

**Sara Jeannette Duncan’s “Canadian Editions”:  
Imperial Authorship, Novel Innovations, and Literary Feminism  
in *Cousin Cinderella***

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**Abstract:** This article examines the publishing conditions and reception history of Sara Jeannette Duncan’s satirical novel *Cousin Cinderella: A Canadian Girl in London* (1908). It contends that Duncan’s understanding of her reading audiences, and the gendered expectations of a woman writing in the early twentieth century, allowed her to advance the novel genre in an English imperial literary market. *Cousin Cinderella* foregrounds the circulation of people and printed material and is interested in their reading and interpretation through the networked connections that empire engenders. Indeed, Duncan’s global mobility and her perspective on Canada as a rejuvenating racial and economic presence in an enlarged world led her to the type of generic experimentation discerned in *Cousin Cinderella* and to a lesser extent *The Imperialist* of 1904. In *Cousin Cinderella*, Duncan extends both novelistic romance and realism through the trope of female authorship and the novel’s allegorised character Mary Trent. Through Mary, Duncan features women in race-making and nation-making projects, where sentimental marriage functions allegorically for practical political and economic ends. And like Mary, Duncan considered herself attached to Canada, as she established success in a market dominated by male authors and metropolitan markets. This article on an understudied novel in Duncan’s oeuvre brings together a study of authorship, literary analysis, and cultural history to contextualise and elucidate Duncan’s path-breaking career.

**Contributor biography:** Bridgette Brown is a part-time professor at the University of Ottawa and Algonquin College; she lives and works on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people. Her 2019 dissertation, “The South African War (1899-1902) and the Transperipheral Production of Canadian Literature,” is a study of the ways in which settler projects of whiteness are constructed in literature, and demonstrates how these projects acted across national lines in South Africa and Canada at the end of the nineteenth century. The dissertation argues that early articulations of Canadian identity, settler colonial discourses of whiteness and gender, and ideas about national literature were informed by Canada’s participation in a conflict in a distant settler colony. Her current research project extends this transperipheral analysis, examining interactions between settler colonies in the early twentieth century, with a focus on women’s writing, teaching, and mobility.

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Sara Jeannette Duncan's literary accolades were unsurpassed by any other Canadian-born woman writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and her insights into the state of Victorian-Canadian literature remain touchstones for those studying Canadian culture and literary nationalism. Born in 1861, Duncan was raised in the small town of Brantford, Ontario and spent formative years working first as a journalist for the *Washington Post* (1877- ), *The Montreal Daily Star* (1869-1979), Goldwin Smith's *The Week* (1883-96), and the *Toronto Globe* (1844- ), after which she branched into novel writing, publishing 22 titles in her lifetime. Her path-breaking career advanced the opportunities available to women with literary aspirations at a time when fiction writing was not a viable career path for most. As Marjory Lang has argued, many women writers in this period espoused literary ambitions, but most were unsuccessful in this pursuit because of financial reasons; those who could find regular, paying work in the periodical and newspaper press found that journalism's demands "devoured creativity and channelled output towards the easily digestible piece which would be soon forgotten" (86). For many women, journalism and novel writing were "ultimately incompatible" (Lang 88). Duncan, however, bucked this trend and succeeded also as a polemicist, literary critic, and playwright. Her contributions to pioneering the realist novel remain the focus of sustained recuperative and scholarly criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Duncan's esteemed place in the Canadian literary canon reveals the problematics of defining a writer in terms of nationality. Although she maintained a fondness for her country of birth, Duncan spent much of her writing life outside of North America and many of her novels make no reference to the nascent Canadian nation. Indeed, Duncan worked in places as far afield from one another as Washington, Japan, Ceylon, London, Calcutta, Simla, and Delhi. Her global mobility often mimicked the international print circuits her English texts inhabited, and while her publishers were frequently located in London and New York, Duncan spent most of her writing life at a great distance from these centres. Her experience living and writing throughout the British Empire influenced her work, as many novels attend to cross-cultural interactions; wry commentary on the social differences of English colonials in imperial outposts is her literary hallmark. Yet, Duncan considered herself attached to Canada. In a letter to Archibald MacMechan, dated 4 May 1905, she wrote, "The Empire is a big place and interesting everywhere, but ours is by far the best part of it" (quoted in Tausky, *Sara Jeannette Duncan* 3). Consequently, Cecily Devereux considers her to be a "critical problem in Canada and outside of it because she is an imperial writer," and yet, she is "not studied much outside of Canada" (52).

