are times when he is especially passionate about his subject and he does not veil his anger or obstinacy. The following chapter considers Nowlan's moments of strong opinion and attempts at persuasion.

CHAPTER THREE – “I’M PREPARED TO CONCEDE. . .”

Although Nowlan is aware that readers most enjoy his humorous columns, he occasionally writes columns on topics he feels passionately about, and while he recognizes his authority as a public voice, he is not didactic. In his column “There’s a big difference between ‘plump’ and ‘obese’” (*Telegraph* 14 March 1981), Nowlan refers to a comment from a reader. He says, “That is almost my favourite paragraph from any of the hundreds of letters I’ve received since I first preached from this pulpit, close to 13 years and 675 columns ago” (40.84.9.4f1). Nowlan is being playful in this comment, however, as he does not actually consider himself to be preaching in either his journalism or poetry. Lesley Choyce asks him in an interview, “Sometimes you give little sermons, as in ‘He Attempts to Love his Neighbours.’ Do I detect a preacher under there?” and Nowlan replies, “If I preach sermons, it is only to myself – which is to say they’re not so much sermons as self-admonitions. Possibly I’m deceiving myself in this, but I honestly think that I’m the only person I know who has no desire to convert anybody to my way of looking at things” (2). Many of Nowlan’s readers would suspect that he is deceiving himself as he wrote many columns that appear to be trying to persuade. Because he did not write as many obviously persuasive poems, this chapter will be concerned mostly with columns.

The most frequent and forceful of Nowlan’s argumentative columns are his anti-abortion columns, but they are remarkably different from his poems on the same subject. Over the years, he published five of these columns in the *Advocate* and seven in the *Telegraph*. Three of the *Advocate* columns appear together as one essay called “The Abortion Question” in *Double Exposure*. The columns were written in 1971, 1973 and

1976, although they do not appear chronologically in the essay and are edited and shortened. I will look at the first two to show how Nowlan constructs an argument. The two columns are “Legalized abortion is not ‘progress’” (March 1971) and “Let’s not reject children of chance” (June 1976).

He begins the first column by making a persuasive appeal to his audience:

“Surely there’s something at once pathetic and absurd in the spectacle of scores of young women, few or none of whom have borne a child, milling about in front of the Parliament buildings and chanting, ‘free abortions on demand!’” (40.86.3.6f1). He uses the words “pathetic,” “absurd,” and “spectacle” to ridicule the women and detract from their credibility. A few paragraphs later, he subtly puts them down by saying, “these are the same young women who acclaim all the fashionable humane causes. In one breath they deplore the American presence in Indo-China, or the British sale of arms to South Africa, or even the seal hunt in the Gulf of St. Lawrence; in the next they talk about abortion as if it were equivalent, morally, to extracting a tooth” (40.86.3.6f1). Nowlan’s tactics are cheap, in that he ridicules the protestors and then claims they are ridiculous. In both passages, Nowlan exaggerates the situation to make his perspective sound more sensible. He uses the word “Surely” to begin his article and again later on because the word encourages the reader to agree with him.

Despite his strong opinion, he avoids definite judgments and uses language that allows him to escape if he is criticized. Note the following section (italics mine):

Perhaps some of the women currently agitating for unrestricted abortions have been worn out by excessive childbearing, so that their physical and mental health has suffered.

But *the great majority seem to be* young, healthy and childless. They have arrived at the age when, *traditionally*, women have been chiefly concerned with starting their own families; and *at times, it would almost appear* that they'd be willing to become pregnant simply so they could confirm their principles by having an abortion. (40.86.3.6f1)

Again, he goes over the top by not leaving any room for his opponents' position.

While he depicts the other side as totally irrational, he attempts to make himself seem flexible and accommodating. He says, "I'm prepared to concede that in the present state of society it may be advisable to remove the existing restrictions on abortion" (40.86.3.6f1). Then he immediately contrasts his response with what he claims to be the pro-choice women's reaction: "If so, I think, it's a change that we should accept with great hesitation, as a dreadful necessity, rather than welcome with an almost hysterical eagerness" (40.86.3.6f2). His word choice here is especially significant as hysterical is a word loaded with implication because of its root as a suffering in the womb.

He then moves on to his ethical and emotional appeal. He shares a private detail of his life with his readers:

I happen to have been born in the worst year of the Depression, when the Canadian birthrate reached its lowest point in the 20th century. My mother was, quite literally, a child, and my father was working for what could be called, without any exaggeration at all, starvation wages.

If the law had then stood as the Women's Liberation Movement wishes it to stand now, it's more than probable that I'd never have been born. (40.86.3.6f2).

Readers of his poetry would later become familiar with this fact in “It’s Good to Be Here” (*SG* 71) published in 1977. The poem reads as follows:

I’m in trouble, she said
to him. That was the first
time in history that anyone
had ever spoken of me.

It was in 1932 when she
was just fourteen years old
and men like him
worked all day for
one stinking dollar.

There’s quinine, she said.
That’s bullshit, he told her.

.....

While I lay curled up,
my heart beating,
in the darkness inside her. (1-11, 20-22)

William Keith talks about the strength of this piece:

A poem on the subject of abortion, whether pro- or anti-, sounds daunting; one expects righteous didacticism. But ‘It’s Good to Be Here,’ the poem that closes *Smoked Glass*, gains an extraordinary power by having a narrative told from the

viewpoint of the fetus whose existence depends upon the outcome. . . . It cannot be called an argument, but it adds up to a passionately effective statement that is difficult to ignore. (27)

Regardless of whether or not it can be called an argument, it is perhaps the most argumentative of Nowlan's poems. The poem's argumentative power comes from the fact that although Nowlan's mother was very young and his father very poor, he feels his life is worthwhile. Another poem, "In praise of the great bull walrus"⁶ (*SHM* 86) contains three lines that can be read, by those familiar with the circumstances of Nowlan's birth, as anti-abortion. He talks about walruses and says:

How good it is to share
the earth with such creatures
and how unthinkable it would have been
to have missed all this
by not being born. . . . (20-24)

He quickly changes tone by saying:

a happy thought, that,
for not being born is
the only tragedy
that we can imagine
but need never fear. (25-29)

Despite this added reflection, Nowlan's happiness at being alive, although his parents did not plan for him or have enough money for him, is a strong statement against the claim that unrestricted abortion would prevent the suffering of children, a claim Nowlan

frequently attacks in his columns.

What makes the poems different from the columns is that the poems are more subtle and less polemical. His aggressive persuasive techniques are similar in the first two columns. He takes the main arguments of the other side and shows how they are unreasonable. In both cases, he briefly adopts the perspective of the unwanted child. He explains, "Proponents of unrestricted abortion frequently argue that the changes which they propose would spare tens of thousands of unwanted children whole lifetimes of unhappiness." He refutes this claim by saying that "not every unwanted child has an unhappy life" (40.86.3.6f2). He then disparages his opponents by saying:

Malcolm Muggeridge is quite right when he sees an undertone of middle class arrogance in many of the statements made by advocates of all methods of population control. He's also right when he says that arrogance is reminiscent of that of the 19th century English disciples of Thomas Malthus, an Anglican parson, who argued that if the poor persisted in having babies they should be allowed to starve. (40.86.3.6f3)

He indirectly links the Women's Liberation Movement to a decidedly cold-hearted figure. He later refers to the "monstrous egotism" of his feminist adversaries.

The intensity with which Nowlan debates this issue reveals its importance in his value system. He also shows its significance by the sheer length of the column.

Although the *Advocate* columns, on average, run longer than their *Telegraph* counterparts, six pages is long even by *Advocate* standards. The length can be attributed to Nowlan's insistence on his viewpoint "at the risk of being repetitious."

He concludes his tract with the slippery slope argument but goes a bit overboard:

Where does it end? When, as appears inevitable, we have free abortion, will there be demonstrations for free euthanasia—‘mercy killing,’ of, for example, the retarded and the senile? . . .

Perhaps the day will come when all of us will have to appear in Population Control Court once a year to give reasons why we should be permitted to continue to take up space on this planet. (40.86.3.6f5)

He uses many of the same techniques in “Let’s not reject children of chance” but exercises more control; his argument spans only three pages. As in the previous example, he begins by fancifully ridiculing his opponents:

The advocates of unrestricted abortion talk a good deal about the Unwanted Child. One would think they believed abortion to consist in gathering up unwanted children and carrying them off to Shangri-La, where they’d dance in the sunshine with flowers in their hair, live to be two or three hundred years old and, at last, voluntarily depart from this life, having become supremely virtuous and wise. (40.87.3.4f1)

As in the other column he then brings up the idea of abortion as trendy, using the words ‘fashionable’ and ‘unfashionable’ each twice in one paragraph. He then builds up his own strategy by pretending that he does not have an ulterior motive: “Let’s put aside the fact that contraceptive techniques have been developed which enormously lessen the number of unplanned pregnancies. Let’s forget for the moment that the course of a human life is very largely determined by chance, which means that the child who is eagerly awaited . . . may grow up to be a homicidal maniac” (40.87.3.4f1).

The phrase, “I’ve known women” appears in both columns, showing that Nowlan

is basing his claims on first-hand evidence. Another similarity is his use of charged and manipulative language. He refers to his opponents as “pro-abortion” rather than “pro-choice” and he states, “it would be snobbish and ignorant to claim that the baby born to poor parents is certain to be miserable and ought to have been aborted” (40.87.3.4f3). In both, he argues that suffering and unhappiness are natural. Although the two columns share most rhetorical techniques, he does not bring up the circumstances of his own birth in the latter. His only ethical appeal on a personal level is in the comment, “From experience, I can say that the children of the very poor possess certain advantages over the children of the middle classes” (40.87.3.4f3). Nowlan often associates social class and abortion, revealing the effect his upbringing has on his opinions.

Not only Nowlan’s upbringing but also his heritage influences his opinions. The best examples are the four columns he published in *The Telegraph-Journal* that address the Irish potato famine and Nowlan’s Irish roots. He first mentions his ties to Ireland in the column “The Irish remember too well” (9 August 1969). He talks about visiting Ireland, a place “from where a small army of [his] ancestors immigrated to Canada during the 19th century, existing for six weeks or two months in the dark, fetid holds of sailing ships where they drank water so bad it had to be laced with vinegar and gnawed like rats on raw potatoes” (40.77.15.3f1). He explains how the trials of his ancestors affect him: “Each of us, whether conscious of it or not, carries the ghosts of his ancestors in his cells, genes and chromosomes” (40.77.15.3f1). In this case, Nowlan is not making an argument, but simply evoking a sensibility that his heritage has helped to shape.

His next column on the subject of Irish ancestry is more heated. Nowlan critiques

the CBC special “Emigrate! Emigrate!” in the column, “You can’t sing about famine” (26 February 1977). He disagrees with the show’s light treatment of the circumstances that led to emigration and asks his audience to “Consider the facts.” He then outlines, “As a result of the great potato famine, during which an estimated 1,000,000 Irishmen starved to death, and the consequent migration, the population of Ireland today is only slightly more than half of what it was in 1841” (40.81.18.6f1). He then makes a comparison that he hopes his readers can appreciate because of its recentness: “The suffering of the Irish in the 1800s was equal to that of the Jews a century later. Will Millar hopes that Emigrate! Emigrate! will become a Broadway musical. That would be like producing a Broadway musical about the Nazi holocaust” (40.81.18.6f2). Nowlan’s statement is daring and aggressive and reveals how much he is outraged when terrible suffering is treated lightly.

He then attempts to describe the horrendous conditions of the Irish who fled from starvation and goes into more detail than in the earlier column: “these people were crowded into coffin ships, and they were aptly named. Of those who lived to reach this continent, thousands perished from disease in the quarantine stations. An eye-witness describes them as lying like fish that had been cast up on the shore” (40.8.18.6f2). He uses stark imagery to appeal to his audience’s emotions, and as in the abortion-related columns, he uses the word “surely” to pull readers to his side: “But, surely, there are events that will remain monstrous no matter how much time elapses” (40.81.18.6f3). His conclusion shows an interesting rhetorical strategy. Although he can expose the producers’ lack of judgment through their failure to respect the actual events by treating them superficially, Nowlan also reveals their ignorance through a small, concrete detail.

He asks, “But what did he [Will Millar] give us? Isla St. Clair singing Danny Boy which isn’t even a girl’s song but the song of an old man to his son” (40.81.18.6f3). He shows his superior knowledge, which assists in bringing others to see his position.

Nowlan starts to repeat himself only two years later on St. Patrick’s Day with the column, “Why not a true Irish celebration?” (17 March 1979), and then again three years later with “There’s nothing funny about starving immigrants” (3 July 1982). He says in the first, “I’ve actually heard Irish New Brunswickers make speeches in which they included jokes about the potato famine which brought their ancestors here” (40.83.3.4f2), and in the second, “New Brunswick must be the only place in the world where people of Irish ancestry crack jokes about the potato famine” (40.85.7.1f1). In both, as in the columns before them, Nowlan compares the suffering of the Irish to that of the Jews, and in both he argues that these horrific events will never be funny. He again discusses the coffin ships and the current population of Ireland.

Where these latter two columns differ from the earlier two is that Nowlan includes a family anecdote to add poignancy to his story. He recounts, “My grandmother’s grandmother died in a field in Wexford with green stains on her lips. Grain stains because she had been reduced to eating grass” (40.83.3.4f2). He tells the same family legend in the final column using a slightly different structure, and then late in his career includes it in poem form. The poem “Bobby Sands”⁷ (*MNT* 91) written for Robert Weaver begins:

I did not cry for Bobby Sands, but I almost did
 thinking of my grandmother whom I loved, and who
 loved me,

and of how her voice would break when she told me again
 how her grandmother died in a field in County Wexford
 with green stains on her lips, her hands filled with
 grass, (1-7)

There is little difference between the prose and the poetic telling; however, he trusts his poetic audience to make the connection between the stains on her lips and the grass in her hands. In the column he explicitly states what she had eaten and why. He does not have to make the statement in the poem because of the common heritage he shares with many Irish readers.

Nowlan traces his lineage back even further in “A pinch or two of dust” (*SHM* 57). A note under the title explains, “The dust being from Culloden, Scotland, where, in a battle fought in 1746, the last of the great Celtic societies was extinguished.” Again he describes the connectedness he feels with the past:

A friend has given me
 a pinch or two of dust,
 an ounce at most of soil
 from a field where our ancestors,
 his and mine, were ploughed into
 the compost bed of history,

.....

their blood contained
 in this pinch or two of dust
 as in my body and the body

of the friend who gave it
 —this soil not only between
 but within
 my fingers, a part of
 the very cells that shape this poem. (1-6, 16-23)

That Nowlan feels his ancestry indirectly shapes his work reveals why he revolts so strongly against those who dismiss or mock the suffering of his ancestors, and explains why he argues for the remembrance of the horrific events so many times in one publication.

The way in which Nowlan argues a point he feels strongly about is quite different from the way he tries to persuade his audience about topics farther from his heart. The difference is in the intensity with which he writes and the quality of emotionally-laden language. The *Telegraph* column “Love often blooms better outside marriage” (24 February 1979), begins with Nowlan explaining his subject position: “In the past six years I’ve been the best man at three weddings. . . . I mention this so that you’ll know I’m a believer in marriage. I’m married myself, as a matter of fact . . .” (40.83.2.6f1). He then proceeds to say, “I wouldn’t want there to be any misunderstanding when I say that I think that Tom Ball and Eric L. Teed are talking through their homburgs.” In this case, he puts down his opponents but does not ridicule them as he does the feminists; the expression “talking through their homburgs” is a playful derogatory remark. He does, however, poke fun at their point-of-view. He jokes, “These two prominent New Brunswick lawyers, one of them a Judge, are worried that even here in this staid old province, where the members of a Swingers’ Club entertain themselves by square

dancing rather than by swapping spouses, the marriage ceremony isn't being taken as seriously as it used to be" (40.83.2.6f1).

What distinguishes this column from the abortion-related columns is that Nowlan quotes the lawyers here, but does not give voice to any member of the Women's Liberation Movement other than repeating the chant "Free abortions on demand!" He summarizes the women's arguments, but only from his own point of view. Of course it is easier to cite what a couple of individuals say than to capture the voices of a whole movement, but it is easier to refute the opinions of a group if you do not actually provide their arguments in their own words. Although the statements by Bell and Teed that Nowlan provides are minimal—"You have couples merrily shackled up all over the countryside," and "the law mustn't condone the behaviour of couples who were 'living together'" (40.83.2.6f1)—at least Nowlan is more fair in debating with them after he repeats their claims.

