

COMEDY, TRAGICOMEDY, AND HUMOUR
IN THE NOVELS OF
SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN

by

SUSAN ELIZABETH SIMPSON HUGHES
B. A., University of Western Ontario, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 1973

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study.

I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date April 20, 1973.

ABSTRACT

In Chapter I, I identify a comic vision which is at the core of Miss Duncan's art. The comic vision is characterized by an intuitive sense of actuality and illusion, and an exuberant joy for life; its medium is social reality. The comic vision coupled with an internal point of view culminates in tragicomedy. With an external point of view Miss Duncan's empathy for her characters commonly asserts itself and turns comedy into humour.

In Chapter II, I demonstrate that the intent of Miss Duncan's purely comic sketches is primarily social correction. Miss Duncan believes that ideally all human endeavours, including social behaviour, should be based upon self-knowledge and self-acceptance. When human activity lacks these virtues, artificial conventions emerge. In social life those who imitate these conventions, and those who revolt against them, constitute the unattractive bourgeoisie.

In Chapter III, I have explored the role of emotions in comedy. As Miss Duncan realized, man is attracted to the suppleness of successful comic characters; our natural predilection is for the vital, and our intellect constantly seeks to impose morality on this primitive emotion. The

essential disparity between tragicomedy and humour lies in the cosmological principle of the humourist which allows him to see life and death in a universal scheme. Miss Duncan is most properly a humourist who celebrates the grandeur of the human spirit that strives towards ideals, and lives amidst realities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
CHAPTER I: THE COMIC VISION	1
CHAPTER II: THE COMIC INTENT	32
CHAPTER III: TRAGICOMEDY AND HUMOUR	70
FOOTNOTES	109
BIBLIOGRAPHY	114

CHAPTER I

THE COMIC VISION

Sara Jeannette Duncan spent her literary adolescence as a capable and highly popular journalist for various Canadian and American publications. One of her first novels--A Social Departure (1893)--emerged from a series of articles she wrote on a trip around the world for the Montreal Star and the New York World. While the varying functions of a journalist doubtless left an intricate mark upon Miss Duncan's form and style of writing, certainly the direction these early endeavours provided for her artistic expression can be confidently labelled as humanistic.¹ Moreover, this early training developed in her a "gifted personality with the power to turn a dull world gay," and a faculty "to reveal hidden wealth of meaning in what may have seemed a commonplace incident."² All of these abilities are basic to a comic vision which is at the heart of Miss Duncan's literary achievement.

All comic art contains a conflict obtained by pitting a concept of actuality against a notion of illusion. Miss

Duncan regularly employs the dichotomy of actuality and illusion in one of her early novels, A Daughter of To-Day (1894). Through this dichotomy she defines the natural world of her successful characters, as opposed to the stilted sphere of that which is contrived and artificial.

A Daughter of To-Day (1894) is a study of Elfrida Bell, an advanced young lady from Sparta, Illinois, who nurtures peculiar artistic pretensions:

Elfrida allowed one extenuating point in her indictment of Sparta: the place had produced her as she was at eighteen, when they sent her to Philadelphia.... Her actual and her ideal self, her most mysterious and interesting self, had originated in the air and the opportunities of Sparta. Sparta had even done her the service of showing her that she was unusual, by contrast, and Elfrida felt that she ought to be thankful to somebody or something for being as unusual as she was. She had had a comfortable, spoiled feeling of gratitude for it before she went to Philadelphia, which had developed in the meantime into a shudder at the mere thought of what it meant to be an ordinary person. "I could bear not to be charming," said she sometimes to her Philadelphia looking-glass, "but I could not bear not to be clever."³

Elfrida's complex personality has been formed partially on her abhorrence of Sparta, and the banal life with which she equates Sparta. Her distaste for her immediate environment has forced her to develop inwardly where she has found in the illusion of herself as an artist of some distinction, a real person and a real life which

she can tolerate. Living her fantasy makes her unlike the people of Sparta. To the extent that she believes herself to be a unique individual, she becomes one. As a consequence, Elfrida enrolls in art school in Paris where life becomes more disconcerting:

She had not yet seen despair, but she had now and then lost her hold of herself, and she had made acquaintance with fear....In waking, voluntary moments she would see her problem only as an unanswerable enigma. (p. 30)

Elfrida's fabrications have given her artistic hopes she cannot realize.

Still, Elfrida has not progressed to this point without some dexterity:

in the beginning she had felt a splendid confidence. Her appropriation of theory had been so brilliant, and so rapid, her instructive appreciation had helped itself out so well with the casual formulas of the schools, she seemed herself to have an absolute understanding of expression. She held her social place among the others by her power of perception, and that, with the completeness of her repudiation of the bourgeois had given her Nadie Palicky, whom the rest found difficult, variable, unreasonable. (p. 30)

Elfrida's talent and her taste is for the veneer. She is a dilettante, both in art and friendship, who possesses an intricate system of knowledge and predilection for that which is not commonplace. Elfrida is dedicated to conscious

unconventionality, and proves herself to be no more than a mediocre painter. By contrast, Nadie Palicsky is a woman of passion who is a natural artist. When Nadie confides matter-of-factly in Elfrida that she has a lover and that they have decided marriage is ludicrous, Elfrida's response is an artificial calculation:

Elfrida reflected afterward with satisfaction that she had not even changed color, though she had found the communication electric. It seemed to her that there had been something dignified, noble almost, in the answer she had made, with a smile that acknowledged the fact that the world had scruples on such accounts as these: "Cela m'est absolument égal!" (p. 38)

Elfrida's composed worldliness is as foreign to her own actual self as the French in which she replies to Nadie.

Miss Duncan makes it clear that Elfrida's illusory belief that art will set her apart from the mundane world, by virtue of its unconventionality, is opposed to the reality of her life. Ironically, Elfrida misuses her real ability for mastering theory to cloak her lack of artistic talent. It is John Kendal, who in character and action, brings Elfrida's personality into focus.

Kendal is an Englishman, who is almost a stereotype in his adherence to propriety and regularity, and whose work is highlighted by control and form. Kendal considers Elfrida to be "a more than slightly fantastic young woman

with an appreciation of certain artistic verities out of all proportion to her power to attain them" (p. 62). Yet Kendal:

was willing enough to meet her on the special plane she constituted for herself--not as a woman, but as an artist and a Bohemian....[although] it is possible to grow indifferent even to the unconventionalities, and Kendal had been three years in the Quartier Latin. (p. 63)

Elfrida's initial confusion of her actual and illusory self has caused her to channel her efforts into becoming a novel personality. As a result she attracts Kendal by virtue of being a phenomenon, but completely bars him from ever viewing her as a woman.

Elfrida attempts to secure the novelty of her self-deception through a liaison with Kendal. In an endeavour to further her design she allows Kendal to paint her portrait, but Kendal, the painter, and Kendal, the man, are authentically one and the same. The result is shattering:

He had selected a disguise, and, as she wished, a becoming one. But he had not used it fairly, seriously. He had thrown it over her face like a veil which rather revealed than hid, rather emphasized than softened, the human secret of the face underneath....It was the real Elfrida. (p. 349)

Moreover, Elfrida's comprehension of the portrait is

complete:

"Oh, I do not find fault; I would like to, but I dare not. I am not sure enough that you are wrong--no, I am too sure that you are right. I am, indeed, very much preoccupied with myself. I have always been-- I shall always be. Don't think I shall reform after this moral shock as people do in books. I am what I am. But I acknowledge that an egotist doesn't make an agreeable picture, however charmingly you apologize for her. It is a personality of stone, isn't it?--implacable, unchangeable. I've often felt that." (p. 350)

Kendal's portrait is excruciatingly accurate. Revealed as an egotist, Elfrida gives the charge substance with her attempt to laud her character as noble by attesting to its perpetuity and indestructibility.

Elfrida's charmingly developed masque of unconventionality is the mode of expression for her overpowering egotism which had its beginnings in Sparta. Mrs. Bell, Elfrida's mother, was an average sort of woman, restless in the mediocrity of her life, who attempted to channel her discontent into fantasy by encouraging Elfrida's droll ambitions. When Kendal has captured the egotistical essence of Elfrida's character, which had for so long been elusive to him, and imposed a control upon it through the medium of the portrait, his interest in Elfrida ceases. Hence, Miss Duncan makes it clear that the artificial is removed from life, results from the confusion of the illusory and

the real, holds but ephemeral interest for genuine people, and has no future in the natural world. Kendal possesses both self-knowledge and self-acceptance. When he marries Janet Cardiff, he chooses a partner with these same virtues.

Janet is a natural person who displays a flexibility toward life and is able to cope with its meaning as she encounters it. She is the daughter of an academic who has grown up very much in the company of the respectable litterati and become a successful journalist in her own right. When, out of economic necessity, Elfrida comes to London to seek employment in journalism--a "scullery-maid's" job in literature--she and Janet form a difficult and ephemeral friendship (p. 54). Elfrida terminates her relationship with Janet, shortly after the completion of Kendal's portrait, and the success of Janet's first novel, by denouncing Janet as an artist bourgeois who is an outsider and who must remain outside. Janet is able to view Elfrida's criticism of her as an artist in its proper perspective:

It doesn't matter to me how little she thinks of my aims and my methods. I'm quite content to do my work with what artistic conception I've got without analyzing its quality--I'm thankful enough to have any. Besides, I'm not sure about the finality of her opinion-- (p. 377)

Janet does not consciously contrive her art, rather she writes in a manner faithful to her own nature and the world as she sees it. Because she has the natural self-assurance that growing up in the artistic milieu has given her, she is skeptical of Elfrida's literary pose.

Janet is concerned about Elfrida's condemnation of her personal hypocrisy, a distaste which Janet also holds for her own behaviour:

But what hurts--like a knife--is that part about my insincerity. I haven't been honest with her--I haven't! From the very beginning I've criticised her privately. I've felt all sorts of reserves and qualifications about her, and concealed them--for the sake of--of I don't know what--the pleasure I had in knowing her, I suppose. (p. 377)

Janet's integrity is a sense of dealing honestly with the world in so far as one is capable of doing so. Elfrida, however, is not as scrupulous as Janet. She looked upon her friendship with Janet as having "an intrinsic beauty and interest, like a curio--she had half a dozen such curios in the museum of her friends--" (p. 183-4). Elfrida is not concerned with human ethics; she deals with people with the license she mistakenly feels her artistic calling gives her. She views Janet from the same aesthetic distance as she did the people of Sparta, with the difference that Janet has aroused Elfrida's sense of comeliness. Elfrida

lacks the basic feeling for common humanity that has brought Janet success in the journalistic world. Indeed, when Elfrida attains posthumous notoriety as a writer it is with a novel which deals with the Peach Blossom Company, a group of dance hall girls whose life Elfrida has indulged in with abandon. As a dance hall girl, Elfrida was able to be herself--an exhibitionist intent on shocking conventional society. Moreover, in the dance hall, unlike the artistic world, Elfrida is reinforced by the attention she so desperately covets.

At the end of the novel Elfrida destroys Kendal's portrait of herself, and shunned by Janet, and depressed over a bad review of her latest piece of writing, she commits suicide. Elfrida's artificial artistic ideals fail even herself finally. And the failure, just as the ideals, are absolute. As Kendal points out earlier in the novel, it was not achievement that Elfrida sought, but success (p. 71).

Northrop Frye describes the comic movement as a motion from illusion to reality, illusion being whatever is fixed or definable, and reality understood as its negation.⁴ This illusion-reality flux is the major pattern of A Daughter of To-Day (1894). Elfrida bases her life on the illusion that she is inherently different from her contemporaries in Sparta, Illinois as a result

of her natural artistic talents. She attempts to live a life emotionally removed from people and dedicated to an art which is also remote from ordinary humanity. Her fallacy is illuminated by counterpoising her against successive foils--Nadie Palicsky, who is genuinely unorthodox, and lives her life and her art through her passion; John Kendal, a painter of the traditional school, who adheres rigorously to perspective in all his endeavours, including his emotions; and Janet Cardiff, a woman and a writer, who finds her inspiration in the changing fabric of life as it presents itself to her. Faced with the reality of her own inadequacy on a personal and an artistic level, Elfrida, still adhering to fixed standards, has no choice but to destroy herself. In this action she fits the description of the comic character, dominated by a humour (i. e. her egotism), who remains immutable.

When Elfrida first saw Kendal's portrait, she could not take the poison in her ring: "He thinks that he has read me finally, that he has done with me, that I no longer count!" (p. 355). But there can be no fulfillment great enough for an egotist, and Elfrida's final decision for death has an affinity with Malvolio's statement: "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!"⁵ Elfrida is aware of her egotism, but she cannot subdue it. She never attains self-acceptance, and tragic as her suicide is, we cannot

feel complete pity, for Elfrida's self-destruction must also be seen as an affirmation of her illusion. As such her suicide is both courageous (she never abandons her belief that she is an extraordinary being, and in rejecting life, she remains faithful to her philosophy that she must renounce that which she deems bourgeois), and foolish, for with it she affirms something not worth affirming (her egotism). Elfrida is tragicomic.

Bergson, Frye, and Langer hold that the province of the comic is a social reality dealing with manners. With this concept in mind, it is interesting to consider Elfrida's behaviour upon being invited to a soiree where George Jasper, an eminent author, much admired by Elfrida, is present. After observing Mr. Jasper from the other side of the room, Elfrida boldly strides over to him, and sinking on her knees before him, kisses his hand. Mr. Jasper is a true Briton, and the situation is superficially comic:

Mr. Jasper repossessed himself of it [his hand] rather too hastily for dignity, and inwardly he expressed his feelings by a puzzled oath. Outwardly he looked somewhat ashamed of having inspired this unknown young lady's enthusiasm, but he did his confused best, on the spur of the moment, to carry off the situation as one of the contingencies to which the semi-public life of a popular novelist is always subject.

"Really, you are--much too good. I can't imagine--if the case had been reversed--"

Mr. Jasper found himself, accustomed as he was to the exigencies of London drawing-rooms, horribly in want of words. And in the bow with which he further defined his discomfort he added to it by dropping the bit of stephanotis which he wore in his buttonhole.

Elfrida sprang to pick it up. "Oh," she cried, "it is broken at the stem; see, you cannot wear it anymore. May I keep it?" (p. 195)

In the light of what we know of Elfrida's idealization of art, and her misdirected emotions, the incident is pathetic.

The marriage of Janet and Kendal represents a festive ritual which marks the formation of a new society which Bergson, Frye, and Langer hold to be a comic trait. The Kendals represent both "truth to certain values in the ideal" and "truth to certain actualities in the real:"⁶

Mr. and Mrs. John Kendal's delightful circle of friends say they live an idyllic life in Devonshire. But even in the height of some domestic joy a silence sometimes falls between them still. Then, I fancy, he is thinking of an art that has slipped away from him, and she of a loyalty she could not hold. (p. 392)

In his painting of Elfrida, Kendal had combined control and a personal theory. Through the medium of the portrait, Kendal was able at once to objectify and solve the enigma of Elfrida which had tormented him for so long. When he completed the painting, he reached a self-fulfillment--pure art--which he has not since been able to realize.

Kendal has a new contentment in his marriage, which is his own reality, but he regrets his lost ideal. Janet shares his domestic happiness. Still, she is aware of her failure to maintain a friendship of principle. Her personal relationship with Elfrida was a guise; all she felt was an appreciation of Elfrida's style.

Hence, the aspects of the comic such as movement from illusion to reality, the exploration of the sphere of social experience as observed through manners, and the marriage ritual, can be used to evoke an effect which is not comic. As a comment upon our reaction it is worth examining the significance of the smiling Buddha statue, Elfrida's constant confidante throughout the novel. After Elfrida's death Buddha is placed "among the mournful Magdalens of Mrs. Bell's drawing-room in Sparta" and "still smiles," his equanimity undisturbed (p. 392). For the gods, as the Oriental believes, life on earth is essentially comic. As Susanne Langer writes:

both Hindu and Buddhist regard life as an episode in the much longer career of the soul which has to accomplish many incarnations before it reaches its goal, nirvana. Its struggles in the world don't exhaust it; in fact they are scarcely worth recording except in entertainment theater, "comedy" in our sense--satire, farce, and dialogue. The character whose fortunes are seriously interesting are the external gods; and

for them there is no death, no limit of potentialities, hence no fate to be fulfilled. There is only the balanced rhythm of sentience and emotion, upholding itself amid the changes of material nature.⁷

Clearly then, it is not life's events which are comic or tragic, but one's attitude towards them.

