IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE IN THE IMPERIALIST

IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE IN THE IMPERIALIST BY SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN

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ABSTRACT

The Imperialist is a novel that studies both personal and national destiny. Sara Jeannette Duncan unifies her study of the destinies of her characters, and of England and Canada by employing a series of images that relate to both character and nation, and by means of a symbolic structure that also allows the reader to identify the fate of specific characters with Canadian or British national identity. The techniques used by Duncan in achieving this unity of imagery and structure amply reward critical attention.

Chapter One ("Interrelated Plots") deals with the career of Lorne Murchison, and the romance between Advena Murchison and Hugh Finlay. Chapter Two ("Interrelated Imagery") examines Duncan's organisation of subsidiary themes in the novel. In Chapter Three ("Interrelated Politics") the concept of imperialism, as perceived in The Imperialist, is discussed in terms of Duncan's imagery.

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER I

INTERRELATED PLOTS

Sara Jeannette Duncan, in writing The Imperialist, has constructed a novel concerned with the unexpected reverses of the hero. The main character in the novel is Lorne Murchison, a young man apparently on the threshold of great success. He is intelligent, virtuous, and hard-working; the circumstances of his birth and surroundings seem most propitious. Lorne's father is wealthy enough to send him to law school and the Murchisons are one of the more prestigious families in Elgin, a growing manufacturing city in southwestern Ontario. Lorne is also regarded as a bright prospect by local Liberals from the beginning, and his future in Elgin seems assured, either as a young lawyer, or as a young politician.

Such expectations seem, moreover, to be eminently justified. As a prospective politician, Lorne Murchison is fortunate to live in Elgin, for "South Fox, as people said, was not a healthy locality for Conservatives" (55).*

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*All references to The Imperialist are from the New Canadian Library edition, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971. Parenthetic numerals indicate page numbers.

As a lawyer, Lorne joins a local firm, and is a sensational success winning his first major case. He is only able to take the case, however, because the senior member of the firm, Fulke, is suddenly stricken with lumbago. Later in the narrative, Lorne is similarly able to receive the Liberal nomination in a by-election, because two other prospective candidates are, temporarily, embarrassing choices to the party establishment. Not only is Lorne Murchison hardworking, therefore, but his career also appears to be lifted at crucial junctures by "tremendous luck" (173). Yet the result of this combination of individual talent and fortunate opportunity underlines how ironic Lorne's career turns out to be. He works hard and honestly as a politician and lawyer, and fails to succeed in Elgin. The Imperialist concludes with Lorne leaving Elgin for Toronto, not as the successful politician he was generally expected to be, but as a partner in Henry Cruickshank's law firm.

Certainly, by the standards of Elgin society, Lorne Murchison is, if not an abject failure like "morose Jim Webster" (75), someone who has failed to make the most of his advantages.[1] Lorne does not even "get the girl". As a matter of fact, he loses her to a vacuous Englishman whose abilities and character he misjudges. Losing Dora Milburn to Alfred Hesketh may be something of a blessing in

disguise, but it should be remembered that it is Lorne who lauds Hesketh to Dora prior to their introduction. Similarly, Lorne is not actually defeated in the by-election. Instead, he reduces the safe Liberal majority to a bare seventy, because he campaigns with excessive zeal on the controversial issue of imperial preference. When irregularities in the voting are discovered, Lorne is forced to withdraw as the Liberal candidate in the re-election, since the party regulars realise that his commitment to imperialism will cost the party the riding of South Fox. The combined effect of these public and personal disappointments brings Murchison to the verge of nervous collapse, and he repairs to Florida to recuperate. Given the advantages and abilities that Lorne had, such a performance is all the more disappointing. The ironic frustrations of his career, and his ultimate separation from the containment and self-fascination of Elgin society are what concern us here.

Lorne's romance with Dora Milburn is, unfortunately, best summarised by his wishful thinking as to Octavius Milburn's motivation in holding the front gate open:

> Alas! the significance that lovers find! Lorne read a world in the behaviour of Dora's father in holding the gate open. He saw political principal put aside in his favour, and social position forgotten in kindness to him. He saw the gravest, sincerest appreciation of his recent success, which he took as humbly as a dog will take a bone; he read a fatherly thought at which his pulses bounded

> in an arrogance of triumph, and his heart rose to ask its trust. And Octavius Milburn had held the gate open because it was more convenient to hold it open than to leave it open. (94-95)

Duncan has placed several notions at work here. Lorne is aware that, in courting Dora, he is challenging her father's intensely Conservative politics, and her mother's snobbish sense of social position. He does not, however, see himself as seriously attempting to alter the Milburn's rigid sense of class. Octavius Milburn is a notorious opponent of the Imperial Idea, and yet Lorne assumes that his love for Dora will somehow compensate for Milburn's opposition to the great motivating force of his life. This hopeful assumption proves to be naive optimism, and Milburn becomes a bitter political foe of Lorne Murchison in the by-election. At the time of the significant gate-opening, Lorne is about to leave for England with Cruickshank's delegation. One might feel that such optimism is justified in light of his appointment by Cruickshank and his recent success in court. But, if this is so, why is Lorne's attitude to Milburn one of such servility? Why does Lorne accept the convenience on Milburn's part "as humbly as a dog will take a bone"? His sense of pride in his abilities crumbles in conflict with the social prestige of the Milburns. As an aspect of character of someone apparently interested in radical and new ideas, this is a damaging revelation. The love Lorne

feels for Dora has coloured his perception of even such a blunt man as Octavius Milburn.

After noting this passage as an instance of Lorne's romantic tendency to colour situations, one may better appreciate Duncan's ironic handling of Dora's character. The circumstances are important. Cruickshank has been so impressed by Murchison's conduct at the trial, that he has asked Lorne to participate as secretary on a trade mission to England. Lorne, as an imperialist, is tremendously excited by the prospect of seeing England, and of hearing Wallingham, the English leader of the movement. Dora will apparently miss him:

> "You know," said Dora, "I hate your going Lorne!"
> She did indeed seem moved, about the mouth to discontent. There was some little injury in the way she swung her foot.
> "I was hoping Mr. Fulke wouldn't get better in time; I was truly!"
> The gratitude in young Murchison's eyes should have been dear to her. I don't known whether she saw it; but she must have been aware that she was saying what touched him, making her point.
> "Oh, it's a good thing to go, Dora."
> "A good thing for you! And the regatta coming off the first week in June, and a whole crowd coming from Toronto for it. There isn't another person in town I care to canoe with, Lorne, you know perfectly well!"
> "I'm awfully sorry!" said Lorne, "I wish --"
> "Oh, I'm going, I believe. . . ." (97-98)

One does wonder what it is that Lorne sees in Dora. She may be beautiful and socially graceful, but Duncan's presentation of the conversation provides some quite devastating insights. Dora is moved "about the mouth", not the heart, or

mind. Lorne's gratitude for her socially pleasant, emotionally vapid remarks may have been noticed or it may not. The passage indicates Dora's concern with the superficial and social (the regatta), and not with the fact that Lorne is going to miss Dora for other reasons. Duncan has revealed the superficial aspects of Dora to the reader, while at the same time indicating that Lorne is too infatuated to notice.

Not only is Dora committed to the superficial, social world of the regatta; later in the same conversation she shows little interest in Lorne's theories about England. Dora can not (or will not) accept Lorne as much more than a handsome canoeing-mate, refusing, as she does, to adjust to his intellectual/emotional preoccupation. When Lorne does start to discuss the imperial idea with her, she quickly and determinedly steers the topic back to the social life of Elgin. The novelist's intention is to condemn Dora for this intellectual shallowness, and to express reservations about her worth.

A study of Lorne and Dora at this early stage of The Imperialist underlines an important aspect of their relationship. Lorne's career is clearly ascendant before he embarks for England. The implication of all his potential and performance is clear, too. If Dora does not

love Lorne now, she probably never will. As someone fascinated by social class and position, Dora is not content with Elgin's most promising young man. What Dora does want, of course, is someone with "noble" connections: someone like Alfred Hesketh, who is thoroughly acceptable in a Milburn family circle "touchingly devoted to far-away England" (211). Lorne Murchison unwittingly obliges this desire by later influencing Hesketh to emigrate. This action may be seen as the first unlucky event in Lorne's adult life, and as the beginning of the change of circumstance and fortune that leads to his failure in Elgin.

Lorne doesn't look on his encounter with Hesketh in London as unlucky. He is, in fact, grateful to meet a young Englishman whose interests are seemingly identical to his own, and is naturally eager to discuss "the idea" with Hesketh. However, the considerable differences between Murchison and Hesketh are marked by Duncan almost from the start of their friendship:

> Hesketh's open mind gradually became filled with the imperial view as he had the capacity to take it; and we need not be surprised if Lorne Murchison, gazing in the same direction, supposed that they saw the same thing.
>
> Hesketh confessed, declared, that Murchison had brought him round; and Lorne surveyed this achievement with a thrill of the happiest triumph. Hesketh stood, to him, a product of that best which he was so occupied in admiring and pursuing. Perhaps he more properly represented

> the second best; but we must allow something for the confusion of early impressions. (121-122)

In this passage, Duncan surprises the reader by assuring us that "we need not be surprised" by Lorne's rather complacent assumptions with regard to Hesketh's imperial view. "The confusion of early impressions" continues to obscure Hesketh's nature from Lorne, and it is only after Hesketh's near-disastrous speech in Jordanville that Lorne realizes how different they really are. As his love for Dora made Lorne too hopeful about Mr. Milburn, so his love for the imperial idea makes him too idealistic about Alfred Hesketh. Lorne Murchison is again revealed as a person who allows his passionately-held tenets to blind him to serious difficulties and contradictions.

A political commentator could use that preceding statement as a polite but explicit analysis of the reason for Murchison's Pyrrhic victory in the South Fox by-election. A chronology of the campaign is quite straightforward: articles written by Lorne for the local Liberal paper attract considerable attention; Farquharson, the Liberal member for South Fox, is forced to retire because of ill-health; two leading Liberals are unable to contest the nomination for reasons of ethics and policy; and Cruickshank quietly suggests that Lorne Murchison be considered. Lorne is chosen, and his Conservative opponent is Elgin's perennial also-ran, Walter Winter. Alfred Hesketh thinks it will be

a "'tremendous lark'" (174) to help Lorne and the imperialist cause. His contribution is limited to one obnoxious speech to a rural meeting, and he is not encouraged to help Lorne after this point. At the climactic meeting of the campaign Murchison, although warned against it by his advisors, speaks with unguarded enthusiasm on the necessity for imperial preference. Lorne effectively throws away his last chance to abandon the issue and run merely as a promising young Liberal, not as an imperialist. The town of Elgin produces a margin of three hundred votes for Winter, but Murchison wins the riding by seventy on the strength of the rural vote. It is apparent, however, that Squire Ormiston, whose son had been successfully defended in the famous court case, has pressured the natives at the nearby Moneida reserve into voting Liberal. This undue use of influence, in addition to other irregularities, means that a re-election must be held. Significant, also, is the fact that the local Liberals bundle Lorne out into the countryside with Ormiston on election day, because his imperialist views have become as potentially embarrassing as those of Hesketh.

Such an account leaves aside the clever anti-imperialist arguments of Walter Winter, and the fearful bitterness of manufacturers like Milburn. It does isolate the reason for the narrow Liberal victory being so charged

with the aura of a personal defeat -- that is of Lorne Murchison's imperial obsession. Small-minded as it may be on the part of the Elgin electorate to reject the imperial beliefs as articulated by Murchison, Duncan also makes evident that Lorne perceives imperialism as a "jihad" (227). Lorne sees himself as fighting a holy war to preserve the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race. He says so to Hesketh in a manner that forecasts the violence of his obsession: "'It depends on what you call pessimism,' Lorne rejoined. 'I see England down the future the heart of the Empire, the conscience of the world, and the Mecca of the race'" (124). The seeds of self-righteous religious fury inherent in this belief flower in the final campaign speech given by Lorne Murchison. The speech is politically naive, ignoring as it does Quebec, immigration to the West, and the complex relationship between Canada and the United States. Lorne also completely misconstrues the motivation for the American Revolution. Early in the speech, Murchison warns against American economic exploitation in a reasonable and far-sighted manner. This discussion, of what Duncan refers to elsewhere in The Imperialist as "the adaptability of Canadian feet to American shoes" (128), is one that is meaningful in the context of a South Fox by-election, and continues to resonate with meaning today. Otherwise, the speech is irrelevant to the local concerns of the audience,

and they respond enthusiastically because "something from him infected them; they applauded being made to feel like that" (229), and not because they are swayed by his arguments for imperialism.