Nowlan's next two paragraphs show how he can take their words and spin them to suit his argument. He says first, "Since neither of the learned men is a theologian, we may assume that they're talking about marriage as defined by the law, rather than marriage as ordained by God" (40.83.2.6f2). He does not decide that they are talking about marriage as defined by the law because they are lawyers; instead, he implies that only theologians can talk about marriage in religious terms. He then makes another assumption: "I also infer that they believe a couple which has not gone through a legally binding marriage ceremony must be living in squalor and represent a threat to society" (40.83.2.6f2). The way Nowlan words this unverified inference shows the silliness of the belief and helps make the lawyers sound foolish.

He then gives an example of a couple he knew in the town where he was born who were not legally married but whom everyone respected. He reveals what he considers the true values of marriage and expresses that those values can be present in a union without a legal certificate. He talks about couples who do not marry because they consider it irrelevant:

I know many such young couples and have found that they love and support and tolerate each other in much the same way as couples whose union has been recorded by the Registrar of Vital Statistics.

Some of them are so interdependent and possess such a pronounced collective personality that it often seems to me that they're deceiving themselves into thinking that they aren't married when, in fact they most certainly are.

(40.83.2.6f3)

He shows his belief that it matters not what a couple's legal status is, but rather how they treat each other.

He saves his strongest argument for the conclusion of his column and again uses the word "surely" to persuade: "Be that as it may, with so little love and so much loneliness in the world, surely anything that fosters love and lessens loneliness must be good. Even if it disturbs solemn, middle-aged lawyers" (40.83.2.6f3). Characteristically, Nowlan appeals to a sympathetic mixture of reason, fairness and emotion.

His techniques for persuading his audience in the *Advocate* column "An extreme case of jail rot" (June 1977) differ from the previous examples. He begins by setting up a clever dichotomy: "Art Meunier, who was born in Moncton, has been imprisoned for forty-one of his fifty-two years. Nearly half his life has been spent in solitary

confinement. He was once soldered in a cell for thirty-one months. Yet he was never a criminal, in the sense that most of us define the word” (40.87.6.3f1). He proceeds to explain his point-of-view by recounting Meunier’s circumstances.

Unlike in the columns on abortion, the potato famine and marriage, Nowlan’s authority on the subject is less direct. He says, “I’ve not as yet been sent to prison, but I suspect I understand Meunier as well as it’s possible for anyone who isn’t an ex-convict to understand him” (40.87.6.3f2). This seems a bit presumptuous until Nowlan explains his comment: “If one day when I was eleven years old I had been caught stealing a toy watch, I might still be in prison, never having summoned the nerve to leave. It’s certainly conceivable. I had sufficient taste of the Depression to be afflicted with a deep-seated, irrational fear of starving to death.”

Nowlan cannot provide an easy solution to the problem, but he is practical in his hopes and expectations. He argues, “What’s needed is an efficient system of separating the Art Meuniers from the Richard Specks and the Gary Gilmores. Perhaps, it’s too much to hope that we’ll ever be completely successful at it. But, surely, we can do a better job of it than we’ve done in the past” (40.87.6.3f3).

This column fits into the genre in which Nowlan stands up for the underdog, the disenfranchised, or those he views as victims. Examples include “Only the poor go to jail” (*Telegraph* 6 November 1971), “Let the poor dream” (*Telegraph* 12 March 1977), “User fees will humiliate N.B.’s poor” (*Telegraph* 28 April 1979), and “Winos should have somewhere to sleep” (*Telegraph* 14 February 1981). He writes “Let them have their beer and taxis” (*Telegraph* 20 February 1982) about welfare recipients and “The kids have a grievance” (*Telegraph* 4 July 1970) about how some adults treat teenagers. The

frequency of this type of column reflects Nowlan's social positioning and his struggles with social class. Thomas Smith says, "In his empathy with country-western signers, Baptists, pulpcutters, factory girls and illiterate people, . . . Nowlan escapes the class prejudice by which many liberal, college-educated whites especially claim superiority over persons who do the actual physical work of maintaining society" (61).

The way Nowlan positions himself with his journalistic and his poetic audiences is difficult to define because of his rather ambiguous social position. He recognizes himself as both a child of poverty and an adult of the academic world. Both sides of his experience emerge in his work. He plays both the fool to wise people and the wise old man among fools. He writes in his columns about the silliness of different class-levels on airplanes and about the plight of the working poor, about the dynamics of theatre and the quality of meals at New Brunswick's finest restaurants. Often he acts as an advocate for the average Maritimer. He critiques the government's treatment of its people and he complains about the Maritimes as the "National Whipping Boy" (*Advocate* June 1977). He is very protective of the poor and resists taking direction from the better-off.

Although these same struggles appear in his poetry, the persuasive poem is rare. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Nowlan argued more publicly and more forcefully in his columns than in his poems. This is not to say, however, that Nowlan did not put strong concerns in his poetry. On the contrary, Nowlan felt, as I previously described, that poems should be about things the poet feels deeply. The following chapter examines the poems that appear to violate this rule and the statements Nowlan makes in their defence.

CHAPTER FOUR – “POETRY WILL BE BANAL OCCASIONALLY”

Over the years, critics have attempted to divide Nowlan’s work into clear-cut categories. Michael Brian Oliver, who completed two full-length studies of Nowlan’s writing, in *Poet’s Progress* describes “the growth of his [Nowlan’s] art in general from journalistic to confessional to philosophical poetry” (30). It is surprising to see the term journalistic applied to Nowlan’s regular metrical verse, until Oliver elaborates on his meaning: “he has exhibited a distinct progression from his early sociological poems of the rural Maritimes through his later psychological poems of personal definition on to his more recent philosophical poems of quiet observation” (39). While his early poems in their subject matter may resemble a reporter’s articles, I will argue that some of his later “poems of quiet observation” are closer to Nowlan’s own journalism. It is these same poems that other critics of Nowlan, such as John Metcalf and W.J. Keith, dislike and dismiss.

John Metcalf was one of the first to attempt to categorize Nowlan’s work, and he did so in an interview with Nowlan in 1975. He claims:

Your poems seem to split into two major divisions—poems that are descriptions or lyric and then there are discursive or philosophical poems. There’s a third smaller group of satiric poems. The descriptive and lyric poems seem to belong to the earlier books in general. And the discursive, philosophic and satiric poems to be increasing in your later books. (13)

He later adds, “In some of your later work as the forms have moved further from the traditional, it seem sometimes—that speaking voice you were talking about earlier—falls into the prosaic” (14). As these comments are directed at Nowlan, Metcalf does not

judge Nowlan's poetry, or specify which of the styles he finds more successful. He reveals his views later in his book *Kicking Against the Pricks*, where he says that with *Bread, Wine and Salt*, "Some of the poetry became far too prosy and he gave in to the desire to be warm, wise and philosophical"—cracker-barrel philosophy. At the end of that road lies the Reader's Digest" (122).

W.J. Keith, the most recent critic to take on the challenge of analysing Nowlan's transformations, agrees with this assessment but is more judicious in his criticism. He says that Nowlan's poetry "wrestles . . . with the problem of employing colloquial speech while trying to avoid descent into the prosaic and banal" (14). Unlike Metcalf, he notes the publication of *Under the Ice*, published six years before *Bread, Wine and Salt*, as a turning point for Nowlan's poetry. He points out, "It is worth noting that the book contained seventy-eight new poems . . . against forty-six in all of the earlier publications combined. *The Things Which Are*, which appeared only a year later, contained an additional fifty-five. . . . It is clear that he became less rigorous in his choices as the opportunities for publication increased" (17). He describes the effect on Nowlan's work:

What I find impressive about the early pamphlets is the *consistently* high technical standard. This is not true from *Under the Ice* onwards. There are approximately the same number of excellent poems—possibly even more—but the total effect is dissipated by the number of indifferent poems that display no obvious *raison d'être*. One senses an impulsion to write more poems even if Nowlan has little or nothing new to offer—as though *any* new experience, however casual or trivial, demands to be recorded. (17)

He cites "Another Poem" from *The Mysterious Naked Man* as his only example of an

indifferent poem, and I agree that, while interesting, it reads like hack work. Nowlan includes discussion of death and of poetry; he tells random anecdotes about kings and groceries and servicing his car; he continues on about Leonard Cohen, scallops and Gordon Lightfoot until he fills four entire pages of his collection.

Keith is more specific with his examples later on. He says that in *Bread Wine and Salt* there is an “inclusion of a number of inconsequential poems that give the impression of being willed—as if they reflect a conscious pressure to continue writing rather than a genuine urgency to express a new idea or experience” (19), and here he gives four examples from this collection: “In Our Time” (14), “Report from Ottawa” (25), “The Masks of Love” (53), and “The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner” (59). He does not elaborate further on these poems so I will provide some excerpts to demonstrate the type of poem he is critiquing.

I disagree with Keith’s opinion that “In Our Time” is an inconsequential poem. It begins, “The newspapers speak of torture / as though it were horseplay” (1-2). He proceeds to describe the casualness of captions under photos of atrocities: “This morning a picture of a Congolese rebel / being kicked to death / was captioned *the shoe is on the other foot*” (3-5). Nowlan breaks the line after “kicked to death” to give the reader time to picture the tragedy, causing the caption to be even more shocking. Nowlan shows his disgust through hard consonants. He tells of captors treating a Viet Cong prisoner “by pumping a generous quantity of water / through rubber tubes into his nostrils” (13-14). He uses irony with the word “generous” to provoke a response from the reader. This poem does not adequately convey his feelings but it does have an obvious “raison d’être”—Nowlan wants to bring attention to the newspaper’s, and potentially society’s,

apathy concerning torture.

I also omit “The Masks of Love,” from Keith’s category of inconsequential poems because in it, Nowlan strongly expresses his love for another person. Although brief, the poem speaks volumes about the experience of being in love:

I come in from a walk
with you
and they ask me
if it is raining.

I didn’t notice
but I’ll have to give them
the right answer
or they’ll think I’m crazy. (53)

I agree with Keith’s assessment that there is little depth in this poem, but the poem does not give any indication of being willed. Nowlan himself says:

There’s not much to say about “The Masks of Love.” A reviewer in England wrote that this was a very North American poem. In England, he said, a person who hadn’t noticed whether or not it was raining outside would not be thought of as being insane. He didn’t understand that we give the word “crazy” a much looser definition. But the poem wouldn’t have worked nearly so well if I’d used a different word. “Eccentric,” for instance. Or “addle-pated.” (40.72.29.2f2)

Although the poem is much less sophisticated than some of Nowlan’s other love poems such as “Looking for Nancy” and “How Beautiful Art Thy Feet with Shoes,” it

nonetheless deserves to be respected for its ability to grasp a sentiment so concisely.

On the other hand, I agree with Keith on “Report from Ottawa” and “The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner.” “Report from Ottawa” conveys no strong emotion, or, even though it talks about politicians, political commentary. Nowlan is not advocating anything—the poem simply reports some of his random thoughts which never cohere in a convincing fashion. “The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner,” despite the expectations its title sets up, merely captures a fleeting sentiment:

My wife bursts into the room
where I’m writing well
of my love for her

and because now
the poem is lost

I silently curse her. (1-6).

Granted Nowlan is a master of irony and demonstrates it here, but the poem does not show his skills and reads as if he wrote it without much effort. What is interesting is that although it is one of the four poems that Keith considers inconsequential, “The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner” is the main subject of one of the very few recent articles on Nowlan’s work, an article that illustrates the danger of going to the opposite extreme by taking too many liberties with Nowlan’s colloquial style.

Roy Neil Graves argues, “By craftily suppressing a wealth of wit beneath a casual-looking surface, Canadian writer Alden Nowlan encourages careful readers to

regard his poem "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner" as a riddlic [*sic*] text or rune" (107). He begins by noting the important point that Nowlan recycles the title of Alan Sillitoe's book for his poem and points out the links between the poet and Sillitoe's runner. He then discusses the "One obvious irony" that:

this poet curses the very woman he is trying to favour with a love poem. As panegyric turns to imprecation, Nowlan's self-satirizing persona shows an underside that, ironically, makes him sympathetic. Still, another irony intrudes because the energetically interloping wife who precipitates both conflict and climax in this minuscule closet drama is more like a runner than her passive husband. (108)

This is useful commentary and not far from mainstream criticism of Nowlan's work. However, Graves then switches to finding puns in the poem on the word "Runner," which he sees as "runer," meaning whisperer or secret writer, and on the words "love for her" (3) which he sees as "lover" (108). These ideas are not too forced, but it is quite difficult to conceive of his finding the words "you see naughty poem, eyes low" (108) hidden somewhere in Nowlan's lines. He interprets the poem as Nowlan's recording of an affair and calls it a "bawdy text" (109).

Graves makes further improbable interpretations of Nowlan's work. He reverses the title of the poem to read "RENNUR EC NAT S ID-GN OLEHT FOS SENILE N OLEHT"(109). He suggests four interpretations of this new title. Even further, Graves says, "Alden's 'Runner' text seems to encode other coterie games in the phonetics of its witty vertical acrostics. Playfully aligned 'rows'—in a suppressed gameboard version of the text—suggest 'wormy' (WRM[b]l. complete with holes); 'ruse/rows' (RW[a]ES);

“B.M. full” (BMVU[a]L) . . . and so on”⁸ (109-110). He concludes his essay by pointing out, “Critics often take Nowlan at face value. . . . Nose-thumbing details like the ones exposed here belie ingenuousness, suggesting a witty, complex, authorized scheme of retaliatory oneupmanship that pushes poem toward game” (110). I find it difficult to agree that it is Nowlan playing the game, rather than Graves, whose approach is easily dismissible by other scholars. This instance reminds me of the comment by Fred Cogswell on “the tendency of commentators to recreate Nowlan in their own image” (qtd. in Keith 13). The article shows that, on occasion, judgements or impressions of good or bad poems can be so commanding that the critic rewrites the poem, imposing meaning that the author never intended. Despite the unconventionality of Graves’ study, the essay is important in that it shows that Nowlan’s apparently insignificant poems may actually merit greater consideration, albeit not necessarily in Graves’ manner.

Graves is unusual in finding cryptic meanings in innocent words. More common is the charge that Nowlan’s casual style risks becoming prosaic or banal. The last two poems, which both Keith and I dismiss as inferior, do not conform to Nowlan’s repeated statement that you should write poems only about what you feel deepest and hardest. Although writing about such subjects is no guarantee that they will be good poems, there is more of a chance that they will have an obvious purpose. Keith uses “Johnnie’s Poem” (*BTL* 50), in which Nowlan gives his opinion of poetry writing, to support his claims about Nowlan’s inferior work. The poem is brief:

Look! I’ve written a poem!

Johnnie says

and hands it to me

and it's about
 his grandfather dying
 last summer, and me
 in the hospital

 and I want to cry,
 don't you see, because it doesn't matter
 if it's not very good:

 what matters is he knows
 and it was me, his father, who told him

 you write poems about what
 you feel deepest and hardest.

Keith says the poem “merely transcribes Nowlan’s feelings at a moment in time. The point of the poem lies almost wholly in the situation; all Nowlan had to do was to write it down with acceptable clarity and directness. Once the reader has got the point, there is little more to be derived from it” (29). Nowlan indirectly legitimates this poem, however, and others in a statement that contradicts almost all of his other statements on poetry. He says in the interview with John Metcalf, “I feel that almost anything that can be experienced can be turned into poetry . . .” (13), and in a review of Irving Layton’s *A Red Carpet for the Sun*, Nowlan says, “The most vulnerable part of the poetry born of immediate experience is its tendency to slide into banality, where the incident or the subject itself does not seem to the reader to have warranted the importance attached to it by the poet” (43).

To counteract criticisms of his prosaic-sounding poetry he asserts, “When I run

the risk of sounding prosaic I run the risk deliberately . . .” (Metcalf 14). Most likely, Nowlan is using the word “prosaic” here to mean that his poems lean toward prose in style rather than that his poems are dull. Nowlan also says, “If all life is to be the stuff of poetry, and it should be, poetry will be banal occasionally” (“Layton” 43). Keath Fraser believes this comment of Nowlan’s is just an excuse. In “Notes on Alden Nowlan” he argues, “Banality, of course, merely concocts an excuse for stuff that would be better left alone or written up in prose” (45).

