

ployers determined to resist unionization have effectively used the labour relations boards to delay certification votes and to price the procedure far beyond the financial means of some unions.

Getting Organized: Building A Union recognizes the dynamics of labour politics and the way certain issues can be bargained away. As Julie White notes, more and more unions and labour centrals are issuing policy statements about the status of women and feminist issues. But, policy statements and contract negotiations behind closed doors can be two very different things. Cornish and Ritchie examine a number of strategies that women can use to guarantee equality, and not simply tokenism.

A large part of our everyday lives is spent working, preparing for or organizing around work. However, a great many women in Canada do not have full dignity at the workplace and must settle for less than decent wages and working conditions. The women at the Lismore fish plant were faced with minimum wages and unhealthy working conditions. They had no paid sick leave, no private pension and absolutely no control over their individual production levels. Unionization was critical in their struggle to gain dignity. *Getting Organized: Building A Union* is an important text for working women looking for dignity and equality in the workplace. Julie White's *Women and Unions* is also an important place to begin in gaining an overview of where women are in unions and what can be won. But much work remains to be done. Local and regional studies, both historical and contemporary analyses, are required to develop effective organizing and bargaining strategies for full equality and dignity in the workplace and the union.

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Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire.
Thomas E. Tausky. *Port Credit: P.D. Meany, 1980. Pp. 300.*

Despite a growing interest in Canadian literature these past ten years, we have been slow to follow up on the pioneer work of such critics as Carl F. Klinck, Reginald E. Watters and Malcolm Ross, who have rescued many of our earlier writers from obscurity. It seems easier to write yet another article on one of our current popular writers than to search through archives and libraries for manuscripts, out-of-print works, and early periodicals. And, surprisingly, despite the current strong interest in women writers and the recognition that many earlier women merit reassessment, feminist critics have not risen to the occasion. A major exception is Clara Thomas with her excellent study of Anna Jameson and articles on Catherine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Sara Jeannette Duncan and Martha Ostenso, to name a few. All the more reason to welcome Thomas E. Tausky's full-length study of Sara Jeannette Duncan, a woman we all recognize as meriting serious attention.

In *Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire*, Tausky studies Duncan's fiction and journalism and gives a brief account of her life. Duncan was one of the most prolific as well as one of the most talented Canadian writers of her day. Although determined from youth to be a writer, she attended Toronto Normal School and taught for a brief period in her home town of Brantford before her first opportunity for a writing career arrived. In 1884 she sought out newspaper commissions to cover the New Orleans Cotton Centennial and sent back dispatches to the London (Ontario) *Advertiser* and the Toronto *Globe*. From then on her journalistic career forms a remarkable success story. On her return from New Orleans

she continued to write on a free-lance basis for the *Globe*, often under the pseudonym of Garth Grafton. The following year she became a book reviewer and editorial writer for the *Washington Post*. In 1886 she became the first full-time woman editorial writer for the *Globe*, in 1887 a columnist for the *Montreal Star* and in 1888 parliamentary correspondent for the *Star*. As well, between 1886 and 1888 she contributed columns and book reviews to *The Week* on a regular basis, writing with facility on a wide range of subjects.

In September 1888 Duncan embarked on a world tour, which was to end in England late the following year. Lily Lewis, Montreal correspondent for *The Week*, accompanied her. Lewis sent back dispatches to *The Week*, Duncan to the *Star*. Yet another perspective on the tour appears in Duncan's *A Social Departure* (1890), which recounts the adventures of the fictional Orthodocia on a world tour. *A Social Departure*, Duncan's first book, proved to be her most popular. It was published simultaneously in England and the United States; in England, it ran to three editions by 1893.