A similar case of Murchison's enthusiasm separating him from more cautious colleagues occurs as his Liberal advisors attempt to moderate his commitment to imperialism. Bingham finally urges:

> "Jolly them up with it at your meetings by all means," advised Bingham, "but use it as a kind of superfluous taffy; don't make it your main lay-out." (224)

The imperial idea is an educative force to Lorne, and to be requested to treat it so lightly must be deeply insulting and discouraging. Such practical men as Bingham and Horace Williams who oppose the emotional and idealistic type of imperialism favoured by Lorne are far more attuned to the mercenary arguments of their nominal opponent, Octavius Milburn: "'The Empire looks nice on a map, but when it comes to practical politics their bread and butter's in the home industries,'" (166). Lorne unwittingly makes this connection when he begins to use the euphemism "practical politicians" as a way of expressing his disapproval of Bingham and Williams.

Even the deputation to England is composed of the same type of people as Milburn and Bingham. The delegates

are more sophisticated and adventuresome, supposedly men with a somewhat wider sense of things. Bates is in dry goods, Poulton in railways, McGill in shipping, and, of Cameron, Duncan comments laconically that "he turned out in Toronto a very good class of suitcase" (115). Even Henry Cruickshank is identified as having basically the same narrow, economically selfish interests as the others, and the manner in which Duncan ticks these interests off, concluding the itemisation with the "very good" suitcases serves as a sharp deflation of their business achievements. Is it any wonder that "only Lorne Murchison among them looked higher and further; only he was alive to the inrush of the essential; he only lifted up his heart" (117)? After all, only Lorne Murchison among the deputation has no business interests to compromise his political vision. Underlying the sense of Lorne's isolation is a critique of the bourgeois society of Elgin and Canada: it stifles individual creative effort, and finally forces Lorne into extremism in an effort to state his case. Read from this perspective, The Imperialist is a savage attack, couched in charming language, on the philistines of English-Canada, who are depicted as paying lip service to their British heritage, while pursuing American economic gain.

A literary rather than social or political analysis

indicates that Lorne's failure to combine politics and imperialism is forecast, in ironic terms, in the opening chapter of The Imperialist. Lorne appears as a young boy in this chapter, which introduces in a light and carefree disguise various thematic material which will afterwards become much more serious. The occasion is the Queen's Birthday, and the twenty-fourth of May holiday lightly sounds the imperial connection. "The social distinctions of Elgin" (14) appear as the townspeople consider joining the factory-workers on their special-rate holiday excursion to the Falls, "a question usually decided in the negative" (14). Elgin's twin interests, politics and religion, are delightfully evoked in the story of Dr. Drummond christening the younger Murchison sons as Oliver Mowat and Alexander Mackenzie. And there is Lorne. The key passage in his regard concerns Mother Beggarlegs. She is a strange old woman who sells gingerbread in the market-place, and is the object of scorn and ridicule (from a safe distance -- an instance typical of Elgin caution):

> Lorne Murchison, when he was quite a little boy, was affected by this and by the unfairness of the way it singled her out. [another theme?] Moved partly by the oppression of the feeling and partly by a desire for information, he asked her socially one day, in the act of purchase, why the gilt was generally off her gingerbread. He had been looking long, as a matter of fact, for gingerbread

> with the gilt on it, being accustomed to the phrase on the lips of his father in connection with small profits. [Perhaps the economic theme?] Mother Beggarlegs, so unaccustomed to politeness that she could not instantly recognize it, answered him with an imprecation at which he, no doubt, retreated, suddenly thrown on the defensive, hurling the usual taunt. One prefers to hope he didn't, with the invincible optimism one has for the behaviour of lovable people; but whether or not, his kind attempt at colloquy is the first indication I can find of that active sympathy with the disabilities of his fellow-beings which stamped him later so intelligent a meliorist. Even in his boy's beginning he had a heart for the work; and Mother Beggarlegs, but for a hasty conclusion, might have made him a friend. (12)

Aside from the other themes that may be adumbrated in this passage, it contains material which markedly foreshadows Lorne Murchison's adult career. Mother Beggarlegs' reaction to the attempted politeness forecasts the confusion of audiences in the election, and Lorne's sudden retreat to the defensive familiar looks ahead to his frustrated decision to relocate in Milwaukee. The movement of this passage encapsulates the movement of Lorne Murchison's career following his return from law school. He asks the wrong questions and misjudges the concern of his audience, first as a child, and then as an adult politician. The deliberate comment that Duncan makes in phrases such as "so intelligent a meliorist" is double-edged: it is both a charming, somewhat precocious description of Lorne-as-child, and an ironic prophecy of his naive pretence as an adult.

Naive meliorative instinct can be seen as the character defect that flaws all of Lorne's successes. In this vein, one is reminded of John Murchison's criticism of his son's articles on imperialism: "'He takes too much for granted.' 'What does he take for granted?' asked Mrs. Murchison. 'Other folks being like himself,' said the father" (150). The entire pattern of frustrated expectation in The Imperialist is opened to the reader by this off-hand remark. One thinks of Dora and Hesketh, and Lorne's assumptions about their characters, particularly in "the happy exercise of his hospitable instinct" (148), as Lorne imagines Hesketh to be the model immigrant. One also thinks of the by-election and the imperial idea, and the campaign in which Lorne's dramatic notions are such alien attempts. Finally, one thinks again of Mother Beggarlegs, and sees that Lorne Murchison did make the same mistake as a child, on a carefully diminished scale.

Read in this way, the ending of The Imperialist may be perceived as neither completely optimistic, nor pessimistic. The acceptance of Cruickshank's offer is no triumph, but there is hope for Lorne Murchison. He has painfully discovered that he will not be premier of Ontario, and that he must "dream no more of short cuts in great political departures" (263). Still, Duncan insists

that the reader must not leave Lorne Murchison "in heavy captivity to the thought of oblivion in the unregarding welter of the near republic" (266). Lorne's search for the "gingerbread with the gilt on it" must inevitably continue, and despite his exile from Elgin, his potential for human growth continues as well.

The ambiguous reading of Lorne Murchison's narrative of expectation disappointed is countered by the optimistic conclusion of the romantic subplot: the romance linking Lorne's older sister Advena, and the young Presbyterian clergyman, Hugh Finlay. The sub-plot is everything that Lorne's relationship with Dora Milburn is not. Hugh and Advena are intellectual, emotional and spiritual mates, and if their intellectual pre-occupation sometimes leads to remarks such as this: "'Doesn't it console you to feel under your very feet the forces are working to the immense amelioration of a not altogether undeserving people?'" (110), the lovers are capable of recognising these moments, and enjoying them unpretentiously: "'No,' said Advena, rebelliously; and indeed he had been a trifle didactic to her grievance. They laughed together. . . .'" (110-111). Despite such moments of mutual goodfeeling, their relationship is far more emotionally gruelling than might be expected of such shy, "bookish" characters. This

emotional intensity is, ironically, the result of the dispassionately cerebral attitude they share, and their self-conscious insistence on attempting to maintain the relationship in an impossibly "platonic" fashion. The efforts that Hugh and Advena make to preserve their intellectual distance and their love lead to confusion and anguish, and almost to their tragic separation. Their final reconciliation has to be neatly stage managed by Finlay's superior, Dr. Drummond, but it is still a triumph of love and empathy over all difficulties, expected and unexpected.

The dramatic significance of this second love-affair goes considerably beyond its function of contrast to the shallow frustrations of Lorne and Dora. Finlay and Advena symbolise a relationship between Canada and Britain, quite the inverse of the Lorne-Dora-Hesketh triangle. Finlay has disinterestedly allowed his aunt to engage him to Christie Cameron, a niece of her late husband's, shortly before he leaves Scotland for Canada. He speaks of his aunt as "'a managing woman'" (139), a phrase that has forceful reverberations in a novel so concerned with personal and national destiny. For much of The Imperialist it appears as if "his incredible entanglement in Bross" (251) will ruin Hugh's and Advena's happiness, as Finlay is determined not to break faith. In

national terms, one may interpret the engagement to Christie Cameron as symbolic of the narrow and confining past, inimical to the spirit of freedom that Finlay finds in his relationship with Advena, who is herself a sign of Canadian potentiality. When Dr. Drummond, a managing person himself who "must always be starting somebody, something in the right direction" (255), intervenes and marries Christie Cameron, freeing Hugh and Advena, the inversion is completed cheeringly. Hesketh parts Lorne and Dora in an ironic sign of Elgin's preference for English veneer in place of local worth, but Drummond marries Christie Cameron in affirmation of Elgin's ability to cope with the forces of the psychic past, and Hugh and Advena may marry to unite the best qualities of their nations.

Duncan aligns the stories of Lorne and of Advena and Finlay in a series of comparative images, as well. Lorne Murchison is a figure connected with sunlight and illumination. His smile seems "to throw light on the matter" (41); "the electric light was actually turned on for the first time in honour of Lorne's return from Toronto, a barrister and solicitor" (32); and, in a moment of ironic self-delusion, Lorne believes that "the sun shone on him; the timidest soul came nearer to him" (75). Even his complaints are in "the sunniest possible tone of grumbling" (42). Advena and Hugh, by contrast, often meet

in the early evening, and their first conversation concerns the sunset before them, signalling their connection with the west, the future. Lorne is also depicted by Duncan as frequently at the centre of social situations: meetings, dinners, parties, speeches. Finlay, although he is a minister, is ill at ease in public:

> He was fettered by an impenetrable shyness; it was in the pulpit alone that he could expand, and then only upon written lines, with hardly a gesture, and the most perfunctory of glances, at conscientious intervals, toward his hearers. (68)

The relationship with Advena loosens him a little, and Duncan portrays the lovers as departing significantly from Elgin convention. They are found in the library where "it would simply have been considered, in Elgin, stupid to go" (88). Lorne, ironically, is fettered also. In his case, it <u>is</u> convention that holds him, and he is "fast tied in the cobwebs of the common prescription" (53) in such matters as being the first guest to arrive at the Milburn's party. Lorne's very popularity may be a kind of trap, as it binds him to the superficial social gatherings characterised by the Milburns.

Their obsessive privacy -- which Finlay somehow hopes to preserve in "'a very private study'" (182) <u>after</u> his marriage to Christie Cameron! -- prevents Hugh and Advena from any tests of conventionality, such as the Milburn's party. Advena's and Hugh's relationship is often

nocturnal, and is marked by violent or sullen bursts of ill-weather, signifying moments of pathetic fallacy when nature alone is able to provide the correct impressionistic sign for their emotional upheavals:

> Silence seemed enforced between them, and walked with them, on into the murky landscape, over the fallen leaves. Passing a streetlamp, they quickened their steps, looking furtively at the light, which seemed leagued against them with silence. (139-140)

> Her asking, straining face seemed to gather and reflect all the light there was in the shifting night about them. The rain had stopped, but the wind still hurtled past, whirling the leaves from one darkness to another. They were as isolated, as outlawed in the wild wet wind as they were in the confusion of their own souls. (249-250)

True love in The Imperialist is a matter of intellectual and spiritual expansion to the fullest, whether it is Lorne's infatuation with Dora, which "dares the imitation of the gods" (147), or whether it is the journey shared by Advena and Hugh, as they struggle "to such heights, scorning every dizzy verge" (250). The middle ground between such admirably excessive affairs and Hesketh's casual evaluation of Dora, ". . .'I consider it an honour. Miss Milburn will compare with any English girl I ever met'" (265) is reached in the marriage-of-convenience made between Drummond and Christie Cameron, a match that combines practical insight with genuine affection.