I noticed some examples of poems that not only would be better written up in prose, but sound a great deal like some of Nowlan’s prose. An example is “A note on the public transportation system” (*SHM* 63). It sounds prosaic, in Nowlan’s sense of the word, and is about a rather insignificant experience. As an experiment, I removed the line breaks and added paragraphs to see if there are other features that would help a reader distinguish that it is a poem and not an excerpt from a column:

It’s not hard to begin a conversation with the person who happens to be seated nearest you, especially when she’s been reading with apparent interest a book that’s one of your favourites and can’t find her matches.

The difficulty is once you’ve spoken you can never go back to being comfortable with silence, even if you learn you’ve nothing to say and would rather not listen.

You can stop talking but you can’t forget the broken wires dangling there between you.

You’ll smile almost guiltily when your glances accidentally bump against each other. It may get so bad that one of you will have to pretend to fall asleep.

The ending seems incomplete, but recreates the feeling of a lack of closure that the public transportation users experience. The paragraphs are not unreasonably short for a column, as he regularly starts a new paragraph with each sentence, especially at the start of a piece.

Nowlan's style here is reminiscent of that of a poet Patrick Lane describes in a letter to Nowlan. The letter is not dated, but Lane must have written it between November, 1970 and March, 1972. Lane writes to Nowlan about *Between Tears and Laughter*:

read your new book and see how you've how shud [*sic*] I say relaxed somehow into an almost reflective style of poetry the words flowing easily out of you reminds me of Tu Fu or was it Li Po don't remember but anyway he'd always (after writing a new poem) walk down to the garden gate where stood a small ancient crone flower/lady and he'd engage her in conversation and during it he'd allow his poem to come out and if she didn't realize it was a poem then he felt he was successful and the poem was real and not contrived somehow this sense in your new book came out -. (40.16.16.7)

The difference between Nowlan's work and that with which Lane compares it is that Nowlan's readers see his work printed on a page and recognize it as a poem. This changes the way the reader's attention is focused and the expectations the reader will have. To show the difference between the poem as prose and the poem with its original line breaks, here is a section of the poem as it is printed on the page:

You can stop talking
but you can't forget

the broken wires
dangling there between you.

You'll smile

almost guiltily
when your glances
accidentally bump
against each other.

It may get so bad

that one of you will have to
pretend to fall asleep. (17-28)

Visually, the poem offers more with its line breaks intact. The reader can see the “broken wires” (19) dangling between the 17th and 19th lines. The “you’ll smile” (21), set off from the rest of the poem, suggests flirtation, but the following “almost guiltily” (22), extinguishes any notion of romance.

This poem, “A note on the public transportation system,” details the same sort of situation as the column, “No place to meet friends” (*Telegraph* 2 August 1980). Like the poem, the column observes a very subtle human feeling of discomfort that is difficult to articulate. Nowlan talks about the “harrowing experience” of meeting people you know in the grocery store. He describes how you greet each other, talk about the weather, and carry on. Then he says, “The trouble is this. As sure as God made little apples, you’ll run into Albert and Pearl again. Again, and again, and again. You can’t very well keep saying ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye,’ and there’s neither the time nor the opportunity to say much of anything else” (40.84.2.1f2).

He goes on to illustrate the awkward moments as each person tries to pass time to give the other person a chance to finish shopping with the inevitable result: “it’s no use. You’re doomed, doomed to meet again, if nowhere else then in the line-up at the check-out counter. . . . If Albert and Pearl’s car is involved in a collision it will be because they’ve been trying desperately to avoid coming face to face with us again, this time in the parking lot” (40.84.2.1f3). Both stories are humorous in their honesty, and aside from the tight ending of the column, the only thing distinguishing the styles is the poem’s brevity. The line breaks signal to the reader that it is a poem, and he or she then has certain expectations. While this poem is a more condensed version than the prose, it flows in sentences rather than lines and it lacks any ornate language, figures of speech or other qualities associated with lyrical poetry.

“He Reflects Upon His Own Stupidity” (*MNT* 72) is another poem that demonstrates Nowlan’s feeling that almost anything that can be experienced can be turned into poetry, and it echoes some of Nowlan’s columns as well. It begins, “For the first twenty-five years of my life / I never met anyone who was stupid / in quite the same way as I am” (1-3). These striking lines seem to be introducing something important, but we soon learn Nowlan’s stupidity is just that he is “an idiot / about doors” (11-12). He confesses, “I turn my hotel key / this way and that, that way and this, / can seldom get out of a car without help” (12-14). He goes on to realize that almost everyone he knows suffers from a similar problem and he concludes, “My stupidity matches theirs. / I have found my tribe and am more at home in the world” (26-27).

Nowlan attempts to sound sincere in this poem, but fails as happens on several other occasions when he tries too hard to be humorous. W.J. Keith comments on this

tendency:

It is not that he is good at some effects and poor at others; his failures often seem similar in their general attitude and emphasis to his successes. However, some generalizations can be offered. In one poem, 'He Addresses Himself to One of the Young Men He Once Was' (*SHM* 38-9), he admits: 'I am / too often tempted to / play the comedian,' and 'He Finds Himself Alone in the House' (*BTL* 19) provides a convenient instance. He is rarely successful when he attempts the flippant; a poem like 'First Lesson in Theology' (*MNM* 31) is a good joke but a decidedly indifferent poem. (29)

I cannot say that "He Reflects Upon His Own Stupidity" is a good joke, but I can easily agree that it is a decidedly indifferent poem. This type of anecdote works much better as a column, and Nowlan included it in the *Telegraph* column "I need idiot guidebooks" (31 May 1969) which is not only humorous but also prophetic.⁹

Another example of a poem that reads too much like a column is "Driving a hard bargain" (*EG* 14). Like many of Nowlan's columns, this poem uses a real news story as its point of departure. It opens:

What would cause a man to haggle over the price
of the rifle which, later that same day,
he used to kill himself?
As a young reporter,
I thought, 'Capitalism!' (1-5)

This story obviously deeply affected Nowlan as he thought about it for a long time. He mentions possible scenarios about the man's motivations and then concludes, "I don't

know. I do know that for twenty years / I've wondered about that man who killed himself" (162).

Why, after thinking about the incident for so long, did Nowlan choose to write about it in poetry rather than in prose? One answer is that poetry allowed him more freedom in his musings. His columns are usually based on fact and his own interpretations of the facts. In this case, Nowlan has very few facts, and fills in the gaps by speculating on the man's life. For example, he suggests the man did not have much money and "knew what it was like to make his wife cry every payday / as men on low wages almost always do" (12-13). When Nowlan finds out that the man had lots of money, he proposes that it was from habit that the man haggled. He uses the word "perhaps" three times in the poem and he ends with a question showing he never comes to a conclusion that satisfies him. In this case, indecisiveness is a virtue, as Nowlan leaves the puzzle for his readers to ponder.

I went back to Oliver's and Metcalf's categories of Nowlan's poetry to see if they also apply to Nowlan's columns. To refresh, Metcalf distinguishes between two major groups: descriptive and philosophical poems. He notes satirical poems as a smaller group. I would argue that Nowlan's columns include all three of these types but that satire comprises the largest portion. Oliver does not mention satire in his breakdown of the poetic subjects. Instead, he marks the major divisions between "sociological poems of the rural Maritimes," "psychological poems of personal definition," and "philosophical poems of quiet observation" (34). Nowlan writes countless sociological columns about the Maritimes that are not necessarily rural in nature. Very seldom does he go into personal detail in his columns, and although I initially felt Nowlan wrote many columns

of quiet observation, I found the opposite when I went back over them.

The columns I consider to constitute “quiet observation” are few and far between. Unlike the philosophical poems, which both critics say come later in Nowlan’s career, his subtle observations are dispersed over the years in the columns. They are, however, the ones that stay in my mind. One example is the column, “This is your captain speaking” (*Telegraph* 29 January 1972). Nowlan begins with what seems an insignificant anecdote, just as he does in many other columns: “On our way home from the supermarket one day this week in what we laughingly call our car I said to my wife, ‘I don’t think your door is shut.’” He then moves into discussion of the importance of this minor occurrence:

All of a sudden I thought of how often I’d heard those words uttered by a driver and addressed to a passenger, usually in much the same tone of voice. . . .

By those words and the tone in which he utters them the speaker proclaims that he’s the modern counterpart of the master of a sailing ship, the earthly equivalent of a commander of a space ship. . . .

I’ve known drivers who by murmuring those seven simple words could make you feel mentally, manually and socially inferior for an hour afterwards. . . .

Examine your emotions the next time it happens to you.

You’ll feel like a baron or a serf depending on whether you’re on the giving or the receiving end of that seemingly commonplace remark: ‘I don’t think your door is shut.’ (40.78.19.8)

I do not need to wait until the next time someone says it to me (and that might take a while because doors are considerably easier to shut than they used to be) to understand what Nowlan means. I can easily recall the feeling of inferiority Nowlan describes. This

is one of the strengths of Nowlan's writing, although it is less common in his columns than in his poetry. Helen Melnyck writes, "good poetry should say things for people who haven't articulated it themselves. 'It was on the tip of my tongue. Why didn't I say that?'" (7). These are the same thoughts I had after reading "This is your captain speaking."

Another column that sticks out from the thousand is "They were all daddys" (*Telegraph* 5 June 1980). Nowlan talks about a little boy between two and three years old who used to live across the street from him: "If he was outdoors when I left the house or when I came home, he invariably greeted me. . . . He shouted, 'Hi, Daddy!' That is how he greeted the postman, the milk man and the man who read the electric meters. That is how he addressed every male passerby. 'Hi, Daddy!' and he made it sound as if he meant it" (40.83.18.2f2). Nowlan explains that this upset the boy's real father and he says:

I could readily imagine the father explaining to the son that I wasn't a Daddy, I was a Stranger and that he must never take candy from Strangers or accept rides in Strangers' cars.

Necessary advice in this sadly imperfect world. But the little boy was not as yet prepared to accept it.

I think he knew very well who his father was. He simply assumed that all the other men were Daddys too, and that all Daddys were good people. People who kept the world safe for little boys. . . .

Unfortunately, that's not the way the world really is. There are people who haven't any love to give anyone.

But he'll find that out soon enough. In the meantime, we can only wish
that the world was as loving as this little boy thinks it is. (40.83.18.2f3)

The reason this column struck a chord with me is that it is reminiscent of a poem
published six years earlier, "The Jelly Bean Man" (*SHM* 72). The poem starts off, "'He
carries jelly beans,' a neighbour told us / when we first came here. 'You're lucky you
don't / have any small children'" (1-3). Four stanzas later:

Later we learned it was true
he carried jelly beans and distributed them,
but only as an uncle might or a grandfather
—and, oh, it's so easy to teach
your small daughters and sons
to accept nothing
from strangers, to keep well back always,
to stay out of arm's reach, to be prepared to run,
so easy to tell them
about evil,
so hard to tell them
about innocence,

so impossible to say:
be good to the Jelly Bean Man
who gives candy to children
from no other motive than love. (25-41)

Both column and poem describe the disappointing fact that the world is not safe for children and therefore adults must teach their daughters and sons to trust no one they do not know well. That Nowlan wrote about this idea twice shows he had strong feelings about the fact that the unkind world inhibits children's innocence. This is not the only time that Nowlan dwells on his preoccupations. The following chapter provides even more concrete examples of Nowlan reiterating ideas or experiences by expressing them as both column and poem.

CHAPTER FIVE – “THE FIRST SMALL STEP TOWARD SENILITY”

The recycling of ideas is not uncommon between the *Telegraph* and the *Advocate*, or even within a publication. Nowlan wrote frequently about restaurant food being unfit to eat and about modern products being disposable, to name a couple of examples. Indeed, he used the same idea for both a column and a poem on several occasions. Toner attributes this to “old-fashioned laziness” (249) and criticizes, “Ever the professional scribbler, Nowlan would claim to friends that he had no qualms about recycling material for fun and profit, a troubling hint that his continued devotion to mass-audience journalism tempted him to make literary compromises” (250). What Toner sees as a literary compromise should be viewed rather as a fascinating exercise in translation from a popular prose medium to a more sophisticated poetic one, and vice versa. Nowlan reused ideas or experiences because they were meaningful to him, and he wanted to share them with as wide of an audience as possible. In this chapter, I will examine how this cross-genre translation occurs.

Nowlan’s poem “Anthem” (*BTL* 47) and the newspaper column “There are no ugly girls” (*Telegraph* 1 September 1979) describe the same experience, and after comparing them, one would think they were written one year apart. Nowlan begins his column, “One day this summer I suddenly realized that all young women looked beautiful to me” (40.89.9.1f1). Because Nowlan regularly wrote about personal events, there would be no reason to doubt his statement. In “Anthem” Nowlan writes, “I realized last summer / that to me young girls without exception / are beautiful” (2-4). What is interesting is that the column was written and published in 1979, while the poem did not appear a year later, but rather eight years earlier in the collection *between tears and*

laughter. Perhaps Nowlan struggled to think of a recent occurrence to write about and recycled this one, but realized it would be odd to comment, “One day nine years ago I suddenly realized. . . .” Immediacy is vital to good journalism, whereas in the poem, the time lapse allows him to reflect on the relevance of the recognition that all girls are beautiful.

Although his reaction to this recognition is the same in both—he says in the poem, “I thought to myself: so / this is what it’s like / to be middle-aged” (5-7), and in the column, “This must be middle age” (40.89.9.1f2)—he treats the realization differently. In the poem he places this conclusion immediately after saying that he had noticed the young girls. He then comments, “For I felt the same / when I was sixteen” (9-10). He admits that he is “desirous / of them all” (20-21) and he recognizes that he is not the first man of his age to feel this way. He says that he:

begin[s] to comprehend
 why in the great days the oldest and
 supposedly wisest
 men did not think it
 beneath them to kneel
 as priests to girls
 as young and
 doubtlessly simpler,
 asking no more
 than to offer them
 oranges

and peacock feathers

and flowers. (22-34)

The poem has a wider reach: it is about age, timelessness and remembering rather than just about the girls or his feelings toward them. This is an interesting combination because the timelessness of men's feelings contrasts with the other components—age and remembering—which are time-bound. Nowlan begins by saying, “We forget” (1), then reiterates shortly after, “Yes, we forget” (8), but then shifts a few lines later to, “I remember now” (11). He observes how time affects him in relation to the young girls:

time has given

to them a freedom

different from but equivalent

to that it has taken

from me (13-17)

He does not feel cheated, but rather he appreciates being able to return to the feeling of being sixteen again. He finds exchange and equilibrium in the universe, which permit a benevolent view of time.

In contrast, the column is all about girls and Nowlan does not go much deeper by analysing the cycle of time. Unlike the poem, the column does not reveal Nowlan's recognition that he has reached middle age until close to the end of the piece. He goes into detail about the moment he realized all young girls are beautiful and recalls, “Everywhere I looked there were girls. Short girls. Tall girls. Medium-sized girls. Girls in short pants. Girls in long pants. Even a few girls in skirts or dresses” (40.89.9.1f1). This redundancy precedes a clichéd simile that would never appear in his poetry: “Every

one of them as lovely as a rose freshly blossomed.” He continues repeating expressions of his shock and after “treat[ing] the matter scientifically” and conducting “Persistent research,” he finally arrives at his conclusion that “This must be middle age” (40.89.9.1f2).

While in the poem he is not ashamed of his attraction, in the column he worries, “I had taken the first small step toward senility. I was on the way to becoming a Dirty Old Man. A sobering thought. For a few weeks, I conducted myself like a mullah of the Shiite sect. If I accidentally caught a glimpse of a female—any female—I looked away” (40.89.9.1f2). He conveys feelings of shame and perversity that there is no hint of in the poem. However, his exaggeration serves a purpose: it contributes to comedic effect. In his columns, his humour is often at his own expense. Nowlan explains in a letter to R.G. Veysey, a reader, “Newspaper columnists tend to express themselves in hyperbole, because that’s the tradition of the trade” (20 June 1975, 40.22.2.56). Nowlan’s readers were accustomed to his sense of humour, although he writes to Ralph Costello, “I think I’ve said before that it’s very curious that when a stranger mentions this Telegraph column to me, he or she almost invariably describes it ‘as that funny column,’ although probably less than 20 per cent of the columns try to be funny. They seem to be the ones that people read and remember” (6 July 1977, 40.29.25.9). As I stated in the introduction, Nowlan catered to his audience. While he continued to include tributes, critiques and reviews, if he did not have a pressing topic to discuss, he could write a short piece such as this one to amuse his audience. It is important to note that in the column, unlike the poem, Nowlan does not mention that he looks upon the girls with desire. Although he is open with his column readers, he is not as honest and confessional as he is

with the readers of his poetry.

