

## VISIONS AND REVISIONS

Writing is a funny business. I can't imagine (the) plan of minute re-writing. If the first draft doesn't do, I always find the second has to be done once again, quite independently. And even in matters of pure style, I do best when I write fastest. (BR to Ottoline Morrell, 23 Sept. 1911)

Reading Russell's comments on writing seems to confirm the impression held by many of his admirers that little or no revision is found in his manuscripts. This is very often true. Yet some exceptions must be noted. The manuscripts belonging to an unfamiliar genre for Russell, such as the fictional attempt "The Perplexities of John Forstice" (1912), or a struggle with subject matter such as that found in the heavily revised essay "Cleopatra or Maggie Tulliver" (1894), reveal that Russell sometimes did "minute re-writing" and that great effort and time was expended in this creative process. Those of us who struggle with writing are comforted by another remark of Russell's to Lady Ottoline: "It is funny how impossible it is to write even tolerably well without lacerating one's spirit" (29 Sept. 1913).

Those manuscripts which underwent major reconstruction are quite naturally seen as gold-mines for the study of Russell's method of composition. But the majority of works, those minimally revised, must be examined as well. Personal revelations, changes in emphasis or judgment, as well as humorous alterations, are all found within these deletions and insertions. For the lover of the written word, the fascination with the power of ink or pencil on an inanimate page is found in both the lines of the first draft and the words added in revision.

For these reasons, textual notes are included in this critical edition. The placement of these notes at the end of the volume allows the reader to read Russell's final intentions unobstructed. Those who see his work as a *fait accompli*, and are therefore uninterested in such material, may ignore this section if they wish. But for those of us who are interested in the creative process, these textual notes include, in a clear and uncomplicated manner, Russell's significant revisions in manuscript as well as the variants found in editions later published. Certain limitations must be acknowledged. The opportunity to watch the creative process in action occurs *only* when different versions of a text are extant; and although the textual notes try to recreate the impressions on the page as exactly as possible, there is really no substitute for the manuscript itself. One must also admit that many of the items recorded are less than stimulating. Some are stylistic or grammatical problems later corrected by Russell. One can only imagine the exacting nature of the recording of such details,

including the false starts recorded in some editions. But the “gems” which do surface reassure those of us involved that recording them is not a pedantic exercise but often an engrossing and entertaining process. The following textual notes, found in the volumes, are yours to judge.

- In the “Journal, 1902–05”, the word “Monday” is crossed out and replaced with “Tuesday”. In “The Status of Women” (c.1907), a recount of a numerical order as detailed in one passage reveals that “five” should be “six”, “six” replaced by “seven” and so forth. In themselves, both cases are simple miscalculations. But to those of us troubled by our own errors, it is comforting to be aware that Russell, a great analytical and mathematical mind, is subject to the same human foibles.

- It is also interesting to note that Russell is most sympathetic to the character of John in “The Perplexities of John Forstice”. Of even greater interest is the fact that Russell changed this character’s name from Philip on numerous occasions. We know that Russell was involved with Lady Ottoline during the period in which this work was written. One can only speculate if Philip, with whom Russell seems to identify in the story, is Philip Morrell, Lady Ottoline’s husband. Does the plot thicken?

- Certainly feelings run high in “Forstice”. In a deleted phrase describing the concept “love”, Russell wrote that this emotion “outweighs all the finite goods and evils in the world.” Yet, in “Cleopatra or Maggie Tulliver” (1894), passion should be “strangled” (subsequently weakened to “checked”). A fascinating description of the resistance of these drives was deleted by Russell: “A powerful love, when a woman resists it, it turns more readily to brutal cynicism, prudishness and hatred of men as a class—always supposing, in both cases, that they avoid insanity, which I have gathered from doctors to be quite a likely alternative.” This passage (which seems to concern Russell’s Aunt Agatha) is only to be found in the textual notes. The forceful nature of this gem and others insures that the recording, as well as the reading, of such deletions and insertions is worthwhile.—Marilyn Mason