A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GISSING'S REVISIONS IN *WORKERS IN THE DAWN*

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Introduction

"A work that aspires however humbly to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line."[1] It is upon such a standard that I base my belief that George Robert Gissing was a true artist. The analysis of the changes he made in his first published novel, Workers in the Dawn (1880), proves that he too felt that art should carry its justification in every line. Throughout his life, Gissing's main aim was artistic perfection. Although at times he became discouraged with life, he never became discouraged with art. His energies were focused upon his writing. "In truth, I think of very little but art, pure and simple,"[2] he once wrote his sister. Gissing realized that fiction was his field.[3] He struggled against disappointment and poverty, yet he never faltered in his writing. Each of his novels shows some improvement in style, some new phase of the development of the conscious artist. Like Conrad he felt too that

> fiction--if it at all aspires to be art--appeals to temperament....The artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal

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[1] Joseph Conrad, Nigger of the Narcissus, pref., p. xi.

[2] George Gissing, Letters to the Members of His Family, p. 193.

[3] This conviction is stated over and over in his letters.

> through the senses....And it is through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour, and that the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.... [4]
>
> The sincere endeavour to accomplish his creative task, to go as far on that road as his strength will carry him, to go undeterred by faltering, weariness, or reproach, is the only valid justification for the worker in prose. And if his conscience is clear, his answer to those who in the fulness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit,...must run thus: My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you <u>see</u>. That--and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there ...all you demand--and, perhaps, also a glimpse of the truth for which you have forgotten to ask. [5]

The meticulous care with which Gissing shaped his novels and his sensitive, yet truthful, presentation of life fulfil Conrad's definition of artistic aim and purpose. Gissing definitely makes us hear the discordant din of London slums, makes us feel the oppressive weight that wears down the workers in the dawn, and, before all, makes us see the unfortunate dwellers in the dirt and filth of Whitecross Street. His writing proves that his artistic conscience was clear. Gissing "gives us a glimpse of the truth for which we have forgotten to ask."

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[4] Joseph Conrad, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. xii.

[5] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. xiv.

His love for truth, his attempt at scientific observation, his exactness of expression make his style a style worth studying. Gissing worked constantly to improve his novels. Of his first novel he wrote:

> On reading proof of Workers in the Dawn, I am dissatisfied with much, and see how greatly I might have improved my work had I taken more time over it. Now I spend hour after hour in thinking of my characters and their forms, looks, and tones, making them absolutely vivid before my mental eye. [6]

But for all of the crudity and lack of finish in this book there was power and force. Gissing himself realized that "there is much of desperate seriousness in it, and it must be read and accepted by intellectual people, if at all."[7] In his revised edition he strengthened the novel by eliminating many sentimental, didactic, and awkward passages.

Hence, it was with this very first novel, Workers in the Dawn, for the publication of which he paid himself, that Gissing began the conscious striving toward artistic perfection. From 1880 until his death in 1903, Gissing worked with untiring devotion in the direction of his goal. He studied constantly, reading widely the works of the continental novelists: DeMaupassant, Balzac, Daudet, Zola, Flaubert, and Dostoevski and Turgenev. But Gissing developed his concept of art and of life slowly. He set his goal high, and although often

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[6] George Gissing, Letters, p. 65.

[7] Ibid., p. 59.

discouraged, he was never defeated. To him art was the highest product of human life.

> I cannot and will not be reckoned among the petty scribblers of the day, and to avoid it, I must for a time issue only one novel a year, and each book must have a distinct character, a book which no one else would be likely to have written. I have got a solid basis, and something shall be reared upon it. I want money and all it will bring very badly, but I want a respectable position in literature yet more. When I write I think of my best readers, not of the mob.... Two things I aim at in my work: the love of everything that is beautiful, and the contempt of vulgar conventionality. [8]

Persistently Gissing followed this creed. He wrote not for the mob, but for "thinking, struggling men." He continually directed his novels to intelligent people. This practice he maintained throughout his career as a writer.

Gissing believed that "for the work of a man's mind there is but one test, and one test alone, the judgment of generations yet unborn. If you have written a great book, the world will come to know of it."[9] Gissing is now beginning to be read with renewed interest. Some of his novels are coming out in popular editions.[10] A motion picture producer owns the original copy of Workers in the Dawn in which

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[8] Ibid., p. 178.

[9] George Gissing, The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 5.

[10] I do not say this with depreciatory intent. Indeed, as a student of Gissing, I do not know how this study could have been carried on without the E. P. Dutton, Modern Library, and Doubleday-Doran editions.

he made his revisions.[11] But one must remember that Gissing himself admitted that he did not write for the general public.

Workers in the Dawn has as its subject

> the dissipation of illusions, the destruction of ideals, in short the failure of a number of people to gain ends they have set up for their lives, or if they do gain them, their failure to find the enjoyment they expected. [12]

And, as Gissing said, this novel is not a book for those who shy away from truth, "but a book for thinking, struggling men. If the readers can put faith in the desperate sincerity of the author, they will not be disgusted with the book."[13] It is his earliest book, crude in comparison with the finished work that appears in New Grub Street and The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft. But it is powerful, and Gissing in the revisions showed that he felt that it was worth bringing to it much of what he later learned through study and experience. In order to show the factors that influenced Gissing's style, it is necessary to trace the influence of the French and Russian writers on this young Englishman.

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[11] This director is Frank Capra of Columbia Studios.

[12] George Gissing, Letters, p. 62.

[13] Ibid., p. 64.

Chapter II

Influences on Gissing's Style

Into a heritage of idealistic and more or less optimistic Victorian literature came GeorgenGissing. Behind him and around him were romanticists, sentimentalists, and moralists in the novel. Gissing was not essentially antagonistic to his contemporaries, but he turned his steps in another direction. Although he profited from earlier writers,[1] he strode out almost alone[2] to a new and untried field in the vast realm of English letters.

Schooled in continental culture as well as in the literature of his own country, Gissing did much to introduce the new scientific concept of realism to the English novel. He was the first person to practice in a contemporary sense "conscious realism." In addition to this, he was a self-conscious artist at a time when, as Galsworthy said, "most of the English novels gave the impression of having gone to bed with their clothes on." Although his contributions to English literature are important historically

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[1] He particularly admired Dickens and has written one of the best studies on him, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study (1898).

[2] It is not generally known that his earliest work antedates George Moore's by some years.

as ushering in modern realism into the English novel, he must also be given a place in the development of the novel for the distinctive quality of his style.

It has not been until just recently, if even now, that Gissing has been given full credit for his contributions to the development of the new realism in the literature of England. Many have called him a drab writer. In Gissing some critics see only a transitional novelist. Young mistakenly identifies Gissing with the transitional group by saying that

> the novels of Gissing bear all the marks of a period of transition; they retain features of a passing Victorian type--sentimental, capricious, benevolently admonitory, plot ridden.... [3]

But Gissing's novels are more than a bridge[4] to cover the gap between the Victorians and the later realists. His work is the first paving block on the road to greater scientific realism. One needs only to read Workers in the Dawn, The Nether World, Thyrza, Isabel Clarendon, The Unclassed, and New Grub Street, all of which deal intimately with the unrelieved misery of London slums, to know that here is a realistic portrayal of life. The pictures of life as Gissing presents them appear brittle to some; harsh and violent to others. Contemporary novelists accused Gissing of unnecessary sordidness and brutality in his novels. In

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[3] W. M. Young, "George Gissing," Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XIII, Pt. 2, p. 654.

[4] Besant, Kingsley, and Reade did this work.