The contrast between confession in poetry and reserve in journalism is evident in another pairing of poem and column. In this case, the column, “Sister’s happy sacrifice” was published in the *Telegraph* on June 25, 1977 while the poem “Sister Williamina in the Valley of the Nashwaak” is dated July 10, 1977, showing that he wrote the two at approximately the same time. Although the poem was published in a broadside by William Hoffer under a different title “Three cups of spring water” in 1979, it did not appear in its final form until 1982 in *I might not tell everybody this* (36-37).

The confession comes subtly at the very beginning of the poem. Nowlan quotes Ernest Hemingway: “Always carry out when you’re sober the promises you made when you were drunk” (1-2). He then adds, “He would have been pleased / with John and me for taking Sister Williamina / for a drive through the Valley of the Nashwaak, farm country” (2-6). He lets us know right away that this was an obligation he had to fulfill because of a drunken conversation. There is no hint of this in the column. He simply opens, “I spent an afternoon and an evening not long ago in the company of a friend who is a nun.” He does not suggest a reason why, nor does he name her. To refer to her later, he says, “My friend the Sister,” emphasizing their friendship rather than the fact that she is a nun.

He also does not name his son in the column although he does so in the poem. He says, “My son and I took her for a drive through the Nashwaak Valley” (40.82.2.6f2). As I will show in my consideration of other works, Nowlan repeatedly uses proper names in poems whereas he usually gives descriptions or categories in columns. In the poem about Sister Williamina, he writes of John but does not add “my son.” He trusts his readers to

know his son's name because they know Nowlan more intimately than the newspaper readers do.

Another slight but revealing difference is that Nowlan refers to the Nashwaak Valley in the column and the Valley of the Nashwaak in the poem. The former is the actual name for the region of New Brunswick; however, inverting the name to Valley of the Nashwaak gives it a Biblical quality appropriate for a poem about a nun. It also sets up the rhythm of the poem and creates a more Romantic image that suits a description of a scenic drive through the country.

In contrast, Nowlan undercuts the Romantic quality of the voyage in the column. Of the actual events of the journey he says merely, "Nothing much happened. We passed mile after mile of forest and farmland, saw a groundhog, stopped for a drink of spring water" (40.82.2.6f2). He minimizes the experience so that the nun's enjoyment of it is more impressive: "Sister described it, with obvious sincerity, as one of the happiest afternoons of her life. She could hardly wait, she said, to get back to the convent and tell the other Sisters about it" (40.82.2.6f2). He must add "with obvious sincerity" because the description of the afternoon's adventure leaves room for doubt and he does not expect all of his column readers to interpret the nun's statement correctly.

In the poem, however, he elaborates on what they did and saw so that her perspective is understandable. Rather than just stopping for one drink of spring water, he repeats, "At every spring / we stopped for water . . . / and there are many / springs in the valley" (7-8, 10-11). He reports, "But her quiet joy in everything proved to be contagious as laughter" (15-16). Similarly, in the column he says, "Such an attitude is contagious. Because of Sister, this was really and truly one of the happiest afternoons of my life."

The poem, in comparison, gives a much richer portrayal of why the afternoon was enjoyable, and it better conveys their happiness:

Each rockpile in a hillside pasture
became an altar set in acres of lupins and daisies,
each zig-zagging pole fence became a monument
to man's ingenuity and strength; the groundhog in
the road seemed aware
that his presence pleased us; we saw the original
Crow of Sadness and Two Crows of Joy, about which
the rhyme was made;
each wild apple tree that had once called to mind
the bones of mastodons
dead for ten thousand years was now in full blossom (21-31)

The lack of full stop punctuation builds up excitement; each sentence piles on top of the previous one. Then he must bring the pace back down “to keep from / bursting into flames / from spontaneous combustion” (8-10), to use his own imagery of fire and water that describes their thirst on the drive.

He changes the rhythm and tone of the poem by giving voice to Sister Williamina's sacrifice. He quotes:

*I'll bet you've never heard of a Paul Jones. That
was the dance we danced. This was almost forty years
ago.*

I danced with a boy and kept stringing him on—do

girls still say that?—
about the great things that I was going to do in St.
John's.
Of course, in our eyes there was no bigger city
on earth.
Oh, my! He was impressed. Somehow I couldn't bring
myself
to tell him the truth: that I was going to enter
a convent. (39-51)

This passage delivered in her voice reveals the essence of her sacrifice better than Nowlan's own words can. In fact, he does not even try. In his column he refers to her "self-sacrifice" and says she "has sacrificed much that the Me Generation considers absolutely essential to a full and happy life" (40.82.2.6f2). He also claims that his "point is that she could not have enjoyed this drive and many other small events of the day so whole-heartedly if it had not been for the sacrifice" (40.82.2.6f2), but he is not successful in explaining it. He gives an example of how it affects her attitude by saying, "This lady could derive more pleasure from having room service for the first time in her life (probably toast and tea) than most of us would derive from breast of pheasant under glass, served to the sound of trumpets" (40.82.2.6f3). This is a weak illustration compared to the corresponding passage in the poem, where he describes her as "this woman, for whom a / drive in the country / was a greater adventure than a year in China would / be / to many of us, children of surfeit" (56-60).

He does not mention the word sacrifice in the poem, nor does he end with the

previously mentioned passage. Instead, he shows the nun's sense of humour with a joke she made, and concludes, "Then she drank joyously, / as if thirst were another / of God's gifts; and in her company I was almost / persuaded that it is" (68-71). Although he is not fully persuaded, the power of her personality is evident. Nowlan resists this kind of tight wrap-up to end his column. He crossed out the final two paragraphs of the column but they are legible on the copy of the text he sent to the newspaper. The deleted passages say, "When I gave her a copy of one of my books, she made me believe for a moment that Santa Claus really existed, and I was him. She had given up so much and received so much in return" (40.82.2.6f3). Perhaps Nowlan felt too pretentious in saying that she reacted so strongly to his book. He may have felt that the Santa Claus reference was too exaggerated to be believable, or he might have decided that his quick summary—"She had given up so much and received so much in return"—was a little too tidy. The latter suggestion is unlikely, as he frequently ended his columns with one brief assertion.

An example of this sort of crisp ending appears in the *Advocate column* of June 1980, "I'm going to hate you for five minutes. . . ." In the column he tells about one of his wife's experiences working at a day-care:

She comes home with little stories about the kids and some of them stick in my mind. Especially the story about the angry little girl who said to her, "I hate you! I'm going to hate you for five minutes." In a little while the child came back and asked if five minutes had passed. "Yes," Claudine said. "All right, then," said the child, "I love you again." (40.87.15.4f1)

He then muses about how much better the world would be if adults could do this, and about how people come to offend others. After giving examples from his own life he

comes back to his main point: “Wouldn’t it be marvellous if we dared to come straight out with it?” Then he concludes, “There would be fewer strikes, fewer divorces and fewer prescriptions for Valium”¹⁰ (40.87.15.3f4).

What takes Nowlan three and a half pages to express in prose he achieves with more poignancy in the ten-line poem “Out of the mouths” published in *I’m a stranger here myself* (5) in 1974. Just as he names his son in “Sister Williamina in the Valley of the Nashwaak,” but did not name her in the corresponding column, he names the child “Jennifer” in the poem whereas she remains anonymous in the column. Even more noticeable is how he changes the story so that the child said she was going to hate him:

If only we adults were as wise
as Jennifer who said
she hated me and was going to
hate me for five minutes
and when I told her the time was up
said, okay, then I love you again (1-6)

Nowlan exposes his motivation behind this stylistic change in one of his earliest *Telegraph* columns. He says of John Diefenbaker:

he told how Winston Churchill had said that a teetotaller differed from a prohibitionist in that the teetotaller hurt only himself. Years later, he was to use this story frequently in his public speeches but by then, aware like all accomplished humourists that a joke is more effective when passed off as a personal reminiscence, he was quoting it as a remark made by Churchill at a dinner for the Diefenbakers in 1957. (19 October 1968, 40.77.5.4f3)

Of course, in the column Nowlan is not trying to be humourous, but a personal reminiscence of his own is more powerful than that of someone else.

His analysis of “his” exchange with the child is also more acute in the poem. He gives the girl greater sophistication than in the column, and even greater than is actually possible for someone her age. He writes of Jennifer’s “knowing that rage is not / a lifetime commitment, but only / a passage of darkness in the mind / a cold shiver of the soul” (7-10). The phrasing of the last two lines resonates with familiarity for Nowlan admirers because its structure is nearly parallel to the last two lines of both “They go off to seek their fortunes” and “The migrant hand” (*SP* 37). The first ends:

They greet one another
with a meaningful movement that is part
bow, part shrug, part nod
accompanied
by a slight pursing of the lips,
the barest suggestion of a wink. (24-28)

The last two lines have the same number of words in each line as the last two of “Out of the mouths,” and the accents follow roughly the same pattern. The strongest emphasis comes five syllables from the end of each line, with a weaker accent on the last syllable. Similarly, the last lines of “The Migrant Hand” are as follows:

he picked leeks for the Seljuks,
garlic for the Tuscans, Goths and Normans,
pumpkins and maize for the Pilgrim Fathers,
has forgotten them all, forgotten all of the past, except

the last ten hours of blackflies and heat,
 the last two hundred barrels of potatoes. (8-13)

While he squeezes more syllables into these last two lines than in the other examples, the rhythm is the same. What is more noteworthy is his use of asyndeton. In each of these examples, Nowlan omits the conjunction between the last two clauses. Edward P.J.

Corbett and Robert J. Connors explain the result of this omission:

The principal effect of asyndeton is to produce a hurried rhythm in the sentence. Aristotle observed that asyndeton was especially appropriate for the conclusion of a discourse because there, perhaps more than in other places in the discourse, we may want to produce the emotional reaction that can be stirred by, among other means, rhythm. (387-388)

Although it is more unusual to omit conjunctions in prose than in poetry, the lack of them in poetry contributes to the same effect. Doubtless, Nowlan was familiar with the attributes of good orators, as he himself wrote dozens of speeches for New Brunswick's former premier Richard Hatfield and even a couple for Queen Elizabeth II¹¹. Naturally these skills at ceremonial discourse are transferable and make his poetry more effective.

His skill as a rhetorician comes into play in another poem-column pairing. His column "To understand him, walk in his moccasins" (*Advocate* December 1975) and the poem "Not fingers or wool" (*SG* 57) both describe the experience of a temporary hearing loss. He begins by explaining why he is qualified to write on the subject. In the column, he says simply, "For the past three weeks I've been deaf" (40.87.1.9f1) and in the poem, "Now that my hearing / has twice failed me . . ." (1-2). This simple explanation of the author's credentials is an important part of gaining an audience's respect although it may

seem insignificant. Most of the other rhetorical elements that Nowlan employs are also characteristics valued in poetry.

The first elements he uses in the column and poem are simile and metaphor. In fact, he uses almost the same comparison for both. He says in the column, “It is as if the machinery of life were wrapped in several thicknesses of cotton wool and the people around me were holding pincushions over their mouths” (40.87.1.9f1). He rejects this analogy in the poem but acknowledges its legitimacy:

I understand that
deafness is not
fingers or wool,
although that may be
how it starts. (3-7)

He had more time to think about the experience when he wrote the poem, as the draft is dated four months after the column was published, and he decided that wool in the ears is not an appropriate means of comparison.

Other than this difference, certain passages from the poem and column are strikingly similar. The first example from the column is, “Visitors whose arrival used to be preceded by a series of friendly sounds . . . now simply appear seemingly out of nowhere” (40.87.1.9f1). In the poem he words it, “Friends walk in / through the walls, / my wife appears / from out of nowhere” (11-14). Surprisingly, he devotes more space in the poem to the subject of others playing tricks on him than he does in the column. In the four page essay he says simply that he suspects that people are plotting, “Let’s go and scare the deaf man, that’s always good for a laugh” (40.87.1.9f1). In the poem he

devotes almost half of the poem, eleven of the twenty-eight lines, to this fear:

And there are times
 when others play games:
 let's have some
 fun with him, they
 say to one another, let's
 move our mouths and not
 make a sounds, let's
 babble senselessly
 in his presence,
 let's play
 baiting the deaf man. (18-25)

He uses anaphora, repetition of a word or phrase, in this section but not at all in the column. His repeated “let’s” poised at the start or end of a line reproduces Nowlan’s frustration and paranoia—his fear that everyone is out to take advantage of his disability.

While anaphora is a device Nowlan more often incorporates in his essay writing and alliteration is common in his poetry, these two examples reverse this pattern. In his essay he says, “I’ll have acquired at least a faint and fleeting awareness of the frustrations that must be endured . . .” (40.87.1.9f1). This use of alliteration contributes to the rhetorical impact of the first two paragraphs of the column, and it is important to note that because rhetorical and poetic devices are the same, Nowlan’s skills at both crafts are mutually beneficial.

Another rhetorical strategy is to construct parallel clauses separated with only a

comma or semi-colon, like the previous examples of asyndeton: “it’s incredibly difficult to keep constantly in mind that it is one’s self and not the world that is abnormal, painfully hard to acquire the habit of distrusting one’s own sense” (40.87.1.9f1), and “Dealing with a sales clerk becomes an embarrassment to be avoided if possible; being asked for street directions becomes an ordeal” (40.87.1.9f2). He creates a surging rhythm in his prose that does more than mimic patterns of everyday speech; it mimics the metre of poetry. In contrast, the only aspect of this particular poem that alerts readers it is a poem rather than a column, aside from the line breaks, is the last three lines: “There are times when / deafness is / believing this” (26-28). I note this passage because it is more obscure than anything he includes in his non-fiction. He does not clarify what “this” refers to, leaving it up to the interpretation of the reader. I understand this last phrase to mean that bouts of insecurity are unavoidable conditions of deafness.

In contrast, he makes a definitive statement at the end of his column to remind his readers of one of life’s lessons:

This experience has been another reminder of how pitifully little we understand each other’s problems. . . . There’s an enormous amount of truth in that old cliché, ‘You can never hope to fully understand another until you’ve walked a mile in his moccasins.’ The words are so shopworn that from time to time we need to be reminded violently that they’re also true. (40.87.1.9f3-f4)

While he believes there are times we need to be reminded violently of things, he is not violent in his column writing. He resists using this moralizing tone in his poetry, even when his poems are critical of his own or others’ behaviour.

Ordinarily he resists this type of preaching in his column as well. He is careful to

critique society without being didactic. An example of this caution appears in his *Advocate* column, “A sweet and noble stink” (July 1971), and in the poem “The great electronic window” (*SHM* 68). Unlike the four previous studies of poems and columns treating the same topic, this pair is not as closely related; however, they bear striking similarities and the column highlights some lines of the poem. Talking about people on television, Nowlan says in the poem:

it is as if
 they had reason
 to live in fear of
 the atavistic as
 represented by
 armpits and onions. (11-15)

In his column, he talks about the “North American fear of natural scents as typified by the obsessive use of deodorants” (40.86.4.5f1). This phrasing follows a similar structure as the passage in the poem above. He goes on to describe the absurdity of “millions of supposedly enlightened North Americans’ fear [of] certain smells, and in particular the smell of their own bodies” (40.86.4.5f1). Then he pokes fun at the people in commercials for products that ward off smells and complains:

Sometimes I suspect that we’re quite literally losing our senses. We stare at the television screen until our vision blurs and our eyes are bloodshot. . . . Almost everything we touch is either made of plastic or wrapped in cellophane. Most of our food tastes like newsprint and many of us, those whose taste buds have atrophied, actually like it that way (40.86.4.5f4)

This directly relates to the main idea of the poem, that people are losing their senses.

Nowlan opens by referring to television: “The people in that world / have only two / senses. They see and hear” (1-3). He claims they have lost their others senses “Although it appears they must / formerly have been able to taste and smell—“ (4-6). He adds, “while by their nature / they can never touch” (16-17), completing the series of three senses that he claims people on television have lost. He concludes:

Once perhaps they were as we are,
as we become more
and more like them
—and soon nobody anywhere
will want to be
anything
but only to play at being something. (23-30)

He worries that his society is becoming like the people on television and losing their senses, which is the argument he makes in his column. He is also playing with the expression “to lose one’s senses” meaning that people are losing their minds or going crazy as they foolishly mimic those they see on television.. He is not lecturing, however, and includes himself among the people transforming into a type of robot-actor. The short, mechanical lines of the poem represent the two-dimensional world of the people he describes. He uses many expressions of uncertainty such as “it appears” (4), “one deduces” (7), “it is as if” (11), “it would seem” (18) and “perhaps” (23), to emphasize the idea of people pretending to be something.