While the narrator criticises Advena for being too "occupied in the aesthetic ecstacy of self-torture" (184) and Drummond refers to Finlay as looking "(. . .'as if he were going to the stake!')" (251), there is a constant feeling that their involvement is so much more authentic than Dora's pretences that the two kinds of emotion seem to exist in different universes. Duncan makes the comparison explicit in the circumstances involving the exchange of flowers between Lorne and Dora, and between Advena and Hugh. Dora has dropped one of the roses given her by Lorne, and possibly used the occasion (or perhaps created it?) to flirt with another young man. Lorne responds to her denial that she actually allowed Phil Carter to keep the rose with this request for an exchange:

> "I don't know about roses, Dora, but pansies -- those are awfully nice ones in your dress. I'm very fond of pansies; couldn't you spare me one? I wouldn't ask for a rose, but a pansy --."
>
> His eyes were more ardent than what he found to say. Beneath them Dora grew delicately pink. The pansies drooped a little; she put her slender fingers under one, and lifted its petals.
>
> "It's too faded for your buttonhole," she said.
>
> "It needn't stay in my buttonhole. I know lots of other places!" he begged.
>
> Dora considered the pansy again, then she pulled it slowly out, and the young man got up and went over to her, proffering the lapel of his coat.
>
> "It spoils the bunch," she said prettily. "If I give you this you will have to give me something to take its place."
>
> "I will," said Lorne. (99-100)

Duncan creates a pointed contrast as Hugh and Advena find themselves at the edge of painful separation, using a rose

as a metaphor for a seemingly impossible future together:

> "I found a rose on my dressing-table," he told her; and the rose stood for him in a wonder of tenderness, looking back.
>
> "I smuggled it in," she confessed, "I knew your old servant -- she used to be with us. The others -- from Dr. Drummond's -- have been there all day making it warm and comfortable for you. I had no right to do anything like that, but I had the right, hadn't I, to bring the rose?"
>
> "I don't know," he answered her, hard-pressed, "how we are to bear this."
>
> She shrank away from him a little, as if at a glimpse of a surgeon's knife.
>
> "We are not to bear it," she said eagerly. "The rose is to tell you that. I didn't mean it, when I left it, to be anything more -- more than a rose; but now I do." (249)

Both situations reflect the emotional currents of the four characters involved. Lorne is obviously infatuated with Dora; he begs and she coolly demands something to replace the pansy. (Dora does actually keep the ring that Lorne gives her later, although she refuses to wear it publically, and acknowledge what Lorne assumes to be their engagement.) One also notices Dora's reluctance to surrender any sign of emotional attachment, even a pansy, while Lorne is all too ready to accept the pansy as just that.

In opposition to this unequal meeting of ardent infatuation and delicate detachment, Hugh and Advena are alive to the pain ("the surgeon's knife") and the possibility ("the rose") of a love affair that has somehow become clandestine. Advena's intrigue is the type of

mystery that Dora enjoys on a superficial level, and her refusal to respond to Lorne's attentions finds its hidden counterpart in Advena's act of private passion. On a social level, even as the Hugh-Advena subplot affirms the potential of "'a physical freedom in which one's very soul seems to expand'" (140) of life in Elgin, Duncan implies a flaw. Dora's behaviour, flirtatious and even grasping as it may seem, is somehow acceptable and accepted, in a way that Hugh's and Advena's efforts to create "the philosophy of life" (179) are somehow not. With the exception of Dr. Drummond, Elgin is unable to comprehend the complex and difficult relationship of Advena and Hugh: the new country is vital, but unfinished.

A significant difference between the pattern of Lorne's career and the pattern of the lovers' is in the fashion in which each character relates to "destiny". Lorne may see himself, in the moments when he is most swept away by his quasi-religious feeling for the imperialist movement, as "splendidly" (178) riding upon the crest of a historic wave. For much of The Imperialist, the optimistic aspect of this oceanic metaphor appears justified: Lorne is in control of his destiny, and at the same time, is part of some larger, mystical flow of good fortune. The darker side of this self-conception, and one which Lorne ignores to his peril, reduces the individual to "an atom

in the surge of London" (118); or, in less elegant terms, to a cork bobbing along with the tide, completely in the power of enormous external forces. At the final campaign meeting, Lorne succumbs to the force of destiny, and loses control of himself. He is described as having been "launched for better or for worse upon the theme that was subliminal in him and had flowed up, on which he was launched, and almost rudderless" (230). This reversal in his fortunes is followed by other disappointments, and Lorne describes himself as "'stranded'" (265), as if the reversals had left him temporarily unable to control his life.

The dangers inherent in Lorne's conception of the "strong and beautiful wave" (147) that lifts "Lorne Murchison along to his destiny, since it was the pulse of his own life" (147) become pronounced in the final meeting with Hesketh. An inability to integrate his subjective sense of importance and self-control (or possibly his well-meaning egotism) and the flow of events beyond his control leads Lorne Murchison into a kind of schizophrenic breakup during which he retains control of himself only in the most superficial sense. As Hesketh relates the news of his impending marriage to Dora Milburn, the final blow in the series of reverses for Lorne, the young lawyer holds back the "plunge into the gulf" (266) -- and this serves

to combine the water-destiny imagery, and the psychological-emotional terrain of Hugh's and Advena's story -- with small talk:

> They talked of various matters in sight, Hesketh showing the zest of his newly determined citizenship in every observation -- the extension of the electric tramway, the pulling down of the old Fire Hall. In one consciousness Lorne made concise and relevant remarks; in another he sat in a spinning dark world and waited for the crash. (266)

This image is the panic-stricken correspondent to Finlay's assertion on first meeting with Advena: "'The world is wrapped in destiny, and but revolves to roll it out.'" (71). Finlay's sense of calm acceptance, an impression reinforced by the alliterative ease of "revolves to roll", is replaced, in Lorne's terms, by the world (and the thread of the furies?) "spinning" out of control. The "crash" is to be a sign of personal breakdown and cosmic disorder, and is the despairing conclusion of Lorne's identification of himself with the operation of fate; destruction of one leads to destruction of the other.

Hugh and Advena provide a contrast as they prepare all-too-calmly for what they see as their foreordained confrontation with destiny: the inevitable arrival of Mrs. Kilbannon and Christie Cameron. If this is partly because both Hugh and Advena are "too much encumbered with

ideas, to move simply, quickly, on the impulse of passion" (179), they do share real strength also, an empathetic "companionship" (69, 70) that ties them together, even before they have actually met. In this way, the destinies of Hugh and Advena are bound up with each other. As Finlay says, "'Now that I have found you it is as if you and I had been rocked together on the tide of that inconceivable ocean that casts us half-awake upon life . . .'" (183). What one perceives here, and especially in contrast with Lorne's self-conception of the crest, is a note of dreamy resignation. The ocean is inconceivable; one may be at its mercy; yet it is not threatening (or perhaps Finlay is simply ignoring this aspect). According to this conception of the self in relation to destiny, the couple "heavy shadowed and obstinately facing fate" (204) swim together, having first been "rocked together" safely in face of oceanic forces beyond their control.

Finlay's dreamy acceptance of the tides of fate has its inevitable dark aspect, as does Lorne's confident sense of inner destiny. After her meeting with Kilbannon and Cameron, Advena breaks down at the prospect of losing Hugh Finlay. The two lovers meet, or encounter, on the street, and Advena has been reduced to "a tossed and straying thing" (248). Her inner will has been broken, just as Lorne's is to be broken: for brother and sister,

the moment of loss is the moment of collapse.

The Imperialist does not conclude in this negative way, however. Lorne continues to work within the ambiguous pattern of national destiny, and for Hugh and Advena is the happy prospect of a future together at the White Water Mission. Duncan includes an image that suggests Finlay is achieving the integration that Lorne is not able to. As Drummond relates the story of Christie Cameron's "second choice" (267), to use Advena's term, Finlays accepts this apparently outrageous reversal as somehow normal:

> . . . relaxation had stolen dumbly about Finlay's brow and lips. He dropped from the plane of his own absorption to the humorous common sense of the recital: it claimed and held him with infinite solace. His eyes had something like the light of laughter in them, flashing behind a cloud. . . . (255)

The drop to the level of everyday life is emphatically not a crash, or a destruction of character. When Hugh and Advena meet later that evening on the "threshold" (256), one senses a new beginning, and the "happy ending" of The Imperialist.

CHAPTER II

INTERRELATED IMAGERY

When The Imperialist is examined for what might be called subsidiary themes -- subsidiary, that is, to Duncan's presentation of the complementary plots, and her discussion of the imperialist controversy -- various other kinds of imagery and meaning emerge. These secondary layers involve a series of variations upon given images or motifs, and provide a subtle unity and direction to the narrative material of The Imperialist. The direction given by these other layers tends to colour the supposedly non-partisan narration of the novel. In his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition, Claude Bissell asserts that:

> Sara Jeannette Duncan is not making a statement nor is she parading her own convictions, which, one suspects, ultimately ran counter to the logic of her fictional creation.1

While this may in fact be true of Duncan's handling of the two major themes, it is not as appropriate to her treatment of the other material. She may not be "parading her own convictions", but she has certainly organised the subsidiary themes into an oblique statement on the moral issues involved in the struggle for imperial unity.

There are two distinct groups of the images and motifs subsidiary to the two major thematic areas. One of the groups, consisting of images of animals; motion; horizons; water; houses; hats; physiognomy; and gestures, contributes to Duncan's psychological development of character. The other groups, consisting of images of sight and perception; weaving; accent and speech, mock-epic comparisons; origins; and family, is used by Duncan to colour the discussion of imperialism. There is inevitably much overlapping, as well: Lorne is an imperialist, because he is a man "likely to expand his horizons" (75), while the political caution of Octavius Milburn is manifest in his very face: ". . . he was -- a man of averages, balances, the safe level, no more disposed to an extravagant opinion than to wear one side whisker longer than the other" (51).

One item in the lists may appear as undistinguished, and that item is "hats". Minor uses of the hat as a psychological correlative include the spirited observation that "no one could say that the Murchisons were demonstrative. They said nothing, but they got their hats" (19), and this note concerning the tentative position of Mrs. Crow's bonnet, which has "in the course of commercial activity, pushed so far back as to be almost falling off" (77). In both cases, Duncan selects the hat as being the

key object signifying a mood. The Murchisons, for instance, are quietly demonstrative, and the reader perceives this characteristic because the children take up their hats in a celebration of holiday and triumph as they prepare to enjoy the Queen's Birthday in a family group. Mrs. Crow is engaged in business, not celebration, and the reader senses the "difficult kind of prosperity" (73) of the Elgin market-place in the uninterest shown by the sharp-witted farmwoman in the apparently absent-minded perch of her bonnet. These minor examples serve as an introduction to Duncan's sense of character, and to her use of the hat as a significant psychological image.

The most extravagant use of hat imagery in The Imperialist shows the importance Duncan places on this seemingly trivial piece of clothing:

> I speak of a soft felt hat, but it might be more than that: it might be a dark green one, with a feather in it; and here was distinction, for such a hat indicated that its owner belonged to the Independent Order of Foresters, who would leave their spring wheat for forty miles round to meet in Elgin and march in procession, wearing their hats, and dazzingly scatter upon Main Street. They gave the day its touch of imagination, those green cocked hats; they were lyrical upon the highways; along the prosaic sidewalks by twos and threes they sang together. It is no great thing, a hat of any quality; but a small thing may ring dramatic on the right metal, and in the vivid idea of Lorne Murchison and his sister Advena a Robin Hood walked in every Independent Forester, especially in the procession. Which

> shows the risks you run if you, a person of honest livelihood and solicited vote, adopt any portion of a habit not familiar to you, and go marching about with a banner and a band. Two children may be standing at the first street corner, to whom your respectability and your property may at once become illusion and your outlawry the delightful fact. (13-14)

This passage serves to establish a system of reference that operates throughout the novel. The Foresters' use of hats combines psychological development (the revelation of essential character) with costume (the disguise of essential character). The farmers who make up the organisation see themselves as distinct, although they do not wish to be as distinct ("Robin Hood") as Lorne and Advena imagine them to be. In literary terms, there is a confusion between metonym (the green hats as equivalent to the organisation) and metaphor (the same hats as signs of potential "outlawry"). In thematic terms, one senses a similar confusion between the practical way of seeing things typical of the Foresters, and the romantic conception typical of Lorne and Advena. Duncan justifies giving hats a significant weight by observing that "a small thing may ring dramatic on the right metal", and the sensitivity of the right metal -- Lorne and Advena -- to the drama of small things provides an excellent plot summary of The Imperialist. Hats may be only a minor test of this sensitivity, but throughout the novel they reinforce the

impression of their importance given in this passage.

