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John Glassco's Richer World: Memoirs Of Montparnasse



Synopsis

John Glassco's *Richer World* shows that *Memoirs of Montparnasse* is not the honest reminiscence Glassco presents it to be. With the narrative energy of a psychological detective story, it compares the published book to its holograph manuscript. Like Frederick Philip Grove and Grey Owl, Glassco too has transformed himself into a person of his own creation. Literary subterfuge pervades not only the premise on which *Memoirs of Montparnasse* is founded, but also the dialogue, the plot structure, the characterizations, and the events that are supposed to have happened. This subterfuge contributes to establishing Glassco's distinctive position in Canadian literary history, that of a twentieth-century successor to the literary dandies, aesthetes, and decadents of nineteenth-century England and France.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Glassco, in this memoir, shows a retrospective view of what his four-year life in Paris has been from a hospital room in Montreal, where he is convalescent with tuberculosis. The memoir begins in 1927 when Glassco decides to drop out of McGill University in Montreal, against his family's wish, to go to Paris and write Surrealist poetry. He is followed there by his great friend Graeme Taylor.

Soon, he will give up the idea of writing poetry because the bohemian life he leads in Paris is far too

interesting to not be told. The activity of the Parisian "rive gauche" is described in detail: the caf s, the social gatherings, the parties at the houses of intellectuals and artists, etc. This life reminds us of Hemingway's description of Paris in "The Sun also Rises". After several love-affairs in which his struggles with his sexual identity are latent, he ends up the island of Mallorca, in Spain, where he has followed Mrs. Quayle, the woman whom he believes to be in love with. But the greatest value of Glassco's memoir is the gallery of famous artists he talks about whom he actually met while he was in Paris. Hemingway himself, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Robert Desnos, Emma Goldman and Gertrude Stein, are all depicted in his memoirs. We get to know facts about their lives and personal characters and he manages to present them to us in a different light. We should also bare in mind that this memoir reveals an important factor in relation to the evolution of Canadian Literature. The 1920s were a time when young Canadian poets were struggling to leave behind the Victorian conventions of poetry. The themes which had prevailed up until then such as nature or national distinctiveness were becoming obsolete because they wanted to let Canadian Literature enter the world of Modernism.

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