In a novel published a year earlier than A Daughter of To-Day (1894), Miss Duncan employs the same assemblage of protagonists, the same basic movement from illusion to reality, and creates a story which evokes a warm and sympathetic humour. The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893) is a series of sketches of a young English couple who set up housekeeping in India. Helen Peachey, of Canbury-in-Wilts, the daughter of Reverend and Mrs. Peachey, becomes engaged to George Browne, who is out in England on leave from his job with the British government in India. Miss Peachey spends a year at home in preparation for her trip out to Calcutta and impending marriage. During this period Helen becomes somewhat of a novelty about Canbury, by virtue of the unusual implications of her marital arrangements. Helen's mother directs many of her thoughts towards encouraging any unique opportunity which Helen's new life will offer to her:

To Mrs. Peachey, one very consoling circumstance connected with Helen's going to India was the good she would probably be able to do to "those surrounding her." Helen had always been the

inspiration of work-parties, the life and soul of penny-readings....Much as Mrs. Peachey and the parish would miss Helen, it was a sustaining thought that she was going amongst those whose need of her was so much greater than Canbury's. Mrs. Peachey had private chastened visions, chiefly on Sunday afternoons, of Helen in her new field of labor. Mrs. Peachey was not destitute of imagination, and she usually pictured Helen seated under a bread-fruit tree in her Indian garden, dressed in white muslin, teaching a circle of little "blacks" to read the scriptures. ...Over the form of these delicacies Mrs. Peachey usually went to sleep, to dream of larger schemes of heathen emancipation which Helen should inaugurate.⁸

It is revealing to compare Mrs. Peachey's musings with some remarks Mrs. Bell makes to Elfrida's school teacher, Miss Kimpsey, at the beginning of A Daughter of To-Day (1894):

"Yes; I often wonder what her career will be, and sometimes it comes home to me that it must be art. The child can't help it--she gets it straight from me. But there were no art classes in my day." Mrs. Bell's tone implied a large measure of what the world had lost in consequence. "Mr. Bell doesn't agree with me about Elfrida's being predestined for art," she went on, smiling, "his whole idea is that she'll marry like other people." (p. 11)

Both passages are concerned with fantasies a mother is entertaining about her daughter. Moreover, the tone of both passages conveys reality. It is manifest that Helen's

training in the rectory is hardly sufficient for missionary work of any consequence, and it is most unlikely that Elfrida's inheritance of Mrs. Bell's artistic talents is going to make Elfrida a major painter.

Like Mr. Bell, who was skeptical of Mrs. Bell's ambitions for their daughter and wanted Elfrida to settle down in Sparta with some "go-ahead" young man, Reverend Peachey has an uneasy feeling about Mrs. Peachey's aspirations for Helen:

he believed these Hindus were very subtle-minded, and Helen was not much at an argument. He understood they gave able theologians very hard nuts to crack. Their ideas were entirely different from ours, and Helen would be obliged to master their ideas before effecting any very radical change in them. He was afraid there would be difficulties. (p. 13)

Both Mr. Bell and Reverend Peachey are unsophisticated and unworldly. The homespun flavour of such phrases as "go-ahead" young man and "hard nuts to crack" brings a smile with its ingenuousness. It is not diction which sets Mr. Bell up as tragic, and enables the reader to see Reverend Peachey as comic; rather, it is the narrator's point of view which shapes our reaction.

The different contexts of the foregoing passages demonstrate the fundamental difference between them. Unlike the idiosyncratic Mrs. Bell, whose character

is so carefully delineated as to reveal in minute detail the furnishings of her drawing-room, Mrs. Peachey remains a genus, that is, a "mother figure." Helen, unlike Elfrida, maintains her pose as a "daughter" and "wife" figure, and is not individualized.

In the Bell household, it is Miss Kimpsey, Elfrida's spinster school teacher who is the mediator between mother and father. Unhappily Miss Kimpsey, as suggested by her single state, is a woman unfulfilled, who seeks satisfaction by promulgating Mrs. Bell's ambition that Elfrida should become an artist of renown.

Helen Peachey's province of endeavour is analogous to that of Elfrida Bell, in that it proves to be much removed from the naive notions of her mother and the overly fortified designs of her father. However, Helen is a creature of the natural world who is able to adapt herself to the pattern of the regular course of events. Thus it is that the fate of Helen Peachey, typical bride-to-be, is accurately outlined in advance by her aunt:

Mrs. Plovtree settled the whole question. Helen was not going out as a missionary, except in so far as that every woman who married undertook the charge of one heathen, and she could not expect to jump into work of that sort all at once....For her part, she would advise Helen to try to do very little at first--to begin, say, with her own servants;

she would have a number of them, and they would be greatly under her personal influence and control. (p. 13)

Mrs. Plovtree gives perspective to the Peacheys' illusions about their daughter. She calls them back to reality with her reminder that Helen is primarily a wife, and that the proper sphere for her efforts is domesticity. Mrs. Plovtree then proceeds to nurture more false notions about Helen's influence with her servants, but as she is already happily and firmly ensconced as Mrs. Browne, the shattering of the illusions is never devastating. The emphasis here is on the continuity of life and the sharing of experiences common to humanity. Conversely, Elfrida endeavoured to be unique and apart from mankind.

Mr. and Mrs. Browne are comic husband and wife prototypes in reference to Mack's definition of such figures--"the emphasis is on permanence and typicality of human experience, as projected in persistent social species whose sufficient destiny is simply to go on revealing themselves to us."⁹ They are surrounded by events, but their character is not altered or developed.

As Mrs. Plovtree has suggested, the servants are Helen's first household chore, and they provide some disconcerting experiences. The new Mrs. Browne discovers

that the domestics are hired on the basis of fraudulent recommendations and that they adhere to most unscrupulous methods in the performance of their duties. In addition the servants are generally unreliable, much too expensive, and habitually unclean. To her amazement Helen learns that this state of affairs is not only tolerated, but accepted by the Anglo-Indians. In language equal to an undertaking of much greater consequence, Helen outlines her approach to her predicament, and her very feminine motive:

She would drop curiosity and pleasure, and assume discipline, righteousness and understanding. She would make a stand. She would deal justly but she would make a stand....He [Mr. Browne] would see that the lady he had made Mrs. Browne was capable of more than driving about in a tum-tum and writing enthusiastic letters home about the beauties of Calcutta. (p. 81)

Helen always assesses herself in relationship to her social reality, that is, her marriage. Consequently, what she reveals to us are wifely traits, not peculiarities of Helen Peachey as an individual.

Despite her severe looks, her attempts at frugality and her endeavours to reason with the servants, Mrs. Browne finds herself overpowered by the Indian method of house-keeping. But, Mrs. Browne and her situation, to use

Feibleman's terminology, are the postulates; her actions are the deductions.¹⁰ Helen's actions affirm the logical order of actuality. She compromises her ways to those of the native-bearers; she observes and learns from her previous domestic errors. Not once does she lose her perspective or her essential humanity. Calculating the cost of the servants to be an exorbitant seven pounds per month:

The two Brownes looked at each other with a slight shade of domestic anxiety. This was dispelled by the foolish old consideration of how little anything really mattered, now that they were one Browne, and presently they were disporting themselves behind the pony on the Maidan, leaving the cares of their household to those who were most concerned in them. (p. 80)

The point is that it does not matter which path the events take, that is, whether Helen overcomes her pecuniary difficulty or whether the financial prospectus entails some deprivation. Either alternative can be comic for Helen is immutable. Helen values love over money, but even were she to reverse the order, she could still be cause for mirth. Coincidentally, it is not Elfrida's preference for the extraordinary over the ordinary in itself which makes her tragicomic. As Mack writes:

"Our reactions to reality we may remind ourselves, depend upon the context. Even a rabbit, were it suddenly to materialize before us without complicity, could be a terrifying event. What makes us laugh is our secure consciousness of the magician and his hat."¹¹

The narrator of The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893) is Mrs. Perth Macintyre, who has been in India for twenty-two years in the same capacity as Helen Browne. The overt presence of the narrator makes us aware that the characters are constantly being manipulated in the manner of marionettes. Helen behaves like an unconscious puppet at the beck and call of the consciousness of Mrs. Macintyre.

When Nadie Palicscky confessed her illicit relationship with Monsieur André Vambéry, Elfrida contrived a response that would give an effect of nonchalance. In contrast is Mrs. Browne's reaction to a confession of unconventional morality. The incident occurs at a dinner party hosted by Mr. Sayter, one of Mr. Browne's superiors. In conversation with Helen, Mr. Sayter relates the ethics of previous Anglo-Indian society:

I'm very respectable myself, but that's not my fault. I've never had the good luck to be married, for one thing; and that, in India, is essential to a career

of any interest. But I was once quite an exceptional, quite an original, character on that account, and I'm not any more. Those were the good old times. And to see a beautiful, well-based, well-deserved reputation for impropriety gradually disappear from a social system it did so much to make entertaining is enough to sadden a man at my time of life.

"Really," said Helen; and then, with a little bold shivering plunge, "Were the people out here formerly so very--incorrect?"

"Oh, deliciously incorrect! Scandals were really artistic in those days." (p. 143)

The passage reflects the same technique of confusing reality and illusion as Miss Duncan employed in A Daughter of To-Day (1894). Elfrida verbally approved Nadie's unorthodox behaviour as compatible with her own moral code. In like manner, Mr. Sayter has described his own unconventional habits in golden tones and indicated that this is the manner in which he believes officials of the British government ought to conduct themselves. Elfrida's internal abashment at Nadie's revelation contrasts with the visible signs of Helen's hesitant response to Mr. Sayter's candid conversation. We view Helen's reaction through the eyes of Mrs. Macintyre.

The ever-present intelligence of the narrator is acknowledged by regular breaks in the narrative, where

Mrs. Macintyre offers observations gleaned from her long stay in India:

I have heard it stated that an expert can tell a Convenanted from an Unconvenanted individual by his back, given a social occasion which would naturally evoke self-consciousness. In the case of their wives, one need not be an expert. Convenanted shoulders are not obviously whiter or more classically moulded than the other kind, but they have a subtle way of establishing their relations with Government that is not to be mistaken even by an amateur. (p. 133)

Digressions are typically completed in the following fashion: "It was in my mind to say much sooner that the Brownes were going out to dinner" (p. 134). This method of deviation lends an air of informality, which contributes to what Bergson terms "a movement of relaxation" which accompanies laughter.¹² Mrs. Macintyre's familiarity with her subject matter, and her consequent sense of identity with Mrs. Browne, finds its outlet in the sympathetic tone of the narrative. And herein lies the basic and vital disparity between A Daughter of To-Day (1894) and The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893). The former is written from an internal and omniscient vantage point, and our reaction to the latter is shaped by a limited external point of view.

The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893) presents

what Mack would term "life-as-spectacle" rather than "life-as-experience."¹³ For example, having distinguished among the various levels of East Indian religious potentates, the narrator whimsically remarks:

I saw a priest of Kali, wrapped in his yellow chudder, sit hugging his knees under a mahogany tree to-night beside the broad road where the carriages passed rolling into the "cow's dust" of the twilight. A brother cleric of the Raj went by in his victoria with his wife and children, and the yellow robed one watched them out of sight. There was neither hatred nor malice nor any evil thing in his gaze, only perhaps a subtle appreciation of the advantages of the other cloth. (p. 246)

Bergson claims that the comic must never bring the emotions into play, as comedy is an affair of the mind: "To produce the whole of its effect....the comic demands something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart. Its appeal is to intelligence, pure and simple."¹⁴ The sketch of the Kali priest presents "life-as-spectacle" in that it is observed externally, yet one suspects that Mrs. Macintyre has an empathy for the simple Kali priest and his mortal musings. It is precisely this quality which regularly prevents Miss Duncan from completely entering the area of the comic, the resultant laughter of which Bergson describes as:

a froth with a saline base. Like froth, it sparkles. It is gaiety itself.

But the philosopher who gathers a handful to taste may find that the substance is scanty, and the after-taste bitter.¹⁵

Miss Duncan's province is more frequently a comical mode which is basically "sympathetic, tolerant, and warmly aware of the depths of human nature."¹⁶ Miss Duncan is primarily a humourist.

It is well to mention at this point the exuberant joy for life, or what Susanne Langer would designate the "élan vital," which is at the heart of Mrs. Macintyre's chronicle. Susanne Langer says:

The pure sense of life is the underlying feeling of comedy....This sense, or "enjoyment" as Alexander would call it, is the realization in direct feeling of what sets organic nature apart from inorganic: self-preservation, self-restoration, functional tendency, purpose. Life is teleological, the rest of nature is, apparently mechanical.¹⁷

More simply, the narrative reveals a positive feeling for life, as differentiated from a feeling of life, that we see in A Daughter of To-Day (1894).¹⁸ Over and over again in The Simple Adventures of a Mem Sahib (1893) human nature is unveiled and life is celebrated in all its unobtrusive and imposing forms. India and her people in their colour and squalor, pageantry and earthiness are joyfully re-created. The Brownes retain their human aspect

amid the heat, the monsoons, and the austere beauty of the snow-capped Himalayas. It is quite a different spirit from that conveyed through the sensitive view which culminates in the death of Elfrida Bell. From the outset Elfrida despaired of the buoyant life force which unites mankind, preferring to fabricate a theoretical world after her own tastes in which to exist.

When she considered characteristics of Miss Duncan's early journalism, Rae Goodwin juxtaposed two assertions concerning aesthetic outlook. The statements are both a revelation and a justification.¹⁹ In one context Miss Duncan writes:

we take the liberty of thinking that literature should at its best be true not only to the objects upon and about which it constructs itself, but faithful also to all the delicate attractions and repulsions which enter so intimately into the highest art.²⁰

In another article she alleges that:

In literature as elsewhere certain fundamental principles do not change. We must have truth of one sort or another--truth to certain values in the ideal, truth to certain actualities in the real.²¹

Both texts assert a belief in realism, coupled with an awareness of the limitations of an actuality which is

perceived through the senses and apprehended in terms of sensibility. To counteract the deficiencies of empirical realism the artistic imagination must attempt to transform the conception with a view towards an absolute vision. The result is consummate art.

By her own definition then, The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893) is an example of Miss Duncan's best writing. In observation and attitude she is faithful to the actuality she recognizes. An examination of a passage from the concluding chapter of the novel lends credence to the foregoing conclusions, and establishes the revelation of human nature as the fit sphere for Miss Duncan's literary endeavours:

If it is necessary to explain my interest in these young Brownes, which you, I regret to think, may find inexplicable, it lies, I dare say, as much in this departure of ours as in anything else. Their first chapter has been our last. When you turn down the page upon the Brownes you close the book upon the Perth Macintyres, and it has been pleasant to me that our story should find its end in the beginning of theirs. If this is not excuse enough, there is a sentimental one besides. For I also have seen a day when the spell of India was strong upon my youth, when I saw romance under a turban and soft magic behind a palm, and found the most fascinating occupation

in life to be the wasting of my husband's substance among the gabbling thieves of the China bazar. It was all new to me once--I had forgotten how new until I saw the old novelty in the eyes of Helen Browne. Then I thought of reading the first pages of the Anglo-Indian book again with those young eyes of hers; and as I have read I have re-written, and interleaved, as you see. It may be that they will give warning to some and encouragement to others. I don't mind confessing that to me they have brought chiefly a gay reminder of a time when pretty little subalterns used to trip over their swords to dance with young Mrs. Perth Macintyre also, which seems quite a ludicrous thing to print--and that has been enough. (p. 307)

Through the guise of the narrator Miss Duncan attests to the exactitude of the subject matter of the novel, and the personal integrity beneath the artistic expression. As we know from her biography Miss Duncan (Mrs. Everard Cotes) was a memsahib herself, and Mrs. Perth Macintyre's lively posture reflects Miss Duncan's personality.

