



More Joy in Heaven (New Canadian Library)

Morley Callaghan

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Based on a real-life character, **More Joy in Heaven** is a gripping account of the tragic plight of young Kip Caley, a notorious bank-robber released early from prison and feted by society as a returning prodigal son.

Earnest, optimistic, and fired by reformist zeal, Kip eventually comes to realize that the welcome of his supporters is superficial and that their charity is driven by self-interest.

More Joy in Heaven was first published in 1937.

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Author : Morley Callaghan

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From Reader Review More Joy in Heaven (New Canadian Library) for online ebook

Paula Dembeck says

This novel, published in the mid 1930s, is considered to be one of Callaghan's best. He tells an interesting story based on the experience of a real life criminal and through the story leads the reader to consider some important questions about individual freedom as well as societal questions of parole reform.

The novel was inspired by Norman Ryan, a man who committed a number of robberies in Quebec, Ontario and the United States. While in prison he underwent a transformation with the help of a priest and was released early after serving eleven years of his sentence. He was welcomed back into society and became a celebrity, a man people were attracted to because of his story. But ten months after his release, he was shot dead while trying to rob a liquor store. This historical event becomes the basis of Kip Caley's story.

As Kip is released, he too becomes the toast of the town. He says he just wants to lead a normal simple life like everyone else, but his reputation as someone who had been reborn makes him an attraction. People flock to him, want to take his picture, write his life story or even touch him. Although he is reluctant to be pushed into the spotlight, he becomes a valuable commodity for the opportunistic friends trying to help him. And, despite his new status as a reformed criminal, he continues to be hounded by his old friends who think this "transformation" is all a ruse. They believe it is all a coverup for another bank robbery and they want to be in on it.

Kip refuses the simple job of a parish gardener, a job the priest believes will help keep him out of the public's continual gawking and fawning. Instead, fueled by the flattery of the Senator, the Mayor and the reporters, he gets a job as a greeter, a job that keeps him in the spotlight, attracting visitors to a hotel. His employer hopes that Kip's celebrity will bring people from far and wide to see him, and once they are in the hotel they will spend money and fill his coffers.

But after meeting with the bishop at a gentleman's club and attending a winter carnival as the guest of the senator, Kip's desire for the simpler life starts to weaken. Why can't he be a part of this life too, in the center of discussions about significant events? His dream job is a position on the parole board, but the judge who sentenced him and who does not approve of his early release, will not allow it. Caley is crushed by this rejection. He was convinced that he could do some good in that role, like he had in the prison working as a liaison between the prisoners and the officials.

Kip has never understood that the public's fascination with him was just a passing fad, due to be eclipsed by the next big news item. As his public celebrity fades and visitors to the hotel diminish, his employer is anxious to get him into a shady wrestling deal that will again bring attention and attract more business. Kip now realizes that everyone is using him. Even those who have been his benefactors are opportunists who have been working for their own interests.

Caley is also beginning to recognize that when he gets attention, he gets excited. It is almost like the excitement and adrenalin rush of robbing banks. He knows too, that when he feels this excitement he makes bad decisions and gets into trouble. He also knows that his longing for recognition which led him first to criminal behavior and later to his transformation in prison, now needs another scheme that will bring those good feelings back. And when his public's attention starts fading even further, he drifts towards the dark side once more.

This is a painful read, the story of a man's attempt to turn his life around. As one is drawn quickly into the story, it becomes clear it will end badly.

Like this story, Callaghan's other works often pose the question of man's freedom to truly choose his own path. Are criminals the true authors of their own troubles? What limitations does society place on any man? What subtle or not so subtle forces lead to success or failure in life?

A simple story in very readable prose that raises thorny and complex questions.
A truly an excellent read.

Brad says

This book was great. Morley Callaghan is 2/2 with me. I'd read *Such Is My Beloved* a few years ago and it was my favorite for a period of time. Like that book, *More Joy In Heaven* deals with faith - faith in oneself, faith placed in one by the community, and faith the faith one has in others. Interesting ideas on violence as well. Well paced, and full of fleshed out seedy characters. An excellent book. Morley Callaghan is the best. He knocked out Hemingway.

Alexis says

Read for *Roughing it* in the books.

<http://www.roughingitinthebooks.com>

David K. Lemons says

I read this book based on critics' reviews, which usually works. Because he was allowed to hang around Hemingway in Paris and imitated his style, I thought I would discover and enjoyable talent--the emphasis here being on "enjoyable". I even made it a point of buying it in Canada where Morley hails from and writes about. I suggest reading all of Hemingway before bothering with Callaghan.