Other appearances of hats commence with this description of the joys of May the 24th in Elgin, "a happy excitement accompanied it, which you could read in the way Corydon clapped his soft felt hat on his head as he pocketed the change" (13), and continues to include the "small boys, with broken straw hats" (15) sneaking into the lacrosse games; and on to Elmore Crow in the marketplace, "He was obviously in clothes which he did not put on every day, but the seriousness of this was counteracted by his hard felt hat, which he wore at an angle that disregarded convention" (74) almost immediately continuing with this assurance of Lorne's worth:

> Lorne Murchison, to dismiss the matter, was well up to the standard of Elgin, though he wore his straw hat quite on the back of his head and buried both hands in his trousers pockets. (75)

The pattern is completed with a comment upon the appearance of the local Indians on market-day:

> Invariably, if you did look twice, you would note that his stiff felt hat was an inch taller in the crown than those worn generally by the farming community, the pathetic assertion, perhaps, of an old sovereignty. . . . (242)

One can perceive in this cycle of hat imagery an index of character response to the demands of society in Elgin. The "broken straw hats" worn by the boys are a sign of Huck Finnish independence perhaps, and a contrast to the

unbroken hats of the more staid Murchison children. What is more important is the series of images connecting Elmore, Lorne, and the natives. Elmore and Lorne are both asserting their individuality -- presumably they are no longer allowed to wear "broken" hats -- in a way that only Elgin would understand. The natives, however, are from outside the confines of Elgin, and while their clothing, including hats, indicates an acceptance of the norms of white civilisation, their acceptance is marked by defiance, even despair. The suggestions of comedy that attend the earnest I.O.O.F. are transmuted into tragedy in this series of descriptions: hats are a "small thing" in The Imperialist; a "small thing" that is one sign of the manner in which characters attempt to compromise, to make their costume appear in accord with their psychological interiority and social norms.

A more common and pervasive system of comparison involves the use of animal imagery. It is here, especially, that Duncan's colouring of the imperial issue (not that this is in any way wrong) is evident. After all, when it is said of Fawcett Wallingham that his "imagination took views of the falcon" (126) -- a combination of animal and perception imagery -- and it is said later of Walter Winter, that "he looked sunk, like an overfed bird" (165), one must infer that some moral reaction and judgement is expected.

This point is made to pick a particular quarrel with Claude Bissell's introduction: Duncan's writing does establish moral choices, and this aspect of her art should be acknowledged.

Not all the animal imagery is so open to unambiguous (moral) interpretation, however. For every deliberate selection such as Young and Windle "'working likes moles'" (262), a splendid metaphor for their short-sightedness and duplicity, there is an ambiguous comparison, such as this one: "Hesketh had lived always in the presence of ideals disengaged in England as nowhere else in the world; in Oxford, Lorne knew, they clustered thick" (122). Clustering thick possibly implies moths, and there is the notion of Oxford-as-light attracting the disengaged ideals -- an innocuous enough implication. On a personal level, though, it may be Hesketh who is one of the moths, attracted to light (one of the keywords for both Lorne and imperialism in the novel) but insubstantial, even insect-like, by himself.

Given that many of the comparisons -- even the ambiguous ones, as just noted -- imply a hierarchy, a study of Duncan's use of these images produces some surprising results. Dr. Drummond is certainly "a small Scotch terrier" (160), and it is typical of Dora that she would call one of

her friends "'a pig'" (99). Equally unsurprising is the description of the porcupine-like Scotchwomen as greeting Advena "with all their bristles out" (220). Duncan does shock the reader with this observation on the Murchison's place in Elgin: ". . . idiosyncracy susceptible to no common translation is regarded with the hostility earned by the white crow, modified among law-abiding humans into tacit repudiation . . ." (44). This image is an accurate and painful forecast of the cool reception given Lorne Murchison following his all-too-narrow victory. The "white crow" is mercilessly and savagely driven from the flock, or it is pecked to death. Lorne is driven away too, and his exile illuminates the reason for Duncan's use of animal imagery. The people of Elgin have "modified" this primal "hostility"; the animal imagery is a sign, sometimes charming, sometimes shocking, of how limited and tentative this modification actually is.

The surface naturalism of the comparisons allows a more conventional moral hierarchy, with the Murchisons at the top, as one might expect, and other characters falling into line. Lorne makes the mistake of joining Ormiston on election day, and sticks "to him like a fly to poison-paper" (237), but he holds off despair, meeting "Hesketh's eye with the steadiness of a lion's in his own" (265). Hesketh is dismissed earlier as "'a lobster'" (199),

with none of Lorne's strengths. In his first interview with Drummond, Finlay listens "with the look of a charmed animal" (158), an ominous image in that it does not specify the type of relationship between the two men. Drummond is infuriated to the point of accusing Finlay, a few pages later, of showing all "'the capacity of a blind kitten'" (162). While this charge clears up the confusion about the relationship, it is also an accurate metaphor for Finlay's helplessness. In a world where Mother Beggarlegs "presided like a venerable stooping hawk" (11) -- who would want to be a blind kitten? or a lobster, for that matter?

A pattern of animal imagery that combines colloquial usage with metaphorical insights consists of an extended series of comparisons of politics to a horse-race, politicians to race-horses. Walter Winter has "the air of a dark horse" (55); Lorne is a "colt" (178); and there are, of course, "party hacks" (178) which is almost a pun. The imperial preference issue causes uncertainty as to the outcome. Parsons, although previously a Liberal, bolts "at the first hint of the new policy" (206); Lorne looks on manufacturers, unwilling to commit themselves as "'a pretty skittish lot'" (223); and Walter Winter meets with widespread assurance "that the enemy's new policy was enough by itself to bring him romping in at last" (166), although

he has "a clear field" (208) only in the industrial sections of South Fox. Lorne's organisers are altogether unsure, and feel that the Liberal policy of imperialism may cost the party a sure thing: "As Horace Williams said, if a dead horse could be made to go this one would have brought Murchison romping in" (225).

The attitude of the Liberal regulars to Lorne, and what they see as his obstinate idealism is expressed in terms of jockey and horse: "'I suppose I'm too old a man to do jockey for a three-year-old, but I own I've enjoyed the ride!" (263). Canada and national government are conceived in similar terms, and almost as casually: "'The Premier of this country drives a team, you know.' 'Yes,' said Lorne, 'but he drives it tandem, and Johnny François is the second horse.'" (224).

A consistent break in the pattern comes in reference to the Conservatives, who are seen as dogs, either "'baying the moon'" (224), or ready "to bark threateningly at the heels of victory" (241), perhaps a case of Liberal bias rather than moral hierarchy. Another slight break occurs when Lorne's injunction against "'any monkey tricks'" (225) is echoed by Horace Williams after Lorne's disastrous speech: "'He had as soft a snap,' returned Horace Williams on the brink of tears -- 'as soft a snap as anybody ever had in this town. And he's monkeyed it all away. All

away.'" (234).

Descriptions of political contests as horse-races are common enough, and as noted earlier, Duncan is consciously using colloquial diction and imagery to ensure the realism of her characters. There is, however, something obsessive about this particular image in The Imperialist, as if the politicians and the public are unable, or unwilling, to conceive of the choice between Murchison and Winter in any other way. Even if the horse-dog-monkey comparisons allow for a possible differentiation, it is not just a cliché to say that the horse-race metaphor cheapens the campaign. What Lorne Murchison wants is a "jihad" and there is again a hint of pun, on race. What he gets is a politically calculated election of dubious honesty, in which the most honest action is also the most disastrous. Again, one perceives the disparity between Lorne and Elgin: how can he communicate his spiritual and imaginative vision to a community where politicians are interchangeable with, and as meaningful as, racehorses.

The imagery of motion, particularly of walking, pervades The Imperialist, as does the animal imagery, but is more ambiguous as a moral indicator. One can quickly assume that Finlay's hectic walks around Elgin are a symptom of his discontent; to go further into categorization, as one can do with the animal imagery, is more difficult.

Without establishing categories needlessly, one is still able to perceive that there is a pace to life in Elgin, a kind of heartbeat that Lorne hopes to achieve with Dora: "'If our lives only keep step it won't matter much about the 'Washington Post'" (145).

A more accurate picture of life as it is lived in the community appears in this description of Main Street:

> Drays passed through it to the Grand Trunk station, but they passed one at a time; a certain number of people went up and down about their affairs, but they were never in a hurry; a street car jogged by every ten minutes or so, but nobody ran after it. There was a decent procedure; and it was felt that Bofield -- he was dry-goods, too -- in putting in an elevator was just a little unnecessarily in advance of the times. (25)

The key notions here are of relaxation and ease, and even a slight nervousness ("procedure") about the maintenance of this relaxed ease. Even the street cars "jog" on a typical Elgin day. The caution that accompanied, and indeed somewhat compromises, this tranquil vision of life at the appropriate pace is found in the "careful walk with the spring in it" (51) of Octavius Milburn. The consequence of walking too quickly, and therefore arriving too soon, is more walking:

> To be the very first and solitary arrival is nowhere esteemed the happiest fortune, but in Elgin a kind of ridiculous humiliation is attached to it, a greed for the entertainment, a painful unsophistication. A young man of Elgin would walk up and down in the snow for a quarter of an hour with the thermometer at zero to escape the ignominy of it; Lorne Murchison would have so walked. (53)

When characters in The Imperialist do walk quickly, it is generally the result of some inner emotional turmoil. So, Dr. Drummond is observed "walking about on his pastoral errands with a fierce briskness of aspect" (63), when he is campaigning against expansion into East Elgin, and Finlay walks "two feverish miles to the town" (163), as he posts the letter arranging for the emigration of his aunt and Christie Camerson. Opposite to these signs of anger and anguish, Advena's delight at being joined by Finlay after the sermon finds her heartbeat drawing inspiration from her joyful walk:

> She felt her heart confronted with a new, an immediate issue, and suddenly afraid. It shrank from the charge for which it longed, and would have fled; yet, paralysed with delight, it kept time with the sauntering feet. (136)

After the news of Finlay's engagement has reached her, Mrs. Murchison walks rather differently, stepping "along with the spring of an impetus undisclosed" (202), but no less significantly.

All these examples demonstrate the manner in which Duncan uses this series of images to reveal character. As with "hats", there is a sense of character intimated in the image. Motivation appears in signs, and is difficult to "read". For instance, Mrs. Murchison prepares to tell her husband about Advena's disappointment with a special

walk, recognisable as such, but "undisclosed", impossible to decipher. Similarly, the "fierce briskness" displayed by Dr. Drummond is recognised by his fellow Presbyterians, although one suspects that this very brusque gesture conveys only a small amount of the annoyance Drummond feels. One possibility is that Drummond, Advena, Finlay, and Mrs. Murchison are all so preoccupied with their inner feelings that their unique walks are an involuntary reflex, appropriate if unwilled.

The political dimension of this device of characterisation is chiefly applied to Lorne and Hesketh, though there is the observation that even the precocious Stella "had been obliged to get into step, as she described it, with the silly old Empire" (149). Lorne has always been in step with the imperial vision, and he is constantly attempting to speed up his life to a pace approximating his intellectual and spiritual advance. Crossing the market square after receiving the Ormiston case, "he involuntarily hastened his steps to keep pace with his happy chance" (78); when Cruickshank calls, "Mr. Lorne came down the stairs two at a time" (88); and he goes "away hot-foot" (173) from the Milburns, after telling Dora of his nomination. There is a propensity in Lorne Murchison's character for self-dramatisation, and combined with his eagerness,

this accounts for his constant violation of the basic pace of life in Elgin. In a town where nobody runs after the streetcar, someone who simply moves "alertly" (75), or when "exhilarated by the sense of crisis" (178) unknowingly displays "something of the wonted fighting elation" (261) in his over-confident stride is riding for a fall. The fall of Lorne Murchison is -- as we have seen -- intimately related with his misunderstanding of Alfred Hesketh, the Englishman at loose ends, who is described as "still fidgeting at the starting-point" (119) when the two young men meet.

Upon meeting Hesketh, Lorne idealises him, as he idealises so much else. Lorne is impressed by Hesketh's seeming vigour, ". . . 'he's a good fellow, and more go-ahead than most of them.'" (142). In Elgin, he is initially incapable of correcting this mistake, despite Hesketh's connection with the feeble Emmett:

> . . . and they fell into step together. As Lorne said, it was only a short distance, but far enough to communicate a briskness, an alertness, from the step of one young man to that of the other. "I wish it were five miles," Hesketh said, all his stall-fed muscles responding to the new call of his heart and lungs. "Any good walks about here? I asked Emmett, but he didn't know -- supposed you could walk to Clayfield if you didn't take the car. He seems to have lost his legs. I suppose parsons do." (152)

Lorne does not notice the bravado of Hesketh's athletic inclinations (though Alec does, and suggests that Hesketh needs a "'motorbike'") (153), or the implied misconception of a minister's languid life-style. The reader perceives that Lorne's vigour is communicated to Hesketh, a sign of the potential of the new unified Empire centred upon an England revitalized by Canada, or a euphemism for Hesketh's parasitical opportunism.