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan's work continues to be canonised in anthologies such as *Canadian Literature in English: Texts and Contexts, Volume 1* (2008) and *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature, Concise Edition* (2019). *The Imperialist* (1904) receives sustained critical attention and scholarly editions of many of Duncan's other novels are readily available. Tecumseh Press of Ottawa, Ontario, publishers of the "Canadian Critical Edition" series, released a 2018 edition of *A Social Departure: How Orthodocia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves* (1890). Tecumseh Press has published a total of five of Duncan's novels as critical editions and Broadview Press of Peterborough, Ontario has four critical titles available.

This article critiques an understudied novel in Duncan's oeuvre to reveal how she advanced the novel genre in an English imperial literary market specifically because she had an astute knowledge of her reading audiences, as well as an awareness of the gendered expectations of a woman writing in the early twentieth century. Nowhere are these issues more clearly fictionalised than in her satirical novel *Cousin Cinderella: A Canadian Girl in London* (1908), which dramatises the sidelined and often overlooked experiences of a Canadian author writing for a readership and market dominated by English and American metropolitan centres. This article examines the novel's publishing conditions and reception history to reveal how Duncan extends both novelistic romance and realism through the trope of female authorship and her allegorised character Mary Trent. *Cousin Cinderella* foregrounds the circulation of people and printed material and is interested in the reading and interpretation of this circulation through the networked connections that empire engenders.<sup>2</sup>

Duncan was already a popular novelist when she wrote *Cousin Cinderella*,<sup>3</sup> and the novel depicts colonial variations of the English language and imperial publishing conditions. Mary and Graham Trent, the novel's brother-and-sister protagonists, allegorically represent themes of reading, circulation, and interpretation—of both Canadians and texts—who leave fictional Minnebiac, Ontario to live in Kensington, London and who show the “curious” that “this continent grows something besides Americans” (11). The novel is narrated by Mary who authors a “journal-novel” through whom Duncan assesses the “relative merits of Canadian freedom and British traditions, and brings into focus her heroine's self-realization as a narrator with a specifically Canadian point of view” (Hammill 78, xiv). In *Cousin Cinderella*, Mary's Canadian perspective reveals British misconceptions of colonial life to highlight metropolitan decay against which she and her brother Graham embody “the thinking qualities of health, energy and self-reliance” (Snaith 56) required to regenerate the empire.

Much of the humour in *Cousin Cinderella* revolves around witty exchanges that arise when British, American, and Canadian characters encounter one another and Mary is attentive to specifics about fashion, social manners, and domestic arrangements, which form the heart of the novel's realism. Clara Thomas describes *Cousin Cinderella* as a “comedy of manners,” where Duncan's ironic social commentary “both covertly and overtly” uses “pure humour, and occasionally ... broad farce” (par. 3) to satirise London's elite social life. When

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<sup>2</sup> Readers interested in allegories of trans-Atlantic trade relations may wish to consult Mary Poovey's *Genres of the Credit Economy* (2008) and Lauren Goodlad's *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic* (2015). My argument is indebted to Goodlad's call for “renewed attention to literary form,” as she identifies the “range and intensity of Victorian fiction's aesthetic engagement with global encounters” that “prize open the category of realism” (11).

<sup>3</sup> Eli MacLaren argues that early pirated copies of Duncan's first two novels, *A Social Departure: How Orthodoxy and I Went Round the World by Ourselves* (1890) and *An American Girl in London* (1891), published under her maiden name in cheap, easily accessible editions, established her fame because the texts were readily available to a wide reading public in the United States.

learning about the mercurial Mrs. Jerome Jarvis, a socialite frequently featured in London's and New York's society news, Mary's narrative voice snidely remarks that she is "widely renowned for no apparent reason," and is "prominent in all sorts of ways, but chiefly as a character; novelists were supposed constantly to put her in" (Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella* 53). Literally the stuff of fiction, Mrs. Jarvis slips between the pages of Duncan's novel, Mary's journal, and the society page. In stark contrast to the way Mrs. Jarvis is caricatured, Mary on the other hand writes with a self-consciousness the novel's other female characters and her brother Graham lack, to inspect and describe the differences between English-speakers, reaffirming some, while correcting many national and gendered stereotypes. Mary's perspective thus articulates Duncan's sustained interest in cross-cultural interactions, which she previously explored in *An American Girl in London* (1891), *A Daughter of Today* (1894), *A Voyage of Consolation* (1898), and *Those Delightful Americans* (1902). In addition, *Cousin Cinderella* contains astute commentary on England's crumbling aristocracy. Lady Barbara and Lord Peter Doleford, the English siblings who will inherit the ruins of their mortgaged Pavisay estate, represent a Britain whose future depends upon imperial marriage to youthful colonial "cousins" like the Trents and their New World money created by their father, the "Hon. Mr. John Trent" and his lucrative lumber industry in Ontario (Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella* 1).