Gissing's own life blacks and greys predominated over the colors. He painted life as he saw it. And if what he saw was disillusionment and frustration, then that is what he painted. He did not create sweetmeats to please the palates of his readers: he gave his readers life, and if that life was too simple, too unpleasant, and too cruel, then the reader could go his way. Early in 1880 Gissing said:

> For the reader of fiction I do not write, nor do I expect to please that worthy abstraction. My novel [Workers in the Dawn] is only deficient in dramatic interest in the sense in which all the best novels are deficient. It is not sensational in plot, since its object is to depict real life. 5

Because he took his subject from a sphere hitherto unexploited by English novelists, it is not at all surprising to find that Gissing met with misunderstanding, opposition and the resultant limitation of his reading public. He admired Dickens, but the type of thing that Dickens wrote was not Gissing's forte; nor did he wish it to be. Gissing's style has its roots deep in the literature of the French and Russian realists. From them he gained his love for truth, his fearless portrayal of actual life, his objectivity, his sincerity, and his love of the proper phrase.

The French naturalist, Emile Zola, had as a part of his creed the slice-of-life theory which implied the cross-sectioning of certain portions of the world in which we live and the analyzing of the selected piece through all

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5 George Gissing, Letters, p. 56.

of its various strata. Gissing followed this portion of Zola's creed to the letter. He himself realized, as did George Meredith,[6] that he could best use life in the slum regions of London. Here Gissing was familiar with the cross-section of life he was to describe. He could, like Zola, intensify what he saw. He could, as Zola did, create in the brain a "world more striking, and in a sense truer, than the actual world."[7] He could see clearly what was around him. Gissing had lived in poverty-stricken holes, seen the dirt and filth of Whitecross Street, hungered and shivered in scantily furnished backrooms and garrets. No wonder Gissing could write as fluently, as fiercely, and as intently as he did on such portions of the nether world. It is true that he was not at one with the people who lived there. His natural tastes and education raised him above the people with whom he lived. Yet, like Zola, he wanted his novels to be more than just "an observation, showing the combinations of life";[8] he wanted them to be "an experience, which seeks to bring forth facts and disengage a law."[9] Zola manifested a "surprising and abnormal

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[6] Meredith advised Gissing to keep to his portrayal of slum life. (See Letters, p. 141.)

[7] Robert Vallier, "Emile Zola," Warner's Library of the World's Best Literature, XXVII, p. 16285.

[8] Ibid., p. 16285.

[9] Ibid., p. 16285.

predilection for the ugly."[10] Gissing too was unafraid of ugliness. In fact Gissing's novels seem sordid; yet they are none the less true. In Gissing we may may find savagry, but it is the savagry of indignation.

Daudet interested and appealed to George Gissing. In a letter to his brother dated September 22, 1885, Gissing queried:

> How do you get on with Daudet? Is he not purely delightful? The style is admirable, and the characters intensely real. Few French novelists have written more humanly. [11]

and later

> Daudet is said to be wretchedly ill, allowed only a half hour's writing per diem. I fear we have read the last of him; an extinction of the delight of nations, if ever there was one. [12]

Gissing was certainly more than passingly familiar with the work of Daudet.

Gissing also came under the influence of one of the greatest French realists--Gustave Flaubert. In his careful choice of words, his exactness of phrasing, and in the turn of his sentences Gissing was undoubtedly[13] influenced by that master of precision and impersonality. Gissing, like Flaubert, attempted an objective attitude and

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[10] Ibid., p. 16286.

[11] George Gissing, Letters, p. 168.

[12] Ibid., p. 323.

[13] See Letters, Essay on Realism, and Charles Dickens.

scientific observation. By holding aloof from life itself, acting as a spectator, Gissing, like the scientific realists, attempted to give an unbiased picture of life. Gissing knew from study that Flaubert stated facts and only such details as improve the facts that are given. Flaubert advocated an awareness of external objects and a scientific examination of them. That Gissing took this point of view also[14] is evident in an excerpt of a letter dated July 18, 1883. In it he presented this attitude:

> My attitude henceforth is that of the artist's pure and simple; the world is for me a collection of phenomena, which are to be studied and reproduced artistically. In the midst of the most serious complications of life, I find myself suddenly possessed with a great calm, withdrawn as it were from the immediate interests of the moment, and able to regard everything as a picture. I watch and observe myself just as much as others. The impulse to regard every juncture as a "situation" becomes stronger. In the midst of desperate misfortune I can pause and make a note for future use, and the afflictions of others are to me materials for observations. [15]

It is evident from the above quotation that Gissing did strive to better his work through an objective attitude and a more artistic presentment.

DeMaupassant was another Frenchman who exerted a telling power on Gissing. The realism of DeMaupassant was not photographic; nor was George Gissing's. In the

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[14] See also the Gissing quotation on the next page.

[15] George Gissing, Letters, p. 128.

preface to the second edition to Pierre et Jean DeMaupassant said:

> Since the truth, to each of us, is in his own mind, his own organs, our individual eyes and ears, taste and smell, create as many truths as there are human beings in the world....Each of us, then, has simply his own illusion of the world: poetical, sentimental, cheerful, melancholy, foul, or gloomy, according to his nature. And the author has no other mission than faithfully to reproduce this illusion, with all the elaborations of art which he may have learned and have at his command....All the great artists are those who can make other men see their own particular illusion. 16

Gissing's ideas on the subject were expressed in this manner:

> As soon as a writer sits down to construct a narrative, to image human beings, or adapt those he knows to changed circumstances, he enters a world distinct from the actual, and call himself what he may, he obeys certain laws, certain conventions, without which the art of fiction could not exist. Be he a true artist, he gives us pictures which represent his own favorite way of looking at life; each is the world in little, and the world as he prefers it. So that, whereas execution may be rightly criticized from the common point of view, a master's general conception of human tragedy or comedy must be accepted as that without which his work could not have taken form. 17

Throughout the work of DeMaupassant, as in the work of Gissing, runs a strain of pessimism. But with this pessimistic philosophy, there is a sincere love of beauty of value, beauty of treatment.

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16 Guy DeMaupassant, Pierre et Jean (second edition), pref., p. 8.

17 George Gissing, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study, p. 284.

Gissing has been criticized for his lack of beauty. Yet in his treatment in the development of his characters we do find beauty. Although Gissing is ever conscious that they do exist, the squalid surroundings are not all that there is to life. A classical scholar at heart, Gissing loved beauty. He realized, however, that it has its place as well as everything else. When a person mentions beauty, he must remember that there is a potential beauty and a potential ugliness in all things. What we are most likely to class as beauty is apparent surface beauty. But there are other kinds. There is some material which appears ugly at first--morbid, diseased life--which hypnotically fascinates one upon closer observation. When the right person analyses the material, he finds beauty.[18] Gissing may have been attempting to prove that beauty may develop even from squalid surroundings. The following quotation would seem to indicate this: "The painting of a dunghill may be justified provided that there blooms on it a beautiful flower; without this, the dunghill is merely repulsive."[19]

Beauty appealed to Gissing, but he remembered that life cannot be spent entirely in looking at beauty. Squalor, filth, and vice are in existence. He was at one with Zola and his school in believing that one must write about what

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[18] I am deeply indebted to Dr. M. D. Clubb, Head of the English Department, Oklahoma A. and M. College, for these ideas which I received in his Interrelation of the Arts course.

[19] This Renan quotation prefaced Gissing's Nether World.

goes on in life. Gissing accepted the challenge. His pictures may be black, but they are a sincere reproduction of one phase of life. There is passion behind his sombre pictures, and as Buchan states:

> He painted the ugliness of life because he found it ugly and hated the foul images. There were truths, cruel truths, which comfortable prosperity chose to ignore; there were stunted, warped specimens of humanity whom society passed by on the other side. 20

In his novels Gissing endeavored to paint life both realistically and artistically. He realized that the artist must make his selection of certain portions of life and intensify them in order to make life appear more real than it actually is. His philosophy of art is summed up in his essay on realism.