The latter, and pessimistic interpretation is upheld as Lorne shocks Hesketh by entering the foundry: "He went on ahead with his impetuous step; he did not perceive the instant's paralysis that seemed to overtake Hesketh's, whose foot dragged, however, no longer than that" (153). Murchison is too "impetuous"to notice Hesketh's discomfort, and Hesketh is able to conceal his surprise. Again, there is a sense of character betrayed -- in this case, Hesketh's in-bred snobbishness -- in an image of motion. On the political level, one is forced to wonder that if Hesketh is stricken with an "instant's paralysis" simply upon entering an iron-foundry, how much he will ever be part of a town with the "'go-ahead' proclivities" (126) of Elgin, and, by implication, how the future integration of the Empire is to be achieved, given such completely different rhythms of existence.

From this moment, Hesketh and Lorne are separated, and their only reunion, at the Jordanville meeting, leads to an irreconcilable separation. Hesketh is quite unaware of this, and settles in with the Milburns, where Lorne is justifiably disquieted to hear Hesketh's "familiar easy step in the house of his beloved" (236). Significantly, Dora is able to force Lorne to leave, and conceal her interest in both young men, because "a step in the hall threatened and divided" (236) the couple. Hesketh has stepped between Lorne and Dora, and when Lorne and Hesketh meet again, it is Hesketh in the ascendancy who "went on, weightily, leading the way through an encumbering group of farmers at a corner" (264). As Lorne begins to suspect the worst, he is forced ("wheeled sharply") (264) to react desperately to Hesketh, and is finally so stunned by the complete nature of his defeat that he gives up walking altogether, and leans "against the door frame, crossing his arms and looking over into the market-place for subjects to postpone Hesketh's departure" (266). So, this aspect of The Imperialist concludes with ironic victory, and stasis and despair. The market-place which had been Lorne Murchison's "microcosm" (74) is now a projection of his collapse; it is reduced to a collection of possible "subjects", some of which may allow Lorne the time to regain his inner control.

The danger that Hesketh poses to Lorne is one that Lorne's idealism prevents him from seeing, and the result is that Hesketh achieves the success in Elgin deserved by Lorne. The entire English section of the novel is taken up with images of stultification and stagnation, of the kind of society Hesketh is eager to escape, not transform. England is a much slower society than Elgin (and Canada), and one senses that Lorne, despite considerable efforts, never adjusts to the ennervating pace of London. He finds the English "'slow -- oh, slow!'" (132), and pities the people for their resigned manner: ". . .'you can <u>see</u> they're used to it, see it in the way they slope along'. . . ." (128). The nation's loss of will and purpose is attributed by the narrator to "the problems of sluggish overpopulation" (125), and this claustrophobic passivity ironically hampers the Canadian delegation at one of Lord Selkirk's parties as they are forced to move "about in a cluster, avoiding the ladies' trains" (114).

One important sub-series of the motion imagery also separates Elgin from England: modes of transportation. Elgin is rather reluctantly leaving the horse-and-buggy era, as the suspicion with which Bofield's elevator is greeted indicates. The vehicles that Duncan places in Elgin include the street cars; the "passing dray" (266); the cutter that carries Dora and Hesketh and Mrs. Farquhar-

son to Jordanville; Farquharson's buggy; Winter's "neat little livery outfit" (237); and the cab that brings Mr. and Mrs. Murchison to the Liberal committee rooms. In England, vehicles are both more modern, and more ancient, and seldom seem to go anywhere. The delegation travels "by special train, a circumstance which made them grave, receptive, and even slightly ceremonious with one another" (114). The train has been specially run only to take the delegation to one of Lord Selkirk's parties at which little happens, save that the Canadians distinguish themselves as being more provincial than usual. Otherwise, there are the ". . . 'shiny carriages with cockaded flunkeys on 'em, wooden-smart, rolling about with an elderly woman and a parasol and a dog'" (123) that irritate Lorne so; the "new French motor" (113) that keeps one of Wallingham's colleagues away from the meetings with the delegation; and, especially, the "omnibus lumbering west out of Trafalgar Square" (118), a vehicle that symbolises (ironically) the current state of civilisation, and Lorne's futile efforts to communicate his imperial enthusiasm to the British. Between the two worlds of small and vital Elgin, and large and ponderous England are the endless billows of the ocean -- and the ocean liners, the ships which the imperialists hope ". . . 'should incorporate us -- that should bring them

out and take us home.'" (252).

The general conclusion that may be drawn from a study of some of the subsidiary levels of meaning in The Imperialist is that Duncan has made a separation of the personal and political issues difficult. As noted earlier, this is partly caused by the coincidence of morally good people supporting imperial preference. Further than this, however, one is inevitably forced to consider national and international ideas in even the most local and personal images. Hats, for instance, form a particular cycle of meaning in Elgin, and are also part of a larger conception. Elgin is generally identified with small-scale achievements that are ultimately vital and growing. At the same time, this sense of a diminished scale indicates a smallness of mind and spirit that threatens Elgin's future. Conversely, the connection of England with a feeling of moribund size and waste is balanced by Duncan by her use of the common image of the family as the model for the Empire.

On a strictly individual level, the subsidiary meanings depict the human characters as disguised, and essentially mysterious. Characters in The Imperialist reveal inner emotions not only through speech, but also by articulating them through ambiguous signs of clothing,

gait, gesture; and this too leads one to a larger conflict in the novel. The conflict is essentially between Duncan's conception of people as they are, and the world as it ought to be. Therefore, Lorne is actually struggling with the unknown and unknowable in the human psyche (of which Dora Milburn is a prime example), as well as prejudice against imperial union. His struggle is all the more courageous because of its conflict with human nature, and the need to save the Empire is again intrinsically linked with the need to encourage human essence.

CHAPTER III

INTERRELATED POLITICS

The controversy over imperial federation is handled by Duncan in as complex and ironic fashion as the career of Lorne Murchison, with which the issue is so strongly identified. While no convenient definition of imperialism is presented, imperialism in The Imperialist is a "touchstone" (149, 177), for the novel's most admirable characters are imperialists. Almost every character contributes to the discussion, and the controversy tests friendships, "sometimes with shattering effect" (149). The views range from Lorne's enthusiastic, "'But it's the Empire!'" (90), to Horace Williams' exasperated dismissal of "'that save-the-Empire-or-die scheme'" (262), and their friendship is one of those tested so severely. Reactions to imperialism are most often expressed as a compromise between the positions taken by Lorne Murchison and Williams. The delegation's meeting Wallingham, for example, is uncompromisingly described as "that fusion of energy with energy, that straight, satisfying, accomplishing dart" (114). Yet this impression is ironised when the same Canadian delegates look with pleasure on their successful business dealings in the same terms: "it helped the sentiment of

their aim, the feather on the arrow" (126). This uncertain mixture of idealistic enthusiasm and materialistic caution is typical of the response to Wallingham and the "epoch-making" (222) movement.

As might be expected, the simplest reaction to the imperialist prospect and touchstone is apparent in the character of Octavius Milburn:

> His ideal was life in a practical, go-ahead, self-governing colony, far enough from England actually to be disabused of inherited anachronisms and make your own tariff, near enough politically to keep your securities up by virtue of her protection. (51)

Milburn's ideal is transparently materialistic. The concern with the practical and the go-ahead are typical of Elgin, as is his championing of the national tariff, a sign in The Imperialist for the narrow-minded and economically-selfish politics that separate England and the Empire. What Milburn appreciates in England is military power, not the moral force that Lorne Murchison recognises:

> It's astonishing what we've stuck to her through, but you can't help seeing why -- it's for the moral advantage. Way down at the bottom, that's what it is. We have the sense to want all we can get of that sort of thing. They've developed the finest human product there is, the cleanest, most disinterested, and we want to keep up the relationship -- it's important. (98)

Moral force is quite out of place in the comfortable and snobbish world of the Milburns, and they are able to assimilate the fine, human disinterest of Alfred Hesketh

in a way that Lorne is not. The reader, having learned that Octavius Milburn's mind is "convertible into the language of bookkeeping" (51), is not entirely surprised to learn of his reason for opposing imperialism:

> Mr. Milburn wouldn't say this preference trade idea, if practicable, might not work out for the benefit of the Empire as a whole. That was a thing he didn't pretend to know. But it wouldn't work out for his benefit -- that was a thing he did know. When a man was confronted with a big political change the question he naturally asked himself was, "Is it going to be worth my while?" and he acted on the answer to that question. (212)

Further, Milburn supports this rejection with "a variety of facts and figures" (212), statistics that can be used to prove anything. His argument is self-centred and unimaginative in the extreme. Milburn is so cautious that any interruption is his smooth profit-taking is suspect, even if it may mean greater prosperity in the future. When Milburn asserts that he has made his decision "naturally", one surmises that Duncan also means, according to his nature. His reaction to Lorne and imperialism is so intense that Milburn grows "quite bitter" (186) during the campaign, and even the eventual election of the anti-imperialist Carter leaves Milburn ready to attack Wallingham again should circumstances arise to "stir up that latent bitterness which is so potential in him" (268). The touchstone of imperialism causes Milburn to appear as the narrow and selfish man

he truly is, and to expose his inner hardness and sterility. The image for Milburn's anti-imperialist feeling is that it resides "in Mr. Milburn as a stone might reside in a bag of wool" (212). This piece of imagery is particularly effective in contrast to the imperialists' use of images of knitting and weaving as metaphors for the Empire of the future. Milburn is potentially fluff ("bag of wool") as a character, but his essence is stone, and therefore a danger to the knitting and weaving of imperialism.

Milburn is an extremist in his opposition to imperialism only insofar as he is conspicuously self-centred and bitter. In other ways, he is quite typical of Elgin's industrialists. Young and Windle, two nominally Liberal manufacturers, disagree strongly with the emphasis that the candidacy of Lorne Murchison gives to imperialism, and announce that "this British boot-licking feature wasn't going to do it any good" (207). Parsons, of the Blanket Works, abandons the Liberals completely since "'he doesn't see his way to voting to give his customers blankets cheaper than he can make them'" (165-166). The correct and measured response to such nervous hostility is provided by John Murchison. He is suspicious of British economic incompetence and wastefulness, but is still able to acknowledge the greater issue: "'Common interest, yes,' said his father; 'common taxation, no, for defence or any other

purpose. The colonies will never send money to be squandered by the London War Office.'" (129).

On economic issues, however, the imperialists are not able to allay these fears of squandering and to present the issue as being good for business in Canada. Robert Farquharson, the politician Lorne succeeds as Liberal candidate in South Fox, begins to doubt imperial federation (or preference trade, its "economic" guise) as a platform because the undertaking can not be assessed in economic terms: "above all things it lacked actuality, business -- the proposition, in good set terms, for men to turn over, to accept or reject. Nothing could be done with it, Mr. Farquharson averred, as a mere prospect" (223). Farquharson is wavering at this point, and he eventually betrays Lorne and the cause, as he articulates Elgin's caution and distrust: "'The popular idea seems to be,' said Mr. Farquharson judicially, "that you would not hesitate to put Canada to some material loss, or at least to postpone her development in various important directions, for the sake of the imperial connection'" (262).

The touchstone of imperialism reveals Farquharson as opportunistic, although it also confirms him as the voice of his community's political pragmatism. Farquharson chooses to preserve the string of Liberal victories in

South Fox, instead of joining Lorne as an agent of the imperial future. In a sense, the choice is a foregone conclusion. Inevitably, in the course of The Imperialist, if a character considers that all the merits of imperialism can "'be put into dollars and cents'" (137), he abandons the pursuit of comprehensive ties with England, and may even turn against the characters striving for imperial union. The materialistic characters are all tested by imperialism, and all of them, ranging from the duplicitous Young and Windle, to the much more likable Farquharson and Horace Williams, are found lacking in fidelity to an idea.