As to the higher truth by which Miss Duncan claims all literature must be guided:

It was a very little splash that submerged Mrs. Browne in Anglo-India, and there is no longer a ripple to tell about it. I don't know that life has contracted much for her. I doubt if it was ever intended to hold more than young Browne and the baby--but it has changed. Affairs that are not

young Browne's or the baby's touch her little. Her world is the personal world of Anglo-India, and outside of it, except in affection of Canbury, I believe she does not think at all. She is growing dull to India, too, which is about as sad a thing as any. She sees no more the supple savagery of the Pathan in the marketplace, the bowed reverence of the Mussulman praying in the sunset, the early morning mists lifting among the domes and palms of the city. She has acquired for the Aryan inhabitant a certain strong irritation, and she believes him to be nasty in all his ways. This will sum up her impressions of India as completely years hence as it does to-day. She is a memsahib like another.

(p. 310)

The significance of the foregoing passage is enhanced by considering the following statement by Susanne Langer:

"Comedy is essentially contingent, episodic, and ethnic; it expresses the continuous balance of sheer vitality that belongs to society and is enhanced briefly in each individual."²²

Clearly, Miss Duncan's intention has been to capture the spirit of freshness and change in the life of the Brownes, which is life itself. By writing of life at a time when the vital spirit is feeling its way into such a foreign channel of endeavour, this mortal essence is exaggerated and intensified.

The fact that the Brownes' initial sensations are ephemeral is all too readily admitted by Miss Duncan--already Mrs. Browne is growing dull to her new environment. As

with all ingenues, Mrs. Browne's wide-eyed guilelessness quickly gives way to weary experience; life becomes existence. For this reason, the artist who celebrates life's pristine moments creates at once joy and truth.

Elfrida Bell lived only for art--her peculiar conception of art, which was a conscious contradiction of all orthodox life. Elfrida's novel dealt with the ethics of amoral dance hall girls, whose lives were perversions of the natural order. Elfrida's impetus was her own egotism. Seeing her ideal captured as the distasteful interior of a pleasant conventional exterior in Kendal's portrait proves unbearable to Elfrida who destroys the picture. She leaves Kendal a note of explanation contrived to give the false nuance of simple frankness:

In doing it [destroying the portrait]
I think I committed the unforgiveable
sin--not against you, but against art.
It may be some satisfaction to you to
know that I shall never wholly respect
myself again in consequence....Under-
stand that I bear no malice toward
you, have no blame for you, only honor.
You acted under the very highest
obligation--you could not have done
otherwise*****And I am glad to think
that I do not destroy with your work
the joy you had in it.*** (pp. 385-86)

The inspiration for Kendal's portrait was Elfrida's human secret. When he revealed her unattractive interior, Kendal lost some of his artistic enthusiasm. The asterisks in

Elfrida's note are for emphasis--what they emphasize is not Kendal's higher calling, but Elfrida's desperation at the sordidness of the revelation.

For Miss Duncan art must always retain the human awareness--the comic vision which rests securely on a sensitive integrity. In Janet Cardiff's words, "the bete [humaine] is too conscious of his moral fibre when he's respectable, and when he isn't respectable he doesn't commit picturesque crimes, he steals and boozes" (p. 157).

Miss Duncan's comic vision encompasses an intuitive sense of actuality and illusion, and an "élan vital" which prompts a celebration of life at the moment of awareness.²³ She frequently employs the "persistent social species" of comedy, but her empathy commonly reveals itself even with an external point of view, and comedy becomes humour.²⁴ Conversely, with individualized characters and an internal point of view Miss Duncan cannot refute her comic vision, and potential tragedy becomes tragicomedy. Further, even with the reaffirmation of life at the end of A Daughter of To-Day (1894), as evidenced by the marriage of Janet and Kendal, there is mention of the silence that falls between the Kendals and blights their idyllic life. Miss Duncan's comic vision possesses an underlying awareness that the healing powers of life are not complete, and that man's nobility lies in his unquenchable thirst for living.

CHAPTER II

THE COMIC INTENT

According to Bergson, the comic differs from the other arts in its construction:

Here it is in the work itself that the generality lies. Comedy depicts characters we have already come across and shall meet with again. It takes note of similarities. It aims at placing types before our eyes. It even creates new types, if necessary.²⁵

Moreover, comedy, because it is based upon outward observation and concerns itself with persons at the moment at which they come into contact with each other, must produce a generic effect, if it is to be laughable.

Hence, Bergson concludes:

comedy lies midway between art and life. It is not disinterested as genuine art is. By organising laughter, comedy accepts social life as a natural environment; it even obeys an impulse of social life. And in this respect it turns its back upon art, which is a breaking away from society and a return to pure nature.²⁶

Comedy serves a utilitarian end by constantly attempting

to rid social life of those obstructions which endanger its existence, or in Bergson's terminology exterminate the mechanical elements which have imposed themselves on the surface of living society.²⁷ Apparently then, the comic writer must seek some sort of social utopia, where its individuals, living gracefully with each other, form a complacent whole beneficial to its members. The intent of Miss Duncan's humour is partially social correction. An American Girl in London (1891) illustrates this purpose and illuminates the basis which Miss Duncan envisions for a social utopia.

Mamie Wick is the young lady from the United States, and the narrator of her own experiences. Miss Wick introduces herself to the reader in the first chapter:

I am an American Girl. Therefore, perhaps you will not be surprised at anything further I may have to say for myself. I have observed, since I came to England, that this statement, made by a third person in connection with any question of my own conduct, is always broadly explanatory.²⁸

Mamie is the feminine naive. Seemingly unaware of common opinion she can only attest to her own observations, and does not view her behaviour as either characteristic or imitative of that of her fellow citizens.

What Mamie is, in terms of her own environment, she is quite willing to divulge. Miss Wick is the daughter of Mr. Joshua P. Wick, of Chicago, Illinois, an enterprising business man who made the comfortable income on which he exists in the baking powder business. Lately, Mr. Wick has devoted himself to politics and sits in the Congress. Mamie's mother is the former Miss Wastgaggle, a school teacher from Boston, whose father was a manufacturer of glass-eyes. In regard to her ancestors Mamie remarks that she is:

inclined to think that they were not people who achieved any great distinction in life; but I have never held anything against them on that account, for I have no reason to believe that they would not have been distinguished if they could. I cannot think that it has ever been in the nature of the Wicks, or the Wastgaggles either, to let the opportunity for distinction pass through any criminal negligence on their part. I am perfectly willing to excuse them on this ground, therefore; and if I, who am most intimately concerned in the matter, can afford to do this, perhaps it is not unreasonable to expect it of you. (p. 6)

The Wicks are a part of the rising middle class. Mamie's freshness has its origins in the humble beginnings of her ancestors, and her candour and spontaneity are a result of the freedom which wealth has brought.

Nowhere is Mamie's naturalness more evident than when she is posed against Mrs. Portheris, who is her relation by a previous marriage:

Though I wouldn't call Mrs. Portheris stout, she was massive--rather, of an impressive build. Her skirt fell in a commanding way from her waist, though it hitched up a little in front, which spoiled the effect. She had broad square shoulders, and a lace collar, and a cap with pink ribbons in it, and grey hair smooth on each side of her face, and large well-cut features, and the expression I spoke of. I've seen the expression since among the Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum, but I am unable to describe it. 'Armed neutrality' is the only phrase that occurs to me in connection with it, and that by no means does it justice. For there was curiosity in it, as well as hostility and reserve--but I won't try. And she kept her hand--it was her right hand--upon the table. (p. 38)

Mrs. Portheris is a ludicrous figure. Her corpulence clothed in ill-fitting finery suggests at once her attempt to disguise her working class ancestry.

If Mrs. Portheris's physical presence is austere, her sense of decorum is even more uncompromising. She is aghast at learning that Mamie has ridden on the top of an omnibus--"the top of an omnibus is not a proper place for you--I might say, for any connection of mine, however distant!" (p. 43). Mrs. Portheris is even less impressed with Mamie's present place of residence:

I beg that you will not remain another day at the Metropole! It is not usual for young ladies to stay at hotels. You must go to some place where only ladies are received, and as soon as you are settled in one communicate at once with the rector of the parish--alone as you are, that is quite a necessary step.
(p. 44)

For purposes of chaperonage and possible room and board,

Mrs. Portheris suggests the services of a Miss Purkiss:

Miss Purkiss is a very old friend of mine, in reduced circumstances....In so far as our widely different social positions have permitted, Miss Purkiss and I have been on terms, I may say, of sisterly intimacy since before you were born....and she, being a friend of my own, some afternoon, perhaps--I must think about it--I may ask her to bring you to tea! (pp. 44-46)

Miss Purkiss is an innocuous and uninteresting little spinster who is completely dominated by Mrs. Portheris and her seemingly Puritanical ways.

Mrs. Portheris is Miss Duncan's vision of the unattractive bourgeoisie in totality. Mrs. Portheris's life is constantly defined in terms of the conventions which she is so mindful of. She values outward signs of propriety and wealth. Her manner and bearing suggest a distasteful masculinity and a definite sense of pretension; however, the presence of Lady Torquillin adds another dimension to the concept.

Lady Torquilin is by birth and marriage a member of the English aristocracy. She belongs to the segment of society, whose customs Mrs. Portheris has illusions about, and fancies she betters herself by imitating. Ironically, Lady Torquilin's behaviour is determined by her own aspirations and desires, only some of which genuinely coincide with the illusory areas of interest for the British peerage. More explicitly, Lady Torquilin does not mould her social conduct around a rigid sense of decorum, nor does she necessarily determine the suitability of her social associations on the basis of wealth and connections.

Lady Torquilin's hospitality proves much more warm and informal than that of Mrs. Portheris:

"I am going to take you," said Lady Torquilin at lunch, "to Mrs. Fry Hamilton's 'at home'. She likes Americans, and her parties--'functions', as society idiots call it--disgusting word--are generally rather 'swagger', as they say. I daresay you'll enjoy it." (p. 84)

Lady Torquilin wants Mamie to have a pleasant stay in London, and this is her only concern. She apologizes for the fact that she is unable to make Mamie more comfortable in her living quarters because of her reduced circumstances this season. Moreover her sense

of deportment is inbred and practical:

When we arrived at Mrs. Fry Hamilton's I rang the bell. "Bless you, child!" said Lady Torquilin, "that's not the way. They'll take you for a nursery governess, or a piano-tuner, or a bill! ...Since then I have been obliged to rap and ring myself, because Lady Torquilin likes me to be as proper as I can; but there is always an incompleteness about the rap and an ineffectualness about the ring. I simply haven't the education to do it. (pp. 85-87)

Lady Torquilin is natural and genuine. Her concept of proper behaviour consists in doing whatever is most gracious under the circumstances. In England, if one knows the customary way to announce one's presence at the door, one follows precedent and avoids the novel.

Mrs. Portheris's scruples about whom she keeps company with are founded on the illusion that people of the upper classes choose their acquaintances on the basis of moral propriety and financial resources. Her attitude is not only incorrect, it is hypocritical. The reader knows that Mrs. Portheris's own monetary transactions are not the most secure, nor are they the most ethical sort. As Mamie recalls:

in fact, we had not had a letter
from her since several years ago,
when she wrote a long one to poppa,

something about some depressed California mining stock, I believe, which she thought poppa, as her nephew and an American, ought to take off her hands before it fell any lower. (p. 7)

It is obvious that where her pocket-book is concerned Mrs. Portheris does not let considerations of respectability and distant connections alter the course of expediency.

In addition, Mrs. Portheris's rigid adherence to her notions of aristocratic decorum are exactly what deem her bourgeois and unnatural. Her behaviour pattern is not indigenous to her way of life. Furthermore the true nobility, as exemplified in Lady Torquilin, are not conscious of acting according to certain class norms, but retain their individual inclinations which constantly create their own conventions.

People who imitate illusory patterns of deportment are not the only components of the unattractive bourgeoisie. Individuals who react violently against these illusory standards are also subject to the same classification, because their lives are constantly manipulated in terms of the customs which they fancy themselves escaping from. Even in a trite matter such as mode of dress this phenomenon is obvious. At the Private View of the Royal Academy of Arts, a traditional gathering, Mamie observes the

assemblage of ladies' gowns:

All of them, pretty and ugly, I might have encountered at home, but there was one species of 'frock' which no American, I think, could achieve with impunity. It was a protest against conventionalism, very much gathered, and usually presented itself in colours unattainable out of a London fog. It almost always went with a rather discouraged-looking lady having a bad complexion, and hair badly done up; and, invariably, it dragged a little on one side....I had a better opportunity of observing it at the Academy Soiree in June, when it shed abroad the suggestion of a Tennysonian idyll left out all night. (pp. 167-68)

When the English react against the established norms, the result is even more outlandish than it would be in liberal America, because one must go to greater ends to overcome more sophisticated customs. Mamie's disdain for this sort of conduct is obvious as she attributes it to unattractive creatures who have no other way of obtaining notice.

There is a third type of bourgeoisie, whom Mamie views much more sympathetically. These are the genuine middle class, most acceptable and profuse in the United States:

Generally and individually, Americans believe every man is as good as his neighbour; and we take pains to proclaim our belief whenever the subject of class distinction is under discussion.

Poppa's views, however--representing those of the majority in an individual, as we hope they soon may do in a senator--are strongly against any theory of exclusiveness whatever. And I will say for poppa, that his principles are carried out in his practice; for, to my knowledge, neither his retirement from business and purchase of a suburban lakeside residence, nor even his nomination for the Senate, has made the slightest difference in his treatment of any human being. (p. 161)

There is subtle mockery in the passage, but it is not directed against Mr. Wick. Rather, Miss Duncan is illuminating the ironical results of the American ethic that all men are created equal and entitled to the same share of life, liberty, and happiness. Mr. Wick's life is the epitome of the American dream--he has worked hard and done well. Now, materially and socially--because the two are linked--he is superior to his fellow citizens. Yet Mr. Wick retains his middle class values, which he genuinely believes in, for they have brought him his own success.

In the United States the individual professes that he believes what is right to be what the majority set as standard. In England the mass attempts to emulate what it conceives to be the norms of the upper class. The American attitude is not faithful to human instinct.

Even Mamie confesses that in England she:

went on liking the way you shut
some people out and let other people
in, without inquiring further as to
why I did--it did not seem profitable,
especially when I reflected that my
point of view was generally from the
inside. My democratic principles are
just the same as ever, though--a per-
son needn't always approve what she
likes. (p. 162)

The middle-class Briton who lives amid aristocratic
fancies is cause for laughter, as exemplified in Mrs.
Portheris. However, Miss Duncan sees merit in the
fact that "in London everything is a matter of the inside"
(p. 35). The British begin with the individual, and this,
Miss Duncan believes, is the proper point for society to
advance from.

Standing in the Poet's Corner, Mamie comes upon
the epitaph of Robert Browning:

It was so unlooked for, that name,
so new to its association with death,
that I stood aside, held by a sense
of sudden intrusion. He had always
been so high and so far off in the
privacy of his genius, so revered in
his solitudes, so unapproachable....
Nothing mattered, except that he who
had epitomised greatness in his art
for the century lay there beneath
his name in the place of greatness.
And then, immediately, from this
grave of yesterday, there came to
me light and definition for all the
graves of the day before....and
showed me what I had somehow missed

seeing sooner--all that shrined honour means in England; and just in that one little corner how great her possessions are! (pp. 159-60)

Mamie stands in awe of England's cultural heritage. She also respects the inherent genius of unique men, and feels it is right that such people should be revered according to the customs of their homeland. Such distinction is not an arbitrary discrimination, but a hallowed tribute. However, Mamie disdains the impractical idea of having an American poet-laureate--not all Presidents care for poetry, and "there isn't a magazine in the country that would take it second-hand" (p. 156). A poet-laureate in the United States would be a ridiculous fixture, for it is not indigenous to the life pattern there. There is also a sly note of contempt for enforced art wherever it is produced, a process which is much akin to conscious convention.