Duncan's attention to gender and nation reflects end-of-century literary trends. Misao Dean argues that *Cousin Cinderella* is one of Duncan's "most conspicuously [Henry] 'Jamesian' novels" ("Note" 96), which emulates the late Victorian "technique of creating characters according to national stereotypes" (Introduction xi).<sup>4</sup> As the novel unfolds, Mary grows in confidence, independence, and authorial voice, and she advances Duncan's project of situating women at the heart of colonial and imperial affairs, which she initiated in the character of Advena Murchison in *The Imperialist* (1904). Anna Snaith reads *The Imperialist* and *Cousin Cinderella* together to argue that the novels share thematic commonalities, as the imperial policy debate on tariff reform predominates in both works.<sup>5</sup> In *Cousin Cinderella*, in particular, Duncan explores how the "economic and political workings of imperialism affect women and the private sphere of personal relations" (Snaith 91). By placing her Canadian characters in London, in *Cousin Cinderella* Duncan demonstrates she is "an important writer of the metropolis, exploring the ways in which the colonial woman is constructed by imperial Edwardian London, but also writing against an empire in which both Canada and women have a subservient role" (Snaith 109). The novel also revives the imperial debate on tariff

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<sup>4</sup> Dean notes how Mary's family name, "Trent," alludes to a major river system, and so indigenises the Trent family—they are of Canada itself. The name "Trent" is like the family name "Hudson" in Henry James's *Roderick Hudson* (Dean, Introduction xii).

<sup>5</sup> The Tariff Reform debate arose in 1903 as a response to debt recovery amassed through the South African War (1899-1902), which had cost England substantially more than expected, over £200 million, and significantly increased national debt. The debate over imperial preferential trade (as opposed to free trade) was a direct response to the War's financial pressures (some called it a fiscal crisis) on the British economy.

reform evoked in Duncan's other "Canadian novel," *The Imperialist*, to question the values and merits of reciprocity and transatlantic trade. In *Cousin Cinderella*, however, the context shifts from the agricultural and early industrial setting of fictional Elgin (in Canada) that displays Duncan's innovations in regional realism, to become an inspection of national character, city life, and flat dwelling in London, a theme which interested Duncan and is also depicted in *Two in a Flat* (1908).

*Cousin Cinderella* first appeared serially (under Duncan's married name of Mrs. Everard Cotes) in *The Queen* (1861-1958) starting in January 1908. That same year, the novel was published by Macmillan in New York, with that American edition being the one that circulated in the Canadian market. It was also published by Methuen in London (Dean, Introduction xxi); thus, through magazine and book publication, Duncan was able to ensure publicity and higher revenues for her work and doubled the earnings she received (Dean, "Researching" 183). There are notable differences between the two editions of the novel. Dean suggests that the London edition's differences may be "interpreted as toning down Canadian criticisms of the British" (Introduction xxii), with a regional adjustment made to the New York edition, so that "Mary's analysis of Graham's motives in enlisting in the Boer War, which might suggest Graham's loyalty and imply a criticism of American attitudes toward the Boers, was deleted" (Dean, Introduction xxi-xxii). These editorial differences are suggestive of the social and political attitudes Duncan ascribed to readers in the various English-speaking book markets.

In fact, *Cousin Cinderella* makes such editorial revisions and colonial variants a theme, which are transposed onto Graham and Mary Trent, whose Canadian idiosyncrasies are "read" and "interpreted" by other English and American characters (8). The witty frontispiece in the 1908 Macmillan edition is a black-and-white sketch of Graham and Mary in an outdoor, Canadian scene, wearing winter furs (with a figure snowshoeing in the background) entitled: "A pair of colonial editions."<sup>6</sup> This caption is one of John Trent's phrases for describing his "offspring" whom he sends "as samples" (like the pieces of wood upon which his lumber empire was founded) to England, "to show forth his country for him" (10). This wry commentary makes clear that Mary and Graham are representative *versions* of the Canadian character and that Mary can be read through the pun on the word "edition" as a figuring of the trials female writers and their works faced in gaining credibility in metropolitan centres. The frontispiece thus positions Mary and Graham as stripped-down versions of more ostentatious imperial editions, foregrounds their circulation in an imperial English market economy, and emphasises the narrative construction of national, gendered identities. Duncan's novel thematically stages the authorial editorial practices she undertook