> Let the novelist take himself as seriously as the man of science; be his work to depict with rigid faithfulness the course of life, to expose the secrets of the soul, to show humanity in its eternal combat with fate. No matter how heart-rending the result, the artist has no responsibility save as to his own artistic conscience. The only question is, has he wrought truly in matter and form?...A demand for complete objectivity is worse than meaningless, for apart from the personality of the workman no literary art can exist....Realism signifies sincerity in the portrayal of everyday life....The artist must recognize limits in every direction, that he will constantly reject material as unsuitable to the purpose of art, and that many features of life are so completely beyond his province that he cannot dream of presenting them. 21

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20 John Buchan, History of English Literature, p. 565.

21 George Gissing, Essay on Realism.

In his patient enumeration of small and accurate details, Gissing owed much to these Frenchman. He said that he thought it important to "try and see into the truth of things, lower than mere surface; that is what few people do."[22] And although Gissing's view of life was rather narrow, he plumbed exceedingly deep into its stream.

To the French writers, then, Gissing owed the fact that he felt the necessity of knowing thoroughly his material; he worked for a scientific attitude, insofar as it could be attained; he developed a love of sincerity; and he paid particular attention to exactness of wording and phrasing. Although there can be no doubt that aspects of French realism are present, Gissing chose to leave the documentation, the extreme brutality, and tendencies toward naturalism in its more brutal phases out of his novels.

But there is another branch of realism which left its mark on Gissing's work. From the Russian novelists he received help in poetic direction of style, use of superflous detail, humanity of treatment, a profound sense of beauty with its quick fading, and a further development of conscious artistry.

The three main factors evident in the field of Russian realism are: the interest in social problems with a realistic rendering of their effect upon contemporary life; a

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[22] George Gissing, Letters, p. 113.

critical attitude in which there is an avoidance of extremes of grotesque and romantic styles; and a poetic quality expressed best when evidencing a vivid insight into nature and humanity.[22] Turgenev pointed out evils surrounding the social problems of contemporary life, but he did not try to cure them.[23] Gissing presented the facts and let the reader draw his own conclusions. Turgenev was sensitive to minute detail. He wrote powerfully of the futility and temporary aspect of life. It is not amazing that he influenced Gissing with his realistic presentations of commonplace life. In Turgenev's novels young Gissing found inspiration and a wealth of material upon which to pattern his novels. In his novels Turgenev artistically creates a careful simplicity of style and an elaborate naturalness. On the mere happenings of the world he places no undue emphasis, for he considers life not over-obvious in its workings. Yet through his selection of detail, Turgenev intensifies impressions. So does George Gissing. In the revisions that Gissing made on the earlier edition of Workers in the Dawn, there are evidences of this Russian's influence upon Gissing. The underlying current of human frustration and despair in Gissing's novels shows how sincerely Gissing absorbed the work of Turgenev.

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[22] Prince D. S. Mirsky, "Russian Realism," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XIX.

[23] Fathers and Sons illustrates this point.

In delineation of character both physiologically and psychologically, Gissing may be compared to Dostoevsky. In the hard-working, intelligent characters in the novels of Gissing, we find kinship with the characters of Dostoevsky's novels.[24] In both writers there appears a sympathy and a pity for humanity.[25]

That Gissing was helped and influenced by the French and Russian artists is not an idle conjecture on my part. Several times in his letters to his family, Gissing mentioned the delight he had in reading the German translations of the Russian writers.[26] He wrote too of the enjoyment he had in the works of Daudet, Balzac, and DeMaupassant. His thoughts ran in the same channels as did those of the continental realists. In a letter written on July 31, 1886, he declared:

> The writers who help me most are the French and Russian; I have not much sympathy with the English points of view. And indeed that is why I scarcely think that my own writing can ever be popular. [27]

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[24] Compare, for example, the student in Crime and Punishment with Arthur Golding, Workers in the Dawn.

[25] Although this pity is not openly declared, it is felt.

[26] Gissing at one time attempted to learn Russian but gave it up. He thought that this might help him to enjoy to a fuller extent the flavor of the Russian novels. See the various letters referring to this subject in Letters to the Members of His Family.

[27] George Gissing, Letters, p. 182.

Later on, however, he definitely read English writers in order to study their style, even if their thoughts did not appeal to him especially. In discussing the growth of intellectual and aesthetic appreciation with his brother, Gissing wrote:

> In writing I feel unmistakable increase of power; the persistent study of English style is beginning to tell. I write more slowly than ever, but with infinitely more savour. 28

Chief among these English novelists that he studied was one of his own contemporaries, George Meredith. It was Meredith who encouraged Gissing to go ahead with his realistic portrayals of the life in the slum districts of London. Meredith realized that Gissing excelled at that type of writing. The Unclassed, in particular, won Meredith's favorable comment.[29] Gissing was naturally proud to win the approval of a man whom he admired very much for his deep intellect. Gissing followed Meredith most closely in the cry for "more brains, O Lord, more brains." On March 4, 1892 Gissing communicated this idea to his sister:

> I throw what weight I have in on the side of those who believe in the aristocracy of brains, as against the brute domination of the quarter-educated mob. 30

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28 Ibid., p. 169.

29 Meredith was then (1884) a reader for Chapman's.

30 George Gissing, Letters, p. 243.

Gissing and Meredith were intimately acquainted. In his letters Gissing reveals many of their ideas on books, on people, and on life.[31]

Another Englishman whom Gissing admired was Robert Browning.[32] For good dialogue and general method, Gissing spent hours of study surveying Browning's work. In fact he once wrote his brother that he was to remember how much like Browning's methods his own were.[33] It is a fact that Gissing's novels abound in dialogue and intelligent repartee. It is no wonder that he once wrote "Browning is a particular favorite of mine."[34]

Thus, by his own statements, it is evident that Gissing was familiar with and influenced by the French, the Russian, and the English writers. We have seen how important were the influences of the scientific observation and conscious artistry on character delineation. A critical analysis of Gissing's revisions in his first published novel, Workers in the Dawn, will reveal something of the lessons learned from the French and Russian novelists and the gradual development and unfolding of Gissing's conscious artistry of style.

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31 See Gissing's Letters, pp. 138, 141, 155, 157, 170-72, 341-344, 346, 347, 350, and 365.

32 See Gissing's Letters, pp. 92, 106, 108, 141, 161, 179, 211, 217, 218, 219, 303, and 320.

33 George Gissing, Letters, p. 141.

34 Ibid., p. 92.

Chapter III

Classification and Analysis of the Revisions in Workers in the Dawn

Gissing was always interested in craftsmanship. He worked constantly to straighten and smooth his material until in his later work he produced the fine quality of workmanship and perfectly shaped material that appear in The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft. This interest in craftsmanship determined Gissing to revise his first published novel, Workers in the Dawn. He realized its early crudity and lack of smoothness, but he felt that it had power and imagination. Although Gissing later abandoned the task of revising the novel, in the revisions that he did make[1] there are distinct evidences of the gradual evolution of his style; as I believe, of the effects of the French and Russian writers on his style. The corrections reflect not only the development of the man's artistry but the development also of the man and his thinking. One critic has said of Gissing that

> ...of few writers can it be said in so full a sense that the books are the man. The style, pure, scholarly, intensely earnest, yet shy and generally

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[1] As yet the date of the revisions has not been determined. Robert Shafer, editor of the Doubleday-Doran edition which I used for this study, wrote me (in a letter dated February 15, 1940) that "had the date of the revisions been recorded in the Gissing's copy, I should have said so in my introduction to Workers in the Dawn."