It would be a grave omission to leave An American Girl in London (1891) cleaving so firmly to doctrine. Many of the characters, and several of the sketches in the novel have been created for the very delight which the reader may find in their existence. The examples which come to mind carry all the freshness and sensitivity of true experience, and read like pages out of the diary of a

first time visitor. One remembers with a smile Miss Wick's encounter with the Lady Guides, and her interviews with several prospective landladies, among them the Cockney lady who expatiates upon culinary facilities:

"Aou, we never give meals, miss!" she said. "It's only them boardin' 'aouses as gives meals in!...But there's a very nice restirong in Totinim Court Road, quite convenient, an' your breakfast, miss, you could 'ave cooked 'ere, but, of course, it would be hextra, miss." (p. 52)

The passage reflects Miss Duncan's talent for characterization and her sense of the "élan vital."²⁹

A Voyage of Consolation (1898) is a sequel to An American Girl in London (1891). The plot consists of a trip to England and the Continent undertaken by Miss Wick and her parents in order to console Mamie upon the abrupt termination of her engagement to Mr. Arthur Greenleaf Page. Apologizing for her indiscretion in announcing her own engagement Mamie explains that:

I was my own heroine, and I had to be disposed of. There seemed to be no proper alternative. I did not wish to marry Mr. Mafferton, even for literary purposes, and Peter Corke's suggestion, that I should cast myself overboard in mid-ocean at the mere idea of living anywhere out of England for the future, was autobiographically impossible even if I had felt so inclined.³⁰

Peter Corke and Charles Mafferton have a dislike for each other and represent two preliminary concepts to A Voyage of Consolation (1898).

Peter Corke is a masculine spinster overpowering in her exuberance for English antiquity:

Miss Corke was more ardently attached to the Past than anybody I have ever known or heard of that did not live in it. Her interest did not demand any great degree of antiquity, though it increased in direct ratio with the centuries; the mere fact that a thing was over and done with, laid on the shelf, or getting mossy and forgotten, was enough to secure her respectful consideration. She liked old folios and prints--it was her pastime to poke in the dust of ages; I've seen her placidly enjoying a graveyard--with no recent interments--for half an hour at a time. She had a fine scorn of the Present in all its forms and phases.
(p. 256)

Peter is symbolic of Miss Duncan's views of English attitude at the turn of the century. Their impressive heritage has made the Britons insular and retrospective. In addition, the antique for the antique's sake is another version of art for art's sake--it removes art from life, from people, and as a consequence, art ceases to live and have import. Peter Corke in her masculine spinsterhood is the embodiment of the effect this attitude has on a society--absorption without production. Miss Duncan

believes that England's future must have an affinity with the progress and productivity of North America, and that this is not at all impossible:

I may tell you that she had delightful twinkling brown eyes, and hair a shade darker, and the colour and health and energy that only an English woman possesses at thirty, without being in the least afraid that you could pick her out in the street, or anywhere--she would not like that--and being put in print, so that people would know her at all....Part of her charm...was the remarkable interest she had in everything that concerned you--a sort of interest that made you feel as if such information as you could give about yourself was a direct and valuable contribution to the sum of her knowledge of humanity; and part of it was the salutary sincerity of everything she had to say in comment, though I ought not to forget her smile, which was a great deal of it. I am sure I don't know why I speak of Miss Peter Corke in the past tense however.
(pp. 141-42)

England, like Miss Corke, must transcend herself and react with other people. Peter is not unalluring, but she has let herself become stagnant. She makes gestures but she lacks feeling.

Mr. Charles Mafferton is an ineffectual and slightly effeminate gentleman in his excessive prudishness, who mistakenly thought he had courted and proposed to Mamie while she was in London. Mafferton is aware only of an established model of social propriety. He views life in

terms of stilted patterns, and people as archetypes. He is completely insensitive, and through long training and habit, he has ceased to have a vital intellect:

He sometimes complained that the great bar to his observation of the American character was the American sense of humour. It was one of the things he had made a note of, as interfering with the intelligent stranger's enjoyment of the country. (p. 196)

It is this sort of English male who has forced Peter Corke into the past and into spinsterhood. History possesses more spirit than Mafferton.

In A Voyage of Consolation (1898) Miss Duncan demonstrates that the causes for England's predicament are not entirely internal. The disagreement which ended in the conclusion of Mamie's betrothal was prompted by Mr. Page's objections to the Anglicisms Mamie had adopted. In rebuttal Mamie recalls Arthur's previous stance:

when Arthur was there--he used to gild all our future with the culture which I should acquire by actual contact with the hoary traditions of Great Britain....I remember he expressed himself rather finely about the only proper attitude for Americans visiting England being that of magnanimity, and about the claims of kinship, only once removed, to our forbearance and affection. (p. 2)

No one is more aware of the British heritage and the

American lack of tradition than the upper class in the United States. In their earnestness to "gild" their own lives with this culture, the Americans have encouraged British insularity and self-consciousness.

In A Voyage of Consolation (1898) Miss Duncan proceeds to explore the origin of social convention. Upon their arrival in London, Mrs. Wick proposes that the Wick family should go their separate ways--each absorbing a different aspect of the culture Britain has to offer. Mrs. Wick advises Mamie that she and her father might go to St. Paul's Cathedral for a start:

Have a good look at the dome and try
to bring me back the sound of the echo.
It is said to be very weird. See that
poppa doesn't forget to take off his
hat in the body of the church, but he
might put it on in the Whispering Gallery,
where it is sure to be draughty. And
remember that the funeral coach of the
Duke of Wellington is down in the crypt,
darling. You might bring me an impression
of that. I think I'll have a cup of
chocolate and try to get a little sleep.
(p. 24)

Mrs. Wick's areas of interest are clearly manners and external fixtures, coupled with a feminine concern for her husband's health. Her only wish for herself is to relax and obtain impressions of British historical institutions as pleasantly as possible.

What finally provokes Mrs. Wick to action is Senator Wick's suggestion that they let the "historical, instructive, and ancient associations" go in favour of that which is unique (p. 25). He quotes the advice of his American friend, Bramley:

'Look here,' he said, 'remember the Unattainable Elsewhere--and get it. You're likely to be in London. Now the Unattainable Elsewhere, for that town, is gentlemen's suitings. For style, price, and quality of goods the London tailor leads the known universe. 'Wick,' he said--he was terribly in earnest--'if you have one hour in London, leave your measure!' (p. 27)

Mamie observes and explains her mother's reaction:

Now, if momma doesn't like poppa's clothes, she always gives them away without telling him. This would be thought arbitrary in England...but America is a free country, and there is no law to compel us to see our male relations unbecomingly clad against our will.... consequently momma replied to the effect that she wouldn't mind his going anywhere else alone, but this was important. She put her gloves on as she spoke, and her manner expressed that she was equal to any personal sacrifice for the end in view. (p. 27)

Senator Wick, as Mamie has earlier indicated, worked himself up to his present affluent status from humble beginnings. His life has been constantly concerned with the exigencies of the practical world. It is Mrs. Wick

who has had time to socialize and to become conscious of appearance and mode of apparel.

This phenomenon of American womanhood is evident elsewhere. Mamie recalls that:

before monarchical institutions
momma weakened. She had moments of
terrible indecision as to how to do
her hair, and I am certain it was not
a matter of indifference to her that
she should make a good impression upon
the head butler. Also, she hesitated
about examining the mounted Guardsman
on duty at Whitehall, preferring to
walk past with a casual glance, as if
she were accustomed to see things quite
as wonderful every day at home, whereas
nothing to approach it has ever existed
in America, except in the imagination
of Mr. Barnum, and he is dead. And
shop walkers patronised her. I con-
gratulated myself sometimes that I
was there to assert her dignity. (p. 23)

Miss Duncan associates convention with social semblance and affectation. The mention of Mr. Barnum suggests showmanship and fantasy, and the attempt to hide or transform an actuality. Miss Duncan also draws an important distinction between Mamie and her mother. Mamie is the modern young lady who has always known freedom from material concerns and excessive propriety. She has inherited her father's practicality and simplicity, and her mother's femininity. As such she is the enlightened ingenue, who is able to see beyond convention, and be

educated to independent appreciation.

Where convention is predominant, cultural appreciation is impossible. Mamie's recollections of her parent's viewing of the Mona Lisa make this fact self-evident. Senator Wick goes to find the picture by himself in order to ascertain if it is fit for his family to study. Having discovered that "she's all right," Senator Wick gives his own reactions:

"Here she is," said the Senator presently. "Now look at that! Did you ever see anything more intellectual and cynical, and contemptuous and sweet, all in one! Lookin' at you as much as to say, 'Who are you, any how, from way back in the State of Illinois--commercial traveller? And what do you pretend to know?'"

...Mamma regarded the portrait for a moment in calm disapprobation. "I dare-say she was very clever," she said at length, "but if you wish to know my opinion I don't think much of her. And before taking us to see another female portrait, Mr. Wick, I should be obliged if you would take the precaution of finding out who she was." (p. 57)

Senator Wick's comments are delightfully sincere, but they are certainly not aesthetic. Mrs. Wick is equally genuine in her response--she is not at all impressed by a woman who has cast such a spell over her husband. Both Senator Wick's cautionary previewing, and Mrs. Wick's concern as to just who Mona was, reveal the new world Puritanism which Mamie has escaped.

Mamie represents the promising American potential. Even Senator Wick is aware of the inadequacies of the present level of culture in the United States, but he holds out a hope for the future:

"It's a mere question of time," said he. "It isn't reasonable to expect Pre-Raphaelites in a new country. But give us three or four hundred years, and we'll produce old masters which, if you ladies will excuse the expression, will knock the spots out of the Middle Ages." (p. 55)

A high level of culture, then, is dependent upon a heritage from the past, and a refined and receptive public. History is inevitably accumulated; it is towards the present public that Miss Duncan directs her criticism. Convention, by definition, is always concerned with the contemporary.

Miss Duncan explores the concept and consequences of convention more thoroughly in Those Delightful Americans (1902), a novel which has a reverse plot to A Voyage of Consolation (1898), in that its protagonists are Britons who visit the United States. In the first chapter of the novel, Mrs. Kemball, who narrates her own experiences, relates the reasons for their journey, and the reaction of her in-laws upon hearing the announcement:

"Go to America!" exclaimed both ladies at once. My mother-in-law's expression was one of simple bewilderment. Frances looked ironical. "What,

under the sun, for?" said she.

"Not for pleasure," Kaye observed, gloomily. "You may happen to remember"--he addressed his mother--"that part of your income is derived from shares in the Manhattan Electric Belt Company?"

"Has it failed," demanded Mrs. Kemball. "If so, tell me at once, Kaye. You know how I like being prepared for things. Dear me, that's the loss of a clear--"

"It has not failed," interposed Kaye, with that superior correcting air which Englishmen use towards their female relatives. "If it had--"

"I should have been obliged to put down the brougham and reduce the kitchen considerably."

"There would be no occasion for me to go to the States," Kaye finished.³¹

Kaye is distraught at the idea of putting so much time and effort into affairs of a commercial nature. His mother is much more concerned and aware of the practical consequences of business failure than he is.

During the course of the conversation Mrs. Kemball notices the presence of a snail in the garden:

"Another?" exclaimed Mrs. Kemball; "that makes the seventeenth to-day. Kill it on the gravel, Kaye."

"Not I," said Kaye, hurriedly; "I-I haven't time. We really ought to be off, Carrie. "...As we made our farewells I dropped my parasol, and in picking it up contrived to slip the snail inside.

(pp. 14-15)

Kaye's squeamishness at the thought of killing a snail reinforces his removal from the world of everyday practicality. He has no desire to remove an unwanted garden pest. In

England, the aristocracy are independently wealthy and men are freed from the exigencies of daily life. English women have more to do with actuality than the men. They administer the households and are subservient to their male counterparts. As a consequence, it is the English male who concerns himself with social behaviour and the ceremonial. This is a complete reversal from the pattern in the United States. Moreover, in his disdain for snail-killing, Kaye signifies his abstraction from the blatant frontier masculinity of the American male which must be constantly proven.

Miss Duncan draws a clear distinction between convention and tradition in Those Delightful Americans (1902). Convention has the flavour of usage which is in vogue at the moment. Tradition is the living heritage from the past.

The Adams are a New York family of moderate income with social pretensions. Mrs. Adams is most anxious to impress the English Kemballs with the finesse of American customs:

Both of the ladies conveyed food to their lips, but in the most perfunctory fashion; the reason of the meal seemed to be much more the roses, and the lovely silver, and the charming suitability of Mrs. Adam's morning frock, and the daintiness of the way everything was done. (p. 75)

This is convention--fashionable, synthetic, sociable.

Tradition may take the form of sophistication or

lack of it, but it always has validity. The Hams are one generation rich who are still very much addicted to their rural origin. Mr. Ham's greatest joy is his bean patch and Mrs. Ham prefers to do the housework herself. Between their daughter, Violet, and themselves lies what Carrie describes as:

different periods, different parties,
different classes. The thing that
made this only peculiar and saved it
from being pathetic was their complete
acquiescence in it. (p. 269)

Violet Ham represents a worldliness which retains its initial simplicity and affinity with the land:

She had soft, dark hair, pushed forward round her face in a slight exaggeration of the way people were wearing it, and splendid blue eyes with thick lashes, and nearly always a laugh in them; as Kaye said, she looked awfully good-natured. Her dress dragged in most exquisite lines on the ground behind her; it was from Paris, and had more of an accent than any English girl would dare to carry, more than it would have had on a French person; the American young lady in it simply doubled its significance. Miss Ham was large and abundant in every way.
(p. 131)

Violet is the best of American tradition. She is true to her particular heritage and living in the present. Her becoming plumpness suggests the fecundity of vast,

booming America and her country background, while her modish Parisian dress is representative of the new internationalism and individualism of certain American women.

Miss Duncan is quick to recognize the faults of the rapid development of the United States. She satirizes the American acumen for making money which becomes an end in itself, and the predilection for material possessions for the sheer joy of acquisition. As Carrie points out, the Americans lack the capacity to appreciate:

"No, but my point is you can't exchange international flatteries with an American. He may or may not say, 'Thanks, very nice of you,' but he thinks he's worth all that and more, and he'd thank you to get to business and understand that that sort of thing doesn't go down with him." (p. 165)

Jacob Ham is the unfortunate result of this rapid pace. At his New York office he is an important executive, and at home he is "just a little, dried-up man" who loves buckwheat cakes and cannot eat them because his digestion is bad (p. 261). Mr. Ham has severed himself from the land, and thus compromised his true feelings for profit. At the end of the novel his one confidante, Jake, the hired man, forsakes his company for that of Henry Bird, the new English butler. Even Mrs. Ham, who might have

redeemed her husband with her integrity, becomes enamoured of being waited on by Henry Bird.

Miss Duncan devotes a large part of the novel to an exploration of courtship and marriage. The end result is two matches--one unsatisfactory, one excellent. Verona Daly, Mrs. Adam's sister becomes betrothed to Lord Robert Walden, a cousin of the Kemballs. Verona is more of a portrait than a person with her cameo complexion and her slim figure. She is attracted to Bobs because he can dance, has won a D. S. O., and possesses a title. Bobs is a pleasant and ineffectual simpleton, who tries desperately to court Miss Ham in the American fashion. After losing Miss Ham and her money to Val Ingram, he becomes subjected to Verona, who is not wealthy, but helps him to save face. Violet Ham is to marry Val Ingram, an American, who is equal to her in wealth and spirit. Val refuses to cater to Verona, whom he previously kept company with, expressing annoyance at her adherence to such artificial habits as keeping him waiting precisely one quarter of an hour. Violet is as much of a female as Val is a male. She is both a capable cook and a charming and clever hostess.

Violet and Val have had the leisure and freedom to ignore affectation and the acquirement of wealth. They

are uniquely and independently American. As a consequence, they have the time to be husband and wife to each other, and it is unlikely that they will become emotionally divorced as the Hams have unconsciously been. Mrs. Ham is at last receiving male attention in the form of her English butler, and Mr. Ham is left alone and bewildered, needing time to think.

