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COLLEGE**

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Ken Follett,
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22-x-92

Dear Ken Follett,

Let me just say how much I enjoyed this novel. It was the perfect "great read" -- and from someone who has to read many popular novels (admittedly from the 1920s and 1930s) which aren't particularly entertaining, this is a real compliment. You combine a story of intrigue and murder with sexual frenzy and horror. I imagine readers will be attracted by your combination of a detective story with the pygmalion theme. It is a domestic romance in the Victorian sense. In fact, it reads very much like a "Victorian novel", by which I mean that the novel is concerned with the rise and decline of one family's fortunes, and has clearly identifiable villains and heroes/ines. Like most Victorian novels, it is preoccupied with class, social mobility, ethnicity (a bit like "The Swarthy Savage in London" occasionally!), and social and sexual misconduct.

May I list some specific points? Many are probably irrelevant and would be picked-up by your copy-proofer anyway; others pedantic; a few directly useful.

My references are listed thus: 30.2 means page thirty, paragraph two.

3. 3 The cane was a "supple yew can"; the most popular wood for making canes in the late Victorian period was the ash plant or ground-ash.

71.7 Why does Edward have to bring his own flask of brandy? The main "money spinners" at these places were betting and selling potent liquors. I was surprised that you don't mention the smell. In Haiti (where I lived for ten years) they have ridding fetes, and the smell of blood and faeces permeated the entire village.

77.1 Says Micky lost ten guineas but on 79.3 says it was fifty guineas.

125.4 Unfortunate that Maisie uses the term "lion's share" since she is the Lioness.

132.5 Found myself muttering "Silly little fool! Did she learn nothing from wicked April"?

157--162 Fabulous!

175.3 Anachronism: "bounder" is a word which only came to be used from the 1880s.

176.1 Why didn't Edward show signs of having been hit?

177.12 Anachronism: "blighter" is a term which first came to be used in the late 1890s.

192.1 Why wasn't Danny more shocked or, at least, surprised? I found this unconvincing. Radical trade unionists in the Victorian period were the most puritanical section of the working class ie. they were the "respectable" working class. I was also surprised with his absence from the second half of the novel. I thought he was an effective character.

193ff. How could Micky have remained moving in such elevated circles with such a barbarian of a father (even with the support of the Palister family)? The father would have broken enough rules to lead to the son's exclusion.

198.5 Killing the grandfather was "gruesomely reminiscent of sex with an unwilling woman". A most memorable metaphor, but Micky seemed to find sex with unwilling women not "gruesome" at all, but exhilarating and pleasurable.

209.6 "Auguta" rather than "Augusta".

211 Solly reminds me of Marc in Rebecca West's Thinking Reed -- but, I confess, I don't know why. A believable portrait in general.

248.2 "Might" instead of "night".

263. You say that she has a Cockney drawl: I had not heard it.

320.2 "Quite" is a colloquialism from post-1895 period.

324.4 Surprised (and unconvinced) by the bland statement that the Greenbournes had agreed to invest in Santamaria Railway Bonds esp. since near the end of the novel Old Man Greenbourne shows disdain for South American investment.

327 Brutal.

335.2 The editor of The Forum would have known about the Ball and would not have expected Augusta home until early morning. Not convinced that he would have waited-up for her.

346.1 Joseph Greenbourne became Lord Whitehaven?

347.5 "Rotter" is a word coined in 1894.

379.2 By 1890, Englishwomen did not work in coal mines for twelve-hour shifts.

381 The problem with this divorce (as we discussed) is that Emily is not a virgin.

382 By the late Victorian period, attitudes towards the unmarried mother were more sympathetic than you are implying. There were many church-run homes for unmarried mothers -- although they were much more "moralistic" than the one run by Maisie.

382-383 Maisie's heart is breaking and bursting over many things -- too many in two pages?

388.4 Do we need to be reminded again that Samuel was an "old pervert". We have already been told that "Young William" was in his forties.

394 The problem is that Emily is not a virgin.

399.2 Strange change of tense to the present.

403 Brilliant.

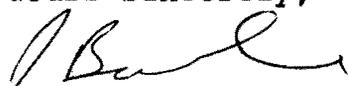
408.5 "Po-faced" is a post-1900 expression.

431 Rachael? When I got to her I wondered: who is she? and had to refer back.

485.4 Desertion was not grounds for divorce (except in Scotland).

Once again, thanks for allowing me to read this novel: you had me enthralled.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J Bourke', written in black ink.

Joanna Bourke
Lecturer in Modern Economic and Social History