> lacking in brisk energy and force, is the man. The atmosphere of his books, full of the depression arising from their sordid studies of sordid backgrounds and poverty-stricken social groups; their general monotony of color; their realistic intentness upon the actualities of life in which hampering circumstance is broken through only by the subjective forces of intellect and emotion, and then only partially, all this furnish the best key to the character of the man. In his novels he not only describes incidents of his own life, scenes that he had witnessed and experienced that were his own, but introspectively draws his own character. [2]

Most of the revisions, appear, at first glance, to be simply a matter of omission of part of the material making up the bulk of the novel, but I disagree with Robert Shafer who says that: "It will be seen at once that Gissing's principal object was to shorten the novel."[3] Although part of the material that hinders the progress of the story is removed, the removal is for a reason other than the mere shortening of the novel. Upon closer inspection of the deletions one is aware that there is a conscious artistry involved in the revisions that Gissing made. Even though he never completed the revisions in the three volumes, whether from ill health or pressure of time--we do not know, the fact that he recognized errors in his earlier work and at one time set about to correct his earlier crudities of style, proves how willing he was to adapt himself to an ever-increasing consciousness of style.

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[2] Allen Nevins, "George Gissing," Warner's Library of the World's Best Literature, p. 3541.

[3] Robert Shafer, Introduction, p. lv., Workers in the Dawn.

He was able to view his earlier writing with a strong sense of its deficiency in craftsmanship. As a critic he realized that there was a vital force and a powerful drive in his earliest novel which could be made more effective if the novel were revised. Thus, perhaps, Gissing began his revisions in Workers in the Dawn. Although obviously an immature work, the novel was definitely improved after the revisions were made.

Workers in the Dawn is a three-volume novel; at times the story drags. But one feels beneath that slow surface action a mighty undertow. And although the surface appears to be sluggish, deep down there is turbulent action. Such a power grips and fascinates. And one who has plunged deep into Workers in the Dawn is conscious of the power which this novel possesses.

Through a study of the revisions one becomes aware of the ability of Gissing as a stylist. His development as an artist can be seen in the things he revised in the novel. A critical analysis of Gissing's revisions in Workers in the Dawn shows the definite trends toward a more conscious art, a more diligent pursual of a smooth prose style, and a more realistic treatment of life. These revisions may be classified into the following groups: (1) Omissions of material which spoiled the illusion of the conscious artist, (2) Omissions which made for a greater objectivity, (3) Elimination of passages for effect or exactness, and (4) Deletion of material which retarded the action. In order that we may

follow the continuity of the story, the revisions will be discussed in the order in which they appear in the novel.[4]

At the opening of the novel, the author takes us down Whitecross Street in London on Saturday night. He leads us into the poverty-stricken districts, and we shudder at the sights revealed by the flickering gas-lamps. Rottenness is evident everywhere. "Yes, children are born here, and men and women die. Let us devoutly hope that the deaths exceed the births."[5] There is no need for the devoutly there. It is an ugly scene. The word hope is enough. Flaubert would not have added the unnecessary and out of place devoutly. This is the first deletion. Now back down the street we go until we reach an umbrella peddler. His talk is "an amazing mixture of rude wit, coarse humour, and voluble impudence." Gissing in the first edition included an example of the peddler's dialect, crude in its "Jewk of Cork" and "damned cheap too"; but he cut it in his revision as he realized that such detail did not add to the picture or to the book. This omission is in line

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[4] For this study I used the Doubleday-Doran edition of Workers in the Dawn, edited by Robert Shafer. Conveniently arranged by means of footnotes, the revisions were shown along with the original reading of the text.

[5] George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 4.

with the statement by Flaubert "that facts and only such details as improve the facts" should be employed by the artist. After passing many stalls, we see a young working lad being induced to spend a shilling for the delight of some comsumptive girl. In the unrevised edition Gissing added to the story by saying: "...with the result, perhaps, of leading her to seek in a brothel a relief from the slow death of the factory or the workroom." But Gissing realized that such additions destroyed the illusions of artistry. He himself rebelled aginst the tell-all school: "Thackeray and Dickens wrote at enormous length; their plan is to tell everything, and leave nothing to be divided." Pushing still farther along this filthy lane, we see a beggar girl. She pleads with us to buy some salt. If we refuse, Gissing tell su, she may receive a brutal beating. In his revised edition Gissing removed the brutal as an unnecessary adjective. If the child received a beating, it would be brutal.

The crowd, consisting mostly of women, presses us closely. Originally Gissing included these paragraphs:

> But look at the faces! Here is a young mother with a child sucking at her bare breast, as she chaffers with a man over a pound of potatoes. Suddenly she turns away with reddened cheeks, shrinking before a vile jest which creates a burst of laughter in the bystanders. Pooh! She is evidently new in the quarter, perhaps late come up from the country. Wait a year, and you will see her joining in the laugh at her own expense, with as much gusto as that young woman behind her, whose features, under

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[6] Ibid., p. 5.

[7] George Gissing, Letters, p. 166.

> more favorable conditions, might have had something of beauty, but starvation and dirt and exposure have coarsened the grain and made her teeth grin woefully from between her thin lips.
>
> Or look at the woman on the other side who is laughing till she cries. Does not every line on her face bespeak the baseness of her nature. Cannot one even guess at the vile trade by which she keeps her limbs covered with those layers of gross fat, whilst those around her are so pinched and thin? Her cheeks hang flabbily, and her eyes twinkle viciously. A deep scar mars her forehead, a memento of some recent drunken brawl. When she has laughed her fill, she turns to look after a child which is being dragged through the mud by her skirts, being scarcely yet able to walk, and, bidding it with a cuff and a curse not to leave loose of her, pushes on stoutly through the crowd. 8

Gissing probably decided that such detail was unnecessary. Or perhaps he decided to omit the paragraphs in view of his belief:

> Far more artistic, I think, is the method of merely suggesting; of dealing with episodes, instead of writing biographies. I think it is better to tell a story as one does in real life, hinting, surmising, telling in detail what can be so told and no more. 9

Gissing summarizes thus: "Well, here is the Whitecross Street of today." He cuts out the passage:

> We suffer them the people seen here to become brutes in our midst, and inhabit dens which clean animals would shun, to derive their joys from sources from which a cultivated mind shrinks as from a pestilential vapour. And can we console ourselves with the reflection that they do not feel their misery? 10

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8 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, pp. 7-8.

9 George Gissing, Letters, p. 166.

10 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 8.

He need not point out a moral; didacticism is not half as effective as the honest portrayal of facts. He presents the social problems of the poor as they are; he does not elaborate upon them; he preaches no lesson. The evils of poverty are presented, and the reader can make of them what he will. In this respect Gissing is like Zola who believed that "we do not have to draw a conclusion to our work; the work must carry its own conclusion."[11]

We move from the street to a dirty tenement house. A gentleman is searching for Number 9, Whitecross Street. Later we find that he is Edward Norman, vicar. He is hunting for an old schoolmate of his, Arthur Golding. A street urchin directs him to the house, where Norman is conducted to Golding's quarters by a grimy landlady. Golding is ill. We enter his room. Specific in his description, Gissing tells us:

> The room, which was ten feet square and about six in height, contained absolutely no furniture save a rude three-legged table. The floor was rugged and sloped from one side towards the other. [12]

Gissing changed this passage to read: "contained no furniture." If a room contains no furniture except a three-legged table, one need not add absolutely.

Once inside of the room, Edward Norman discovers Golding, dying, with his son sitting close by his side. The description of the death scene is equal to many of the passages

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[11] Robert Vallier, "Emile Zola," Warner's Library of the World's Best Literature, Vol. XXVII, p. 16284.