Falina says

I liked this book, especially the ending, but it was so overwhelmingly negative that it left a bad taste in my mouth. The only one who is cheerful, optimistic, and self-confident is the tragic victim of the story.

Why are so many classics about what a dark place the world is and how flawed people are? It's the reason I have a hard time liking "good" books and gravitate towards mysteries, romance, and fantasy. Why do "realistic" novels have to be so damned depressing?

"In the even, timeless flow there under the bridge the little ripples were like the voice of the priest talking about the city of God--good will, bad will, the thing he had been, the thing he was now and would be, all swept along to the lake like pieces of old furniture." (p.122)

1.1 says

Callaghan is consistently a surprisingly good writer. I still have a bit of a prejudice against him for the fact he was writing Canlit in the '30s, because I assume that it'll be boring, moralistic, or stodgy in some other way. Never am I right in asserting that, and my initial misgivings turn into pleasure as I find myself enjoying the book. *Such Is My Beloved*, for instance, I was wary of... it redeemed itself. This book is at least twice as good.

And it's not like I hate the 1930's - some of my favorite books are from then, but I always get the sense that someone with a name like Morley Callaghan will be some Catholic or Methodist moralizer with an axe to grind.

I really enjoyed this book. Kip Caley, ex-con extraordinaire, is a compelling protagonist who's filled with dreams of doing good, as prodigal son he is a bit hollow at times, but clearly he is set forth by the author as part of an argument – an argument the book does not really answer, but more or less questions. It's an important question – is there any basis for trust after a first breach of faith? It's almost sociological/criminological in its scope, and I got the sense Callaghan knew exactly that, and more.

And that's not even the only question Callaghan is asking with this book. It's beautifully written, don't forget it's from Depression-era Canada (a low down, dirty time), and it comes with my recommendation.

Whiskeyb says

I liked it okay but the main character was kind of predictable or unbelievable or something.

Hannah Law says

More Joy in Heaven was not a read I picked out for myself. Thank you public school.

The first time reading *More Joy in Heaven*, I found it very hard to become immersed in Kip Caley's story as a parolee newly released from prison. To me, the plot seemed lethargic and slow, the characters nonrelational, and even Kip's ultimate failure failed to touch me. However, on the second time around, I began to appreciate Morley Callaghan's deceptively simple tale.

More Joy in Heaven centres around a seemingly reformed parolee, Kip Caley who is attempting to reintegrate himself into the society which he has been away from for night on 10 years. He finds himself a sudden celebrity, and is offered fame, posh jobs, constant admirers, and seeming acceptance from the people. Kip likens himself to the prodigal son returned to his father, but gets muddled as he tries to apply himself to it.

After a while, the hype around Kip dies down and Kip finds himself lacking for attention. He is left with no one but the two people who truly believe in him, the old prison chaplain, Father Butler, and his beautiful and devoted girlfriend, Julie Evans. Yet even their love and support proves to be futile to Kip. Kip falls in with the "wrong crowd", and despite the warnings from all sides, stoops to crime again. Only after he has been pursued and lies broken, hiding in a coal bin, does Kip come to the realization of the truth: there really is more joy in heaven than on earth at the repentance of a sinner. And the rest is silence. Kip is shot to death as he attempts to bid farewell to faithful Julie, and dies hated by the town that once welcomed him with open arms.

Although Kip's downfall is horribly tragic, it is not entirely unpredictable. From the beginning of the novel, Kip refuses to listen to the voice of reason, instead allowing himself to be blown out of proportion by the sycophants of the world. He becomes proud and cocky, living on the high that attention gives him, and allowing himself to forget his dreams of becoming a new man. When his true friends finally bring him to a realization of how the fame has gone to his head, it is far too late, and Kip is beyond help.

I eventually came to love this book for its simple reading and profound truths. Callaghan touches on themes of heroics, of the responsibility of society for Kip's death, and of pride. He subtly speaks on the tendency of human nature to be the same, but most of all, he warns us not to place our faiths in the hands of those who are able to use them to gain something from it.

A cautionary tale, indeed.

Ibis3 says

Fuck. I just lost the page long review I just gave this book. Hit save and it just hung there forever. My own fault. ALWAYS MAKE A COPY BEFORE YOU TRY SUBMITTING A REVIEW. I'm too upset to try recreating it right now. Fuck.

Christopher Langer says

While a bit dry in a very Canadian way (think Roberston Davies), Callaghan carries much more emotion in this thematically deep book. While the tragic ending is known to the reader from the get-go, the final pages are a hard emotional journey that questions society's notions of justice, charity, and humanity.

Frank says

Re-read after many years. It stands up because of Callaghan's insight and charity. A common story told with compassion and an ear for everyday speech.
