



Phases of an Inferior Planet

Ellen Glasgow

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Phases of an Inferior Planet Details

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Author : Ellen Glasgow

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JohnM44 Miller says

Romance on a fire-escape, dying infants and children both privileged and poverty-stricken, artists and politicians populate the stage in this 1900 age snapshot of life and love in New York City. Hero must hit rock-bottom before undertaking a life-altering transformation done well, but with fundamental insincerity. Vividly drawn and engaging major characters; others somewhat sketchy. Psychology and reality of poverty amongst the working poor powerfully evoked.

Sample: "In the glimmer of dawn Salvers entered. A sombre mist penetrated the curtains at the windows, and in the grate a heap of embers reddened and waned and reddened and waned again. A light dust had settled over the room, over the mantel, the furniture, and the blankets on the bed--a fine gray powder, pale like the ashes of yesterday's flame."

Cera says

This was Glasgow's second novel, and probably one of her worst; it's about semi-Bohemian artists living in New York, and how romance interferes with one's ability to create art, and there's some socialist/anarchist strains running through it, and it's clunky and over-weighted and yet I really, really enjoyed it, because I felt like I was getting a clear window on the life of the time. This is the book in which the pregnant woman in her tiny slum apartment in New York doesn't feel that she can go out to stretch her legs during the day, because then strangers might see her pregnant body. That's the sort of boggling I like in my old fiction!

Perry Whitford says

The story of a swift, ill-matched love affair, contending against ambitions, poverty and tragedy in New York at the end of the 19th century.

Mariana Musin is a vibrant young woman of restive emotions who has run out on her family in the South with romantic ambitions to be an opera singer, though her singing instructor advises her that she does not quite have the talent.

Anthony Algarcife is a struggling scientist, raised by a priest, who has long kept his emotions in check to his intellect, until he falls for Mariana.

The romance is quick, the marriage unsuccessful. They eventually separate, and as the story skips ahead eight years we discover that they have each taken a different, seemingly successful course in life, though in reality they have both suffered '*the slow torture of famished asperations*'.

Phases of an Inferior Planet, portentous title and all, is very similar to the works of two of Glasgow's contemporaries, Edith Wharton and Henry James, though not quite as sharp as Wharton, nor as flaccid as James.

As with those two the occasional, direct intervention from the author themselves is often telling, as with this

example:

'our conceptions of others are colored solely by their attitudes towards ourselves, and not in the least by their attitudes towards the universe, which, when all is said, is of far less consequence.'

I always come away from novels of this period extremely thankful that lovers today have no such compulsions to turn a fleeting passion into an immediate matrimony.