[12] George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 11.

in Zola's novels. But at the end of the scene Gissing omits this passage:

> The child shook off the speaker's hands, and took hold of the arm of the corpse as if to prevent himself from being removed by force.
>
> "Why should I go with you?" exclaimed the child, impulsively. "I'm going to stay with father, I am. I'll wait till he wakes. I don't know you at all, do I?"
>
> Mr. Norman reflected for a moment, then spoke in a kind, low voice--
>
> "Your father is dead, my poor child. He will never wake."
>
> The boy stared with terror in the speaker's face, then sprang to the dead man's side, and grasped the face in his hands. He seemed to understand that the stranger was telling him the truth. He fell upon his face on the floor, sobbing as if his heart would break, and between his sobs, crying--
>
> "Father, father!"
>
> It was in vain to endeavor to take him away, and Mr. Norman was ultimately obliged to leave him alone in the garret with the corpse. 13

In the revised edition Gissing merely has Norman lead the terror-stricken child away. We know that the child would probably not feel like uttering such sentiments upon first becoming conscious of the death of his father; nor would it be natural for him to inquire of the stranger, at such a time, whether or not he knew him. For a child eight years of age to carry on in the manner first described by Gissing seems unbelievable. Far truer appears the revised account. A greater objectivity is reached in the simple, revised account.

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13 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

At the beginning of the second chapter, the scene changes to the country surrounding Edward Norman's vicarage. We are given a little history of Norman and his word in the parish of Bloomford. The duties, Gissing tells us were not arduous,

> ...and the compensation, from a purely sordid point of view--that the treasure upon earth which the clergy doubtless prize merely as a type of the heavenly treasure which will one day be theirs... 14

was liberal. In remodelling the introductory paragraph to the second chapter, Gissing omitted the supercilious passage just quoted. Continuing with his story, Gissing describes the character of Edward Norman, ending by telling us that Norman is an invalid, suffering from consumption. In the original edition this was not enough for Gissing; he wrote,

> It made its first decided appearance when he came of age, and now that he was almost thirty-five he could entertain no hope of its relaxing the hold it had gained upon his constitution. 15

Tuberculosis usually does wear one down. How much more effective and forceful is the revised edition which simply states that Norman suffered from consumption.

From a description of the rector, Gissing progresses to a description of the rectory. On the grounds is an observatory tower where, in his earlier days, Edward Norman studied the stars, in consequence of which he had been at first "...regarded as a species of Dr. Faustus, with whom

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14 Ibid., p. 15.

15 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

it might possibly be dangerous, notwithstanding the soundness of his doctrine, to hold much connection."[16]

The author then tells us the story of Edward Norman's short, but happily married life, the birth of his daughter Helen, and the death of his beautiful wife at childbirth. In the first edition Gissing added a very sentimental and touching story of the days following the death of Helen's mother, including the troubles that beset Norman, the attempts of the young ladies of the village to become the second Mrs. Norman, and the final addition of Mrs. Cope, housekeeper, as a means of settling the question. When he made his revisions, Gissing took out a portion of the story of the first year of bereavement and thus created a more forceful picture than had he told all. Like DeMaupassant who believed that

> The realist, if he is an artist, will endeavor not to show us a commonplace photograph of life, but to give us a presentment of it which shall be more complete, more striking, more cogent than reality itself. To tell everything is out of the question. A choice must be made. [17]

Gissing chose his scenes.

The next revision occurs in the description of the curate of the parish, Mr. Whiffle. In the first edition Gissing had a rather long description of the man, and the reader feels

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[16] Ibid., p. 18.

[17] Guy DeMaupassant, op. cit. p. 10.

that he could pick him out of a crowd of people. At the end of the description Gissing wrote:

> I may, however, remark that the man was a living satire upon the Church of which he was a servant, an admirable caricature, far excelling anything that a professed ridiculer of ecclesiasticism could possibly have conceived. 18

And it is unnecessary that such a passage be left in the novel. It is in such revisions as this that Gissing shows himself a true artist--and an artist affected by the French and Russian schools. Turgenev said that the

> ...writer must be a psychologist, but a secret one: he must sense and know the roots of phenomena but offer only the phenomena themselves--as they appear....The psychologist must disappear in the warm and living body for which it serves as a firm but invisible support. 19

And DeMaupassant believed that "the artist who paints our picture does not display our bones";[20] so why should the artist who paints with words display all. Therefore, Gissing in his revised edition spread an air of exactness by omitting clogging reflection. Here is definite proof of his conscious artistry.

After we have been given a word picture of the curate, we have the opportunity to hear Norman and Whiffle in conversation. There appeared in the first edition several pages of rather stilted conversation which Gissing omitted in the

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18 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 25.

19 Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, His Art, and His Age, p. 194.

20 Guy DeMaupassant, Pierre et Jean, p. 9.

revisions. Such consciouness to the naturalness of dialogue makes for scientific realism and a greater objectivity. One passage that Gissing included in the first edition might serve to prove the point:

> The thought oftenest in my mind whilst in that hideous scene was: "How can we wonder that men doubt the existence of God?" said the rector, speaking more to himself than to Mr. Whiffle.
>
> "Precisely the same thought has occurred to myself. Really, one ought to carry about with one a small selected volume of religious evidences, especially for such occasions."
>
> There was a silence for some minutes, during which Mr. Whiffle whistled a Te Deum in a very low tone.
>
> Mr. Norman then suddenly roused himself. "But I have been wandering," he said. 21

Here we stray close to the preaching of a lesson. In his revised edition Gissing saw his error and omitted the passage. Henry James once said that "art and morality are two utterly different things....The only duty of the novel is to be well written; that merit includes every other of which it is capable." And so Gissing in striving for pure art, scientific objectivity, separates art from morality. He tells his story straightforwardly. This conversation of which we have just been speaking was, in the first edition, the longest dialogue in the novel. The two men talk on and on, but Gissing realized that one must leave something to be divined by the reader. In the original Workers, Gissing had Norman tell also a frothy, sentimental story of his acquaintanceship with Arthur Golding's mother and father. It destroyed the illusion

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21 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 28.

of artistry; so these passages were deleted from the revised edition. In cutting out this portion of the novel Gissing revealed that he was striving for a realistic presentation of life. Like Flaubert and Turgenev, Gissing was dedicated to the objective method, intent on making the novel not "a vehicle of fantasy or individual crotchets, but a transparent vessel which would at once show the true color of life and give it shape."[22] It is true that there appears much of what is called "a personal vision of truth and logic of art" in Gissing's works, but he presents his story as definitely as he can--and he is true to his own conscience.

The next alteration that Gissing made was the omission of the long conversation between Helen, aged eight, and her father. The youngster asked, among other deep questions, "Father, what is God?" The dialogue which followed was full of moral preaching. Gissing shows in this revision a similarity to Turgenev who held that the striving "after impartiality and integral truth is one of the few good qualities for which I am grateful."[23] But ever-conscious artist that he became, Gissing realized that the philosophy did not add to the story; in fact, it helped destroy the objectivity of the novel. And as he wrote his brother about his novels,

> I do not dogmatise, remember; my ideas are negative and on the whole I confine myself to giving pictures of life as it looks to my observance of it. The outlook, certainly, is not very cheerful; it is impossible

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[22] Avraham Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 312.

[23] Ibid., p. 128.

> for me to see the world in a rosy light....At the best it looks to me, not only intolerable. As far as human aspirations, I know not their meaning, and can conceive no credible explanation....The world to me is mere phenomena (which means literally that which appears), and I study it as I do a work of art--but without reflecting on its origin. 24

This chapter was at first full of conversations. The next one takes place between Helen and Arthur. Arthur has never felt quite at home with Helen and he father. The life he had lived before was in entirely different circumstances. His father had not encouraged him to study. Suddenly he is placed in a calm, cultured intimacy with the Normans. He is given lessons by the domineering Mr. Whiffle, and he finds that he is homesick. Helen does her best to try to interest him in something, and she decides to ask him about his future. In this conversation which Gissing removes from his corrected copy, there were many of Gissing's personal attitudes toward books and their value.