In Cousin Cinderella (1908) Miss Duncan considers the Canadian heritage and its issue. The novel sets forth the adventures of a Canadian brother and sister, Graham and Mary Trent, in England. On Christmas Day they invite Evelyn Dicey, an American heiress, to dine with them in their London flat:

Christmas is a time in England when everybody supposes you will be going to more intimate friends. For Graham and me that resulted quite satisfactorily, as we certainly were our most intimate friends and had only to stay at home; but Evelyn deplored it.³²

Evelyn is that phenomenon of second generation urban America who has inherited her mother's social inclinations and her father's shrewd business sense. It is not surprising that her full address at home is "Roosevelt Towers, Juniper Avenue, Troy, New Jersey" (p. 211). She lacks a home and roots, and as a consequence, she is concerned with appearances, but more for the purpose

of establishing her own individual identity. Evelyn arrives at the flat looking:

all slender and lovely in one of her unapproachable dresses, with the grace and complexion of a flower, if you could imagine a flower in pearls that had nothing to do with dew, with its hair done in a manner before which any zephyr would sink away abashed.
(p. 210)

She represents a vivid contrast to Graham and Mary with their simple garb and warm Yuletide thoughts of home and family.

Miss Duncan makes it clear that part of the difference in social attitudes between Miss Dicey and the Trents has a direct political cause. During dinner Evelyn compares notes on England with her host and hostess:

"Well, compared with this, you won't deny that you're going back to rather a one-horse show," Evelyn challenged him Graham, with a disarming smile.

"It's a one-horse show that is going some day to pull the Empire!" Graham retorted good-naturedly.
(pp. 212-13)

Evelyn disdains Graham's response and we are reminded of some advice she gave him on the occasion of their first meeting:

"The fact is you haven't become foreigners yet--you still belong to them, so of course they think you're of no importance. Become foreigners, get Mr. Ambassador Bryce to come over and write you a Declaration of Independence, start a President, and take no further notice of them. They'll

adore you. I don't mind giving you the tip." (pp. 76-77)

Canada has been built with the aid of and a sense of pride in Britain, and as a consequence, Canadians feel loyal and indebted to England. Conversely, the United States began when the British ties were severed. As a result America has always competed with Great Britain. Evelyn's confident superiority has the echo of camouflaged inferiority.

Miss Duncan pursues this contrast with a discussion of systematized charity in England. Graham, Mary, and Evelyn all display the frontier ethic of self-sufficiency, and look disparagingly upon the beneficiaries of Britain's Christmas charity. Evelyn, particularly, is repulsed by Yuletide beggars:

"I saw some 'User of Suburban Trains' writing to the paper the other day to point out that while the porters and ticket collectors were always 'remembered', nobody up to date had thought of the engine-drivers!...Is it any wonder they all 'expect'?--every creature that does a hand's turn in any capacity, public or private? If they can't do anything else," Evelyn added disgustedly, "they stand outside your door and sing out of tune." (p. 216)

Evelyn abhors the lack of pride that the British caste system has instilled in the lower classes, which she feels is the origin of such unabashed mendicancy.

Mary's sensitivity is much more colonial. She relates the reaction of Towse, the Trents' British domestic, upon receiving Mary's gift of a pot of chrysanthemums to brighten up the kitchen:

"'They ain't a great deal in my way, and there, if it pleases Miss Mary!' They're very good and patient, that kind, over here, I notice. They let you do unto others as you wouldn't be at all willing to have them do unto you. It's rather touching, I think; but, phew! It's a choking atmosphere.'" (pp. 215-16)

It is the patronising parental posture which repels Mary. Yet in another context, she is quick to emphasize the relationship which exists between Canada and England:

"It's a pity, isn't it, that they've lost their Dickens?" Graham observed....

"It's a pity we've lost our Dickens," I said, with a slight emphasis. I never liked Graham to drop into that objective way of regarding Great Britain, especially with Evelyn." (pp. 216-17)

The Canadian identity is firmly rooted in the British past, if not subserviently so in the British present and future.

While Graham is in England he becomes attracted to Barbara Pavisay, a young lady with an awesome ancestry, whose family is now somewhat impoverished. As a result,

the Pavisay home with its illustrious history seems doomed. The Pavisay plight brings out the stoic in Graham who proposes marriage to Barbara, in order that he may rightfully and respectably bring a satisfactory financial settlement about. Even Mary, seemingly of a simple nature, is not insensitive to the situation:

Again I asked myself--I almost asked the curate--whether it was quite unimaginable that Pavis Court, and Barbara's future, and her mother's past, and the Pavisay place in the history of England, and everybody and everything attached to it should just--go? I must say a dreadful gulf yawned with the idea, and I turned, with a kind of fascination, to the spectacle of my Roman brother plunging in. (p. 279)

To marry Barbara would be the brave, colonial thing to do.

Yet Mary is able to see beyond the emotion of the moment. Her perception of Barbara is acute:

--Barbara was really a dear; we had long ago found that out, a warm-hearted dear, with nice ideas about nearly everything....Somehow, if she had been insignificant and rather plain like me, it would have been easier to see Graham in love with her--he liked a sketch always better than a finished picture; and Barbara was the finished picture, that left the imagination nothing at all to do. One is dazzled for a moment, but one is bored for all time. (p. 278)

The brave personal satisfaction that his marriage to Barbara would bring would be an ephemeral consolation for Graham. Miss Duncan does not believe that Canada's manhood should be sacrificed to the mother country, the results of which would be castrating.

Mary realizes what course her brother's future will take if he weds Barbara:

But then there was Pavis Court, and no question of dazzlement or boredom there. Only a long and lovely office of keeping the lamp trimmed and replenishing the vessel. Was it or wasn't it enough--for a person like Graham? It wouldn't have been at all enough for me; but then I, compared with Graham, was singularly unworthy to entertain such an idea. Only one thing I hoped he wouldn't remember, and that was that he was only, as Evelyn had pointed out, a simple Canuck, who the world would probably, when it came to hear of the matter, think an extremely lucky fellow. It was a view that was only too likely to occur to him, and except in the eyes of the world I could not see that it had any pertinence whatever. (pp. 278-79)

Miss Duncan uses Graham as a metaphor for Canada and all it holds for the future. A political unit, a society, and a person, can all be judged by the same criteria of actual validity. Canada must search her own national conscience, and coming to grips with her past and her present, adhere

to her genuine inclinations regarding England. Miss Duncan gives form to this ethical code in the conclusion of the novel.

Barbara becomes truly fond of Graham, and breaks the engagement. Graham is bitter at first, and Mary recalls his attitude:

But of course my frame of mind was different from Graham's. I had not evolved an ideal and chivalric project and had it returned on my hands as not quite ideal and chivalric enough. I wasn't suffering, in the most delicate and high-minded region of my consciousness, from a fearful, fearful snub. And poor Graham was.
(p. 340)

Again the ideal, which one cannot live. The productive life must always take reality into account. Cousin Cinderella (1908) has its light moments, but Graham is not comic in his distress. Mary, as narrator, represents point of view, and she has an empathy for Graham in his youthful pain.

The Duchess, a high-minded and proud creature, manages to prevent Lord Peter Doleford from being bought on the marriage market by Evelyn Dicey. However, Evelyn has revenge of a sort by consenting to marry Peter's Uncle Christopher. The marriage enables Evelyn to prevail, even if it is at a high cost, and gives her a semblance of identity. She also has the satisfaction of saving Pavisay Court from its debtors, and possessing it herself. It is

a strict business deal, as Lord Doleford points out to Mary, and Evelyn has a shrewd commercial mind:

"About Americans," Peter went on with extraordinary candour, "I haven't the same feeling. They have their eyes open--they know what's involved and what's understood. If they care about that kind of a bargain, by all means let them make it." (p. 361)

As the conversation indicates, Peter is an intelligent and sincere young man.

Peter's proposal to Mary is based on authentic affection, as is Mary's acceptance:

"But you--you belong to us," he continued in a voice which anyone would have found penetrating. "You are our own people. We can't marry you on that principle of commercial bargainBut I'm a fool about ties of sentiment."

"Aren't they," I said, "the only wisdom?" (pp. 361-62)

The word "ties" implies unification. "Sentiment" connotes a fusion of genuine emotion and idea, or what the dictionary defines as an "attitude, thought, or judgment permeated or prompted by feeling." Miss Duncan believes that any legitimate sphere of endeavour must be prompted by sentiment, which is also a binding force. The marriage of Mary and Peter is a bond of love. Similarly, the Empire must represent a union of true loyalty if it is to be a workable,

progressive entity.

In The Crow's Nest (1901) Miss Duncan applies her ethics of social behaviour to her own art. The novel is essentially a diary of Miss Duncan's experiences in a garden to which she has been confined for reasons of health. The garden also acts as a source of revitalization for Miss Duncan's imagination. It is a book full of homespun common sense, and overtly trite occurrences. But the style is light and bright, and Miss Duncan manages to find meaning even in a flower bed.

In the freedom of the natural world Miss Duncan finds her innate sensibilities, which have been dulled by the printed word, sharpened:

My regrettable experience is that you can explore the recesses of your soul out-of-doors in much less than a week if you put your mind to it, with surprise and indignation that you should find so little there.³³

Miss Duncan believes that the artist must seek externally if he is to write. And he must live in the present for "it is dull work subsisting upon the most glorious reminiscences and much wiser to become the shining ornament of the more limited sphere to which one may be transferred" (p. 35). The past and future, although they may be more

spacious than the present, have only human meaning in the present.

Further, humans are able to perceive only in human terms. After Miss Duncan has been in the garden for awhile, she becomes acquainted with the daytime and the inanimate term "weather" exists for her no longer. Rather she senses the mood of the days. She deflects her own knowledge of temperament onto the state of the atmosphere.

Pure reality, then, does not exist for the human in life. Actuality is always tinged by one's particular sensibilities. Of the peonies Miss Duncan remarks:

Always they were the first, in a certain garden of early colonial fashion that I used to know in Canada, after the long hard winter was past, to push their red-green beginnings up into the shabby welcome of March. (p. 43)

Consequently, peonies for Miss Duncan are hardy harbingers of springtime, and suggest new life and gladness.

Conversely, the external world affects the individual's disposition:

There is reason in the superstition which associates great heat with the devil. Operating alone, it can do almost as much as he can. (p. 137)

I stated earlier that Miss Duncan admired the British

society for advancing from the individual. I have subsequently attempted to prove that Miss Duncan believes that one becomes an individual through self-knowledge, which can only be obtained by having the self react with the world one is presented with. Unlike her husband, Tiglath-Pileser, the narrator of The Crow's Nest (1901) does not adhere to the belief that it is "stupid to talk about the aggregate of human woe, since all the pain as well as all the pleasure of the world is summed up in the individual and limited by him" (p. 64). Rather she believes that the woes of an individual are relative as they are dependent upon his attitude. "The human beast of burden is surely the summing up of pathos--free and valuable are all others compared with him" (p. 61).

Every human endeavour is limited, then, by point of view and temper of sensibility. The mist of the September rains "makes one think of the impalpable barrier of one's environment, possible to break in any direction but never broken, always there, the bound of one's horizon and the limit of one's activities" (p. 201). Miss Duncan is a self-conscious artist as she readily admits. Yet she has attempted to do her gardening with scissors and discretion. She has kept the higher truth in mind to the extent that this is possible, yet her writing has always been her own:

To have increased the sum of the world's happiness by one's own is perhaps no great accomplishment, yet is it so easy? Neither can it be called especially virtuous to feel a little better, but what moral satisfaction is there to compare with it? (p. 247)

Clearly, Miss Duncan believes knowledge and acceptance of self to be the basis and virtue of her work.

CHAPTER III

TRAGICOMEDY AND HUMOUR

In his lecture on Bergson, Hoffding asserts that Bergson "has spoken only of the laughter of mockery; he has neglected the laughter of humour."³⁴ Bergson emphasizes what he terms "an absence of feeling" that accompanies laughter.³⁵ When we look upon life as "disinterested spectators" the comic is possible.³⁶ Further, Bergson postulates that there is something "aesthetic about comedy as it comes into being just when society and the individual, freed from the worry of self-preservation, begin to regard themselves as works of art."³⁷ If Hoffding is right--and I think he is--in pronouncing Bergson's theory to have extreme limitations, then these primary hypotheses must be the mainstay of the bias which prohibits a more catholic application.

The tension between the ideal (in the sense of a fixed norm) and the individual who refuses to fit himself into it, lends itself equally well to both comic and tragic effects. What determines the import of such oppositions is the author's

point of view, and his attitude.³⁸ In His Honour and a Lady (1896), Miss Duncan's attitude is direct, and this frankness, coupled with the omniscient vantage point she assumes, allows some diverse effects.

His Honour and a Lady (1896) is the story of Judith Church, a young woman "with an inordinately hungry capacity for life" who had had "the narrowest conditions to live in:"³⁹

She knew by intuition that the world was full of colour and passion, and when one is tormented with this sort of knowledge it becomes more than ever grievous to inhabit one of its small, dull, grimy blind alleys, with the single anticipation of enduring to a smoke-blackened old age, like one of Stoneborough's lesser chimneys. (p. 13)

Judith marries John Church for "the sake of her imagination," although there "was nothing ideal about John Church except his honesty" (p. 13). Hence, we have the prerequisites for the drama. John's inflexibility, his ideal, is his honesty and this trait is the antithesis of what Bergson labels as "a certain elasticity of mind and body" which enables us to adapt to the perpetually changing life current.⁴⁰

John is named Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and sets about legislating what he deems much needed education reform. Church proposes to reallocate funds so that new technical

schools may be built, at the expense of Calcutta University:

--the three lakhs and seventy-five thousand rupees--that goes every year to make B. A.s of Calcutta University. It's a commonplace to say that it is sweated in annas and pice out of the cultivators of the villages--poor devils who live and breed and rot in pest-stricken holes we can't afford to drain for them, who wear one rag the year through and die of famine when the rice harvest fails! (p. 190)

John's sense of morality is absolute, and unhappily for Church, Miss Duncan believes life is never so elementary.

Church's contemporaries view him as a ludicrous simpleton:

"His Acting Honour represents to me a number of objectionable things. He is a Radical, and a Low Churchman, and a Particularist. He's that objectionable ethical mixture, a compound of petty virtues. He believes this earth was created to give him an atmosphere to do his duty in; and he does it with the invincible courage of short-sightedness combined with the notion that the ultimate court of appeal for eighty million Bengalis should be his precious Methodist conscience. But the brute's honest, and if he insists on putting this University foolishness of his through, I'm sorry for him. He's a dead man, politically, the day it is announced. (p. 49)

As the passage portends, Church's inflexible political morality does cause, ironically, both his political and physical demise.

Church is duped by Ancram, the Chief Secretary, who is his confidant. We first meet Ancram at a dinner party hosted by the Dayes, his future-in-laws. Mrs. Daye is a member of that social species Miss Duncan portrays with such dexterity--the pretentious bourgeoisie. Mrs. Daye is elated that her daughter, Rhoda, is soon to become the wife of the Chief Secretary and she fancies that the entire Calcutta society is jealous of the impending marriage. Mrs. Daye's overzealous attention to the manner in which she ought to behave toward a Chief Secretary brings comedy of the sort that has been delineated previously. Finding her dinner conversation with Mr. Ancram lagging, Mrs. Daye produces her "trump card:"

"Oh," she said finally, "I haven't congratulated you on your 'Modern Influence of the Vedic Books.' I assure you, in spite of its being in blue paper covers and printed by Government I went through it with the greatest interest. And there were no pictures either," Mrs. Daye added, with the ingenuousness which often clings to Anglo-Indian ladies somewhat late in life. "...Really?" he said, looking fully at her, with a smile that had many qualities of compensation. "My dear Mrs. Daye, that was doing a good deal for friendship, wasn't it?"
(pp. 25-26)

Mrs. Daye is a type figure who is never individualized.

As Bergson contends, "we begin to become imitable only when we cease to be ourselves. Our gestures can only be imitated in their mechanical uniformity and therefore exactly in what is alien to our living personality."⁴¹

Mrs. Daye, by endeavouring to be unassuming about her erudition, unwittingly reveals her pretentious folly, and our laughter is what Bergson labels that of a social group. This phenomenon "will come into being whenever a group of men concentrate their attention on one of their number, imposing silence on their emotions and calling into play nothing but their intelligence."⁴² Mrs. Daye is embarrassed and we do not feel humiliated for her, nor, more importantly, do we feel enmity towards her betrayer, Lewis Ancram. On the contrary, Mr. Ancram secures our approval as a man undeceived in his opinion of his accomplishments and free from social fraud. Hence, as the comic encounter is resolved one has made a value judgment. The social corrective nature of such confrontations makes it imperative that as we reject the "inelasticity," we accept that which seems free and supple.⁴³ So we do have feelings, or at least an initial sense of well-being, about characters who possess the essential accommodation necessary for life. We are no longer "disinterested spectators."⁴⁴ Moreover, Mr. Ancram has revealed

himself to us as a man with a sense of humour, and as we laugh with him, he becomes a member of our social group.