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<sup>6</sup> "Colonial editions" were often less embellished and consequently cheaper than London editions. *Cousin Cinderella* also ironically critiques Rudyard Kipling for depicting Canada as "Our Lady of the Snows" (95) and the frontispiece embellishes this wintry stereotype.

to prepare versions of her work for publication and her awareness of the differing reading tastes and national sympathies in the English-speaking markets of the empire.

In addition to textual differences between the New York and London editions, there were alterations made to the title. First editions were published as *Cinderella of Canada*, which Macmillan's editor George Platt Brett opposed because "novel readers here [in America] ... will consider it as a sort of fairy story in which they are not at all interested ... and it won't, either, help the sale of the book in Canada, as the readers will ... be offended by the title and be inclined to resent it" (Watt quoted in Dean, "Researching" 184; Hammill 73). Faye Hammill explains that the title could have evoked offense if read literally, since Canada is equated to a poor humble relation of Britain (the Cinderella figure who seeks legitimation through marriage). Yet, when interpreted ironically, it is the "British characters [who] eagerly court the Canadian fortunes" (Hammill 73). Dean argues that the title changes reveal Duncan's penchant for making last-minute alterations to her novels; however, in this instance, the title edits have relevance to the novel's interpretation because suggested alternatives that Duncan provided included "The Maple Prince" and "Two from Arcady," both of which reveal that she intended to invoke the fairy tale trope and the notion of Canada as a mythical and idealised space ("Researching" 186).<sup>7</sup> The title is explained in the British version (but was eliminated in the American edition): "As to you, Mary,' and Evelyn looked me up and down, 'you're like something out of a fairy tale, with your humble airs.' 'Cinderella,' suggested Graham, and they both considered me with more humour than I thought I deserved" (quoted in Dean, Introduction xxii). The interpretations of the novel's title and the fairy tale romance is repeated in the novel and many of Mary's witty remarks suggest that humility distinguishes Canadians from Americans. "Of course you're not American" (75), retorts the American Evelyn Dicey, on one of the many occasions when the Trents are mistaken to be Americans, and when their father is referred to as a Member of Congress, Graham wittily replies: "American titles are great. They carry no responsibility" (93).

Unlike her earlier works, *Cousin Cinderella* was not a spectacular financial or commercial success; yet, scholars like Thomas E. Tausky hold it alongside *The Imperialist* as "among the enduring classics of Canadian fiction" ("Sara Jeannette Duncan" 104). When first published, Canadian reviewers found *Cousin Cinderella* to be a disappointing work from one whom they considered to be an established author. While one commentator in the *Canadian Courier* (1906-1918) held that the latest of "Mrs. Cotes' vivacious stories" contained some "interesting insights into Canadian character" ("Fiction" 14), an earlier commentator

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<sup>7</sup> Macmillan also won another battle. The American firm refused to make the changes and corrections Duncan wanted so that the book would be uniform with the British edition. Correspondence makes it clear that the British edition incorporates later revisions and has authorial sanction, a surprising discovery since the changes in the British edition significantly mute the witty and challenging criticisms of the British, which make the book so appealing (Dean, "Researching" 185).

described the novel as a “disappointment” and its characters “half-baked specimens of colonial crudity” (“Literary Notes” 18). Neither did the *Canadian Magazine* (1893-1914) consider it a strong work from a “Canadian writer,” critiquing the Trents as “rather too egotistical to be typical Canadians” and the “love affairs” to be like “lukewarm weak tea” (“Canadian Girl” 89). While reviewers were quick to claim the imperial Mrs. Cotes as a Canadian author, *Cousin Cinderella* frustrated them because of the novel’s allegorical representations of national types and the perceived weak romance. The interpretative struggle results, in part, from Mary’s narrative voice, which is often tentative and naïve. This uncertainty should not be read as a stylistic weakness, however; it is a structuring principle that depicts the voice of a female writer who attempts to find her literary voice at the same time as she negotiates her way in the world. This hesitancy also registers the insecurities women felt when writing about political issues. While Mary’s narrative style may have irked reviewers, it reveals Duncan’s literary strategy of depicting the conditions of female authorship and her own struggles as a writer who commented on politics and economics—field dominated traditionally by men.