Finally Helen and Arthur come to a timid friendship, and they are just beginning to enjoy one another's company when a distant cousin of the Normans comes to visit, turning the house into a gay scene of endless parties and visitors. At first Gissing had a long description of the parties, but in reworking his novel he left out these pages. They only retarded the progress of the novel. The sensitive Arthur withdraws into a shell and becomes depressed. Shrinking more and more within himself, he lets his mind dwell on his former life.

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24 George Gissing, Letters, p. 318.

Finally he becomes so homesick, he decides to leave Bloomford. Originally Gissing wrote that Arthur thought that he

> would run away. He would visit his father's grave; the people of the house he had lived in would tell him where it was. He felt, in his instinctive, unreflecting way that it would be a happiness to fall down upon it and die, so unutterably wretched was he. The feeling actuating him was as the longing of a child for the mother's breast; the yearning of a mariner on a desert island for the home he will never see again; the ardent soul-quelling desire of a lover to gain the side of an absent mistress. As I have said, he did not reflect upon his longing; he would not then have been a child of eight years. It was instinct, and all the more invincible. 25

But as the Russians cast an aura of mystery around their characters' lives, yet produce a sense of reality, by leaving something to be surmised by the reader, so did Gissing admit that

> ...it is a fact in itself remarkable, that by dint (it seems) of omitting those very features which in life most strongly impress us, an artist in fiction can produce something which we applaud as an inimitable portrait. 26

Later in the novel, Gissing, working on the above principle, takes out not only this scene but another similar:

> "Where have they buried my father?" he sobbed out, after giving full vent for a minute to the distress which overmastered him. "Will you please tell me?"
>
> "How the devil should I know?" replied the woman with a croaking laugh. 27

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25 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, pp. 55-56.

26 George Gissing, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study, p. 113.

27 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 66.

The strangers make a hermit out of Arthur. Brooding, he makes himself miserable; he stays out late at night, hiding in the trees to keep from meeting some of the guests. One night he hears music. Knowing that he would not be allowed in the drawing room with the older people, the little boy stays outside in the cold, listening under the window until the music ceases. When he enters the house, he is covered with snow. In the first edition Gissing included this scene:

> He had opened the bedroom door before he observed that there was a light within, and on entering he found himself fact to face with Mrs. Cope. The good lady was horrified; she scolded severely; she even threatened corporal punishment. Arthur said not a word but allowed himself to be hurried into bed. When Mrs. Cope had gone and he was alone in the dark, he burst into passionate weeping, and so at length sobbed himself to sleep. [28]

In the corrections he later made, Gissing deleted the passage. He felt that the artist should "let the understanding read between the lines; as in all great art, much is implied that finds no direct expression."[29]

And so Arthur runs away, returning to the home he once knew in Whitecross Street. Memory makes the place welcome to him, although the surroundings are "foul and hideous from the covering of slush and grime." Mrs. Blatherwick speaks to him in coarse, unfriendly tones until she discovers that he has money; then she allows him to climb the many flights

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[28] Ibid., p. 57.

[29] George Gissing, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study, p. 153.

of stairs to the room he and his father once occupied. Later they go down into the dark and damp cellar-kitchen, where are laid the preparations for "the good lady's" mid-day meal. When he rewrote the sentence, the author left out the descriptive phrase good lady's as Mrs. Blatherwick was neither good nor a lady. Here is a trace of Flaubert's influence: the minute attention to exactness of expression.[30]

Sitting together in the dark and gloom, Mrs. Blatherwick and Arthur are interrupted by the entrance of Bill, Mrs. Blatherwick's drunken son. Immediately following this scene, Gissing added: "The conversation which ensued I shall not endeavor to repeat under fear of being stigmatised as a "realist" by the critical world."[31] The omission of this sentence is one of the most revealing revisions that Gissing makes in his revised edition. When Gissing used quotation marks around the word realist in the first copy, he was undoubtedly thinking of the Zolaesque school of realism--naturalism, a school he did not always follow. Later Gissing discovered, what many people who decry realism have not discovered even yet, that there are many kinds of realism. Gissing learned through the reading of the works of Daudet, Flaubert, DeMaupassant, and Turgenev and Dostoevski of the other phases of realism. From his revised

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30 Although the expression has been removed, care as to such fine points as this mark Gissing as a scholar interested in the perfection of his prose style.

31 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 65.

copy, then he omits the statement; for he realizes that he, too, is a realist. Such a statement destroyed the illusion of conscious artistry. In this omission he definitely gives a sign of progress. The change in attitude toward realism, the growth of experience, the widening of artistic consciousness and power--all are evident in this revision. Gissing became aware as he developed that

> the school of strict veracity--of realism--call it what you please, has directed fiction in a path it is likely to pursue for many years to come....Novelists of today desire above everything to be recognized as sincere in their picturing of life. [32]

In some of his later works,[33] Gissing confesses himself a realist. For realists, he says, are "men with an uncompromising method, and utterly heedless as to whether they give pleasure or pain."[34] His novels certainly indicate a realistic portrayal of life. In this mere three line deletion we definitely find more than a "mere shortening of the novel." We find a decided development in awareness of a more scientific objectivity.

As Arthur wants to stay with them, Mrs. Blatherwick and Bill decide that they will put him to work as a stooge for Bill in a panhandling business. Arthur is to sing religious

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[32] George Gissing, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study, p. 79.

[33] See Letters, Charles Dickens, New Grub Street, Essay on Realism, The Nether World, and Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.

[34] George Gissing, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study, p. 283.

songs and hold a cup while leading the supposedly blind Bill. In the first edition Gissing recited the words of the song and gave intimately the details of the singing lesson given Arthur by Mrs. Blatherwick. From the later edition, Gissing omits the specific words of the song, merely indicating that the song was a religious one. Following the account of the singing lesson, there is a description of the nefarious activities of Bill and the unhappy Arthur. In the original copy Gissing inserted an unnecessary addition in his account of the "blind widower and motherless boy" to the effect that, "Truly it was not without cause that the mendicant whined out his trust that in proportion as he excelled in moral worth the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, a kindly Providence would take thought for his future sustenance."[35] Gissing later discarded this selection as being unnecessarily specific. Bill spends his earnings in gin palaces and leaves poor Arthur outside to freeze in his rags. Day after day the same procedure is followed. At length it is Christmas Eve. In the first edition, Gissing had penned:

> Far be it from me to emulate the skill of those numberless holy men who have exhausted their inventions in describing those regions which are to be the future home of no inconsiderable portion of the human race; but had I a tithe of their descriptive power, O, what a hell could I depict in Whitecross Street of this

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35 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 71.

> Christmas Eve! Out of the very depth of human depravity bubbled up the foulest miasmata which the rottenness of the human heart can breed, usurping the dominion of the pure air of heaven, stifling a whole city with its reek.... 36

Gissing did have the power to describe the hell of the slums. Further on in Workers in the Dawn he does so; and in his other novels, he shows his "fine and grisly realism" in painting this hell. Thus, when he altered this part of Workers, he left out the portion mentioning his lack of skill.

Throughout the bitter pictures of the bestial scenes of Christmas Eve in Whitecross Street, Arthur Golding wanders. He does not play with the boistrous children, instinctive delicacy making him shrink from their rude games. Longingly he stares at window displays of food. At this point in the first copy of the novel, Gissing included a catalog of the provisions in the windows, but he leaves them out in the revised copy. Arthur is hungry, but he has no money to spend. He is given a hot potato by a kind-hearted peddler. The immature Gissing closed this scene with the comment, later omitted:

> And if every man in London had been as judiciously charitable that night as was the baked-potato man, the Christmas Day which followed would have been more rich with a blossoming of unwonted happiness. 37

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36 Ibid., p. 73.