He notes the similarity between fictional characters and real people in the column

also and notes that people do not realize how much their behaviour is like those they laugh at. He writes of Tiny Tim and Miss Vicky: “Tiny Tim with his cosmetics case and his innumerable shower baths. I just this minute realized that the most remarkable thing about Tiny Tim is not that he’s so freakish, but that’s he’s so typical For a good many of us laughing at him is like laughing at the mirror without having to watch it laugh back” (40.86.4.5f5). In this case he also includes himself, at least rhetorically, as one of the people he is critiquing, by using the word “us.” Although he conveys his idea more humourously in the column with passages such as “she anoints herself regularly with Anti-Effluvium of No-No-Stinko” (40.86.4.5f1), he makes his point as eloquently and more concisely in the poem.

There is yet another example of his ability to express similar ideas more concisely in a poem, this time in two columns and one poem describing time Nowlan spent with John Diefenbaker. These examples are particularly interesting because he wrote one of the columns, “When Dief and I sat in the cellar” (19 October 1968), at the start of his career as a columnist with the *Telegraph*, and the other, “John Diefenbaker: larger than life” (October 1979), near the end of his stint with the *Advocate*. He wrote the poem, “We were younger then” (*SHM* 20) in between the two columns.

To demonstrate his greater economy, I will compare the length of a section in the first column describing how he came to spend time with Diefenbaker with the corresponding section in the later column. In the earlier he says, “Learning that our weekly had reprinted a speech he had made in the Commons in which he had outlined a proposed Canadian Bill of Rights, he decided that he must see a copy of the back issue in which the speech had appeared” (40.77.5.4f1). The latter is decidedly shorter: “The

weekly newspaper for which I worked had, some months earlier, published his proposed Bill of Rights in its entirety. He wanted a copy of that issue and I was assigned to find one . . .” (40.87.13.3f4). He omits all but one “had” and makes his second attempt much more succinct. In fact, he cannot pare down the recounting of events much more for the poem, and while he uses fewer words in the poem, he also omits the fact that Diefenbaker requested a copy of the issue.

He describes Diefenbaker and himself “searching through back issues of *The Clarion* / for the one in which we reprinted the full text / of his Bill of Rights for Canada” (14-16). Yet again he gives a proper name to something that remains generic in the column. Although the newspaper he is referring to was not called *The Clarion* but the *Observer*, he trusts readers to know he is recalling his days working for the weekly in Hartland.

He assumes the same casualness elsewhere in the poem when he describes what Diefenbaker talked to him about: “He talks about / Sir Winston and Sir John” (17-18), as though they are all on a first-name basis. In contrast, he maintains formality and provides more information in both columns. In the first he says, “he talked about potato prices, salmon fishing, the gerrymander that was to deprive him of his old Lake Centre, Sask., seat in the next election, Disraeli, Winston Churchill, Mackenzie King and Sir John A. Macdonald” (40.77.5.4f2). In the second he changes the list: “He talked—about weekly newspapers and Joe McCarthy and Sir John A. Macdonald and Winston Churchill and Gabriel Dumont, lieutenant to Louis Riel” (40.87.13.3f5). By the time he wrote the second column, Nowlan was much more adept at rhetorical effect. He adds the dash after “He talked” to emphasize that he talked a great deal, and he furthers this idea by using

polysyndeton, the deliberate inclusion of many conjunctions. This creates a very different impression of their conversation from either of the previous descriptions.

When he describes Diefenbaker's behaviour while reading the found document, however, his depictions are uniform. Nowlan writes in the *Telegraph*, "He did not read aloud, although several times I felt he was on the point of starting to do so. But he gave many little murmurs of satisfaction that made it clear he found the sight of his own words pleasing" (40.77.5.4f2). In the second he recounts the story differently but maintains the effect: "he had read his own words from the newspaper: at the end of each sentence he had given a little grunt of self-congratulations" (40.87.13,3f5). And to show how Nowlan felt it necessary to always include this detail, even when telling the story to different audiences, the following is his poetic account:

When at last we find
what we've been looking for he continues
to sit there on the box until he's read
every word that he wrote,
giving at frequent intervals
a little half-grunt of satisfaction (30-35)

No matter when he writes about this occasion, Nowlan always recounts this part in a similar way.

In contrast, he sets the scene for this story in very different ways. In each case he introduces the time period when he met Diefenbaker, but his way of articulating it is different each time. In the earliest telling, he says, "That was in the early '50s when George Drew led the Tories and it seemed that the Liberals, who in every election since

the Depression had campaigned successfully against R. B. Bennett's ghost, were destined to reign in Ottawa forever" (40.77.5.4f1). Likewise, he describes the time period politically in the later column: "It was in 1952, four years before he succeeded in his third attempt to win the party leadership. . . . Those were what he was later to call 'the dinosaur days' when the Conservatives elected fewer than 40 members to Parliament" (40.87.13.3f4). In the poem however, he uses alliteration to evoke a much more vivid sense of the time in which they met:

The year is 1952: in that drooping decade
before the century got its second wind,
when being young seemed such a waste of time
that we who were young then will always feel
we deserve a refund. (1-5)

Later he repeats the year, making clear that identifying the date is imperative to appreciate the message of the poem. He says, "The year is 1952 and already / there are those who see in him the man who will / redeem the pledge . . ." (26-28).

Despite the length of the essays and the relative brevity of the poem, there is another way in which he is more successful at setting the scene in the poem than in the essays. In the first column, he describes the location of their meeting as "a very dark and messy basement . . ." (40.77.5.4f1). He later adds to the description of the basement: "old newspapers were scattered like the debris left by a hurricane among barrels of printer's ink, bars of linotype metal and boxes containing everything from engravings of Santa Claus to empty beer bottles" (40.77.5.4f2). He gives approximately the same amount and quality of information in the later column. He describes "stacks of dusty,

dog-eared and, in some cases, decomposing newspapers piled helter-skelter in a basement that had served for half a century as a repository for all the odds and ends that accumulate wherever there is an old-fashioned weekly newspaper” (40.87.13.3f5). While he gives the same basic facts in the poem, the language he uses to present them helps the reader to better visualize Nowlan and Diefenbaker’s surroundings:

John Diefenbaker and I
sit on two cardboard boxes that once contained
White Swan toilet tissues and are now
filled to the top with stereotype engravings
of Santa Claus, reindeer and Christmas trees,
in a basement where the cobwebs do to the windows
what cataracts must do to the eyes, and the dust
rises and falls in accordance with our breath (6-13)

Whereas in the columns he did not even mention what is marked on the cardboard boxes, here he gives detail about the brand of toilet paper they used to hold. He mentions dust and cobwebs in the columns but does not give them the clarity he gives them in the poem.

Considering that the three pieces are all about the same event, and in many respects say the same thing, it is clear that Nowlan carefully crafted the poem. He uses clever line breaks and an oxymoron to reveal his wit:

Here is Lincoln born
in Ontario, Andrew Jackson come
from Saskatchewan. He will free us
from them, too, and all such

most admirable oppressors. (21-25)

He also uses parenthesis in the lines, “(it is as though we had / left our country with the pawnbroker)” (28-29), which contributes to the nostalgic tone of the poem. He shows that he is looking back fondly through his style, through his title “We were younger then,” and also through his conclusion which is wistful but not overly sentimental: “while I, nineteen years old, congratulate myself / on being within arm’s reach of greatness. / That was so long, oh so very long ago” (36-38).

He does not maintain the same ironic distance from the event in his first column. Written only sixteen years after the event, he feels more comfortable concluding his column by talking sentimentally about a more recent showing of Diefenbaker on television. He mentions only that the memory of sitting and talking with Diefenbaker “remained vivid.”

The later column, written twenty-seven years after the fact and serving as an obituary, resembles the poem more in its perspective than the first column, and it reveals why this may be: “It took me a while to admit to myself that I had been a little uncomfortable when he had read his own words from the newspaper Still, I thought that I had been in the presence of a figure who was larger than life. A great man. I think so today” (40.87.13.3f5). This final passage links back to my earlier discussion of Nowlan’s creation of a golden age. Nowlan sees Diefenbaker as extraordinary, and his feelings only grow with nostalgia. In his first column on the subject, Nowlan is not yet creating the golden age of Diefenbaker and calls him “striking yet unassuming” (40.77.5.4f3). As the years go on, his fondness for former days increases.

While there are many similarities between the poems and columns in these

examples, the differences are recurring. He is more honest and open in the poetic tellings and uses more descriptive, visual language. He tends to create humour in the columns where he does not feel the need to do so in the poems, and the columns tend to end with a definitive statement as compared to the poems that are more open-ended. In places where he uses specific names in his poetry, he provides only descriptions in prose. The last three differences may arise because his column readers expect humour, expect a column to be complete, and are not familiar enough with Nowlan's acquaintances and experiences to recognize names, and as Nowlan says, "as a journalist, you must adapt to the medium" (40.112.8f1).

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

I began this thesis by providing Nowlan's commentary on how he turned an actual event first reported in the newspaper into a poem. In "Recalling the circumstances" for *Transitions III: poetry*, Nowlan writes of the same story and how the poem came into being. He says:

Some poor fellow truly was wandering naked in the streets and the citizenry were getting very upset about it. His plight set me to thinking about other forms of nakedness: emotional, spiritual and metaphysical. We're each of us both mysterious and naked to ourselves and others and we're infinitely more afraid of showing our insides than of baring our bodies. (40.72.29.2f2)

Nowlan, himself, was unafraid of showing his insides; or at least he got over the fear by the period of his early-middle work. He does not hold back his feelings and even invites his readers into the private aspects of his life, such as his marriage. For example, the poem, "Parlour Game" (*SHM* 36) captures the light and dark sides of a relationship that every couple experiences. The poem begins:

We were sitting there
hating one another when
some friends dropped in
who've always said
we're the most loving couple they know (1-6)

He then describes how the two pretend that they are happy even though they are "sneering inwardly" (13), and eventually the façade becomes real:

—and within half an hour

we caught ourselves exchanging
 silly and affectionate
 smiles even when
 nobody else was watching:

for the millionth time,
 starting over again. (20-26)

In his columns, he uses marital arguments as a source of humour that all couples can relate to. For example, the *Telegraph* column, “Newlyweds, take heed” (5 April 1980) describes the difficulty of Nowlan and his wife doing the dishes because they criticize each other’s system. It is written as a joke as opposed to the serious tone of the poem.

As previously illustrated, Nowlan writes some things in verse that would never appear in his column. One example is the poem, “The middle-aged man in the supermarket” (*SHM* 80). The speaker reveals his fantasies about an attractive young lady: “I’m pretending to test the avocados for ripeness / while gaping obliquely at the bare brown legs / of the girl in the orange skirt selecting mushrooms / when she says, ‘Hi, there, let’s make love’” (1-4). While it may have been easier for Nowlan to open up to his readers in his poetry, because as he says, “Nobody believes anything that’s put in a poem,” a comment of J.B. Priestley quoted by Karl Meyer in “Newspaper Columnists: Literature by the Inch,” explains why Nowlan is comfortable sharing some of his less risqué feelings with his column readers as well:

When a man is writing regularly in one place for one set of readers, he tends to lose a certain stiffness, formality, self-consciousness. . . . He comes to feel that he

is among friends and can afford as it were to let himself go. . . . It also encourages him to focus his attention upon passing little things that he might have disdained were he not writing for the next week's paper. He is a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, and it is his pleasure and privilege to glimpse the significance of such trifles, so that for a second we see them, surprisingly, against the background of the Eternities. (25)

Nowlan did feel he was among friends in both his poetry and journalism. As he says in the previously mentioned poem, "He Reflects Upon His Own Stupidity" (*MNT* 72), "I have found my tribe and am more at home in the world" (27). Although he writes about finding a community in this poem, he admits to Costello on two occasions where he feels most at home. He says at one point, "Sometimes I get nostalgic for the newsroom. I felt at home there in a way that I could never feel at home in an academic community" (17 February 1970, 40.29.23.62), and shortly after, "I still feel more at home in newsrooms than on college campuses" (7 April 1970, 40.29.23.69). While he may feel more at home in the journalistic environment, he is nevertheless more confessional in his poetic work and relies more on his readers' trust. Michael Oliver comments on this aspect of his work in *Poet's Progress*:

I have been stressing the honesty, maturity, and control of Alden Nowlan's recent poetry [up to 1978], and at one point I suggested that these characteristics make him a trustworthy writer. . . . some of his recent poems actually require faith on the part of the reader. That is, the validity of these verses cannot always be tested, empirically as it were, for one reason or another. (*Progress* 36)

The same could be said of some of Nowlan's columns, because they cannot be tested either, but it is difficult to determine if Nowlan valued truth and trust more in one form than the other. He says in the poem, "And He Wept Aloud, So That the Egyptians Heard It" (BWS 8), "oh, admit this, man, there's no point in poetry / if you withhold the truth / once you've come by it" (15-17); however, he also says, "Today I find myself communicating more honestly with virtual strangers than I used to do with persons I considered friends" (DE 87). If we consider this comment in light of Nowlan's view discussed in chapter two, that journalism is like a conversation with a stranger, then it might seem reasonable that Nowlan is equally honest in his journalism. This notion is counteracted, however, by Nowlan's demonstration that a conversation with a stranger on a plane cannot be trusted. In contrast, an intimate whisper should be truthful, and this is how he describes his poetry.

Two of Nowlan's critics would most likely agree that the poetry is more honest. John Metcalf says, "The collection *Miracle at Indian River* is somehow journalistic, a part of a North American tradition from which I feel particularly estranged. They are 'tales,' for the most part, rather than stories and I distrust the honesty of the teller. I believe the voice in the poem 'Cousins' but I don't believe the voice in 'Miracle at Indian River'" (*Kicking* 122). One wonders if Metcalf would believe the voice in "Alden Nowlan Reports" or "Alden Nowlan's Notebook." Smith, too, finds the journalistic form inherently dishonest. He says of his poetry, "Another of Nowlan's gifts to us is his care for truth. Having labored most of his adult life in a profession now distrusted nearly as much as the politicians" (21). I believe that Nowlan presents an accurate self-portrait in both forms, and also uses the same degree of embellishment in both. As he explains to

Robert Sorfleet in an interview, “sometimes in art you can tell the truth best by lying” (42). His rapport with his audience is comparable as I showed in the introduction.

Although, as Greg Cook points out, Nowlan’s public persona is the same throughout his various works (314), his journalism receives little critical attention and perhaps this is why it is less trusted by certain critics. Nowlan seems to agree, however, that there are different qualities or levels of literary achievement. He says of his play *The Incredible Murder of Cardinal Tosca*, “I think some people are afraid that I’m dissipating my energies on inferior forms of writing. They forget that I’ve been earning my living on inferior forms of writing ever since I was 19. And the poems keep coming” (Zanes 40.33.14.32b). In 1971 he asserts to Zanes, “I’m a poet first and a journalist second; but for a good many years I wasn’t sure about the priorities” (40.1.59.66), and he admits that he does not always devote much energy to producing top quality journalism. He writes to Zanes, “This past several years I’ve done a weekly column for The Telegraph-Journal and, latterly, a monthly column for The Atlantic Advocate -- all of it slight topical stuff and some of it sheer rubbish” (4 October 1972, 40.33.14.106). While it is possible Nowlan is belittling his work out of modesty, some of his columns seem to have been written in haste, without a great deal of exertion.

It is obvious, however, that he did put a great deal of effort into his columns. Certain files contain multiple drafts and for others a large amount of research was required. He also reveals a sense of duty to keep his public aware of issues he feels are important. Regarding CUSO and the guerrilla movement in Africa he writes to his editor, “I did a piece on this same theme about a year ago; but I think it’s worth having another go at it -- particularly since I seem to be the only columnist in the country who is

concerned about the question” (19 September 1979, 40.1.5.98).