Duncan returned to Canada from England late in 1890, only to leave in October for India. According to letters cited by Rae Goodwin in her unpublished M.A. thesis, "The Early Journalism of Sara Jeannette Duncan, with a Chapter on Biography" (1964), Duncan went to India to work on a newspaper. In 1891 she married Everard Cotes, an Anglo-Indian civil servant, whom she soon persuaded to embark upon a career in journalism. Henceforth, Sara spent most of her life in India, with frequent extended visits to England and to Canada. She did not stop writing, but, in fact, produced another twenty books. Tausky suggests that Canadians "have little cause to love Mr. Cotes," since "only one of her twenty subsequent books has 100% Canadian content." It seems to me any regret we may have would

stem from disappointment that these twenty books do not fulfill the promise of Duncan's earlier lively and perceptive prose; to judge from Tausky's consideration of her works, her writing between 1891 and 1922 fails to show the development that might have been expected.

Of Duncan's books, there are only five which Tausky considers "successful and whole" novels: *The American Girl in London* (1891); *The Simple Adventures of a Mem-Sahib* (1893); *His Honour and a Lady* (1896); *The Imperialist* (1904); and *Cousin Cinderella* (1908). Of all her works, *The Imperialist* is most appreciated today; few of the others are read at all. Tausky takes on the not inconsiderable task of assessing all of Duncan's works, and, because they are relatively unknown, providing plot summaries. He organizes his discussion of the novels under several headings, but most can be considered under two—the North American girl abroad, and India under British rule. There are also two political novels: *The Imperialist* and *The Consort* (1912), set in England.

Several of Duncan's Indian novels were very well received in England. *Set in Authority* (1906) was an outstanding success. Tausky reports that it remained on the London *Bookman* best-seller list for three months. Tausky had high praise for a collection of autobiographical sketches, *On the Other Side of the Latch* (1901), in which Duncan uses her journalistic skills to comment on the social world of Simla, the summer capital of British India, in the Himalayas. *The Burnt Offering* (1909), which includes references to the extreme tension in India at the time, strikes Tausky as an attempt "to justify the conservative, traditional attitudes of the Anglo-Indian community in its encounter with strange, new forces."

By 1915 Duncan had developed an interest in drama. Tausky directs attention to her plays

in a brief Appendix. Although she wrote at least thirteen, only three were ever produced, and in Tausky's view they were not successful.

Tausky's study, as the first critical overview of Duncan, is an important contribution to Canadian studies. It must be confessed that the plot summaries become tedious. And space, after all, does not allow for an in-depth analysis of twenty-one works. Many intriguing questions remain, and, certainly, more intensive evaluation of Duncan's works is required before any definitive assessment of her place in Canadian literature can be made. Two of the questions I would like to see answered are: what sort of marriage did she have? and what was her relationship with other writers of the day? As a journalist himself, her husband would be likely to encourage her writing. She often visited Canada and England for long periods, without her husband, an arrangement which suggests a give-and-take relationship. Of contemporary writers, we know that E.M. Forster visited her in India, and that Kipling was her contemporary in writing about India. I think it likely that she knew Robert Barr in England, but Tausky makes no effort to establish a connection. In fact, he does not mention Barr's name. Yet Barr, who also grew up in southern Ontario and attended Toronto Normal School, was, at the time of Duncan's first arrival in England in 1891, a successful writer for English and American periodicals. In 1892 he was co-founder with Jerome K. Jerome of *The Idler*. Duncan's *Vernon's Aunt* (1894) was first serialized in *The Idler*, and an interview with Duncan, the only one mentioned by Tausky, appeared in *The Idler* in 1895. Earlier, in 1891, Duncan's *Two Girls in a Barge* was published, a book Tausky claims "echoes" Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*.

Generally speaking, it is the lack of relevant biographical material that I find disappointing

in this study. What insight we do get into Duncan's personality and background stems from the efforts of two earlier critics whom Tausky acknowledges, Rae Goodwin and Reginald E. Watters. Professor Watters corresponded with Sara's youngest brother, Archibald, with her niece by marriage, Mrs. Sanford Ross, and with Everard Cote's second wife. Goodwin, who acknowledges Watters as the source of biographical material in her 1964 thesis, provides a valuable resource to scholars with her catalogue of Duncan's journalism and contemporary reviews of her books.