37 Ibid., p. 77.

Every day conditions go from bad to worse for the boy. Bill kicks and scolds him. One day when Bill becomes drunk, Arthur seizes the opportunity to escape his harsh taskmaster. Bill pursues him, but Arthur stumbles out of his grasp. Beaten and bruised, he runs almost unconsciously. Instinctively he returns to the corner where the hot-potato man has his stand. Here he loses consciousness. When he awakes, he finds himself in a poor, but clean, room where Ned Quirk, his benefactor, has taken him. The hot-potato man is very kind and introduces Arthur to the rollicking family of Mike Rumball, the landlord, who sees to it that Arthur receives a job clerking in the store of Mrs. Clinkscales. In the course of time, Lucy Clinkscales, his employer's daughter, teaches Arthur to read a little. Reading and drawing appeal to the boy. Ned decides to arrange with Mrs. Clinkscales for some time off for Arthur so that he can attend night school. The arrangements are made, and Arthur begins his studies.

> Truly the gate of the realms of learning did not open to Arthur Golding at the first blast of the summoning trumpet and let him in to walk on flowery paths. 38

We feel that such would not be the case, knowing the story of the boy's life and his character so well, and Gissing cuts the passage in the revised edition.

But study is not everything to Arthur; each day his joy in sketching increases. He draws on every piece of paper that

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38 Ibid., p. 99.

he finds, and even on the walls. He makes the acquaintance of an artist who rooms with the Rumballs. But his joy is short-lived. Mike asks the artist to move, for he considers art and culture to be wicked. Arthur is forbidden to draw; nevertheless he continues to draw secretly on his slate, rubbing out his pictures immediately to keep from getting caught. Here we find a little of Gissing's love of beauty creeping through the lines. Such an action (erasing his work) grieves Arthur because it appeared already to his mind "the worst sin he knew of--the destruction of something that was beautiful in his eyes." This explains partially why Gissing decided not to explain further the sorrow caused Arthur by Mr. Rumball's stern forbiddance of future chalking.[39]

Arthur goes to school and works for Mrs. Clinkscales for two years. One day, while on an errand, he sees a sign in a print shop window advertising "a boy wanted." Upon entering the store, Arthur meets Samuel Tolladay, the owner. Successful in his application, Arthur returns home to receive permission to take the job at Mr. Tolladay's. Unselfishly his former friends grant this permission. A new phase of life opens to Arthur. He and Mr. Tolladay spend many happy hours in the library talking and reading. In describing the library in the first edition, Gissing wrote,

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[39] Ibid., p. 103.

> The library was evidently that of a man who had known how to cultivate judiciously the emotional side of his nature; the only books really bound with any degree of richness were the poets. Theological works there were none, and natural science was alone represented by a few works on botany; but the collection of histories was complete and good. 40

This library was undoubtedly the kind that Gissing's own father had.[41] Looking backward into his early days, Gissing furnished this fictional library with the books he was familiar with in his boyhood. From the revised copy of Workers, however, Gissing omits this passage and a subsequent one which explained at length the "few works on botany."

Day by day Arthur becomes more adjusted to his new home. He meets Tolladay's closest friends, Mark Challenger and John Pether. Conversations, musing, and work fill their days. When periods of relaxation are over, Mr. Tolladay says, "now let us get on with our work." Originally Gissing added one of his favorite quotations, if one may judge from the number of times he used it in his letters, "For the night cometh, wherein no man can work." When he revised the novel, however, he left such Bibical quotation out of the book.

Leaving Arthur contentedly toiling at Mr. Tolladay's, Gissing takes up another thread in the novel. He returns to the story of the Normans and Mr. Whiffle. With the disappearance of Arthur, the whole household was upset. But after a

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40 Ibid., p. 110.

41 Gissing's father, a druggist, was interested in botany and compiled a Wakefield Flora. See any biography of Gissing for this information.

prolonged search proved unsuccessful, the family settled back to its usual routine. Mr. Whiffle, no longer occupied as a tutor, decides to train his eldest son, Augustus, for the church. Augustus soon discovers that by feigning an interest and by memorizing a few stock phrases he is able to secure money and clothes from his father. Helen, too, begins a more formal education under the able tutelage of her father. In the early edition Gissing went into detail about her personality, her beauty, and her development. From the later edition he omits much of this material. We are next introduced to Gilbert Gresham and his daughter Maud, lifelong friends of the Normans. In the first edition Gissing wrote a long, comparative study of the two girls. Since the contrasts are made evident in the gradual unfolding of the story, Gissing eliminates five pages of useless material from the revised edition.[42]

Gresham and Norman, during a conversation in which they have been recalling the strange incidents of Arthur's history, are speaking of Arthur's father. Gresham says,

> However dissipated a man becomes, let him at least remain in respectable company. If a poor devil runs over head and ears in debt through living in too high a style, and then blows out his brains comfortably in his dressing-room--well, I can spare him some sympathy. But to let oneself starve to death in a noisome garret--bah! [43]

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[42] Ibid., p. 158.

[43] Ibid., p. 139.

But that is sermonizing, and perhaps, preaching a little too close to his own personal experience for Gissing to leave it in his book. Art takes precedence over moralizing in the deletion of the passage.

As the two men continue talking, the subject of Norman's health becomes the topic of conversation. Gresham urges Norman to take a rest, to change his environment. Norman refuses; nevertheless, he does appreciate Gresham's insistence that should anything happen to Edward, he, as Helen's godfather and guardian, will take care of the girl. Such a conversation borders on the sentimental, and Gissing deletes it. In a few months Gresham receives a letter from Norman asking him to return to Bloomford. Norman is ill. The earlier edition included a long, descriptive narrative of Norman's feeling of happiness and peace--the serenity that comes to a mind which renounces once and forever futile hope.[44] But in the revised copy Gissing makes his work stronger by slashing out the comments of the psychological trend of Norman's thoughts. Norman and his daughter leave England and take up residence across the channel. The first edition concluded with a letter written by Helen to Maud. It is definitely not needed in the novel, but in fact retards the action. It is removed.[45]

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[44] Ibid., pp. 140-141.

[45] Ibid., pp. 150-151.

Jumping back to another phase of his story, Gissing again takes us to the home of Tolladay, where Arthur has now found some degree of happiness and contentment. Walking is the favorite exercise of the two companions. On one of their walks, they travel citywards. In the first edition Gissing included a dialogue which abounded in philosophical questions and religious arguments, which he later omits. It is interesting to note that included in this deleted passage was a scene picturing a group of girls singing about a "happy land, far, far away." It was a phrase from this song--far, far away--that Gissing first chose as the title for the novel we have been discussing. But craftsman that he was, he realized that

> Far, Far Away, after all, appeared to me a trifle sentimental, and perhaps not too impressive. The title now is Workers in the Dawn, a much more apt one....It is a novel, you must know, of social questions, and the principal characters are earnest young people striving for improvement in, as it were, the dawn of a new phase of our civilization. 46

Workers in the Dawn is an immeasurably better title, far more specific than Far, Far Away.

Returning homewards, Arthur and Tolladay continue talking. Tolladay presents a horrid, yet accurate, picture of the life of people in the slum districts. In the original copy Gissing added a drawn-out monologue by Mr. Tolladay beginning,

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46 George Gissing, Letters, p. 58.

> All my life I have given way to bursts of indignation at these monstrous scenes, and my reward has always been laughter and ridicule. "What is the use of railing thus?" they tell me. "These things are a necessity; it is as absurd to charge any human being with the fault, as it would to throw upon mankind the blame of a droughty summer or a severe winter.... [47]

Workers in the Dawn, revised, does not retain this passage, probably for two reasons: the first, and most important, is that Gissing felt that a realist if he were a conscious artist need not draw a conclusion to his own work; the work must carry its own conclusion; the second, and this is intelligible in view of the character of the author, is that he wrote about these things from an artist's point of view.