Despite the strength of many of Nowlan’s pieces, his journalism is ignored because many critics do not consider it as literary as poetry or fiction. In order to prove that his journalism merits greater consideration, I have shown that Nowlan employs the same rhetorical techniques in his journalism as in his poetry. Sam G. Riley argues:

If voice and point of view are important determinants of literary writing, the work of some columnists should qualify as literary. A modest number of readers, however, might still be loathe to concede the point because so many columnists to use point of view have been humorists. Others “take humor seriously,” realizing that humour with a serious purpose behind it, such as political or social satire, would seem to have a legitimate claim to literary status. (43)

Nowlan’s columns do have a legitimate claim to literary status. There is a purpose behind his satire and he creates a definitive voice. To use Nowlan’s own persuasive strategy, *surely* any work of literature that touches so many lives must deserve appreciation, and Nowlan’s work was of that status. In “Alden Nowlan, What Made His Writing So Special,” Ralph Costello writes of one of Nowlan’s columns concerning Nowlan and his father. He says:

And what joy those lines would have brought to Alden’s father if he could have lived to read them. . . . but here is part of what was so special about Alden Nowlan’s writing—other fathers and other sons would read those lines and would remember similar events in their lives, and they would treasure their own memories, and the world would be a better place for it. Just as, in some small way, this world is a better place because Alden Nowlan visited it. (26)

Arguably, there are many lesser-quality literary works that have touched people's lives; however, Nowlan regularly wrote his column with the same depth and insight found in his poetry. Riley adds:

Still other scholars of writing are possibly reluctant to regard the work of any columnist as "literary" due to the brevity of this writing form. But the work of a columnist ought not be regarded in so myopic a way. One should not consider a single column of perhaps 850 words as the unit of analysis, but should instead consider the *body* of the columnist's work.

As I previously said, some of Nowlan's columns are dismissible, but as a collection, they make up a serious literary corpus.

Not only has there been close to no comment on Nowlan's journalism, and the only place it has been mentioned is in the biographies, but there is also little serious critical work on either Nowlan's poetry or fiction. For this study, essays on his fiction are of little use, and I was disappointed in the quantity of criticism of his poetry. There are more articles than those I have cited, but they did not prove useful either because they concentrate solely on his early poetry or on specific poems which did not pertain to my study, or because they are tributes and memorials rather than literary criticism.

I am not the only researcher to feel there is a serious lack in Nowlan scholarship. W. J. Keith notes:

Criticism has tended to concentrate on his regionalism and the fact that he wrote in both regular and irregular verse—legitimate matters of concern, but not ones that in themselves lead, as the best criticism should, to a closer appreciation of his finest poetic achievements. . . . As a biographer, Toner inevitably concentrates

more on the man than on his work, and is generally content, so far as literary criticism is concerned, to quote brief snatches from contemporary reviews. Oliver makes a number of legitimate points, but is strangely uneven in his comments. (11-12)

There is, however, hope for the future of Nowlan scholarship. The biographies have renewed interest in the writer, and a new collection of essays, *Alden Nowlan and Illness* by Shane Neilson has recently been published. The Alden Nowlan Literary Festival in Fredericton, New Brunswick continues his legacy there, as does the newly renovated Alden Nowlan House, home of the University of New Brunswick Graduate Student Association.

In my criticism, I have tried to stay true to a style of academic analysis that Nowlan would approve. He despised jargon and mocked, "The academics used to write in Latin. Now they write in jargonese" ("crock" 31). On another occasion he says, "I think that any kind of literary criticism that purports to be more than an honest expression of what a particular reader feels about a particular book is a sham" (Layton, 42). Therefore, I must simply state that I honestly feel that while there are exceptions, Nowlan's journalistic achievements are as deserving of attention as his poetry, and set alongside each other, they highlight characteristics that might otherwise be overlooked.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Our political house is afire." *The Telegraph-Journal*. 1 April 1972.

"How it sounds from here." *The Telegraph-Journal*. 20 August 1972.

² Nowlan, Alden. *White Madness*. Ed. Robert Gibbs. Ottawa: Oberon, 1996.

Nowlan, Alden. *Road Dancers*. Ed. Robert Gibbs. Ottawa: Oberon, 1999.

³ Although this column appears in the box and folder marked 86, the pages in the folder are numbered as box 85.

⁴ Nowlan uses this same phrasing in "Johnnie's Poem": "it was me, his father, who told him / you write poems about what / you feel deepest and hardest" (*BTL* 56, 12-14).

⁵ An exception is the poem "The carpenter's misfortunes" (*SG* 34) which Nowlan cites at the top of the poem as "taken from the December 9, 1876, issue of the Carleton Sentinel, published at Woodstock, N.B."

⁶ Nowlan comments on this poem in the column "Why I like walruses" (*Telegraph* 28 June 1980) saying what he likes about walruses is "their attitude towards life. . . . The walrus just lies there in the sun, enjoying life" (40.83.18.8).

⁷ Bobby Sands was a political prisoner in Ireland who died on hunger strike in 1981.

⁸ Note that the author uses Nowlan's first name; this contributes to the essay's lack of credibility.

⁹ I refer here to the "[Whatever] for Dummies" series of books which emerged close to thirty years after Nowlan's column.

¹⁰ Nowlan's original word choice was "tranquilizers" but he crossed it out to insert Valium.

¹¹ Nowlan's speeches can be found in the prose series of the Alden Nowlan Fonds at the University of Calgary Special Collections.

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APPENDIX A – Nowlan's *Telegraph-Journal* Columns

1968-Oct. 5	Dr. Clarke follows N.B. trails	Apr. 5	Batman left him broke
Oct. 12	A fine humorist, a truly funny book	Apr. 12	His patience is over-taxed
Oct. 19	When Dief and I sat in the cellar	Apr. 19	Music can be a strain
Oct. 26	Small fry power—it's the latest!	Apr. 26	He's a hard one to catch
Nov. 2	Of rum, beans, and Larry Gorman	May 3	He's leadership material
Nov. 9	Digging into a shadowy past	May 10	How he lost his wife
Nov. 16	If only I'd met Miller Brittain	May 17	The flower woman belonged
Nov. 23	Spruce gum pickers of the world unite!	May 24	I know of none better
Nov. 30	What to do when you've seen it all	May 31	I need idiot guidebooks
Dec. 7	History of beards is full of oddities	June 7	Crime victims deserve aid
Dec. 14	He knows how to keep Christmas	June 14	We need more provinces
Dec. 21	Fredericton—hotbed of poetry	June 16	Their minds were made up
Dec. 28	Why start a year at a time like this?	June 21	This world needs Lennons
1969-Jan. 4	The day the world was exterminated	June 28	We must not ignore them
Jan. 11	Flu seems worse with a fancy name	July 5	This dreamer was a doer
Jan. 18	Television needs more rubbish	July 12	Our lives need pageantry
Jan. 25	Poverty just isn't all that romantic	July 19	You've got to learn the lingo
Feb. 1	Too many adults forget being kids	July 26	It wasn't all awe-inspiring
Feb. 8	Wish me luck as you wave. .	Aug. 2	Legends can turn on you
Feb. 15	That Pierre's no swinger	Aug. 9	The Irish remember too well
Feb. 22	Old-style wars were best	Aug. 16	This is "soul music" too
Mar. 1	Welcomes Maliseet revival	Aug. 23	We should test candidates
Mar. 8	Songs tell Miramichi story	Aug. 30	They're real human beings
Mar. 15	How a censor was corrupted	Sept. 6	He's done with hippies
Mar. 22	Even bad art can be enjoyed	Sept. 13	Layton's never a bore
Mar. 29	Simple answer won't do	Sept. 20	It's useless to argue
		Sept. 27	We need pipes and kilts
		Oct. 4	Nixon should nix the smile
		Oct. 11	The past isn't the problem
		Oct. 18	Patronage is how it is
		Oct. 25	How drinking has changed
		Nov. 1	You can be right but wrong
		Nov. 8	You should meet these people
		Nov. 15	Instant experts are comic
		Nov. 22	You should think twice
		Nov. 29	People beg to be duped
		Dec. 6	Good food is too rare
		Dec. 13	Why Britain is still great
		Dec. 20	It's time to destroy enemies
		Dec. 27	The road ahead's rocky, men
		1970-Jan. 3	21 st century man can have it
		Jan. 10	What progress is costing

- Jan. 17 Ballots are better, but. . .
 Jan. 24 Cheap Cash is sad to see
 Jan. 31 A crusade can be lonely
 Feb. 7 The Wigglesworths are fine
 Feb. 14 A moment is missing
 Feb. 21 You can't ignore violence
 Feb. 28 N.B. has seen 'em before
 Mar. 7 They're obscene but harmless
 Mar. 14 Things should work better
 Mar. 21 This book you should read
 Mar. 28 Harshness won't cure crime
 Apr. 4 Drug "statistics" are junk
 Apr. 11 Half a wit's worse than none
 Apr. 18 We balk at odd things
 Apr. 25 N.B. has always had Boops
 May 2 Better TV should be easy
 May 9 We live in a strange world
 May 16 Censors shouldn't suffer so
 May 23 Nobody "owns" a child
 May 30 Unhappy folks are freaks
 June 6 Fiddleheads do grow up
 June 13 The truth about Jamie
 June 20 Winos scare us silly
 June 27 On men worth remembering
 July 4 The kids have a grievance
 July 11 "Dev" lives with ghost army
 July 18 On a remarkable friend
 July 25 He's sick of being pitied
 Aug. 1 Kids weren't the threat
 Aug. 8 Shrugs won't move mail
 Aug. 15 Good old Joe is a menace
 Aug. 22 The signs are plain to all
 Aug. 29 You don't tire of Dylan
 Sept. 5 It takes a lot o' lovin'
 Sept. 12 On eating licorice
 Sept. 19 Party funds need a change
 Sept. 26 Ropes don't stop murders
 Oct. 3 It's tough to be historic
 Oct. 10 On politics in marriage
 Oct. 17 TV rarely rouses him
 Oct. 24 Pills are taking people
 Oct. 31 You can argue for anything
 Nov. 7 N.B. has two good leaders
 Nov. 14 Ghosts are worth a thought
 Nov. 21 You don't own your cat
 Dec. 2 Maritime union sort of pulls him apart
 Dec. 5 It's great history, well told
 Dec. 12 How innocents get hurt
 Dec. 19 On Maritime politics—: as Dalton Camp sees some leading players
 Dec. 26 Canadian dullness is hogwash
 1971-Jan. 2 Every voter should read it
 Jan. 9 There's this nagging worry. .
 Jan. 16 Change scares our pants off
 Jan. 23 Some Knaves are needed
 Jan. 30 Dief missed with Abbie
 Feb. 6 Some people are superior
 Feb. 13 Italians may be superior
 Feb. 20 Most of us are bigots
 Feb. 27 Fluorides defy logic
 Mar. 6 Style conceals the man
 Mar. 13 Hitch hikers have problems
 Mar. 20 He likes friendly dissent
 Mar. 27 Newsmen aren't all bad
 Apr. 3 Tommy's quite a man
 Apr. 10 Five nations fascinate him
 Apr. 17 He might have killed too
 Apr. 24 Good slang's going bad
 May 1 TV changes Tarzan
 May 8 On TV, NDP and images
 May 15 He'll be the same old Al
 May 22 One sip separated the quick from the dead
 May 29 Degrees aren't guarantees
 June 5 Beware the new puritan
 June 12 They're helping Quebec go
 June 19 It's a mighty short dream
 June 26 Westerns aren't so different
 July 3 Science is our new god
 July 10 Young rovers deserve a hand
 July 17 We're Canada's whipping boy
 July 24 The truth about Cash
 July 31 On being imprisoned
 Aug. 7 Cars breed madness

- Aug. 14 Us bearded villains are the crowd-pleasers
 Aug. 21 On how to boil water
 Aug. 28 Student nurses are special
 Sept. 4 It takes a lot o' lovin'
 Sept. 11 Friendly spirits are a help
 Sept. 18 On how the world will end
 Sept. 25 Stool pigeons are sorry birds
 Oct. 2 Torontonians can't see far
 Oct. 9 You, too, can meet the stars
 Oct. 16 The reviewers missed the point
 Oct. 23 N.B. isn't won on TV
 Oct. 30 His neighbour's a skunk
 Nov. 6 Only the poor go to jail
 Nov. 13 It's best to celebrate life
 Nov. 20 Jim almost kicked in the door
 Nov. 27 Tipping is a sweaty chore
 Dec. 4 You can't feel mass tragedy
 Dec. 11 All the nudes aren't good nudes
 Dec. 18 Young only play at politics
 1972-Jan. 1 Being a Maritimer is tiring
 Jan. 8 Justin's not his baby
 Jan. 15 Being paid to loaf is no bargain
 Jan. 22 Once we knew who we were
 Jan. 29 This is your captain speaking
 Feb. 5 He's not a youngster anymore
 Feb. 12 Plastic moments depress him
 Feb. 19 "Jalna" has medicinal merit
 Feb. 26 He doesn't agree with Walter
 Mar. 4 On marriage, accidents, etc.
 Mar. 11 The dries are off target
 Mar. 18 Talent just isn't enough
 Mar. 25 The French problem in plain English—as seen by Dromedary Boop, MLA
 Apr. 1 Our political house is afire
 Apr. 8 Boop is beyond question
 Apr. 15 Boop is top banana
 Apr. 22 Status outranks the dollar
 Apr. 29 We might try independence
 May 6 We could lick those Danes
 May 13 Some critics are deep
 May 20 Youth understands Hokum
 May 27 Exit lines can be great
 June 3 Everyone shot at Wallace
 June 10 We sure need to stay pure
 June 17 Youth now knows less of life
 June 24 Nudity has barely begun
 July 1 You can't tell a doctor much
 July 8 Fast-draw Nowlan recalls the old West—yes, in New Brunswick
 July 15 Old Charlie never pretended
 July 22 A taste for Saint John
 July 29 Flying gunhands unsettle him
 Aug. 5 Pulp cutting's no picnic
 Aug. 12 Senator McGovern missed Delbert
 Aug. 20 How it sounds from here
 Aug. 26 Have hopes, will travel
 Sept. 2 NB's next premier named by Dromedary Boop
 Sept. 9 He's a hired prizefighter
 Sept. 16 Terrorism is terrorism
 Sept. 23 He'll leave no leg uncuffed
 Sept. 30 Campobello's just right
 Oct. 7 China's poverty was very real
 Oct. 14 Humour is a rare gift
 Oct. 21 How to foil the evil eye
 Oct. 28 There's a yawning difference
 Nov. 4 Barns aren't quite heavenly
 Nov. 11 On where credit is due
 Nov. 18 Nixon lost—by our standards
 Nov. 25 Island spokesmen argue extraordinarily fairly
 Dec. 2 Cars—and drivers—are shoddy
 Dec. 9 Courage befits the last king
 Dec. 16 Righteous zealots are fierce
 Dec. 23 Bah! Humbug!—and a Merrie Christmas
 Dec. 30 Moon men are cosmic bores
 1973-Jan. 6 Bigots are important people
 Jan. 13 Little red schools weren't
 Jan. 20 John A. deserves better

- Jan. 27 A little learning is. . .
 Feb. 3 It takes people to enjoy taxis
 Feb. 10 Your mouth gives you away
 Feb. 17 Doomsayers are a drag
 Feb. 24 Beauty gets under the skin
 Mar. 3 TV films are too much
 Mar. 10 It's a throwaway world
 Mar. 17 Not all Tories have forgotten
 Mar. 24 It's time to fire Hess
 Mar. 31 Soon we'll all be frisked
 Apr. 7 Paul Lauzon's worth sharing
 Apr. 14 Don Messer lifted the weary
 Apr. 21 The first five were fine
 Apr. 27 Road dancers are a-comin'
 May 5 He's ready to go whole hog
 May 12 A man must do his share
 May 19 This royalist can write
 May 26 We could have a Canadian king
 June 2 Criminals are just like you
 June 9 He mourns dead monarchy
 June 16 Backwardness bugs Boop
 June 23 Alden Nowlan Reveals: The Secret of Tom Forrestall's glorious tints
 June 30 Stompin' Tom beats all
 July 5 We've met Mike too late
 July 7 We've neglected Ben
 July 14 They live the good life
 July 21 Miss Forcemeat could learn 'em
 July 28 Toronto's pretty funny
 Aug. 4 A Monarch's in order
 Aug. 11 Too much isn't worth fixing
 Aug. 18 Humans have him wondering
 Aug. 25 Why we're able to eat
 Sept. 1 Poker players get around
 Sept. 3 Hick towns are nice places to live
 Sept. 8 Fashion has overtaken him
 Sept. 15 Raw deal for workers
 Sept. 22 Don't frighten the tourists
 Sept. 29 The shadow isn't the man
 Oct. 2 This book's worth reading
 Oct. 6 My friends don't match
 Oct. 13 Stanfield: 'The Most Improbable of Politicians'
 Oct. 20 It leaves a good taste
 Oct. 27 If Spiro had only smiled
 Nov. 3 Quebec voted for Canada
 Nov. 10 They've got a secret
 Nov. 17 It was nailed to the floor
 Nov. 24 We can stand a lot but. . .
 Dec. 1 This book's packed with N.B. stories
 Dec. 8 The CBC needs trash
 Dec. 15 Cars may vanish soon
 Dec. 22 The bigots need prayers
 Dec. 26 He can hardly credit it
 Dec. 29 Marilyn found me irresistible
 1974-Jan. 5 Ma Bell isn't lovable
 Jan. 12 Fear makes some bigots
 Jan. 19 He's got their message
 Jan. 26 God bless you, Mr. Cox
 Feb. 2 The future's all planned
 Feb. 9 Truth can be hard to see
 Feb. 16 My bank can unbend
 Feb. 23 Jack Benny makes him laugh
 Mar. 2 Wine-sipping is nutty
 Mar. 9 GG should be colorful—Greene, perhaps
 Mar. 16 Streaking started in N.B.
 Mar. 23 Votes don't stay bought
 Mar. 30 Rep by pop doesn't work
 Apr. 6 Will Dromedary Boop go to the Senate
 Apr. 13 Typhoid Mary still lives
 Apr. 20 Jail's not too good for some
 Apr. 27 Animal lovers can be foul
 May 4 We've got our new Boop
 May 11 We'll hide sloppy bushes so we can drink at ease
 May 18 Our next government
 May 25 Terror can be impersonal
 June 1 Emmy-worthy it wasn't
 June 8 The bridge needs a look
 June 15 You can like a monster
 June 22 You vote for strangers
 June 29 Look twice at the magic realists