Attempting to rigidly categorise the novel’s genre undermines how it captures the ambivalence and uncertainty of the generic debates of the late Victorian and early Edwardian period. The novel is perhaps best thought of as a hybrid genre that makes many realist innovations, while not entirely discarding traditional patterns of romance. Duncan’s realist descriptions attend to factual representations of custom and linguistic dialects, to regional description, and to the norms of London life, while the conventions of romance become the plot device that resolves Graham and Mary Trent’s futures and allegorises the theme of national and imperial relations. Duncan was acutely aware of these competing tensions and argued vigorously for advancing both genres. As early as 1887, in her January 13 “Saunterings” column for *The Week*, she vilified the (male) writers (she calls them the “novel writing fraternity”) who advocated for realism, and would “put to the edge of the sword every wretched romanticist who presumes to admire the exotic or the ideal” (111). Duncan defines realism as “the everlasting glorification of the commonplace” (“Saunterings” 111), which in *Cousin Cinderella* results in commentary about day-to-day life in Kensington, customs, and regional dialects because “Language in England is a great joy” (*Cousin Cinderella* 38). Rather than favouring one genre over the other, Duncan argues that fiction “is bound to present itself in more diverse forms than any other—constantly to find new ones, constantly to recur to old ones” (“Saunterings” 111). Suggesting that writers could borrow from multiple genres, Duncan maintained that fiction could not entirely discard traditional formal conventions such as the romance, a genre in which the interpersonal relations between characters, in this case, allegorically stand in for ideological perspectives within empire.

Critics have seized on these competing tensions in Duncan's writing. Carole Gerson reveals that Duncan wrote that "life should be represented as it is and not as it should be," not to "change the novel, so much as to expand it" (59-60). Colin Hill reads Duncan's earlier novel, *The Imperialist*, as an example of early "traditional realism in Canadian fiction" (21) since its pre-1920s aesthetic gestures toward the later modern realists (35), and Glenn Willmott takes Duncan to be the "original writer" of a form that continues to "insist upon an element of idealism, and its language of romance, in modern realist fiction" (22-23). Romance registered a "historicized wish" for an insular past that no longer existed, and Willmott insists that while romance was reinvented, writers turned literary realism "inside out" using a "self-ironicizing realism" (23, 5) to register the conditions of a globally connected world and technological advancement occurring in the early twentieth century.

The novel is framed with an inspection of gender roles in a familial and authorial context and it is in relation to Graham and John that Mary presents herself in order to authorise her adventure to London. "I will first introduce our father, as seems suitable" (1) she tells her reader, before describing Mr. Trent's economic and political credentials. These familial bonds serve as a paradigm for imperial relations, as Mary situates herself in relation to her patriarch, who financially and metaphorically authorises her travels and her narrative. Yet, the paternal line is challenged when it is Mary, and not Graham, who solidifies the imperial connection through marriage. While the introductory chapter features Graham's education and military experience, *Cousin Cinderella* is not a *bildungsroman* like *The Imperialist*, as it is not concerned with Graham's development from childhood into manhood, but selectively offers background information to illuminate his character. The romance of a colony's material potential is alluded to in the novel's title and Duncan's suggested alternative titles of the "Maple Prince" or the "Cinderella of Canada" signal to the reader that the romance sub-genre of "fairy tale," and the theme of national character, are inextricably bound to the novel's interpretation. These generic characteristics are made apparent in the first chapter, wherein Mary Trent twice refers to the "fairy tale" (8) of her father's commercial success. Mary says that John Trent was reluctant to travel "across the Atlantic" to show "what he himself had arrived at by believing in the fairy tale" (8). John Trent's humble birth in Yorkshire, followed by a move to Canada, where he became a wealthy lumber baron, is emblematic of the opportunity the settler colonies represented, and Mr. Trent embodies the idea of the self-made man. Indeed, when Mary asserts that Mr. Trent "simply created Minnebiac" because he "made lumber pay from the very beginning" (1), she reduces the history of collective labour, Indigenous displacement, and land clearing behind his business success. The "fairy tale" in Canada resides upon the myth that any settler man (and this opportunity is gendered as masculine) through hard work can mythically "create" prosperity from the colony's raw materials and settlement, which drastically rewrites England's aristocratic inheritance that exists because of feudal land holding and birthright.