The image frequently used in response to the doubting economic analysts is the family, and it is a potentially successful device in the hands of the imperialists because it connotes both the interdependence and independence of Britain and the colonies.[1] The narrator observes of the delegates in England: "The Empire produces a family resemblance, but here and there, when oceans intervene, a different mould of the spirit" (113), and then of imperial consciousness in Elgin: "whatever it was in England, here it was a family affair" (149). Lorne Murchison sees the Empire as an unambiguously positive family, with the colonies appropriately supplying much of the initial support

for the imperial movement:

> "Doesn't there come a time in the history of most families," Lorne replied, "when the old folks look to the sons and daughters to keep them in touch with the times? Why shouldn't a vigorous policy of Empire be conceived by its younger nations -- who have the ultimate resources to carry it out?" (122)

Within this optimistic conception of family strength and understanding, Lorne can speak of the English choosing to "'commit themselves to a zollverein with us and the rest of the family'" (129), and can compare inter-Empire competition to a good-natured spat with his youngest sister, Stella. In a less relaxed, even distracted, manner, Lorne chooses the family imagery, as an indication of the choice Elgin (and Canada) must make between Britian and the United States:

> They see us thinking about keeping the business in the family; with that hard American common sense that has made them what they are, they accept the situation; and at this moment they are ready to offer us better terms to keep our trade. (231)

> No doubt a bargain between the Americans and ourselves could be devised which would be a very good bargain on both sides. In the absence of certain pressing family affairs, it might be well worth our consideration as used to think it before we were invited to the family council. (231)

In these examples, there is an urgency that is quite different from Lorne's earlier positive confidence. He is afraid of the attraction posed by reciprocity with the United States, and his anxiety is caused by the relative

unattractiveness of imperialism as an economic issue. The "'Imperial Council -- of the future -- at Westminster!" (127) sounds almost informal, but there are suddenly "pressing" matters involved, making the formation of the council imperative. Therefore, Lorne's tone is a mixture of jaunty confidence ("the family council") and undisguised concern over the attraction of the United States. The tension between them explodes in the nadir of Murchison's speech, an explicit comparison of the United States with a harlot:

> "And this Republic," he went on hotly, "this Republic that menaces our national life with commercial extinction, what past has she that is comparable? The daughter who left the old stock to be the light woman among nations, welcoming all comers, mingling her pure blood, polluting her lofty ideals until it is hard indeed to recognize the features and the aims of her honourable youth. . . ." (233)

The sense of family solidarity and security has disappeared by this furious stage in Lorne's speech, but the consistency with Lorne's earlier statements should not go unnoticed. The family is bound together by its common origins; the Anglo-Saxon nations of the world ought to be united; but the Americans have betrayed this common heritage: first, in the Revolution, and second, in accepting the waves of "impure" immigrants from continental Europe. In addition, the United States poses an enormous

commercial threat to Canada, and specifically, to Canada's commercial ties with Great Britain. Although the speech Lorne gives is extreme in many ways, in the notion of pure blood, for example, it is consistent with his perception of imperialism. In his use of family imagery in this intense fashion, Lorne Murchison is extending -- in the face of danger, real or imagined -- a conception of the Empire with which he was already familiar and comfortable.

Other uses of the family-Empire motif indicate that it has a wider range of meaning than Lorne Murchison might wish to admit. The image is used by anti-imperialists to expose the archaic and moribund nature of England. For example, when Horace Williams allows that the initiative for a preference trade agreement should come from England because, "'We're not so grown up but what grandma's got to march in front'" (131), there is a tone of affection and attachment. England as the grandma, is capable of leading a united and purposeful Empire, and Williams approves of this capability. More doubtfully, Williams argues that Canada should offer her armed forces to Britain on these terms; ". . .'let 'em understand they'll be welcome to the use of it, but quite in a family way -- no sort of compulsion'" (129, 130). Family is seen as encompassing mistrust ("compulsion") of Britain, as if the grandma-figure had become a tyrant. What Williams seems

to envisage is an Empire so casually connected as to be politically meaningless. Although Williams uses the image of family, as does Lorne Murchison, the actual ideas of the two men are much at odds.

The specific image of England as a grandmother first appears in this description of the good-natured contempt on the part of those citizens of Elgin who have celebrated the Queen's birthday in both Canada and England:

> Travelled persons, who had spent the anniversary there, were apt to come back with a poor opinion of its celebration in "the old country" -- a pleasant relish to the more-than-ever appreciated advantages of the new, the advantages that came out so by contrast. More space such persons indicated, more enterprise they boasted, and even more loyalty they would flourish, all with an affectionate reminiscent smile at the little ways of a grandmother. (12-13)

The comparison invoked here is not as immediately negative as Williams' fear of "compulsion", but conveys a similarly unfavourable view of England. Canadian novelty and vigour are superior to the grandmotherly -- quaint, perhaps embarrassing, certainly out-of-date -- "little ways" of marking the occasion in England. Family implies, in this example, that Canada is growing apart from England, and that someday there may be no need to tolerate even affectionately ("smile") the family bond.

A stronger impression of separation from England is gained from a comment made by the narrator on Elgin's

perception (or, imperception) of England's foreign policy:

> It was recognized dimly that England had a foreign policy, more or less had to have it, as they would have said in Elgin; it was part of the huge unnecessary scheme of things for which she was responsible -- unnecessary from Elgin's point of view as a father's financial obligations might be to a child he had parted with at birth. It all lay outside the facts of life, far beyond the actual horizon, like the affairs of a distant relation from whom one has nothing to hope, not even personal contact, and of whose wealth and greatness one does not boast much, because of the irony involved. (59)

The analogies are couched in the family image familiar from the other comparisons, and gain their specific force in the context of those other, more positive interpretations of British-Canadian connections. Aside from the disinterest in complexity, the most unusual feature of this passage is that it effectively separates Canada and England. The family relationship, and thus the imperial connection, is depicted as that of parent and child, but of a parent and child separated since the latter's birth. England is not even the tolerated grandmother in this family, and the completeness of the separation makes any sense of obligation "unnecessary". If one aspect of the passage insists on the "splendid isolation" of Britain, another acknowledges that there may be some Canadian connection with British wealth and prestige. This second aspect is almost as negative, however. The relation is

a "distant" one, certainly not parental, and the connection is noted with "irony", not affection. Britain is perceived as being out of touch with Canada, and there is no hope or interest on the part of either nation in changing the situation. So, the family metaphor for Empire, as used by Canadians in The Imperialist, encompasses everything from imperial ardour to cool detachment, and the concept, which has potent imperialist qualities, is revealed as being open to compromise.

From an imperialist point of view, the compromises undergone by this metaphor in Canada are mild when compared to the distorted views advanced by two Englishmen in the novel, Alfred Hesketh and Charles Chafe. Hesketh introduces his insensitive version of the Empire as a family, when he praises colonial involvement in the Boer War:

> Then did the mother country indeed prove the loyalty and devotion of her colonial sons. Then were envious nations compelled to see the spectacle of Canadians and Australians rallying about the common flag, eager to attest their affection for it with their life-blood, and to demonstrate that they, too, were worthy to add deeds to British traditions and victories to the British cause. (193)

Hesketh affirms the British character of the Empire, and he does so in a tone certain to offend all but the most committed Anglophiles.[2] According to Hesketh, the colonial involvement in the war served as notable proof of colonial

subservience to British tradition. Sacrifices made in campaign ("life-blood") are important as they confirm the worthiness of the colonies "to add deeds" to this tradition. For Hesketh, there is no question of "compulsion", or "common interest". He assumes that the Empire functions as a family because the colonial "sons" are "eager" to serve the "mother country", England, and ignores the whole issue of national individuality and imperial evolution.

A more extreme distortion of the family metaphor is evident in the anti-imperialist arguments of Chafe. The Englishman bitterly opposes a zollverein, the customs union, despite the fact he would benefit from such an arrangement. Chafe is also resolutely anti-colonial: "as to the colonies -- Mr. Chafe had been told of a certain spider who devoured her young ones. He reversed the figure and it stood, in the imperial connection, for all the argument he wanted" (121). The relation of Chafe's consciousness to the imperialist controversy is apparent. His narrow-minded fear of the colonies as somehow ready to devour Britain marks him as the English counterpart of Octavius Milburn. Both men write to the papers attacking Wallingham, and both men feel that while their fellow members of the Empire "might or might not be good customers" (120), any sort of imperial union would only jeopardise the business they are certain of now, and the chance is not

worth taking.

Duncan allows the presentation of Empire as family to encompass many shades of meaning, and she presents a similar range of meaning with the closely related image of Anglo-Saxon blood in The Imperialist. The blood-ties of a family can be the source of a mystical fervour, and as the narrator observes, "Belief in England was in the blood" (59). We have already seen how the key moments of family imagery are connected in the minds of the characters with this same sense of racial blood, and how the strengths of the Empire derive from the undiluted mystical bond "in the blood".

As with the family metaphor, there is a considerable variety of meaning concerning the common racial stock. The members of the delgation are aware of "that new quality in the blood which made them different men" (126), but only Lorne Murchison is conspicuously vital because of it. Of Lorne, the narrator relates that "the theory of Empire coursed in his blood" (259), and his is the exemplary case of the "new quality" made potent by intellectual and emotional commitment to England. Hesketh responds to the special enthusiasm in Lorne Murchison, as "his own blood stirred with the desire to accomplish" (121), and Hesketh sees Lorne approaching the "large matters of the future with a confidence and a grip that quickened the circula-

tion" (121). Hesketh's subsequent behaviour toward Lorne gives this sudden stirring of the blood the ominous thrill of vampirism, and reinforces the overall impression of English stagnation. This impression is one of which Hesketh, unlike Lorne or Finlay, is only "vaguely conscious" (121), and it reaches its most ghastly effect in the description of Charles Chafe as "a cautious, heavy fellow, full of Burgundy and distrust" (120), in other words, as bloodless. By contrast, the continuing vigour of the blood in Canada is literally expressed in a description of Ormiston blushing with imperial emotion as he changes political parties to join the imperialist cause. Ormiston does so with "the red creeping over features that had not lost in three generations the lines of the old breed" (171). Another example of the vitality of Canadian life expressed in similar terms occurs when Finlay realises that Advena is both his intellectual idea, and the woman he loves:

> He broke off, still gazing at her, as if she had been an idea and no more. How much more she was she showed him by a vivid and beautiful blush.
>
> "I am glad you are so well satisfied," she said, and then, as if her words had carried beyond their intention, she blushed again.
>
> Upon which Hugh Finlay saw his idea incarnate. (111)

The negative connotations of the blood metaphor are the

difficulties of adapting the cramped ways of Britain to the expansive colonies. Alfred Hesketh is an example of the difficulties of adaptation, while Finlay warns that the danger of ever-increasing refinement and isolation from the colonies is "'anaemia'" (108). Even in Elgin, there is an awareness of the dangers of the past. So, the tea-party falls silent after Lorne tells of the heart-breaking patience of the British poor because "they all had in the blood the remembrance of what Lorne had seen" (128). Hugh Finlay, as a recent immigrant, supplies the example illustrating the power that this memory can exert. On the one hand, Finlay is ecstatic over the political life of Elgin, which he feels is free of the religious interference so characteristic of British politics: ". . .'here it doesn't even impede the circulation!'" (110). Political life, and therefore personal potential, is perceived as sensible, vigorous, and liberated. On the other hand, Finlay accepts the bonds upon his personal life with the frustrated apology that they are "'somehow in the past and the blood'" (162). Finlay's attachment to tradition is so strong that even the prospect, amply played upon by Dr. Drummond, of unhappiness for Advena and himself does not shake his resolve. The attachment is as irrational and powerful as the positive attributes of Elgin's vitality and adherence to England. Finlay is controlled by the attach-

ment, until his ironic liberation by the two Scotchwomen takes place.

Mrs. Kilbannon and Christie Cameron are surprisingly adaptable emigrants because they have found their ideal entry into Elgin at the home of Dr. Drummond. Their unlikely contribution, unlikely in that it results in so much that is positively good, is discussed in this way: "They come in couples and in companies from those little imperial islands, bringing the crusted qualities of the old blood bottled there so long, and sink with grateful absorption into the wide bountiful stretches of the further countries" (216). The analogy here is to ancient wine, or elixir, escaping an unhealthy confinement ("crusted"), and enriching the soil of the colonies. While the Scotchwomen do not allow themselves to be absorbed by the new society without first receiving Advena with "half-hostile faces" (220), they are also part of the healthy immigration, and of the resulting process of fertile enrichment. The colonies are strengthened by the immigrants because the newcomers renew their immediate ties with Britain, and the immigrants benefit because they have the crucial opportunity for new and "bountiful" lives.