- July 6 He'll vote—but not because he's interested
 July 13 No column published
 July 20 You're alone in that booth
 July 27 No column published
 Aug. 3 You can eat well in places
 Aug. 10 A play is a team effort
 Aug. 17 More than moose in peril
 Aug. 24 He's against freer abortion
 Aug. 31 They all love Laura Foster
 Sept. 7 There's magic in his magic
 Sept. 14 Pardon is impardonable
 Sept. 21 Drunks don't cause all the accidents
 Sept. 28 He admires one Trudeau
 Oct. 5 Joey's the worst Newfie joke
 Oct. 12 Poverty really isn't fun
 Oct. 19 TV is something else
 Oct. 26 On chowder and chowderheads
 Nov. 2 The sky is falling
 Nov. 9 He's hiding behind a bum
 Nov. 16 R.H. will save us all
 Nov. 23 A browse through some books
 Nov. 30 The only color was gray
 Dec. 7 Rocky's a dream guest
 Dec. 14 Modern travels remarkable
 Dec. 21 Medicine men stood out
 Dec. 28 He's proud to be a do-gooder
 1975-Jan. 4 Benny's good for 39 more
 Jan. 11 The summer Roosevelt got polio
 Jan. 18 MPs need more—ask Boop
 Jan. 25 Mike contradicts himself
 Feb. 1 Health ministers think funny
 Feb. 8 MLAs have dandy jobs
 Feb. 15 Canada needs her magazines
 Feb. 22 Dalton's been sheltered
 Mar. 1 That old Swede is nuts
 Mar. 8 Prayers keep planes up
 Mar. 15 The mail didn't go through
 Mar. 22 Victorians lived it up
 Mar. 29 By head-gold is bedder
 Apr. 5 You can't insult my flag
 Apr. 12 I'm truly an exercise nut
 Apr. 19 Flying is for birds
 Apr. 26 Canada panicked in 1970
 May 3 We're missing a moose
 May 10 Dying's a personal problem
 May 17 They're brainwashing kids
 May 24 Beards are nature's way
 May 31 "I said to the Prince. . ."
 June 7 Men are just animals
 June 14 Woodstock had the bomb
 June 21 Hard-lines are too soft
 June 28 N.B. has changed politics
 July 5 Just call me serene
 July 12 Barflies need seat belts
 July 19 Canada owes Des
 July 26 It's too big a chance
 Aug. 2 They're tilting my pinball
 Aug. 9 It's time to split
 Aug. 16 Being old is no joke
 Aug. 22 We're going to the dogs
 Aug. 30 One way to reform Senate
 Sept. 6 Guest column by Col. Ian S. Fraser, "Col. Fraser borrows a column—for a fond farewell to NB"
 Sept. 13 The MPs should decide
 Sept. 20 Tories aren't bores anyway
 Sept. 27 Hands off, stranger
 Oct. 4 Mrs. Simpson's "Little Man"
 Oct. 11 He has unspeakable ideas
 Oct. 18 His data bank's loaded
 Oct. 25 This book's a bargain
 Nov. 1 What Trudeau really said
 Nov. 8 There's no path back
 Nov. 15 Everyone wants Bob's job
 Nov. 22 Fred's rousing—but wrong
 Nov. 29 He's ready to pay again
 Dec. 6 Of course Oswald did it
 Dec. 13 Yes, that magazine is obscenely obscene
 Dec. 20 You need kids at Christmas
 Dec. 27 MPs should set an example
 1976-Jan. 3 On books for browsing
 Jan. 10 Sir John will not be running
 Jan. 17 An evil monster's after him

- Jan. 24 It was like "Playboy"—in 1947
- Jan. 31 Violence is such fun
- Feb. 7 Time flies much too fast
- Feb. 14 Those doggone deer killers
- Feb. 21 Shady lady stories pay off
- Feb. 28 This cab company cares
- Mar. 6 Dief tells it like it was—to him
- Mar. 13 He will miss Mrs. Bridges
- Mar. 20 When everything got fixed for 50 cents—with a smile
- Mar. 27 Take care with this recipe
- Apr. 3 Door's open to sex equality
- Apr. 10 Why most adults hate kids
- Apr. 17 Hughes: a pitiable old man
- Apr. 24 Toronto needs a big kick—again
- May 1 They always neglect the army
- May 8 We need more blood
- May 14 Maureen McTeer isn't Queen of Canada
- May 22 That black juice is great
- May 29 We're over-reacting to crime
- June 5 Bob's satire is good-natured
- June 12 Dr. Hellebore approves
- June 19 N.B.'s roads made us what we are
- June 26 The General won't join the Colonel
- July 3 Benedict Arnold's sex scandal
- July 10 He's a chicken loyalist
- July 17 MPs aren't messengers
- July 24 There was no song to sing to the Queen
- July 31 Spare underwear is a must
- Aug. 7 He's all for Christopher
- Aug. 14 We loved those smokes
- Aug. 21 They're looking ahead
- Aug. 28 It should be the "Newbie" joke
- Sept. 4 You can fire your MP—but you keep paying him
- Sept. 11 Frank was a wise town Marshal
- Sept. 18 He's voting for Ford
- Sept. 25 It's more fun walking
- Oct. 2 They deserve the pillory
- Oct. 9 In praise of Star Trek
- Oct. 16 Protesters can't pretend to be downtrodden
- Oct. 23 They should've burned King's diaries—maybe
- Oct. 30 They complain too much
- Nov. 6 On being a playwright
- Nov. 13 Otto is so unselfish
- Nov. 20 It's too much like divorce
- Nov. 27 Meat addicts, beware
- Dec. 4 Grammar? Who needs it!
- Dec. 11 Faces are forgettable
- Dec. 18 Outlaws can be heroes
- 1977-Jan. 1 On Jan. 1 he feels like a new man
- Jan. 8 It's safer to chew
- Jan. 15 Such honesty charms
- Jan. 22 It's back to tea for us
- Jan. 29 The Senate is a rip-off
- Feb. 5 No column published
- Feb. 12 Tell us SOMETHING, Joe
- Feb. 19 A CBC flame goes out
- Feb. 26 You can't sing about famine
- Mar. 5 She preferred being old
- Mar. 12 Let the poor dream
- Mar. 19 An odd look at Sir Albert
- Mar. 26 Storks are mostly unemployed now
- Apr. 2 Boop cuts the fat
- Apr. 9 Tourism: a mixed blessing
- Apr. 16 She's silly, but splendid
- Apr. 23 Goodbye to the Bellamys
- Apr. 30 Vietnam's not news now
- May 7 Cec knows about soaps
- May 14 It needs a Shakespeare to portray the real Nixon
- May 28 The day Hartland crowned the Queen
- June 4 The Clan Nowlan's claim
- June 11 A case of murder

- June 18 Separatism is spreading
 June 25 Sister's happy sacrifice
 July 2 Canada jails too many
 July 9 Henry, alone, not enough
 July 16 A sect boosts your ego
 July 23 Silence is a basic right
 July 30 They talked too much
 Aug. 6 Quebec is our natural ally
 Aug. 13 Modern 'convenience' Ha!
 Aug. 20 Grandma will be disposable
 Aug. 27 I don't think I'd buy Peter
 Kent another beer
 Sept. 3 We all have accents
 Sept. 10 Anglin was the voice of Saint
 John's Irish Catholics
 Sept. 17 The jobless laborer is
 Canada's forgotten man
 Sept. 24 A romantic man of action
 Oct. 1 Merle Haggard needs no
 gimmicks
 Oct. 8 Fewer spies in Halifax
 Oct. 15 Dull debates are best
 Oct. 22 N.B. has always had Boops
 (p.p. Apr. 25, 1970)
 Oct. 29 Art book depicts tragedy of
 war
 Nov. 5 It's a truly comic book—but
 was it meant to be?
 Nov. 12 You don't own your cat (p.p.
 Nov. 21, 1970)
 Nov. 19 Some promise, even for
 politician
 Nov. 26 He can't condone police
 breaking law
 Dec. 3 Robert Corbett's response to
 A. Nowlan's Nov. 19/77
 column
 Dec. 10 Nine girls with a story
 Dec. 17 Good news is no news
 Dec. 24 Love thy neighbour—but not
 too strenuously
 Dec. 31 Mine host is an expert
 1978-Jan. 7 Poor old Joe didn't know
 Jan. 14 Salt cod makes a good meal
 Jan. 21 "Fire!" yelled Sally An
 Jan. 28 Pity she destroyed it—I bet
 Winston cheered
 Feb. 4 The Wiggleworths are fine
 (p.p. Feb. 7, 1970)
 Feb. 11 They fight for the unborn
 Feb. 18 It's a doubtful deterrent
 Feb. 25 Lang should be ashamed
 Mar. 4 Benedict'll pack 'em in
 Mar. 11 It's cheaper not to reply
 Mar. 18 A useful thing, the wink
 Mar. 25 Boop is top banana (p.p. Apr.
 15, 1972)
 Apr. 1 No column published
 Apr. 8 Boop is beyond question
 (p.p. Apr. 8, 1972)
 Apr. 15 Boozers and puffers deserve
 a big hand
 Apr. 22 Grizzly's wild pals are
 dangerously cuddly
 Apr. 29 How can poor pay to stay
 healthy
 May 6 They know what time it is in
 Hartland
 May 13 Mooney's ankles beat
 Bryden's hairdo
 May 20 No news is new news
 May 27 Roast flattery tastier
 June 3 TV characters die too
 casually
 June 10 These books enrich lives
 June 17 They'll exercise gently and
 you'll pay plenty
 June 24 He sees a lot by night
 July 3 The state makes a rotten
 mother
 July 10 No column published
 July 17 It's embarrassing when your
 wife comes home with a
 policeman
 July 22 Famous last words
 July 29 To make a man
 Aug. 5 Stop crying, you Anglophone
 babies!
 Aug. 12 There's life in Hodge yet
 Aug. 19 Step up here for lessons in

- horse-driving, wood burning
- Aug. 26 Dream for sale: why not?
- Sept. 7 That's too much, General
- Sept. 8 Don't honk—we're busy being polite
- Sept. 16 Optimists can get killed
- Sept. 23 They're singing the same old song
- Sept. 30 How the postal service died (p.p. Mar. 15, 1975)
- Oct. 7 Politicians should leave legacy of pride
- Oct. 14 N.B. voter values loyalty
- Oct. 21 "No comment"—until election day!
- Oct. 28 Ted Eaton's old recipes were worth eating
- Nov. 4 This jogging madness has stolen my soul mate
- Nov. 11 Catch whales, spare mackerel
- Nov. 18 Odd happenings at Sussex Drive
- Nov. 25 His "chief" complaint
- Dec. 2 Gibbs' magic spell conjured up childhood
- Dec. 9 Don't apologize—they owe us!
- Dec. 16 It's time to close door
- Dec. 23 Those concerts were fun
- Dec. 30 Almanacs can tell you
- 1979-Jan. 6 Don't touch my frills
- Jan. 13 "... the very model of a modern Governor-General"
- Jan. 20 If critics shifted targets
- Jan. 27 Optimists can get killed (p.p. Sept. 16, 1978)
- Jan. 29 He's tops at surviving
- Feb. 3 My job creation effort had astonishing results
- Feb. 10 If someone set your house alight wouldn't you yell "Fire"?
- Feb. 17 "The Duke" has aged well
- Feb. 24 Love often blooms better
- Mar. 3 Eclipse risk overstated
- Mar. 10 School days, school days
- Mar. 17 Why not a true Irish celebration?
- Mar. 24 Why statistics often lie
- Mar. 31 "Bridal" wasn't the word
- Apr. 7 Heroes brought our safety
- Apr. 14 "Coffin case" argues well against death penalty
- Apr. 21 I vote—sometimes passionately
- Apr. 28 User fees will humiliate N.B.'s poor
- May 5 Column part of Cuba series
- May 12 Voting in a safe seat is bloody boring
- May 19 Old-time woodsmen a proud, tough bunch
- May 26 Pity those poor doctors!
- June 2 The twilight Tarzan
- June 9 Common fairness
- June 16 Victoria and Sex
- June 23 It's Miss Napadogan, not Miss Universe
- June 30 Too much hypocrisy about patronage
- July 3 At least the Shah went quietly
- July 7 There are too many laws
- July 14 They did me in the eye
- July 21 Only pushers deserve jail
- July 28 After only eight months, her painting's "phenomenal"
- Aug. 4 Mrs., Miss, Ms, —how about Ent?
- Aug. 11 Separatists everywhere
- Aug. 18 Full, frontal bottle-drinking is a no-no
- Aug. 25 Wives take some beating
- Sept. 1 There are no ugly girls
- Sept. 8 A book for old navy men
- Sept. 15 Hodge Nolwan reports: Hodge's final column—about "The Lump"

- Sept. 15 And Alden grieves for an old friend
- Sept. 22 He was a classic hero
- Sept. 29 Mackasey is out—but a lot of Grits are hanging in there
- Oct. 6 Fairy stories still happen
- Oct. 13 This diet's too slimming
- Oct. 20 Woman the lobbies ignore
- Oct. 27 "Slasher" Daigle is talk of Fredericton
- Nov. 3 Some PhDs are dumb
- Nov. 10 To the young, war seems like a marvellous [*sic*] game
- Nov. 17 Holidays: let's be honest
- Nov. 24 Must I live with woofers and tweeters?
- Dec. 1 It's double-trouble
- Dec. 8 Great stuff, Gordan—you bring it all back
- Dec. 15 No column published
- Dec. 22 Topsy-turvey modern world is so confusing
- Dec. 29 —one group N.B. doesn't need
- 1980-Jan. 5 N.B. riding too predictable
- Jan. 12 The care and feeding of wood stoves
- Jan. 14 Why Hugh John should be Lieutenant-Governor!
- Jan. 19 Trudeau's running like a fox
- Jan. 26 Jimmy should try this
- Feb. 2 Garbage was useful then
- Feb. 9 Ali is so honest
- Feb. 16 Some choice—"The Shrug" or "the Hollow Laugh"
- Feb. 23 Detectors really work!
- Mar. 1 Mr. Cocking is no chef
- Mar. 8 The flag is accepted—finally
- Mar. 15 Three ounces of whiskey, with a chaser—that's Ryan's Fancy
- Mar. 22 When I get old don't call me "senior"
- Mar. 29 Don't bother choosing—N.B. has always had its own bird
- Apr. 5 Newlyweds, take heed
- Apr. 12 Kings Landing throws a Christmas party
- Apr. 19 Prince may remember N.B.'s civilized treatments
- Apr. 28 Meows in the night get you going (published in *Evening Times-Globe*)
- May 3 Cloak-and-dagger guys aren't Mounties
- May 10 It's not all black vs. white in Africa
- May 17 Movie's hero portrayed courage, not alcoholism
- May 24 Jackie Vautour—take your hand out of my wallet
- May 31 The young cashier wanted it that way
- June 7 They were all daddys
- June 14 Miller was no porn artist
- June 21 Deny them cold beer, Mr. Kinney, and do so at your peril
- June 28 Why I like walruses
- July 5 Let's suppose Wolfe lost
- July 7 Happiness was everywhere
- July 12 At least he sells hope
- July 19 The Chinese make nice old movies
- July 26 A nice place to sleep (it off)
- Aug. 2 No place to meet friends
- Aug. 9 A man dead to beauty
- Aug. 16 Old fogeys or young, they're all against me
- Aug. 23 Ronnie's nice—but scarey [*sic*]
- Aug. 30 You teetotalers are parasites
- Sept. 4 Hartland is scared firms won't rebuild
- Sept. 6 Joggers have odd goal
- Sept. 13 Terry raged at his pain
- Sept. 20 Red tape measures are weird
- Sept. 27 It's quicker to reach Jamaica than Charlottetown