One of the novel's central preoccupations is how Graham comes to discern where his cultural and fiscal loyalties lie, which serves as an allegory of national emergence. Significantly, Duncan ironically deploys the romance structure upon which to depict her male protagonist's options, but when his engagement to Barbara fails, and the British-Canadian imperial romance is left hanging in the balance, it is Mary who usurps his place as romantic hero(ine) and unexpectedly announces her marriage in the novel's culminating pages. This feminist reversal sees the romance ironically fulfilled as a symbolic and literal marriage of two worlds, centred on the sidelined female narrator-character. If Mary is to be read as a reimagined Cinderella figure who continues the fairy tale in which her father believed, she is not the helpless heroine of romance. Allegorically, Mary as Cinderella is poised to broker future political and economic cooperation between Britain and Canada; it is through her that anachronistic and patriarchal ties of imperialism are dismissed, by which Britain's centripetal place in empire is displaced. Duncan envisages Mary's birthright signalling a new female-directed era in Canada's future, wherein self-authorship is an essential component of self-determination, while Graham's place is diminished.

Ultimately, *Cousin Cinderella's* major generic innovation is in this surprising marriage conclusion to a novel that has foregrounded Graham's romantic attachments. Duncan rejects the polarisation of politics and love with a practical resolution that blends the conventions of romance and realism to celebrate and centre the overlooked "Cinderella" of Canada. Yet, nowhere is marriage proposed or love named, and the conversation Mary describes relies on metaphor to convey her engagement announcement to England suggesting close familial ties because Mary (and Canada) "are our own people" (361). Peter comments saying, however, "We can't marry you on that principle" (361). The "principle" of marriages based on either paternal ownership or economic dependence are reiterated when in his allusive marriage proposal, Peter describes how Mary "belongs" to "us," and he cannot see the marriage as a solution to the economic issue of "tariff-reform" (361). By invoking the topics of imperial trading relations, Peter references the primacy of the "contingent event" over the "cosmogenetic world" of ideal love, which Willmott argues is a way in which the romance is reconfigured because it becomes the formal vehicle to register the intrusion of external events into the logic of the social space of daily life (5). Instead, Mary and Peter suggest that the "ties of sentiment" are the "only wisdom" for their union and the narrator offers that in "dealing with the colonies the heart is supposed to have more of a chance" (362). Mutual affection and choice are portrayed as the "wisdom" and basis of a marriage partnership, ironically reflecting on the notion that freely chosen love is akin to trade between equal partners. Consequently, by fulfilling the foundational vehicle of the romance, Mary provides a comic ending, evolves as the author of her narrative, and supersedes Graham in the novel.

*Cousin Cinderella's* reimagined romance foregrounds the maternal feminist argument that women exude much power in marriage and Mary saves the crumbling fortunes of an English Pavisay dynasty, but without the loss of her independence, voice, and initiative. For Duncan, these ties are far from private; they bear political and imperial weight and allow women to be active actors in their affairs. Mary diminishes her feelings and under-narrates her personal romance to reveal her sidelined experience in empire; Duncan revolutionises this marginalisation and construes marriage as strongly political because Mary chooses what is ideologically necessary for Canadian settler nationalism. Her marriage underlines the political message that Duncan gestures to in *The Imperialist*, but which is more fully realised in *Cousin Cinderella*—that the political and the sentimental are closely related and that women are significant though often overlooked characters.

Even while she worked from various points in empire, Duncan considered herself attached to Canada and established success in a market dominated by male authors and metropolitan markets. Her perspective on Canada as a rejuvenating racial and economic presence in an enlarged world led her to the type of generic experimentation seen in *The Imperialist* and in *Cousin Cinderella*. In both novels, romance is the formal, though merely foundational, vehicle through which to convey the intrusions of external events into Canadian experience. When *Cousin Cinderella* announces Mary and Peter's marriage, the narrator exclaims: "And then the sun rose" (362). The "sun," a metaphor for the benevolent reaches of the British Empire, rises on a new dawn that shines on the Canadian-British marriage, shifting the centre of this union away from the metropole to the periphery in Canada. Duncan intertwines New Woman agency and maternal feminist agendas to centre women at the heart of imperial projects. Through Mary Trent, she rewrites the romance to feature women in race-making and nation-making projects, where sentimental marriage functions allegorically for practical political and economic ends.

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