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Butler for Beginners

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expected to read pointed analysis of, say, *THE TRUMPET MAJOR* or *A LAODICEAN*. Of the latter book, Prof. Carpenter comments: "The book affords glimpses of what Hardy might have become if he had been denied his Wessex and his tragic outlook, his grotesque and mythic consciousness, but it is to be read as a curiosity and then laid aside without regret." Readers who know but few of Hardy's poems will appreciate Prof. Carpenter's discussion of such buried poetic treasure as "Logs on a Hearth," of which he says: "the symbolic tension between the past and the present--between this log burning on the hearth, 'sawn, sapless, darkening with soot,' and the days when he [Hardy] and his sister climbed its bending limbs for apples--constitutes the central meaning and cannot be abstracted from the metaphors which give it life." The book contains many similar examples of such close and sympathetic analysis of Hardy's less popular novels and poems.

The only aspect of Hardy's work not equally well covered is his shorter fiction, for which Prof. Carpenter has less admiration. Perhaps his stories do "range in quality from that of, say, *TWO ON A TOWER* to that of *THE WOODLANDERS*"; their range in variety and the achievement of individual stories is greater than suggested here. This complaint is a small one, however, in light of the fulfillment of the basic aims of the study. Oddly enough, the lack of a thesis is not a handicap, perhaps because of Prof. Carpenter's enlightening emphasis on the relevant motifs in Hardy's work which help us see Hardy's work as a totality, and that the same sensibility and genius may be seen throughout his work. One significant motif may be singled out: love and sacrifice, the odd mixture we see so clearly in *Marty South*, *Tess*, *Henchard* and *Jude*, "those scapegoats of the world", whose love for someone found expression in self-giving of an extraordinary kind and led to the ultimate sacrifice of life itself.

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3. Butler for Beginners.

Lee E. Holt. *SAMUEL BUTLER*. NY: Twayne Publishers, 1964. \$3.50.

Lee E. Holt's *SAMUEL BUTLER* is a welcome contribution to Butler scholarship insofar as it contains a wealth of material covering Butler's whole career from its beginning to its end. Unfortunately, however, the book has two rather fatal flaws. It is not well organized and, for the most part, lacks depth.

Professor Holt breaks up the material in his chapters into individual sections designated by roman numerals and subtitles. All of this organizational paraphernalia tends to fragment his discussion into parts which are difficult to relate to the whole picture that Professor Holt is attempting to create. For instance, in Chapter 1, Section 4, he begins a discussion of the Butler-Darwin controversy. In Section 5 of the same chapter, he interrupts the discussion of this topic and does not return to it until Section 6. Furthermore, we find references to this controversy in many chapters of the book; it would have been wiser to contain the whole controversy in one chapter instead of forcing the reader continually to backtrack in order to tie the strings of the controversy together.

Also, too much of the book is mere summary on a very superficial level. His discussion of *EREWON* in Chapter 2 is typical of this problem: "When Higgs awakes, he hears the ghostly sound the wind makes blowing through the ten statues at the pass into Erewhon--the ten commandments of Christianity which by formalizing our lives, Butler suggests, have kept us from coming nearer to ourselves. We must

pass these and leave them behind; we ought not be frightened by them since they are really only hollow bogeymen" (p. 38). And "the 'Musical Banks' at which the Erewhonians worship are used to express Butler's criticism of ethical dualism and of religious hypocrisy" (p. 41). All of this is true enough, but the discussion goes on in this "summary manner" page after page.

In Chapter 4, he interrupts a discussion of THE WAY OF ALL FLESH in order to discuss LIFE AND HABIT: "Since so many of Butler's ideas about inherited memory are incorporated into THE WAY OF ALL FLESH it will be well to discuss... this subject before examining the novel" (p. 60). However, when Prof. Holt returns to his examination of the novel in Chapter 8, he does not discuss THE WAY OF ALL FLESH in relation to LIFE AND HABIT at all. Again the reader is left to make his own connections. I might add that this is not a task that U. C. Knoepfelmacher imposes on the reader in his discussion of THE WAY OF ALL FLESH and LIFE AND HABIT in his book RELIGIOUS HUMANISM AND THE VICTORIAN NOVEL.

I feel that Professor Holt's book can be profitably read by a beginning student of Butler. He obviously has a sound knowledge of his material. But his lack of organization and depth in presenting this knowledge leads him to produce a disappointing product.

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Philip Armato

4. Gissing and Gabrielle: Private Lives

THE LETTERS OF GEORGE GISSING TO GABRIELLE FLEURY. Edited by Pierre Coustillas. NY: The New York Public Library, 1964. Paperbound: \$5.00; clothbound: \$6.50.

In his Introduction, Mr. Coustillas has provided a fine summary of the facts of Gissing's life, and, more important, a far more just portrait of Gabrielle Fleury than we have had before. There is perhaps more evidence here of Gissing's physical and emotional being and less of the artist and intellectual than in most other published autobiographical writings. Without Mr. Coustillas' Introduction, the letters might easily be misread as the work of a rather stuffy pedantic man who forces endearments into his letters at more or less appropriate places as convention demands. Mr. Coustillas' review of the period prior to 23 June 1898, the date of the first letter, however, leaves little doubt of Gissing's desperate need at this point for a woman like Gabrielle. His desperation is borne out in the letters by occasionally adolescent caution, at other times by equally adolescent show of passion, sometimes by the suppression of information which might stand between Gissing and Gabrielle, and sometimes even by downright misrepresentation. Coming to him when she did, Gabrielle Fleury almost seemed like a fulfillment of Edwin Reardon's dreams "of a beautiful and intellectual wife." Her effect on Gissing's literary life was to widen "the circle of his acquaintances and put him in touch with influential people of the French literary world"; "she helped to extend the European aspect of his culture," an influence which is evident in THE CROWN OF LIFE; and she made him still better known on the Continent by translating and having published NEW GRUB STREET as well as by translating some of his stories. Unfortunately, Gissing did not live long enough "to reap the seeds she had so lovingly sown" and to write a second volume, under her inspiration, in the manner of HENRY RYECROFT.

Mr. Coustillas, unlike some writers on Gissing, does not delude himself or us about the "idyllic" last years of Gissing's life. As Coustillas frankly admits,