Tausky's bibliography lacks any reference to manuscript sources. While Mrs. Sanford Ross informed Watters that she knew of no manuscripts or diaries left by Duncan, there are the letters to Watters which are cited in Goodwin's thesis and in Tausky's study, a letter to Lord Landsdowne in the Toronto Public Library, and manuscripts of twelve plays in the University of Western Ontario Library. I should like to add to this list a number of letters which Duncan wrote to Sir James Willison from Brantford, New York, Calcutta and London, England. These letters contain references to her work, to her future plans, to her husband. Another omission from the bibliography, and one which scholars will regret, is a list of Duncan's short stories published in English, American and Canadian publications. In the Willison letters, Duncan mentions writing for the well-known English women's magazine, *Queen*. Tausky does not mention this publication. Nor does he mention the *Youth's Companion*, the most widely read American periodical of its time, in which Duncan also published.

It seems to me that the key to Duncan might well be found in the contradictions within her personality. Tausky comments from time to time on this issue but never develops it. He

writes of the "mixture of daring and conservatism" in her character, and observes at one point, speaking of her journalism: "She was always conscious of being a modern woman, of being a pioneer in the struggle to evolve a new type of self-definition. Yet at the same time she had conservative instincts of loyalty to and faith in her country, and the social order. So, in discussing almost any issue, she seeks to discover what seems to her to be a sensible middle course, rejecting both the advanced position which she finds too radical, and the traditional position which she regarded as outmoded." This contradiction seems to me to have carried over into her fiction. Tausky claims that in each of the five books he judges "successful," the principal woman character "resists or at least scorns conventional behaviour without venturing into radicalism. Each . . . is superior in her imagination to her environment, and conscious of her superiority." In her fictional technique, the same dilemma between the conventional and the innovative appears to resolve itself into an enthusiasm for such writers as Henry James, yet a continuation in her own writing of the narrative tradition of late nineteenth-century fiction; that is, if Tausky is right, for he says: "I cannot feel that Sara Jeannette Duncan really understood the drift towards a modern consciousness. In some, though not all respects, she embodied it, but she was too divided in her loyalties to be able to present it effectively in her work." This is the aspect of Duncan's personality and art that most intrigues me. As I have mentioned elsewhere, I feel that many women writers reflect in their writings their own ambivalence about their role in society, and their inner conflict is often revealed through the characters they create. Alice Munro puts this dilemma well in an interview with John Metcalf (*Journal of Canadian Fiction* 1, No. 1, Fall 1972, p. 59): "There is probably a contradiction in many women writers in the woman herself Be-

tween the woman who is ambitious and the woman who is there who is also . . . well, what was called traditionally feminine, who is passive, who wants to be dominated, who wants someone between her and the world. And I know *I'm* like this. I have the two women." The question that remains with Sara Jeannette Duncan is: to what extent did she "have the two women"? to what extent, and in what ways, did this doubleness affect her writing?

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Women Pioneers: Volume Two Canada's Lost Plays. Edited by Anton Wagner. *Toronto: Canadian Theatre Review Publications, 1979, Pp. 272.*

No one examining the second volume of this series could be disappointed by its appearance among the current offerings for Canadian theatre books. Wagner has carefully reviewed the available dramatic literature to select six plays written by Canadian women: *The Fatal Ring* (1840) by Eliza Lanesford Cushing; *Laura Secord* (1876) and *The Sweet Girl Graduate* (1882) by Sarah Anne Curzon; *When George the Third Was King* (1897) by Catharine Nina Merritt; *Pasque Flower* (1939) by Gwen Pharis Ringwood; and *Teach Me How to Cry* (1955) by Patricia Joudry. With the exception of the Joudry script, these plays have been difficult to obtain and thus impossible to assign as class readings. CTR Publications should be commended for their willingness to undertake this publishing venture.

Ignoring the debate regarding the validity of Women's Literature as a distinct field of study, my question in examining *Women Pioneers* has