The Bengalis are also instrumental in Church's ruin, and it is here that Bergson's hypotheses fail most profoundly. From the beginning India had slaked Judith Church's thirst for life's hearbeat. Even after eight years of dreary provincial officialdom, India was a resource:

India that lay all about her, glowing, profuse, mysterious, fascinating, a place in which she felt that she had no part, could never have any part, but that of a spectator. The gesture of a fakir, the red masses of the gold-mohur trees against the blue intensity of the sky, the heavy sweetness of the evening wind, the soft colour and curves of the homeward driven cattle, the little naked babies with their jingling anklets in the bazar--she had begun to turn to these things seeking their gift of pleasure jealously. (p. 15)

Judith is never forced to comprehend the reality of the panorama she views with such gratification. She is an on-looker. Freed from the drudgery of what existence entails as a participant in this India which confronts her, she can indulge her taste for the colour and gusto of life in its panoply. Judith's appreciation is not cerebral.

The people of Bengal hold the same recondite magnetism for Judith, for the author, and for the reader:

Then came the square dark hole of Abdul Rahman, where he sat in his spectacles and sewed, with his long lean legs crossed in front of him, and half a dozen red-beaked love-birds in a wicker cage to keep him company. And then the establishment of Saddanath Mookerjee, announcing in a dazzling fringe of black letters:
 PAINS FEVERANDDISEASES CURED
 WHILE YOU WAIT (p. 74)

Saddanath Mookerjee is a charlatan; we smile at his guileless pronouncement of his dubious trade and at the simplicity of his potential clients who believe life's ills to be so easily remedied. Additionally, as Miss Duncan's diction clearly intends, like Judith, we are set free from our common concerns and we are attracted to the man: "The old fascination never failed her; the people and their doings never became common facts" (p. 75). Our reaction, as Freud demonstrates, is not intellectual:

the object of the humorist is to strip away, momentarily the heavy intellectual trappings of adult life, including so many things which we regard as virtues, and to set us free again in that happy condition which we enjoyed in the morning of life, when everything came to us freshly; when we did not have to make allowances for the limitations or misfortunes of others; when we dared to call a thing or a person stupid if they seemed stupid to us; when we lived gloriously from moment to moment, without thought for the past, or consideration for the future.⁴⁵

Whether we accept Freud's contention that in every adult there is a child anxious to be indulged, or whether we admit that a longing for freedom from social constraint is latent in every individual, is of little import. What is of consequence is that we confess that people who manifest such emancipation from the social ethics can, for whatever reason, incite pleasurable feeling in us. It is the creation of this phenomenon, what Robertson Davies calls looking deep into the heart of life and seeing the fun and nonsense there, which is most appropriately labelled "humour."⁴⁶ And certainly "humour," as thus defined, is an affair of the heart.

Church's downfall provides an interesting commentary on Bergson's assertion that in comedy both society and the individual are freed from a concern with self-preservation.⁴⁷ Here, with regard to Ancram and the Bengalis, the reader registers quite different responses.

Our feelings toward Ancram pivot about our feelings toward Judith Church. Judith openly acknowledges her female vanity and her pleasure at her husband's appointment to Ancram:

"Don't imagine a lofty intention on my part to inspire my husband's Resolutions. I assure you I see

myself differently. Perhaps, after all, it is the foolish anticipation of my state and splendour that has excited my vain imagination as much as anything. Already, prospectively, I murmur lame nothings into the ear of the Viceroy as he takes me down to dinner! But I am preposterously delighted. Tomorrow is Sunday--I have an irreverent desire for the prayers of all the churches." (p. 16)

Judith's candour and her ability to laugh at her own absurd conceit make us feel she has integrity.

Judith also elicits our positive feelings as a creature of adaptability. For example, en route to open a bazaar, Judith converses with Lady Scott, who beguiles her with details of an operation she had insisted on witnessing at Dufferin Hospital for Women:

"I only wonder," said Mrs. Church, "that, holding the position you do on the Board, you didn't insist on performing the operation yourself": and her face was so grave that Lady Scott felt flattered and deprecated the idea. (p. 72)

The effect of such encounters is to give us an assurance that Judith has a sense of proportion and an intuitive ability to see through people's pretensions. Concisely, when comedy makes us aware of the living beneath the superficial, it is momentarily negative and ultimately positive in its assessment. As Feibleman suggests, comedy

is negative in that it is a "criticism of limitations and an unwillingness to accept them," but it is positive in that it "affirms the direction toward infinite value by insisting upon the absurdly final claims of finite things and events."⁴⁸ Comedy speaks from a sure knowledge of real life, and it is for this reason that we have confidence in Judith.

We know Ancram is egotistical. Miss Duncan tells us that he was so lavish in his praise of Philip Doyle, his friend and room-mate, that "one might have suspected a virtue in the expression of it. Notwithstanding this implication, it was entirely sincere" (p. 46). So Ancram is a man somewhat self-deceived about his own vainglorious pretensions, who, nonetheless displays a certain adroitness in life:

It was Mr. Ancram's desire to be a conspicuous benefactor--this among Indian administrators is a matter of business, and must not be smiled at as a weakness--and in very great part he had succeeded. The fact should be remembered in connection with his expressed opinion--it has been said that he was not always discreet--that the relatives in the subordinate services of troublesome natives should be sent, on provocation, to the most remote and unpleasant posts in the province. To those who understand the ramifications of cousinly connection in the humbler service of the sircar, the detestation of exile and the claims of family

affection in Bengal, the efficacy of this idea for promoting loyalty will appear. It was Mr. Ancram's idea, but he despaired of getting it adopted. Therefore he talked about it. Perhaps upon this charge he was not so very indiscreet after all. (p. 105)

Ancram is a scoundrel, but a supple one. His truculent pragmatism elicits results, no matter how dubious the means to achieve them.

The catalogue of Ancram's methods, dealings, and achievements fulfills Langer's definition of the personal comic antagonist:

The feeling of comedy is a feeling of heightened vitality, challenged wit and will, engaged in the great game with Chance. The real antagonist is the World. Since the personal antagonist in the play is really that great challenger, he is rarely a complete villain; he is interesting, entertaining.⁴⁹

Ancram is a bit of a rogue, but still he is a challenger in the complex Anglo-Indian bureaucracy, and we feel a primitive, emotional intrigue about that sort of self-assertion.

Above all, we temper our intellectual scruples. Not only must a man understand crookedness and be equal to it in order to be successful with the Bengalis, but also he must be prepared for a philosophy which has no place for his bounded mortal mind:

They are like cattle--they plough and eat and sleep; and if a tenth of them die of cholera from bad water, they say it was written upon their foreheads; and if Government cleans the tanks and the tenth are spared, they say it is a good year and the gods are favourable. (p. 30)

Apparently then, our ethics have no place in such a world, and one would be a fool to try to apply them. Ancram is clever, and his relationship with Judith gives him even more validity.

Judith confesses her love for Ancram despite her knowledge that he is "hard and cruel" (p. 212). To Ancram, from "that moment she realised to him a supreme good, and he never afterwards thought of his other ambitions without a smile of contempt which was almost genuine" (p. 208). Ancram has taken on another human aspect for us.

Ancram rouses public opinion against John Church through the Indian editor of the Bengal Free Press, Mohendra Lal Chuckerbutty. The Bengal Free Press

was a voice of the people--a particularly aggressive and pertinacious voice....Its advertisements were very funny, and its editorial English was more fluent than veracious: but when it threw mud at the Viceroy, and called the Lieutenant-Governor a contemptible tyrant, and reminded the people that

their galls were of the yoke of
the stranger, there was no mistaking
the direction of its sentiment. (pp. 107-08)

Ancram plants ideas in Mohendra's mind as to how to most effectively challenge Church's new education bill. We are aware that Ancram's motive is his vanity--Church "had not merely ignored the advice of Ancram : he had rejected it somewhat pointedly, being a candid man and no diplomat" (p. 112). Still, the Bengal Free Press was obviously a force antithetical to Church, with or without Ancram.

Ancram's full complicity is divulged when he writes a letter to his friend Doyle in England. It had long since become obvious "that the College Grants Notification held fateful possibilities for John Church personally, and for his wife incidentally" (p. 218). Annoyed by the gravity with which the Bishop has taken up the cause, Ancram felt the need to communicate the comedy in the situation to Doyle:

He reminds one of nothing so much
as an elderly hen sitting, with the
obstinacy of her kind, on eggs out
of which it is easy to see no addled
reform will ever step to crow. He is
as blind as a bat to his own deficiencies.
I doubt whether even his downfall will
convince him that his proper sphere of
usefulness in life was that of a Radical
cobbler. He has a noble preference for
the ideal of an impeccable Indian ad-
ministrator, which he goes about con-
templating, while his beard grows with
the tale of his blunders. (pp. 222-23)

When we learn that Ancram has been led on by his vanity to reproduce some of the phrasing he had originally written for the damaging editorial against Church in the Bengal Free Press, we are forced to make a moral decision which is exactly what comic antagonists cannot withstand.

Morality, which is primarily intellectual, makes us awaken, like Doyle, to a double-edged awareness:

He permitted himself no characterisation of the incident--lofty denunciation was not part of Doyle's habit of mind--beyond what might have been expressed in the somewhat disgusted smile with which he re-lighted his pipe. It was like him that his principal reflection had a personal tinge, and that it was forcible enough to find words. "And I," he said, with a twinkle at his own expense, "lived nine months in the same house with that skunk!" (p. 226)

There is bitter comedy at our own folly in being so complacent about Ancram, which is simultaneous with an underlying sense of tragedy at the consequences this unscrupulous attitude has, not only for Church, but for a world which values probity. Our own cosmos has been violated; Church, symbolizing its consummate criteria, is imperiled. Moreover, we are aware of Church's foibles, and we are left with no code to adhere to. The reader dwells in uncertainty--the "disgusted smile" of the tragicomic (p. 226).

This phenomenon may be likened to the man in the

desert who sets out for water, and in the evening finds he has moved in a full circle. Guthke comments:

This experience is one of the identity and simultaneity of the "tragic" and the ludicrous in this moment of truth. And progressive "intellectual" analysis will by no means destroy the one or the other, the tragic or the comic, but will, on the contrary, realize in an infinitely deepened rational awareness, that both are, in fact, interdependent. The impression of tragic futility is surely not obliterated by the distinctly comic form and appearance that it takes. And, conversely, the aesthetic appreciation of the comic constellation, of the circular movement, is in no way weakened by the shrill tragic overtone that suddenly pierces our ears. More than that, full intellectual realization of the quality of such a scene or moment will make us aware that the tragic and comic are here not only simultaneous and identical, but also that they heighten each other.⁵⁰

We extol virtue, and yet we do not believe that virtue is always effective. We are attracted by adeptness, and yet when adeptness violates morality in a personal manner, we are repulsed. The bitter comic sense of the absurdity of such values, makes the tragedy of such thinking even more intense.

Miss Duncan gives us a detailed and poignant account of Church's decease:

For an instant Judith, coming out at the sound of hoofs, failed to recognize her husband, he looked, with a thick

white powder of dust over his beard and eyebrows, so old a man. He stooped in his saddle, too, and all the gauntness of his face and figure had a deeper accent. (p. 238)

Church is a pathetic posture when he receives word that he must resign as Lieutenant-Governor, and yet, after his death, Judith is all too anxious to be rid of the unhappy burden of tragedy:

In spite of her conscience, which was a good one, there were times when Mrs. Church was shocked by the realisation that she was only trying to believe herself unhappy. (p. 279)

Man is not inclined to tragedy for a long period; rather, his natural instinct is toward the "élan vital"--what Langer labels "the pure sense of life."⁵¹

The human life-feeling is at once animalistic and cerebral:

Mankind has its rhythm of animal existence, too--the strain of maintaining a vital balance amid the alien and impartial chances of the world, complicated and heightened by passionnal desires....Symbolic construction has made this vastly involved and extended world: and mental adroitness is his chief asset for exploiting it. The pattern of his vital feeling, therefore, reflects his deep emotional relation to those symbolic structures that are his realities, and his instinctual life modified in almost every way by thought--a brainy opportunism in face of an essentially dreadful universe.⁵²

Miss Duncan plays off this tension between the natural predilection for living and the moral impulse toward mourning.

There can be little doubt that a tart comic sense of absurdity is present (man's duality of nature makes it inevitable), and contradictory to Bergson's thesis, the death of John Church even becomes subject matter:

Ancram still considered him an ass, but hostility had faded out of the opinion, which, when he mentioned it, dwelt rather upon that animal's power of endurance and other excellent qualities. Ancram felt himself distinctly on better terms with the late Lieutenant-Governor, and his feeling was accented by the fact that John Church died in time to avoid the necessity for a more formal resignation. His Chief Secretary felt personally indebted to him for that, on ethical grounds.
(p. 278)

Again and again Miss Duncan plays on our ability to disavow our moral feelings, until at the end of the novel, the comic and tragic are synthesized again when Judith becomes fully aware of Ancram's dastardly actions. Judith makes a decision for morality, and consequent subjection to a life of penury.

There is tragedy in the futility of John Church's life which could not even provide a comfortable pension for

his widow. At the same time we experience a grotesque sense of comedy in the fact that Ancram is appointed Lieutenant-Governor:

One day, a year later, Sir Lewis Ancram paused in his successful conduct of the affairs of Bengal long enough to state the case with ultimate emphasis to a confidentially inquiring friend.

"As the wife of my late honoured chief," he said, "I have the highest admiration and respect for Mrs. Church; but the world is wrong in thinking that I have ever made her a proposal of marriage; nor have I the slightest intention of doing so." (p. 321)

Miss Duncan clearly opts for Judith's moral decision, but as the final passage suggests her position is tenuous at best. The scoundrels survive rather well in the temporal world and constantly threaten the scheme of things. Even for the person of principle it is a constant struggle to overcome his attraction to the compliant Ancrams who flourish in society. Man's very duality creates the tragicomic, that is, his ability to be at once both physical and emotional, spiritual and intellectual. Our animality constantly vies with our intelligence for superiority.

The phenomenon of the tragicomic is distinguished from humour which has as its basis what Guthke terms "an ultimate reassurance:"⁵³

the vision of the humorist encompasses the great and the small things in the world, pleasures and sufferings, worth and worthlessness, becoming and perishing, the tragic and the comic--but all this is seen from the firm standpoint of knowing tolerance or, to use a different image, it is seen within the framework of a world that is intact.⁵⁴

Miss Duncan views the Bengalis with the same tolerance one exercises towards children. Children, like the Bengalis, are exempt from our ethical pattern; they live by a code of values which remains somewhat unintelligible to the outsider. In any event, in His Honour and a Lady (1896) the Bengalis do not display by themselves any sinister or threatening characteristics. They, like the reader and the Churches, are primarily victims of Anglo-India's defective human design.

When Dr. MacInnes departs for England to decry Church's educational policy on the grounds that it will be detrimental to the cause of Christian converts in the university, he takes along Shib Chunder Bhose:

Shib Chunder Bhose had been found willing, in consideration of a second-class passage, to accompany Dr. MacInnes in the character of a University graduate who was also a Christian convert. Shib Chunder's father had married a Mohamedan woman, and so lost his caste, whereafter he embraced Christianity because Father Ambrose's predecessor had given him four annas every time he came to catechism.