As happens elsewhere in The Imperialist, Duncan demonstrates that support for England and the imperial ideal is not automatic, despite the presence of a common

heritage and immigration from England. The process by which the Empire must be united is hindered in England by an overly complacent sense of security, and a decadent materialism, although the island is revered as "the heart of the Empire, which beats through such impediment of accumulated tissue" (114). In Canada the process is thwarted by an impatient practicality, making people too insensitive to determine "whether there was any chance of insidious sapping" (59). Yet Duncan also expresses dissatisfaction with the conventional response of belligerent fervour that occasionally unites Canada and Britain. Canadians are "indifferent, apathetic, self-centred" (59), until British involvement in a war on the fringes of the Empire ignites the fire of imperial sentiment:

> Then the old dog of war that has his kennel in every man rose and shook himself, and presently there would be a baying! The sense of kinship, lying too deep for the touch of ordinary circumstance, quickened to that; and in a moment "we" were fighting, "we" had lost or won. (59)

Duncan objects to this display of martial emotion as a basis for imperial unity. There is an essential lack of nobility, mockingly noted in the rising, shaking, and baying of the old war-dogs, in an Empire made coherent solely through military prowess. Such displays of unity, although genuine, are only temporary eruptions in the otherwise indifferent isolation of the various members of the Empire. As Duncan implies in this passage, the

Empire must channel the common enthusiasms of kinship and blood in more idealistic and stable ways than war.

The imperialist movement is an attempt to accomplish just this end, and Duncan presents the movement's demands on the patriotism and perception of the characters in ironic terms of light and dark. Again, it must be said that while Duncan acknowledges the complexity of public response, her writing is engaged and partisan. Imperialism is equated with the light of revelation, with "joyous torches in the insular fog" (120), and the anti-imperialists are equated with contented shortsightedness, as being unable "to see further than the lengths of their fists" (222). The reader is presumably politicised by such distinctions, and is constantly reminded of the choice involved in further attempts to illuminate the "insular fog".

In fact, the strongest impression one receives is of the resistance to "the Idea shining high" (263). This metaphorical sun, supposedly the source of so much intellectual brilliance, is not only dismissed as the "blackness of darkness and ruin" (120) by its opponents, but also seems to appear as an enormous cloud that has "obscured the political horizon, and [is] widely spreading" (129). The all-encompassing nature of the issue is per-

ceived as ruinous (as storm-clouds), or as revelatory (as a cloud that illuminates). All previous concerns are reduced by the emergence of imperialism, and yet, so innate is the suspicion with which it is greeted in England that its radiance is described as "filtering through the slow British consciousness, solidifying as it travelled" (120). In terms of light, this process means that, as the public perception of imperialism solidifies, the quality of the imperialist light may change, and be distorted.

Other frustrations inherent in radiating imperialist conviction to the public are discussed in terms of similar imagery. Walter Winter realises that confusion over the material and emotional factors that compose the issue in the public consciousness may be "easily beclouded" (207) by effective use of satire. Wallingham's supporters, in attempting to transmit the light with as little distortion as possible, find that while the "joyous torches" of imperialism "shed a brilliance and infectious enthusiasm, . . . there were not enough to do more than make the fog visible (120). Lorne Murchison's commitment "to do more" finds even those close to him not particularly responsive. John Murchison reacts with mixed emotions as only "the sentimental half of him was ready at any time to give out cautious sparks of sympathy with the splendour of Wallingham's scheme" (260). Elmore Crow is not ready to give out

even this much, and fails "heavily to catch a light even from Lorne Murchison" (149). Most of Elgin chooses to interpret the imperial issue as political bad weather, and joins Parsons, who will "'wait till the clouds roll by'" (166), and vote for Walter Winter in the meanwhile.

The British opponents of "Wallingham's scheme" are more vigorous in their efforts than Parsons, and Duncan describes them in heavily ironic terms: "Many persons found such torches irritating. They pointed out that as England had groped to her present greatness she might be trusted to feel her way further. "Free trade," they said, "has made us what we are. Put out these lights!'" (120). By placing arguments such as these in the mouths of the anti-imperialists, Duncan has certainly directed the reader's response to the debate. The blatant stupidity indicated in this passage far surpasses the "'kindly blindness" (124) criticised by Lorne Murchison. Whatever one's feeling about free trade, a sympathetic reader can not in any way miss the point that Englishmen trusting England to grope "her way further" are fools. In the context of the poetic shaping of the imagery of light and dark that informs Duncan's presentation of the debate, the sympathetic reader must feel some of the impatience with the "'stupid confidence'" (124) of the anti-imperialist

British felt by Lorne Murchison, Hugh Finlay, and possibly by Duncan herself. At this moment, one of the less subtle (or more direct) in The Imperialist, Duncan absolutely confirms the mindlessness of the opposition in the debate over imperial federation. If she does not specify a choice, the correct choice is pointedly implied.

By contrast, the more perceptive and far-sighted characters see the "fog" as a spiritual affliction, and a danger to Britain's position. Finlay feels that his country is blanketed with a shadow of material possessions, and that imperialism is the light: "'I'm afraid I see it in the shadow of the degeneration of age and poverty," said Finlay, smiling -- "or age and wealth, if you prefer it'" (137). Imperialism is a secular religion capable of casting out the shadows and redeeming England and Canada from the disease of materialism. Finlay goes further, and wonders aloud, "'the younger nations can work out their own salvation unaided; but can England alone?'" (137). The spiritual corrective to the despair that Finlay feels makes it urgent that the public be convinced to "'think imperially'" (222), and the struggle to unite the Empire and re-vitalise England is perceived as a struggle "to vindicate the race, the whole of Anglo-Saxondom" (118).

The conception of imperialism as a secular religion pervades The Imperialist, underlying and uniting the various other strands of politics, race, and family. In the hearts and minds of idealistic intellectuals such as Wallingham, Lorne Murchison, or Hugh Finlay, the issue is charged with an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual force that embraces the more conventional and partial conceptions. Duncan ironises this characteristic attribution of divine force to a political cause when imperialism is allowed to glow, in Lorne's campaign literature, as "a halo of Liberal conception" (225). Imperial preference is also ironised in its appearance as a guest in the Murchison drawing-room, as it rests beside Cruickshank: "It seemed to sit there with him, significant and propitious, in the middle of the sofa; they all looked at it in the pauses" (89). Conversely, however, Duncan depicts the effects of the imperial debate as leaving England "absorbed in a single contemplation" (129), and does so in a serious and meditative tone. More fatalistically, the narrator reports the defeats suffered by the imperialist cause in British by-elections, and offers the readers a choice: "we may look on and cultivate philosophy; or we make make war upon the gods with Mr. Wallingham which is, perhaps, the better part" (223). The tentative note of "perhaps, the better part" is as explicit

an instruction as one receives in The Imperialist, but the image of Wallingham as heroically waging war on the earth-bound heaven of his day is a consciously appealing comparison. The light imagery in the selection suggests a Promethean figure, with Wallingham bringing fire to a dark world, and there is the attendant sense of a romantically doomed endeavour, as if the courageous theft is already too late.

Fawcett Wallingham is called a "prophet" (120) hoping "to find the leaven that should leaven the whole lump" (121), a prophetic stance that places him at the centre of the struggle. Wallingham is hampered by his role as a member of the British cabinet, and this interference by the demands of practical politics is repeated in the case of Lorne Murchison in Elgin. Despite this restriction, Wallingham is able to make "astonishing conversions" (129), an explicit example of the prophet and the secular religion suceeding. Later, Wallingham's prophetic work of "teaching and explaining" (222) the tenets of imperialism so enrage members of his party that he seems "to be courting political excommunication with it, except that Wallingham was so hard to effectively curse" (222). Wallingham is hard to curse because he is a prophet, and to such a man a "political excommunication" (again, the similarity with Lorne Murchison and Elgin) is not a reverse in any meaningful

sense. For Wallingham and his followers, party politics are insignificant and compromised in comparison with imperialism and its future.

Wallingham's counterparts in Elgin are Lorne Murchison and Hugh Finlay. Finlay is aware of the "'tremendous moral potentialities hidden in the issue'" (137) which could act as a regenerative force in England, and Murchison is popularly recognised to be "in touch with the Idea" (226). The great flaw in the imperial movement in Elgin is the unfortunate separation, through differing temperaments, of Lorne and Hugh. Duncan calls attention to this separation by making John Murchison and Dr. Drummond close friends, and showing that this coalition of spiritual and secular concerns is conspicuously absent in the second generation. Indeed, what Lorne's vision may lack is some of the spiritual depth and tempering of Finlay who preaches "the gospel of imperialism from Deuteronomy XXX, 14" (198), choosing his text from a chapter in which Moses (again, the prophetic stance) exhorts the Israelites to obedience. The imperial future is connected with the promised land in this allusion, and the Empire is connected with the Israelites, a people enslaved and lost, but someday to find their true home. The absence of so profound a spiritual awareness in Lorne's character makes him a less certain, more impulsive prophetic figure than Finlay. After suffering severe

political and personal reverses, Lorne Murchison is exhausted. He considers joining a friend in the United States, a thought that is discussed in religious terms, as an act of escaping "into more strenuous activities and abandoning his ideal, in queer inverted analogy to the refuging of weak women in a convent" (266-267). Even a conventionally full and happy life as a lawyer in Milwaukee would be a retreat to "a convent", and a refuge inappropriate to someone as significant as Lorne Murchison. Of all the delegates on the business-like pilgrimage to London, the narrator records, "only Lorne Murchison among them looked higher and further; only he was alive to the inrush of the essential; he only lifted up his heart" (117). Lorne Murchison is singled out as truly responding to the secular religion of imperialism, and the description contains overt scriptural reference and rhythm. Such a prophet can not withdraw to some position of private devotion. The "gospel of imperialism" must be preached vigorously, and publically, if it is to suceed.

The established secular religion with which imperialism is striving is the conventional wisdom of the age, the spirit of late-Victorian complacency. In Britain, this (false) religion manifests itself in the free trade movement, personified by Charles Chafe, and sanctified in "the Holy Cobdenite Church, supreme in those islands" (222). The

supremacy of this Church rests on "the national economic creed" (129), and this doctrine of laissez-faire "expressly forbids" (222) the "liberty" (222) of thinking imperially. The Prime Minister appears as a high churchman torn between the narrow strictures of his creed, and the innovations of Wallingham, the prophet who must support "the disabilities of a right honourable evangelist with a gospel of his own" (129) while he is still a member of the Cabinet.

The situation in Elgin is simpler, but analogous. The danger in Canada is that many Canadians are not convinced by the advocates of imperial preference and see "commercial salvation in improved trade relations with the United States" (168). This prospect is encouraged by "'commercial missionaries'" (232) from the United States, who make "calculated prophecies" (259) concerning Canada's imperial opportunities. Duncan consistently joins an adjective from business-practice with a noun from religious belief in order to depict the materialistic nature of the United States. The United States appears a false paradise because of this pattern, and the implication is that religion and business are interchangeable in that country.

Lorne Murchison's "speech of the evening" (234), which concludes with a violent attack on the United States, is a compendium of religious imagery, randomly accurate

political analysis, and rhetoric that is out of control. The significance of the speech in the context of imperialism as a secular religion is the tone of the imagery chosen by Lorne Murchison, and the prophetic stance he adopts in delivering the images. Lorne perceives imperialism "with Wallingham, not only a glorious prospect, but an educative force" (226). Throughout the campaign, Lorne "would now and then breathe in his private soul, 'choose quickly England,' like a prayer" (178), an indication of the importance and urgency he attributes to the imperialist movement. Despite his private prayer that England "'choose quickly'", Lorne plans to convince the voters of Elgin in a more measured fashion, with "a grand marshalling of the facts and review of the principles involved" (228). This projected speech is set aside at the advice of "Bingham and the rest" (228), and with its withdrawal, Lorne loses his opportunity to articulate the "prospect" in a coherent fashion. Instead, his speech is charged with emotional, rather than educational, force. The speech Lorne does give reaches its climax in the intense attack on the United States, and the narrator intrudes to apologise for Lorne's self-conception: "he believed himself, you see, at the bar for the life of a nation" (233). Although the defence of Canada that Lorne presents is not legalistic, and is only sporadically factual, the prophetic

cast may lend his argument a coherence it lacks if examined from a more conventional and rational viewpoint.