- Oct. 4 Only hardy souls survive our taxis
- Oct. 11 Guns are overdoing it
- Oct. 18 I'm an exercise nut, too
- Oct. 25 Grandmother's doctor was wintergreen
- Nov. 1 Spare me from movie magpies
- Nov. 8 Public is "man in the middle"
- Nov. 15 Don't imprison hope as well
- Nov. 22 Marie and Wilnot deserve a wider audience
- Nov. 29 Sir John A. would know
- Dec. 6 Hong Kong veterans deserve this new book's salute
- Dec. 13 Minority rights won't last
- Dec. 20 It made "Santa's" day
- Dec. 27 Durell's biographer packs a punch, too
- 1981-Jan. 3 Orange Order's history makes good reading
- Jan. 10 On being young at war
- Jan. 17 Can no restaurant cook a decent mashed potato?
- Jan. 24 The unanswerable questions
- Jan. 31 When immigrants—and common sense—we outraged
- Feb. 7 Mr. Gwyn, meet Mr. Carter
- Feb. 14 Winos should have somewhere to sleep
- Feb. 21 An exercise in bilingualism
- Feb. 28 Let's not talk rot about pot
- Mar. 7 Bill of Rights won't prevent a black eye
- Mar. 14 There's a big difference between "plump" and "obese"
- Mar. 21 A dog wouldn't lie. . . now would he!
- Mar. 28 Ceremony is stodgy, maybe—but memorable
- Apr. 4 It's about time heroines fought back!
- Apr. 11 Ghosts of Sable Island's shipwrecks still hover
- Apr. 18 Hard-core soap is a great tranquilizer
- Apr. 25 It's pointless chasing kids to their deaths
- May 2 Some freedoms aren't by choice
- May 9 Book makes you laugh and cry with Durelle
- May 16 The dead can rest easily only in Quebec
- May 23 Going to school again was great experience
- May 30 One good turn deserves another
- June 6 Customers are such a bother
- June 13 Demonstrating mobs are all stupid
- June 20 N.B. patronage? Tsk. . . tsk!
- June 27 MPs have to live too ". . . er. . . well. . . don't we?"
- July 4 Remember when "voluntary" meant paying your own way?
- July 11 Canadian nursery rhymes? We've got the characters
- July 18 The left sounds as bad as the right
- July 25 Federally-sponsored book bums need recycling
- Aug. 1 Girls—even princesses—are so intimidating
- Aug. 8 Foreign aid should be personal
- Aug. 15 You're not Jane, Bo
- Aug. 22 No column published
- Aug. 29 N.B. couple embarking on African adventure
- Sept. 5 I'm offensive, I know
- Sept. 12 A new—and sometimes absurd way of viewing North America
- Sept. 19 Ever tried to give something away?
- Sept. 26 Women's libber doesn't know women
- Oct. 3 Confessions of a lifelong

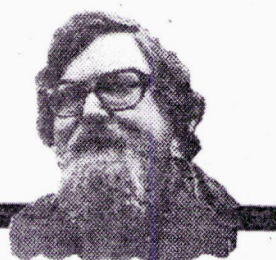
- addict
- Oct. 10 Birds of a feather flock together
- Oct. 17 The case against the case against the case against abortion
- Oct. 31 Such publishers deserve a salute
- Nov. 7 Even a “nothingarian” can honor St. Jude
- Nov. 14 Banks have sure changed
- Nov. 21 Death of a poor rich man
- Nov. 28 Granny could have told them
- Dec. 5 Patients have rights too
- Dec. 12 Whatever happened to Charlie Van Horne
- Dec. 19 The funny things you save when panic strikes
- Dec. 26 Taking one’s dentist out for a bite
- 1982-Jan. 1 You no Jane, Bo (previous published Aug. 15, 1981)
- Jan. 9 Cat’s behavior takes some modifying
- Jan. 16 Suitable punishments for vile wretches
- Jan. 23 High-minded mice reprimand publisher
- Jan. 30 All fuels risk life
- Feb. 6 Vacancies prove people don’t believe in Senate
- Feb. 13 Lice are an old childhood hazard
- Feb. 20 Let them have their beer and taxis
- Feb. 27 They “detest” gossip—but love to hear it
- Mar. 6 Don’t blame society for bums like these
- Mar. 13 On love, cookbooks and the “White Madness”
- Mar. 20 We may be heading for trilingualism
- Mar. 27 “For the record,” they were hardly worth recording
- Apr. 3 They like his money but not his name
- Apr. 10 They all hate Trudeau out west—why?
- Apr. 17 Miller Brittain came close to greatness
- Apr. 24 Acadians should ask Levesque to cool it
- May 1 War’s no comic opera
- May 8 Eyes on two N.B. writers
- May 15 Education is a wonderful thing
- May 22 I knew it—licorice IS a vice!
- May 28 “Bert Burgoyne donated strength the way some people donate blood”
- June 5 Grandma will be disposable
- June 12 Acting has its own occupational hazards
- June 15 Obscenity is in the mind of the beholder
- June 19 Now they’re bugging kiddies’ play
- June 26 OK, disarm; then what?
- July 3 There’s nothing funny about starving immigrants
- July 10 Tragedy turned into fund-raising scheme
- July 17 The “Sourpuss Princess” is distinctly lovable
- July 24 You don’t hear heroes complaining
- July 31 You’re not off Satan’s pitchfork yet, Fredericton!
- Aug. 7 Even a tycoon can be stupid
- Aug. 14 Ryan now treading Dief’s path
- Aug. 21 The ambassador deserves medal too
- Aug. 28 “Lou” ground too many axes
- Sept. 4 Anyone seen a big shot tightening HIS belt?
- Sept. 11 Good Samaritans can still surprise
- Sept. 18 Irish pubs refresh your soul

- Sept. 25 Sometimes it's right to
manage the news
- Oct. 2 New book attacks Dief
unfairly
- Oct. 9 Now if they hunted lions
with spears
- Oct. 16 Voices of doom have gone
too far
- Oct. 23 How big Lyndon Johnson
got physical with mild-
mannered Lester Pearson
- Oct. 30 Save us from political
pundits
- Nov. 6 Much to fear, including fear
itself
- Nov. 13 Juvenile law reform wrong
- Nov. 20 Everyone favors
disarmament but. . .
- Nov. 27 Got a new disease? Just
blame society
- Dec. 4 That was a terrible interview,
Barbara
- Dec. 11 How lucky we are to live in
N.B.
- Dec. 18 Best arguments are friendly
- Dec. 24 How I got a laugh at the
school concert
- 1983-Jan. 1 Anyone seen a big shot
tightening HIS belt
(previously published on
Sept. 4, 1982)
- Jan. 8 Good ole Joe-the motor
monster (previously
published on Aug. 15, 1970)
- Jan. 15 You're only as old as you
say you are
- Jan. 22 Battling the Bangkok fly bug
- Jan. 29 She tells our ports' tale well
- Feb. 5 Rehabilitated Riel no hero to
me
- Feb. 12 Would you deny right to
protest?
- Feb. 19 A cigar box could boost book
sales
- Feb. 23 No kowtowing now from
Bob Corbett
- Feb. 26 What's all this bull about
milking cows?
- Mar. 5 Loughheed would be a bust as
Prime Minister
- Mar. 12 N.B. people: talking
champs—of a kind
- Mar. 19 Schreyer's heart isn't in his
job
- Mar. 26 Not going places is an art
- Apr. 2 Diamond Jim didn't believe
in diets
- Apr. 9 Odd lot, those Bee Ceers
- Apr. 16 Words can too hurt
- Apr. 23 Let's have those DGC's—
jackboots and all!
- Apr. 30 Seat belts are fine—left
unregulated
- May 7 That disarmament question is
dishonest
- May 14 Soaking the sick is
deplorable
- May 2 Elections more exciting in
Saint John
- May 28 Phil Coffey earned his
credentials
- June 4 Requiem for a book
publisher
- June 11 Mulroney may be the
unknown PM
- June 18 Banks have sure changed
(previously published Nov.
14, 1981)
- June 25 Girls—even princesses—are
so intimidating (previously
published Aug. 1, 1981)

APPENDIX B

43.10.21/2
Jan. 7, 1978

alden nowlan reports



POOR OLD JOE DIDN'T KNOW

I switched on the lullaby lantern the other night and there before me in living color stood the Brown Bomber, Joe Louis, who for my generation was the last true heavyweight boxing champion of the world. The others have been mere claimants to his throne.

"In this corner, from Detroit, Michigan, wearing purple trunks, and weighing 196 pounds..." That's how the radio broadcasts of his fights used to begin. Although there was a radio in every house in our village, the men would gather on Friday nights in the general store to listen to the fights. Unlike watching television, listening to radio could be a communal experience.

"I'll bet you \$50 that Billy Conn will beat him this time," one of the men in the general store might say. They sat on benches that had been installed to accommodate them (or their wives who on a different evening would gather there to knit and gossip). Can anyone conceive of a modern supermarket

providing seats for the convenience of sports fans and the Women's Institute?

Those \$50 bets didn't involve even so much as 50 cents in real money. Nobody ever dreamt of saying, "I'll take that bet." The betting was purely a figure of speech.

The broadcasts ended with Joe Louis saying, "I'm all right, Mum." Nobody laughed, just as nobody laughed when the Brown Bomber said that we were going to win the Second World War because God was on our side.

Here he was on television, a guest star on the Red Foxx Show. That is to say, he was billed as a guest star. Actually, he was a body that was led in and then led away. Not a star, but a burnt-out meteorite.

He first appeared dressed for the ring and then in a tuxedo that was too big for him. It was painfully obvious that the poor old sod had only the vaguest idea of why he was there.

The cheers of the audience, in response to off-camera arm-waving stage managers and flashing red applause signs, were loud and prolonged. The Brown Bomber also waved his arms. It was hard to tell if he was thanking the crowd or trying to silence it. Perhaps his arm-waving was simply a conditioned reflex.

He looked more and more bewildered. When he was told that he had just won "\$5-Million and the Red Foxx Show," it seemed that he wasn't sure whether this was a joke or a presentation. The audience laughed hysterically. And, no doubt, the technicians turned up the laugh track.

"I like your show," he said, and the laughter became uproarious. At least Foxx had the decency not to throw a custard pie in Joe Louis' face. Then again, perhaps he did throw a custard pie in his face, later, after I'd switched off the set. On television, common decency is a very uncommon commodity.

I felt like punching somebody.



JOE LOUIS

Sample of Nowlan's column as it appeared in *The Telegraph-Journal*.

Sample of the same column in manuscript form.

40-82.9.1f.

Alden Nowlan
676 Windsor Street,
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 4G4

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ALDEN NOWLAN'S



NOTEBOOK

HORATIO ALGER WAS probably the best selling author of all time. It has been estimated that half a billion copies of his books for boys have been sold, books with titles such as *Strive and Succeed* and *Try and Trust*. His name has become a part of the language, so that journalists who have never read him will automatically dub a self-made man an Horatio Alger hero. The term appeared in obituaries of Lord Thomson. Nowadays, of course, there's usually an element of irony in the phrase, since it's no longer fashionable to admire millionaires, self-made or otherwise. Or, rather, it's no longer fashionable to admit to admiring a millionaire, as our ancestors did. It's a curious fact that our Victorian forbears were more truthful than we are in dealing with every department of life except one: sex.

Poor old Horatio has been given a drubbing by just about every 20th Century critic who has written about him. He has been variously described as a "poor emotional cripple," a "bad joke of the nineteenth century," and a "terrible monument to bad taste." The novelist Paul Gallico went so far as to accuse him of creating the "mortgage syndrome," which he defined as a neurotic fear of being in debt, prevalent among our grandparents. Many, perhaps most, of today's public librarians refuse to put Alger's books on the shelves of their children's departments. He's supposed to have been an untalented hack who committed the unspeakable sin of teaching generations of young boys that their one aim in life ought to be to make money.

Now I happen to be a member of the final generation of Alger boys.

The Hero's Face Reflected The Face of the Reader

For it would be hard to find a boy who has read him during the past twenty-five years. Many of his books are still in print. A number of titles recently became available in paperback, including a magazine serial that had never previously appeared in book form, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*. But boys don't buy them, old boys do. I have a large boxful of Alger that I've picked up in recent years at second-hand sales, and I must confess that I read every one of them at a sitting, starting as soon as I got it home. For the benefit of any reader who may be sneering at such folly, I might add that I've bought them all for between twenty-five cents and \$2.50 a copy and on today's book market none of the titles in my possession is worth less than \$25. Obviously, there are a lot of middle-aged men who are prepared to shell out good money for the privilege of re-reading *Joe's Luck* and *Mark Manning's Mission*. The author must have done something right to deserve such loyalty.

Every Alger book has the same plot and very much the same series of sub-plots. In the first chapter we become acquainted with "a boy of fifteen, well-knit and vigorous, with a frank, manly expression, and a prepossessing face." His name may be Walter Sherwood or Ben Bradford or Tom Temple or Tim Thatcher, but essentially he's always the same boy. Often, he's the son and sole support of a widow, a sweet but highly ineffectual woman, with a mortgaged farm. The mortgage is held by a blustering, greedy Squire who has a foppish, bullying son of the same age as the hero.

Twenty or so chapters later the frank, manly, prepossessing boy has both feet firmly planted on the first rung of the ladder to riches, more often than not as the result of his having been befriended by a benevolent millionaire. The Squire is bankrupt, and has "crept away like one crushed by a sudden blow." The foppish, bullying son has been reduced to clerking in a dry goods store.

When thus stripped to the bare bones, it sounds silly. But, of course, Alger didn't hand his readers the bare bones. Far from it. He has been called a dreadful stylist, partly because of his habit of working in

innumerable incidents that had little if anything to do with the development of the plot. But these irrelevant incidents that have so disturbed his adult critics were in large part the basis of his appeal to boys. Very often they portrayed adults, particularly school teachers, in a ridiculous light, and there's nothing a kid likes better than watching a grown-up make an ass of himself. Come to that, most of the adults in the Alger books are figures of fun. His villainous Squires are pompous and stupid, rather than frightening.

As for the frequent occasions when Alger himself entered the narrative with "I will endeavour to represent the Squire's pronunciation" or "I hope you recall what I told you in our first chapter," his readers didn't find those intrusive, they felt that they were being taken into the author's confidence. In fact, the narrator's sudden entrances were probably Alger's most endearing trait.

What the critics fail to realize is that whatever the author's intentions may have been, boy readers of the Alger books didn't see them as paeans to the capitalist system. No twelve-year-old ever decided to go into banking when he grew up because of reading *Joe's Luck*. What mattered to an Alger reader was not the money the boy hero made but the power that he attained. The books were essentially power myths in the classic tradition. Being so weak themselves, children delight in picturing the weak overcoming the strong. They love it when young David fells the giant Goliath. They love it when Jack in the Beanstalk slays the ogre. They love it when Clark Kent, who is essentially a little boy, turns into Superman.

Just so, we Alger boys used to love it when the greedy blustering Squire and his foppish, bullying son were humbled by Paul Prescott or Luke Larkin. It has been said that the Alger heroes were without distinct personalities. Ah, but the reason should be obvious. The hero's face was left blank so that it would always reflect the face of the reader, not as he was but as he would have liked to have been.

The money in the Alger books isn't real money. It's another name for King Arthur's sword. □

Sample of the same column in manuscript form.

40 87. 4.3f, 1
Alden Nowlan,
676 Windsor Street,
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 4G4

Horatio Alger was probably the best selling author of all time. It has been estimated that half a billion copies of his books for boys have been sold, books with titles such as Strive and Succeed and Try and Trust. His name has become a part of the language, so that journalists who have never read him will automatically dub a self-made man an Horatio Alger hero. The term appeared in obituaries of Lord Thomson. Nowadays, of course, there's usually an element of irony in the phrase, since it's no longer fashionable to admire millionaires, self-made or otherwise. Or, rather, it's no longer fashionable to admit to admiring a millionaire, as our ancestors did. It's a curious fact that our Victorian forbears were more truthful than we are in dealing with every department of life except one: sex.

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