Shib Chunder inherited the paternal religion, with contumely added on the score of his mother, and, since he could make no other pretension, figured in the College register as a Christian. A young man anxious to keep pace with the times, he had been a Buddhist since, and afterwards professed his faith in the tenets of theosophy; but whenever he felt ill or lost money he returned irresistably to the procedure of his youth, and offered rice and marigolds to the Virgin Mary. Dr. MacInnes therefore certainly had the facts on his side when he affectionately referred to his young friend as living testimony to the work of educational missions in India.
(pp. 229-30)

Christianity to aid the soul is being promulgated in India by materialistic incentives. The Bengalis are quick to seize this basic verity and use it to their advantage. The Bengalis, in their anxiety to be as acceptable and sophisticated as the English, are only imitating the pattern of the religious leaders. The distortion lies within the human structure of the missions, not within the inherent values of the religious sects themselves.

Two principles of humour, as elucidated by Leacock, are evident here--our sympathy for the human frailty of Shib Chunder Bhose and our own shattered idealism:

if a man has a genuine sense of humour,
he is apt to take a somewhat melancholy,
or at least a disillusioned view of life.

Humour and disillusionment are twin sisters. Humour cannot exist alongside of eager ambition, brisk success, and absorption in the game of life. Humour comes best to those who are down and out, or who have at least discovered their limitations and their failures. Humour is essentially a comforter, reconciling us to things as they are in contrast to things as they might be.⁵⁵

Miss Duncan has revealed the fallacy of the benevolent and wise rulers from the Motherland. The self-preservative spirit of the Bengalis in the face of all this alien and false benefaction is solace--a reinforcement of life's ultimate ability to go on living.

Leacock says this reconciliation is the final stage of the evolution of amusement:

when men become too sympathetic to laugh at each other for individual defects or infirmities which once moved their mirth, it is surely not strange that sympathy should then begin to unite them, not in common lamentation for their common defects and inferiorities, but in common amusement at them.⁵⁶

We have seen in Ancram and Judith and the assorted members of the Anglo-Indian community, what vile deficiency lies at the base of our own advanced civilization. We have nothing by fellow-feeling upon viewing the pusillanimous

Bengali character.

In The Path of a Star (1899), Miss Duncan tells us that Calcutta society had not attained this advanced and enlightened sense of humour:

It may as well be shortly admitted, however, that to stir Calcutta's sense of comedy you must, for example, attempt to corner, by shortsightedness or faulty technical equipment, a civet cat in a jackal hunt, or, coming out from England to assume official duties, you must take a larger view of your dignities than the clubs are accustomed to admit. For the sex that does not hunt jackals it is easier--you have only to be a little frivolous and Calcutta will invent for you the most side-shaking nickname, as in the case of three ladies known in a viceroyalty of happy legend as the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.⁵⁷

Leacock states:

The final stage of the development of humour is reached when amusement no longer arises from a single "funny" idea, meaningless contrast, or odd play upon words, but rests upon a prolonged and sustained conception of the incongruities of human life itself.⁵⁸

The material that was cause for laughter in Calcutta does not even adequately fulfill the definition of comic incident. Miss Duncan clearly intends this deficit to be a disparaging comment upon the crude stage of human development in which English Calcutta is languishing.

True humour is the product of an advanced culture. As such, humour is a sustained philosophy rather than a series of clever happenings, and as Leacock affirms, it is "unquotable in single phrases and paragraphs, but... [produces] its effect in a long-drawn picture of human life, in which the universal element of human imperfection--alike in all ages and places--excites at once our laughter and our tears."⁵⁹

In The Path of a Star (1899), Miss Duncan explores what Leacock terms "the contrast between the fretting cares and petty sorrows of the day and the long mystery of tomorrow."⁶⁰ Humour is at best a delicate balance. Of pathos and humour Leacock writes, "United, each tempers and supports the other: pathos keeps humour from breaking into guffaws, and humour keeps pathos from subsiding into sobs."⁶¹ Clearly, Miss Duncan's task is not facile.

Ideally, humour of the Leacock variety will demonstrate that:

people are better than their surface often reveals, that the real truth about life is to be found not in the arbitrary and accidental events that actually do occur, but in the general conditions of life: the motivation and the impossible aspiration of man, the ironic poetry of human hopes and

desires, their purity and passion
and magnificence, and all caught
within a fragile and decaying
physical carcass and issuing only
in stunted and distorted forms.⁶²

The Path of a Star (1899) abounds in "stunted forms"⁶³

and the "arbitrary and accidental events" which are their
issue.⁶⁴ One must look underneath the droll tableau of

characters to see at work the "kindly contemplation" of
life which distinguishes the philosophy of the humourist.⁶⁵

The focal point of the novel is Hilda Howe, an actress
who is the leading lady of the principal theater in Calcutta.
Colourful and remarkable, Hilda appears a modern, self-
made woman of the nineteenth century with a tasteful,
surface sense of place and people. When she becomes
involved in a relationship with Stephen, a lean, mild priest,
who is an ascetic with motive (i. e. he wishes to be free
of the world for his own sake), her character is revealed
as something unexpected.

Hilda has a strong predilection for the vital:

My kind of life is so primitive, so
simple; it is one pure impulse, you
don't know. One only asks the things
that minister--one goes and finds and
takes them; one's feet in the straw,
one's head under any roof. What dif-
ference does it make? The only thing
that counts, that rules, is the chance
of seeing something else, feeling
something more, doing something better.
(p. 163)

Hilda's life is a series of points of feeling, and this experience has left its mark:

She had all the argument--which is like saying all the arms--and the most accurate understanding; but the only practical outcome of these things had been an intimate lesson in the small value of the intelligence, that flavoured her state with cynicism and made it more piquant. (p. 181)

Hilda is a predator in life. Operating on raw instinct, she does not feel any need to be answerable to the people and happenings that are her prey.

When Hilda meets Stephen, who is almost womanish in his taste for finery and the solitude of the cloister, she finds a companion who makes no demands, and lets her play out a most absorbing drama of thwarted love. Being with Stephen fills Hilda with "a triumphant sense of her own vitality, her success and value as a human unit" (p. 200). Unconscious at first to Hilda, Stephen once aroused, displays all the adolescent maladroitness of a man enamoured for the first time.

Death intervenes and prevents Stephen from renouncing his vows and marrying Hilda, by now a Carmelite nun. At Stephen's deathbed, Hilda muses about:

the very vivid perception she had at that hour of the value and significance of the earthly lot....Time for reflection,

alone with death and the lamp, upon the year that had been very valuable. "I would have married you," she whispered. "Yes, I would." Later her lips moved again. "I would have taken the consequence;" and again, "I would have paid any penalty." There he lay, a burden that she would never bear, a burden that would be gone in the morning. There were moments when she cried out on Fate for doing her this kindness. (pp. 307-08)

For Hilda the year has been pictorial and profitable.

Hilda is suggestive of so many British officials who come to India, and live off its blood for the sake of absorbing its charm.

Hilda, we are told, never considered "what she ought to feel" (p. 302). This depreciative comment on the brutal behaviour of the human species when it lacks morality and operates on passion, is mollified by Stephen, who, in the bonds of death, becomes a most unsuspecting purveyor of the sincerity of human feeling:

The room filled itself with something that had not been there before, his impotent love. "...If this had not happened I would have been--counted--among the unfaithful," he said. "I know now. I would have abandoned--my post. And gladly--without a regret--for you." (pp. 304-05)

Refusing to be confessed by his Church, and not asking to be caressed by Hilda, Stephen dies with his hand in Hilda's,

secure within the human sphere which has been so recently unveiled to him: "in the end he trusted the new wings of his mortal love to bear his soul to its immortality. They carried their burden buoyantly, it was such a little way" (p. 309). Stephen's earthly love did not imperil the future of his soul in eternity; rather, the humanity of his feeling coalesced him with perpetuity.

Even in such a sequestered and barren sample of mankind, the human spirit strives; Hilda's brutish dilettantism is half-way redeemed by having prompted such a display of mortality. The benevolent recognition of the irony of responsiveness at the moment of extinction, and the belief in the invincibility of the human soul are the mark of the humourist philosophy.

The subplots reinforce the philosophical contention in the manner of a pastiche. Duff Lindsay and Laura Filbert present fitting parallels to Stephen and Hilda, with their roles altered sufficiently to underscore the narrative's primary thrust.

Duff is first attracted to the physical appeal of Laura's voice at a Salvation Army meeting, much as Stephen had first become cognizant of Hilda when she starred in The Offence

of Galilee. Duff, we are told, is not a strong man:

"He's immensely dependent on his tastes, his friends, his circumstances" (p. 298). He explains quite naively his desire to marry Laura:

"What marks her even more is the wonderful purity and transparency of her mind; one doesn't find it often now, women's souls are so clouded with knowledge. I think that sort of thing appeals especially to me because my own design isn't the least esoteric. I'm only a man. Then she was so ludicrously out of her element. A creature like that should be surrounded by the softest refinement in her daily life. That was my chance. I could offer her her place. It's not much to counter-balance what she is, but it helps, roughly speaking, to equalise matters."
(pp. 184-85)

Duff's motives are not as candid as he surmises. Like Hilda, Duff finds a pleasurable image of himself as valuable and essential to Laura, and it is an image unclouded by consequences. When the consequences inevitably develop, Duff is ready, like Hilda, to pay any price and sacrifice himself on the nuptial altar. Moreover, Duff, like Hilda, is saved from self-oblation by a peculiar quirk of circumstance.

Laura, the Salvation Army functionary, resembles

Stephen in her unconsciousness to life; however, while Stephen was moved by the finery of the Church, Laura's only impetus is the baseness of the Army religious fervour. Nevertheless, Laura, gauche and simple-minded, reaches a pathetic epiphany through her encounter with Duff.

En route to India for her wedding to Duff, Laura meets Colonel Markin of the Salvation Army, a character whose duplicity is in the best tradition of Miss Duncan's tart comic delineations. Through Colonel Markin, Laura realizes how complicated her marriage to Duff will be and determines to return to the simplicity and comfort of her forsaken missions. Prior to becoming Mrs. Markin, Laura abandons all the remnants of her tempting and never to be attained finery:

She already had the turquoises, and with a jerk of her left hand, she freed it and threw them after the rest. The necklace caught the hand rail as it fell, and Markin made a vain spring to save it. He turned and stared at Laura, who stood fighting the greatest puissance of feeling she had known, looking at the pearls. As he stared she kissed them twice, and then, leaning over the ship's side, let them slowly slide out of her fingers and fall into the waves below. The moonlight gave them a divine gleam as they fell. She turned to Markin with tears in her eyes. "Now," she faltered, "I can be happy again. But not tonight," (pp. 292-93)

Laura is insensible to life, and in discarding her jewellery she realizes for the first and final time, a human desire. She is a most somber Christian, and it is ironic that her moments of joy were a result of material things. It is a diminutive greed and anguish which Laura experiences, but it provides her lone mortal moments.

At the end of the novel, Miss Duncan writes:

There has never been any difficulty in explaining Lindsay's marriage with Alicia Livingstone even to himself; the reasons for it, indeed, were so many and so obvious that he wondered why they had not struck him earlier. But it is worth noting, perhaps, that the immediate precipitating cause arose in one evening service at the Cathedral, where it had its birth in the very individual charm of the nape of Alicia's neck, as she knelt upon her hassock in the fitting and graceful act of the responses. (p. 310)

Alicia Livingstone is the counterpoint of The Path of a Star (1899)--a woman whose life experience has been narrow, she nevertheless comprehends life both emotionally and intellectually. She possesses both self-knowledge and humanity. In the true tradition of humour, it is not any sudden appreciation of Alicia's astuteness which awakens Duff to her many assets; rather, as it has been for the male ad infinitum, Duff is initially allured by her physical charms.

Miss Duncan cannot ignore a sly jest at the expense of Duff's vanity, which prompted his infatuation with Laura:

His instincts in these matters seem to have had a generous range, considering the tenets he was born to, but it was to him then a delightful reflection, often since repeated, that in the sheltered garden of delicate perfumes where this sweet person took her spiritual pleasure there was no rank vegetation. (p. 311)

Life's need for Duff was not as dramatic and absolute as he had envisioned. The ultimate issue--a most suitable marriage with Alicia--provides a sense of human well-being.

As the novel concludes everything is resolved and everyone is placed confidentially in his proper sphere. Hilda is restored to the stage, protesting too much that she means someday to abandon it for "the life which is her heritage in the wider, simpler ways of the world" (p. 311). But life requires self-involvement which is too exacting a price for Hilda to pay. Stephen receives eternity to which he had devoted most of his life. Laura has returned to her missions as the wife of Colonel Markin, of whom Duff comments with resignation and relief, "'One hopes he isn't a brute'" (p. 310). The tone is congenial, and contrasts effectively with the concluding cast of His Honour and a Lady (1896).

With The Burnt Offering (1909) Miss Duncan resolves the philosophical dilemma of His Honour and a Lady (1896), and manages to assert the positive treatise of the humourist, even after the untimely death of an able Anglo-Indian administrator.

The Burnt Offering (1909) deals, as does so much of Miss Duncan's writing, with the effects of new environments on the identities of the protagonists. As the book opens, Vulcan Mills, a self-styled socialistic idealist, who is the "romance of the British proletariat," has arrived in India to right the evils being perpetrated in the name of the Crown.⁶⁶ We are under no illusions about Vulcan; he sat "earnestly at Westminster with his feet upon the floor and his policy in the clouds" (p. 19). An enthusiastic follower of John Stuart Mill, Vulcan "did not read far enough to be disappointed" (p. 28). Vulcan, in all the trials to come, never loses his infantile and benighted stance.

Ever seeing himself as a champion of humanity, Mills is a tragicomic figure:

I think they [Joan and Mills] made
courageous figures standing there
in the mantle of their ignorance
and the fire of their enthusiasm
with their eyes on the door and their
banner between them waiting for the
crusade to begin. (p. 30)

We feel for Mills the sense that Guthke describes as simultaneously tragic and comic--the incredible idealism of the man which makes him both cause for mirth and an instigator of calamity.⁶⁷ We view him with distance as he blatantly ignores the severity of the political situation fermenting around him, and, just as suddenly, in an intimate moment we find ourselves drawn to him.

When Mills ponders the marriage of his daughter and Bepin Dey, this duality is manifest:

"I suppose I must decide, father, one way or another," Joan said, and paused. "You yourself have always believed in the mingling of the races, haven't you? You have always thought that the prejudice against it was the mere survival of a tribal fetish, and that the people of the future would be one people?"

"Those are certainly my general views," replied Vulcan, none too willing. Again he kept back the other half of his thought, which was, "But you are my particular and only daughter." ... "I thought that you might possibly have some personal feeling about it, father," she said.

She leaned forward as she spoke, and laid her hand on his knee. He covered it with his own, and they had their moment of unspoken things. When he did articulate, it was nothing remarkable that he said.

"I shall be sorry to lose you, my girl," he told her; "but that is a point of view I could never allow myself to take."

At that she kissed him a little awkwardly and went out of the room. Vulcan, left alone, felt the bowl of his pipe, found it cold, and laid it by. He sat for a long time thinking without that solace, the unopened newspaper on the floor beside him. It may have crossed his mind, not unreasonably, that it was hard to be invited to the act of Abraham without any compensating faith in Abraham's God. But he did not hesitate on that account, and to this extent, plain man though he was, no doubt he soared above the patriarch. (pp. 180-81)

Mills' paternal feelings require empathy; concurrently, the personalization of Vulcan's idealism is laughable. The moment of reactive indecision is ephemeral however, for Mills is a creature of habit and returns with barely a whimper to the cold comfort of his romantic doctrines. Mills is beyond his predicament. Pathetically, he is an untouchable robot labelling escapism as gallant equanimity, unable to cope in any profound manner with the very private moral crisis which has evolved. Mills is a dreamer to the end, but his visions are never disorientating to the ultimate framework of the novel. Miss Duncan questions only Mills' ability to enact his lofty ideology.

In the resolution of The Burnt Offering (1909), the cosmological principle of the humourist is everywhere evident. Even the intermingling and assertion of the

British and Indian worlds, bringing as it does the central conflict of the novel, is classified, simplified, and disentangled.

Mills is quietly deported, which brings the Indian revolutionary activities to a critical juncture. Yet Mills is impassive to the end, and Miss Duncan knowingly tells us: "He was very deeply astonished but the law abiding instincts he had devoted so many years to denying did not fail him when he needed them, and he went quietly" (p. 231). And so in the end Mills is an aging Walter Mitty, in whom the reader doubtless sees some recognizable traits--an ironic comment about the way we actually are and the way we fancy ourselves to be. We feel at once pathos, humour, and sympathy.