> My own life is too sterile and miserable to allow of my thinking about the Race. When I am able to summon any enthusiasm at all, it is only for art.... I cannot get beyond it. Human life has little interest for me, on the whole--save as material for artistic presentation. I can get savage over social iniquities, but even then my rage at once takes the direction of planning revenge in artistic work. [48]

Striving for an objective mode of expression, Gissing became aware that if he allowed too many of his own thoughts to enter in, the work would not be strict veracity. And then, too, he held that "there is no good in pretending interest where you do not feel it."[49] Like Turgenev who said, "Novel writing was an art which could be practiced only by one who was concerned with representing the world about him rather than rendering its effect upon him...," Gissing attempted to see

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[47] George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 165.

[48] George Gissing, Letters, p. 110.

[49] Ibid., p. 274.

life and understand it, not improve it. His theme in Workers in the Dawn, as in New Grub Street, is absolute realism in the sphere of the ignobly decent.

The next episode of the novel returns to the story of Helen Norman. Her father dead, she now makes her home with the Greshams. The girls are returning from a visit to Bloomford accompanied by Augustus Whiffle. Formerly, Gissing went into detail about the trip. From his revised copy he omits the description. As DeMaupassant said, an artist must show choice in his detail:

> Life is composed of the most dissimilar things, the most incongruous, the most unforseen; it is merciless, without sequence or connection, full of inexplicable, illogical, and contradictory catastrophes, such as can only be classed as miscellaneous facts. This is why the artist, having chosen his subject, can select only such characteristic details as are of use to it, from his own life overladen with characters and trifles, and reject everything else, everything by the way. 50

Gissing followed this continental artist in his selection of events. Gissing, in describing Helen's adjustment to her new environment, described her love of music, her lessons from a teacher procured by Mr. Gresham, and her pleasure at finding something with which she could pleasantly pass her time. This redundant passage is removed from the revised novel.[51] Books, long companions to Helen, also help her while away her days.

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50 Guy DeMaupassant, op. cit., p. 8.

51 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, pp. 197-198.

One day Maud enters the library to call Helen to dinner, but finds her deeply engrossed in an English translation of Strauss' Leben Jesu. The rather awkward and stilted conversation which followed in the earlier version of the novel is removed from the later one.[52]

So impressed is Helen with the book that she decides to study in Germany. Receiving permission from her guardian, she leaves for the continent. In a chapter written in diary form, entitled "Mind Growth," there is a long narration of Helen's thoughts, which begins:

> This is the first time I have ever begun to keep a diary, and I wonder the thought never occurred to me before. The following pages are not to be filled with pretty sentiments, hysterical wailing, or scraps of verse--I will not say poetry--I write for my own benefit that I may more clearly gauge my own progress, and not for the amusement of others.... [53]

By the form in which the chapter is written, we know that the record Helen keeps is a diary; so the author need not tell us that it is. Then, too, the character's thoughts are not as intriguing as her overt reaction. It is up to the reader to figure out what makes a character acts as he does.

After her summer on the continent, the Greshams are happy to welcome back. Although she appears outwardly the same, her character has undergone an alteration. The analogy between Helen's growth and development and the stability and vegetation of the Greshams is dropped from the corrected novel since the contrast is made evident in the natural course

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[52] Ibid., p. 199.
[53] Ibid., p. 203.

of the story. Dropped also are some of the descriptive tags pinned on the various characters. Mr. Gresham, for instance, happens one day to pass the shop of Mr. Tolladay, where he sees exhibited in the window a copy of one of his own pictures. Gresham asks Tolladay who executed the drawing, speaking in a tone that had a "touch of aristocratic haughtiness which usually marked his speech when directed to those less wealthy than himself."[54] From past descriptions of him, we know Mr. Gresham to be a proud and haughty man; we know that he would patronize those in a position lower than himself. Therefore, Gissing uses artistic judgment when he removes such identification tags from his characters. They stand out clearly enough in his character delineations.

Mr. Tolladay tells Mr. Gresham about the artist, Arthur Golding. Upon discovering that the painter is the lost ward of Edward Norman, Gresham asks for the history of the boy. Tolladay tells all he knows briefly. In the original novel, Gissing had Tolladay preface the story with the remark, "It is included in very few words."[55] He did not need the preface; the shortness of the account is self-evident.

When Arthur comes home, he is told about Mr. Gresham, who has purchased the picture and invited Arthur to visit him at his home. Arthur, in turn, tells Mr. Tolladay the story of his year with the Normans at Bloomford.

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[54] Ibid., p. 223.

[55] Ibid., p. 227.

> Naturally exaggerating much which he barely retained of the far-off memories of childhood, but giving a true and vivid account of that uneasy year in his child's heart, and that longing for a sight of his dead and gone father, and all the vague restlessness to which it gave rise, which had ultimately led to his running away. 56

We know that children have a tendency to exaggerate and that memory often serves to enlarge incidents in our minds. Gissing knew that in looking back on the events of life, we see them otherwise than they appeared to us at the time. And since he wrote his books for intelligent people, he knew that they could drew such conclusions. From the revised edition he excised the passage just quoted.

Arthur is informed of the money left to him by Mr. Norman and is told that he can now follow his career as an artist if he chooses. He renews his friendship with Helen and meets her circle of friends. In visiting with them, Arthur Golding looks for the first time into the life of the upperclass society of London. These people have a different set of ideals and ambitions from those of Arthur and his acquaintances. They have been reared in separate worlds. In discussing his hopes for the future with Mr. Tolladay, Arthur insists that he shall become a famous artist. Mr. Tolladay warns him against over-exuberance; he knows that young hopes are too often frustrated. He

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56 Ibid., p. 331.

sermonizes a little on ambition. In his speech, which is omitted from the revised edition, there was much of a hint of Conrad's statement that "life is hort, art is long, and success is far off."[57]

The day after this conversation, Arthur visits the Gresham home for a conference with the artist. Upon entering the studio, Arthur finds Helen gazing at a picture painted by Gresham. Arthur is fascinated by his lovely former playmate. After a short conversation, Helen leaves the room.

> "She is indeed a goddess!" he exclaimed to himself, as, for the first time in his life, perhaps, he began with reluctance to work. "And she is as far superior to me as a 'Madonna' of Raphael is to this miserable smudge which I call a picture!" [58]

Although Gissing, with DeMaupassant, held that "a woman should appear to us as in a dream, or such glory as may poetize her vulgarity";[59] although throughout all of his novels Gissing places women on pedestals, whether they deserve it or not, in this one place, Gissing feels that Helen appears more effective if not surrounded by an aura of golden light. This omission is the last revision that Gissing makes, and it marks the end of the first volume.[60]

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57 Joseph Conrad, op. cit., p. xvi.

58 George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, p. 253.

59 Guy DeMaupassant, op. cit., p. 63.

60 The first edition of Workers in the Dawn was published in 1880. As this study has shown, Gissing at one time began the revision of the novel. Although he never completed his work, The Doubleday-Doran Company published, for the first time, the extant revisions in their edition of Workers (1935).

Gissing did not finish the revision of the novel. Just when he gave up the attempt to publish Workers in the Dawn in a revised form is not known. The fact that he did, at one time, set out to correct it is important in itself. In the extant changes that he did make, we have become conscious of his development. It is apparent that there is in the revised work indication of simplicity, calm, clarity of expression, and conscientious craftsmanship, which are not apparent in the first edition. In his style there are distinct evidences of a constant striving toward artistic perfection. Continental realists influenced him greatly as is borne out by his statements in his letters and in his revisions in his earliest novel. All in all, in greater objectivity, in care taken to preserve the illusion of reality, in rigid exclusion of unnecessary detail, and in scrupulous polish of sentence and and diction, we can see something of the growth in Gissing's art--a growth that points at least to the perfection of all these qualities in his masterpiece, The New Grub Street. The revisions are largely in the form of deletions, but that method marks Gissing as no less the artist. In these deletions of Gissing's, one can feel as Schiller did when he once wrote, "In what he leaves unsaid, I discover a master of style."

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