The impression Lorne has of himself as being at the centre of an epic battle for Canadian survival is the key to the cosmic aspect of his imagination. He places the prospect of imperial federation not in any immediate political context, but in terms of "'the endless construction and reconstruction of the world'" (228), a seemingly impossible process to relate with a by-election in the riding of South Fox. There is a sense of cosmic urgency in the timing of the controversy. A decision must be reached "'between the rising and the setting of the sun" (226), and the consequences will be universally beneficial "'if the stars continue to be propitious'" (233). Occasionally, the cosmic urgency of the situation, in Lorne's mind, forces him to the use of near-apocalyptic imagery, as if the decision over imperial federation, and his candidacy in South Fox, will produce an astonishing recreation of the cosmos. In his prophetic role, Lorne Murchison finds it natural to survey "'the wrecks of Cabinets'" (230); to conceive of his speech at the opera-house as "one last strenuous call to arms" (227); and to forecast "'a momentous sailing-day'" (230) which will save England from destruction. None of these images applies to South Fox, or to the faithful Liberals addressed by Lorne Murchison.

The images can communicate Lorne's sense of urgency only if Lorne is able to radiate understanding as well as emotional vibrancy. The tragedy of his career is that Murchison is unable to make the connection between the local and the universal comprehensible to his audience, and his speech, especially the imagery just considered, remains only spectacular rhetoric.

In an effort to mediate between the universal reaches of his imagination, and the parochial concerns of his audience, Lorne adapts Biblical phraseology to imperialism. The issue is discussed as "'imperial sacrifice'" (231), studied by "'the seers of political economy'" (233). A prophecy, transcribed in "'the scrolls of the future'" (229) suggests that as long as Canadians "'remain faithful'" (229) to Britain, Canada's national identity is secure. This Biblical phraseology still leaves imperialism in mystical terms, and Lorne Murchison cannot truly convince his "half-comprehending" (229) listeners of the inevitability of his prophecy. At best, the images gives Lorne's rhetoric an effective simplicity ("'the political principles that are ennobled in this country by the imperialist aim'") (228), but at worst, the religious manner reduces him to simple-mindedness ("'and, thank God, we were long poor'") (233). This latter excess, marking

Lorne's separation of impossibly virtuous Canadians and irredeemably fallen Americans is mocked by the narrator, who wittily apostrophises the Boston Tea Party in a parody of Lorne's inflated rhetoric as "that ancient misbehaviour in Boston Harbour" (230).

While the religious imagery fails to convince the audience, it has the even more dangerous effect of encouraging Lorne Murchison to view as normal, conceptions that are quite extraordinary. The central intellectual argument in his version of the imperialist thrust is that England, and the English tradition, may be best preserved and revitalised through liberal exchange with the colonies, and through the political remedy of imperial federation. Lorne Murchison appears persuaded by the oracular ring to his rhetoric that the transformation of the Empire into an imperial federation is inevitable, and that Canada's crucial position in this new Empire is self-evident. Paraphrasing selections from his speech, one may organise the argument in this way: "'it is already written that the centre of the Empire must shift -- and where, if not to Canada?'" (229). "'England has outlived her own body'" (229), and may we not, therefore, look forward to the day when Englishmen sail the Atlantic to take up "'a representative share of the duties and responsibilities of Empire in the capital of the Dominion of Canada?'" (230).

It is no wonder that "the Liberal voters of the town of Elgin blinked a little, looking at it" (230), or that John Murchison shakes his head, whether he does so "slightly" (90), while laughing (130), or smiling "with pleasure" (229), when Lorne Murchison enthuses over the Empire of the future. The imagery he uses is so steeped in religious fervour that it expands his conception into larger-than-life vistas. Lorne can speak logically about the benefits of imperialism, but he can not speak coolly about it, and when he speaks "hotly" (233) his logic departs, leaving the intensity of his emotional commitment naked. The severe rejection of this naked appeal in the election makes it clear that Lorne Murchison's speech "without construction and without control" (230) is completely the wrong appeal to make, especially to his fellow Liberals. The address does nothing to allay their fears about the economic dangers posed by imperial federation, and Lorne's oratory reveals him as too idealistic to be trusted as <u>their</u> political representative.

The ability of Lorne Murchison to fascinate his audience with his prediction of "'a union of the Anglo-Saxon nations of the world'" (233) is celebrated in this description of Lorne as a mystic, surrounded by an aura: "he had them all with him, his words were vivid in their minds; the truth of them stood about him like an

atmosphere" (233). As the election returns demonstrate, however, the mysterious awe dissolves completely, and even this hold on Elgin proves empty. Duncan also deflates such notions earlier in the chapter by noting the respect for Sir Matthew Tellier, the Minister of Public Works, whose "telling speech, with the chink of hard cash in every sentence, a kind of audit by a chartered accountant of the Liberal books of South Fox" (234) is the antithesis of Lorne Murchison's. In Elgin's mind, Tellier "was held to have achieved the loftiest sense, and probably because he deserved to; a kind of afflatus sat upon him" (226). Lorne Murchison may be the true mystic and oracle, and Sir Matthew Tellier the false prophetic figure, but Duncan connects Elgin's impressions of both men, and prevents the reader from interpreting the passage, as it applies to Lorne, as a wholesale endorsement.

The same ironic puncture suffered by one who interprets Lorne Murchison as a powerful shaman is applied several times to the cause with which "his eager apprehending heart" (226) so readily identifies. Imperialism never appears to Lorne "in the faded colours of some old Elizabethan mirage" (226), but to several characters, imperialism is quite as insubstantial as a mirage. It is "'an empty bun-bag'" (210) to Walter Winter; "a grown-up

fairy tale" (225) to the farming community; and "a kind of chivalry" (260) to John Murchison. All these conceptions imply superficial appearance at the expense of inner reality. If imperialism is all these things, it is impractical, silly, misleading, and mannerly. This damning notion appears as the pessimistic heart of The Imperialist: not only is Wallingham's solution too idealistic to appeal to the public, it is also unreal and insubstantial in the first place.

Nevertheless, such pessimism is too hasty and too easy, or so The Imperialist suggests. Throughout the work, there is constant play on the meanings of "balance" as a weighing-apparatus, the equalising of accounts, and the weighing of a question. There is also related punning on "scale(s)" as a device of measurement, and "scale" as a proportionate reduction in size. The delegates drop "into their places in the great scale of London" (113); Mrs. Milburn reports that "'the residences are, of course, on quite a different scale'" (96) in Buffalo; Octavius Milburn is "a man of averages, balances" (51); Lorne thrills to "the dramatic chance for the race that hung even now" (226); Wallingham shows "skill in adjusting conflicting interests" (114); it is "no part of the Murchison policy to draw against

future balances" (35); Dr. Drummond is "alert, poised, critical, balancing his little figure on the hearthrug" (160); Lorne urges his audience "'to announce ourselves for the Empire, to throw all we are and all we have into the balance for that great decision'" (233); Tellier shows "good sound reason why the Liberal candiate should be returned on Thursday, if only to keep the balance right" (234); Advena hopes that her relationship with Finlay will "continue upon terms of happy debt to one another, the balance always changing" (180); Drummond carefully corrects any excess in his services, and "balance was thus preserved" (197); Lorne surveys his father's accomplishments and adjusts "the balance with pride" (154); and Finlay is "familiar with the scale" (107) of Christie Cameron's merits. Duncan's use of this variation operates in the same way as the puns on profit and prophet in The Imperialist. Characters like Milburn think in mercantile terms, and characters like Drummond weigh moral issues, and both use the same expressions, and, even more ironically, make the same sound, but with opposed meanings. There is a more complex meaning, as well, which this separation of characters should not obscure. The image of vast scales weighing the characters' worth, the destiny of their nations, and the fate of imperialism suggests a moment of great urgency, an hour of decision. The image of these scales (of justice?)

in the act of balancing makes Lorne Murchison's use of the imagery of currency to discuss his nation's future curiously tentative and unresolved, as if even this most ardent imperialist was aware of the great balance, and uncertain of the result, of the identity to emerge:

> The question that underlies this decision for Canada is that of the whole stamp and character of her future existence. Is that stamp and character to be impressed by the American Republic effacing "-- he smiled a little --" the old Queen's head and the new King's oath? Or is it to be our own stamp and character, acquired in the rugged discipline of our colonial youth, and developed in the national usage of the British Empire? (233)

CONCLUSION

The Imperialist is a highly complex novel, and Sara Jeannette Duncan's achievement in unifying the various narrative and thematic strands of the novel's material is considerable. There is a sense of unobtrusive organisation and control of fictional material throughout the novel, particularly in the interweaving of the plots and the imagery, that gives the work a satisfying coherence. Duncan is committed to as fully-rounded a depiction of the imperialist controversy that is at the narrative's core as she finds possible, and yet, one feels, she is also committed to a sympathetic presentation of the imperial vision and its proponents. The balance, to use one of key images in the work, that Duncan achieves between these tendencies in her fiction allows the reader to study the movement in both its successes and failures, and to share Duncan's frustration that Lorne Murchison is part of one of those failures.

For this reason, and because of Duncan's meticulous recreation of late-nineteenth century Brantford, The Imperialist is one Canadian novel invariably familiar to students of Canadian history, and its rich treatment of social and political material speaks to issues which still

concern us in our national life. In her discussion of English-Canadian identity, a discussion that is unresolved in the novel, Duncan seems especially far-sighted and rewarding. Again, the complexity of the question is handled with appropriate moral complexity by the novelist. There are few easy choices, on any issue, in The Imperialist.

Indeed, Duncan's complex fictional response to the social and political issues in the novel should remind us that this material is, ultimately, part of a larger narrative framework. While the insight Duncan brings to such issues is fascinating, it is her interlocking imagery and structural abilities that keep them so. The organisation of The Imperialist, through interrelated structure and imagery, is Sara Jeannette Duncan's most subtle accomplishment, though it is, perhaps, her most underestimated.

FOOTNOTES

Notes to Chapter I

[1]The related themes of ironic success, opportunity missed, and outright failure permeate The Imperialist. Aside from Lorne Murchison and Jim Webster, Duncan includes such different examples as Henry Cruickshank who, upon his resignation from the Cabinet on a matter or principle, is called "after a British politician of lofty but abortive views, the Canadian Renfaire" (81); "the lost leader of the Canadian House of Commons" (115) who is campaigning on behalf of "a cause still more completely lost in home politics" (115); Rawlins, the second-string journalist who despairs of handling Florence Belton's sensational testimony, and realises later that it has been the story "which, if he had only been able to handle it adequately, might have led him straight up the ladder to a night editorship" (83); the English immigrants, of whom Lorne generalises that "'we're very apt to get the failures'" (99); Elmore Crow, who is back from the West, and is helping his parents on the farm, now that "'he's wore out his Winnipeg clothes and his big ideas'" (77); and, most pathetically, young Ormiston who leaves his trial for robbery a "free and disconsolate" (88) young man, acquitted of all legal charges, but humiliated, in the eyes of Elgin, because of his involvement with Florence Belton.

Duncan's creation of a gallery of secondary characters whose chief attribute is a failure of some type anticipates the eventual disappointments of Lorne Murchison, and hints that his hopes are unrealistic, in the first place, in an atmosphere so deadened by other defeated hopes.

Notes to Chapter II

[1]Claude Bissell, "Introduction to The Imperialist" (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. ix.

Notes to Chapter III

[1]The image of the Empire as a family was a piece of pro-imperialist rhetoric familiar to supporters of the movement. For example, the following quotation attributed to Stephen Leacock makes the humourist and imperialist sound like a voter in South Fox who would need no urging to cast his ballot for Lorne Murchison:

> Stephen Leacock once compared England to an aged and feeble farmer whose sons had arrived at maturity. "The old man's got old and he don't know it," Leacock wrote, "can't kick him off the place, but I reckon the next time we come together to talk things over, the boys have got to step right in and manage the farm."

Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 261.

[2]The preposterous arguments that Hesketh proposes, and the fact that he is hooted down by the Jordanville audience, should not obscure Duncan's use of the occasion as an opportunity to parody some of "Lorne's beautiful beliefs about England" (127). The Empire as family, the strength of the colonies, the flag, Anglo-Saxon blood, and even Hesketh's appeal to "'loftier principles than those of the market-place and the counting-house'" (194) are all aspects of imperialism that Lorne Murchison reveres. Alfred Hesketh unblinkingly burlesques each one. Even more ironically, Lorne is responsible for accepting Hesketh's offer of campaign assistance, and does so against the advice of the Murchison family.

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