Finding it impossible to incite any fervour for a hero "who has gone comfortably to sea at the State's expense," Bepin Dey, the unbalanced and vain zealot of the Indian cause, is forced to a daring act (p. 243). His assassination attempt on the Viceroy is thwarted, although John Game, the compassionate and effective British administrator, dies finally and suitably enough from bloodpoisoning in his wounds: "Tetanus awaits the barked skin in the mud of

Calcutta, and it had a better chance at poor John than that" (p. 283). Clearly, the implication is that the exhaustion, from so many years devoted to the British cause in India, has finally broken Game's stamina. The bizarre incident which preceded Game's death was the last link in a chain reaction for Game.

Of Bepin Dey's demise, Miss Duncan writes:

It looked as if the old gods had checkmated Bepin in a move too high for him; they are known to prefer to keep the game in their own hands. His name went into the shadows with him. He became, with cruel quickness, the mere accident that finally turned a people of philosophers from the methods of madness. Perhaps it was to that end that he was allowed to play. (p. 284)

Bepin suffered from an excess of what Leacock termed "the comedy of the short reach and the long desire."⁶⁸ Further, even in the foolish and sinister ends to which he aspired, Bepin is not viewed as an ignoble being. He had a sense of purpose, however ill-conceived, and ultimately fate who had "put her fool's cap on him, hiding the shape with laurels," turned his luckless fortitude to better ends (p. 234).

Shaw's description of Ibsen clarifies the tone of the foregoing passage:

the dramatic poet who firmly established tragi-comedy as a much deeper and grimmer entertainment than tragedy. His heroes dying without hope or honor, his dead, forgotten, superseded men walking and talking with the ghosts of the past, are all heroes of comedy: their existence and their downfall are not soul-purifying convulsions of pity and horror, but reproaches, challenges, criticisms addressed to society and to the spectator as a voting constituent of society. They are miserable and yet not hopeless; for they are mostly criticisms of false intellectual positions which, being intellectual, are remediable by better thinking.⁶⁹

Bepin is not society's victim, nor is he the fool of the gods as much as he is his own dunce, a martyr to his own deluded cause. The gods have merely rectified an anomaly.

The real India is represented by the Rani Janaki, her father Sir Kristodas, and the Swami. They become a metaphor for India itself, and in the final pages of the novel Miss Duncan writes with a prescience of the future:

The old man wears the sannyasi's yellow like the very garment of his soul, the girl seems rather to wrap her heart in it; the priest and his garb are one....Henceforth from holy place to holy place they will gather that wisdom of the heart that rewards the roof that shelters them, the hand that feeds them, that wisdom of the heart which is the gift and the

glory of the Mother whose children they are. Henceforth, by remembering ever the Rule and the Real, by holding with their own souls the eternal conversation of peace, they will endeavour to forget that which so impressed itself as life. Life not having pleased them, they have exercised towards it the profound and delicate option which is their inheritance: they have left it in the world. (pp. 287-88)

The British will gain wisdom from sheltering the Mother, and someday a new India will emerge. As symbolized by Sir Kristodas returning his Order of the Indian Empire, the India that will evolve will not be based exclusively on the British tradition, nor will it be founded entirely on the Indian nature. A new and superior coalescence, which has as its foundation both the expertise of the British and the profound sagacity of the Indian inheritance, will form the new nation.

Even John Game, virtuous and honourable as he was, dies without regret and within this universal scheme:

John Game died, and the ranks closed up, and another man made the footprints that would have been his where the flag moves on in the history of the race. The ranks closed up, as they always have, as they always will, since there can be no faltering in the front, whatever they may do in the rear, no turning back for the vanguard from the end they cannot see....I find myself lending an ear to the observations of Michael Foley, who

said to his wife: "If it was expedient that only one man should die for the people, I fancy, as things have turned out, old John was pleased enough that it should be he." (pp. 283-84)

Miss Duncan's world is intact. She envisions even death within the terms of the unfolding history of man. Man is compelled to move ever onward, ever forward. It is this momentum which is life itself, and which Sara Duncan, the humourist, celebrates while simultaneously aware both of the confines of mortality, and the nobility of the human spirit as it strives within this bounded world which is our common ground.

FOOTNOTES

1 In this context I define humanism broadly as an interest in, and concern for, man and his affairs.

2 Marjory MacMurchy, "Mrs. Everard Cotes," The Bookman (London), 48 (May 1915), p. 39.

3 Sara Jeannette Duncan, A Daughter of To-Day (New York, 1894), pp. 18-19. Further references to A Daughter of To-Day will be indicated in the body of my text.

4 Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (New York, 1967), pp. 169-70.

5 William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, ed. George Lyman Kittredge (New York, 1941), p. 383, l. 386.

6 Sara Jeannette Duncan, "Saunterings," Week, III (November 4, 1886), p. 781.

7 Susanne K. Langer, "The Great Dramatic Forms: The Comic Rhythm," from Feeling and Form in Theories of Comedy, ed. Paul Lauter (New York, 1964), pp. 506-07.

8 Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (New York, 1893), pp. 12-13. Further references to The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib will be indicated in the body of my text.

9 Maynard Mack, "Introduction to Joseph Andrews," in The Comic in Theory and Practice, ed. John Jacob Enck (New York, 1960), p. 100.

10 James K. Feibleman, "The Meaning of Comedy," from Aesthetics in Theories of Comedy (New York, 1964), p. 461.

11 Mack, op. cit., p. 101.

12 Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (New York, 1956), p. 186.

13 Mack, op. cit., p. 100.

14 Bergson, op. cit., p. 63.

- 15 Ibid, p. 190.
- 16 William Flint Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman, ed., A Handbook to Literature, rev. ed. (New York, 1960), p. 229.
- 17 Langer, op. cit., p. 499.
- 18 By a feeling of life, I intend a sense of personal perception of life, or self-realization.
- 19 Rae E. Goodwin, "The Early Journalism of Sara Jeannette Duncan, with a Chapter of Biography," (Thesis University of Toronto 1964), p. 92.
- 20 Sara Jeannette Duncan, "Saunterings," Week, III (November 4, 1886), p. 781.
- 21 Ibid, p. 781.
- 22 Langer, op. cit., p. 505.
- 23 Ibid, p. 499.
- 24 Mack, op. cit., p. 100.
- 25 Bergson, op. cit., p. 166.
- 26 Ibid, p. 170.
- 27 Ibid, p. 84.
- 28 Sara Jeannette Duncan, An American Girl in London (Toronto, 1891), p. 1. Further references to An American Girl In London will be indicated in the body of my text.
- 29 Langer, op. cit., p. 499.
- 30 Sara Jeannette Duncan, A Voyage of Consolation (New York, 1898), p. 1. Further references to A Voyage of Consolation will be indicated in the body of my text.
- 31 Sara Jeannette Duncan, Those Delightful Americans (New York, 1902), pp. 3-4. Further references to Those Delightful Americans will be indicated in the body of my text.

32 Sara Jeannette Duncan, Cousin Cinderella (New York, 1908), p. 209. Further references to Cousin Cinderella will be indicated in the body of my text.

33 Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Crow's Nest (New York, 1901), p. 37. Further references to The Crow's Nest will be indicated in the body of my text.

34 Harald Höffding, Modern Philosophers and Lectures in Bergson, trans. Alfred C. Mason (London, 1915), p. 268.

35 Bergson, op. cit., p. 63.

36 Ibid., p. 63.

37 Ibid., p. 73.

38 Karl S. Guthke, Modern Tragicomedy (New York, 1966), pp. 76-77.

39 Sara Jeannette Duncan, His Honour and a Lady (Toronto, 1896), p. 13. Further references to His Honour and a Lady will be indicated in the body of my text.

40 Bergson, op. cit., p. 72.

41 Ibid., p. 81.

42 Ibid., p. 65.

43 Ibid., p. 67.

44 Ibid., p. 63.

45 Sigmund Freud, from Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious in Masks of Fiction, ed. A. J. M. Smith (Toronto, 1961), p. 110.

46 Robertson Davies, "On Stephen Leacock," from Masks of Fiction, ed. A. J. M. Smith (Toronto, 1961), p. 107.

47 Bergson, op. cit., p. 63.

48 Feibleman, op. cit., p. 471.

49 Langer, op. cit., p. 521.

- 50 Guthke, op. cit., p. 57.
- 51 Langer, op. cit., p. 501.
- 52 Ibid., p. 502.
- 53 Guthke, op. cit., p. 72.
- 54 Ibid., p. 72.
- 55 Stephen Butler Leacock, "Preface," from The Garden of Folly (New York, 1924), pp. viii-ix.
- 56 Stephen Butler Leacock, "American Humour," from Essays and Literary Studies (New York, 1916), p. 114.
- 57 Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Path of a Star (London and Glasgow, 1899), p. 131. Further references to The Path of a Star will be indicated in the body of my text.
- 58 Stephen Butler Leacock, "American Humour," from Essays and Literary Studies (New York, 1916), p. 113.
- 59 Ibid., p. 115.
- 60 Stephen Butler Leacock, Humour: Its Theory and Technique (London, 1935), p. 17.
- 61 Stephen Butler Leacock, Humour and Humanity (London, 1937), p. 233.
- 62 Donald Cameron, Faces of Leacock: An Appreciation (Toronto, 1967), p. 36.
- 63 Ibid., p. 36.
- 64 Ibid., p. 36.
- 65 Stephen Butler Leacock, Humour and Humanity (London, 1937), p. 11.
- 66 Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Burnt Offering (London, 1909), p. 19. Further references to The Burnt Offering will be indicated in the body of my text.

67 Guthke, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

68 Cameron, op. cit., p. 37.

69 George Bernard Shaw, "Tolstoy: Tragedian or Comedian,"
The London Mercury, IV (1921), pp. 37-39.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Brown, Ashley and John L. Kimmey, eds. Tragicomedy.
Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1968.
- Cameron, Donald. Faces of Leacock: An Appreciation.
Toronto: Ryerson, 1967.
- Cook, Albert Spaulding. The Dark Voyage and the Golden
Mean: A Philosophy of Comedy. Cambridge: Harvard
Univ. Press, 1949.
- Corrigan, Robert Willoughby, ed. Comedy Meaning and Form.
San Francisco: Chandler, 1965.
- Davies, Robertson. Stephen Leacock. Toronto: McClelland
and Stewart, 1970.
- Duncan, Sara Jeannette. An American Girl in London.
Toronto: Williamson, 1891.
- _____. The Burnt Offering. London: Methuen, 1919.
- _____. The Consort. London: Stanley Paul, 1912.
- _____. Cousin Cinderella. New York: Grosset and Dunlap,
1908.
- _____. The Crow's Nest. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1901.
- _____. A Daughter of To-Day. New York: Appleton, 1894.
- _____. The Gold Cure. London: Hutchison, 1924.
- _____. His Honour and a Lady. Toronto: G. M. Rose, 1896.
- _____. His Royal Happiness. New York: Appleton, 1914.
- _____. The Imperialist, introd. Claude Bissell. Toronto:
McClelland and Stewart, 1961.
- _____. The Path of a Star. London and Glasgow: Collins,
1899.
- _____. The Pool in the Desert. New York: Appleton, 1903.

- _____. A Social Departure: How Orthodocia and I Went Around the World by Ourselves. New York: Appleton, 1890.
- _____. Set in Authority. London: Constable, 1906.
- _____. The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib. New York: Appleton, 1893.
- _____. The Story of Sonny Sahib. New York: Appleton, 1895.
- _____. Those Delightful Americans. New York: Appleton, 1902.
- _____. Title Clear. London: Hutchison, 1922.
- _____. Vernon's Aunt: Being the Oriental Experiences of Miss Lavinia Moffat. London: Chatto and Windus, 1894.
- _____. A Voyage of Consolation. New York: Appleton, 1898.
- Enck, John Jacob et al. The Comic in Theory and Practice. New York: Appleton, 1960.
- Feibleman, James K. In Praise of Comedy: A Study in Its Theory and Practice. New York: Russell and Russell, 1939.
- Fielding, Henry. Joseph Andrews, introd. Maynard Mack. New York: Rinehart, 1948.
- Freud, Sigmund. Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, trans. and ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1960.
- Frye, Northrop. The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. New York: Atheneum, 1967.
- Guthke, Karl S. Modern Tragicomedy. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Herrick, Marvin T. Tragicomedy. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1955.
- Hoffding, Harald. Modern Philosophers and Lectures in Bergson, trans. Alfred C. Mason. London: Macmillan, 1915.

- Hogan, Robert Goode and Sven Eric Molin. Drama: The Major Genres. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1962.
- Hook, Sidney, ed. Art and Philosophy: Proceedings of a Symposium. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1966.
- Houghton, Walter Edwards. The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957.
- Hoy, Cyrus. The Hyacinth Room: An Investigation into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy and Tragicomedy. New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1964.
- Klinck, Carl Frederick et al., ed. Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965.
- Langer, Susanne. Feeling and Form. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
- Lauter, Paul, ed. Theories of Comedy. Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1964.
- Leacock, Stephen Butler. Essays and Literary Studies. New York: John Lane, 1916.
- _____. The Garden of Folly. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1924.
- _____. Humour and Humanity. London: Thornton Butterworth, 1937.
- _____. Humour: Its Theory and Technique. London: John Lane, 1935.
- Mayne, Jonathan, trans. and ed. The Mirror of Art. London: Phaidon, 1955.
- Meredith, George. An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1897.
- McCollum, William G. The Divine Average: A View of Comedy. Cleveland: Press of Case Western Univ., 1971.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. The Theory of Drama. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1931.

Pacey, Desmond. Creative Writing in Canada: A Short History of English-Canadian Literature, rev. ed. Toronto: Ryerson, 1961.

Shakespeare, William. Twelfth Night, ed. George Lyman Kittredge. New York: Ginn, 1941.

Sherman, Stuart Pratt. Matthew Arnold How to Know Him. New York: Peter Smith, 1932.

Smith, A. J. M., ed. Masks of Fiction. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961.

Styan, J. L. The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic Tragedy. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962.

Sypher, Wylie, ed. Comedy: An Essay on Comedy [by] George Meredith: Laughter [by] Henri Bergson. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956.

Tobias, Richard Clark. The Art of James Thurber. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1970.

Thrall, William Flint et al., ed. A Handbook to Literature, rev. ed. New York: Odyssey, 1960.

Wagenknecht, Edward. Cavalcade of the American Novel: From the Birth of the Nation to the Middle of the Twentieth Century. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965.

_____. Cavalcade of the English Novel from Elizabeth to George VI. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

ARTICLES IN PERIODICALS

- Anon. [Women Writers]. Can. Mag., 25 (Oct. 1905), pp. 583-85.
- Burness, Jean F. "Sara Jeannette Duncan: A Neglected Canadian Author," Ontario Library Review, 45 (Aug. 1961), pp. 205-06.
- Donaldson, F. "Mrs. Everard Cotes," The Bookman (London), 14 (June 1898), pp. 65-67.
- Duncan, Sara Jeannette. "Saunterings," Week, III (November 4, 1886), p. 781.
- MacMurchy, Marjory. "Mrs. Everard Cotes," The Bookman (London), 48 (May 1915), pp. 39-40.
- R[oss], M. E. "Sara Jeannette Duncan: Personal Glimpses," Can. Lit., 27 (Winter 1966), pp. 15-19.
- Shaw, George Bernard. "Tolstoy: Tragedian or Comedian," The London Mercury, IV (1921), pp. 37-39.
- Thomas, Clara. "Happily Ever After: Canadian Women in Fiction and Fact," Can. Lit., 34 (Autumn 1967), pp. 43-53.

THESES

Cogswell, Fred. "The Canadian Novel from Confederation to World War I." (Thesis University of New Brunswick 1950).

Goodwin, Rae E. "The Early Journalism of Sara Jeannette Duncan, with a Chapter of Biography." (Thesis University of Toronto 1964). I am particularly indebted to the bibliography of Miss Duncan's journalism compiled by Rae E. Goodwin.