

The Immortal Coustillas: Pierre in Memory

I understand that Pierre had entrusted himself to H el ene’s tender care for the past few years. Any communication difficulty in the last weeks, I believe, would have mattered no more to them than to Basil and Veranilda: “Where they sat together there was sunshine, and before them gleamed an eternity of cloudless azure.”

It was two years after my website, “Gissing in Cyberspace,” was launched on the 138th birthday of the author (November 22, 1995) that I first came into contact with Pierre via snail mail. A notable aspect of the website was that almost all the works of Gissing I had digitized were available for public perusal online. In order to add to the appeal of the website, I asked for “A Message from Professor Pierre Coustillas, Editor of *The Gissing Journal*.” He readily agreed to my audacious request and sent the message with a profile photo in his letter dated December 7, 1997. Whenever you miss him, therefore, you can see his dignified face at <http://victorian-studies.net/gissing/coustillas.html>. While Pierre probably frowned at the large number of typos remaining in my Gissing etexts, he acknowledged the potential value of “A Hyper-Concordance to the Works of George Gissing” <http://victorian-studies.net/gissing/concordance.html>. I was more than pleased that the leading authority on Gissing studies found the concordance useful.

Pierre began using email in the last year of the 20th century. To be precise, H el ene received and sent emails on behalf of Pierre, but this facilitated our communication in making the life and works of Gissing better known on the Internet. I have wasted so many hours before my PC every day that my academic output is only a small fraction of Pierre’s. Nevertheless, I have edited a pair of critical anthologies on Gissing, though in Japanese. One marks the centennial of Gissing’s death and is entitled *The World of Gissing: Overall Picture of the Novelist* (Tokyo: Eihosha, 2003). Pierre was kind enough to write a long preface, as well as to provide a paper titled, “A Cavalcade of Gissing Criticism in the Last Hundred Years,” for my Japanese translation, before reading it at the Gissing Centenary Conference. The title of the other anthology edited for the sesquicentennial of Gissing’s birth is *Society and Culture in the Times of George Gissing* (Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2007). Pierre wrote a new biographical sketch of Gissing and contributed an article titled, “Gissing and Pacifism: A Temperament in the Light of History.” Henry Ryecroft mirrors Gissing’s thoughts as a pacifist: “I see [science] bringing a time of vast conflicts, which will pale into insignificance ‘the thousand wars of old,’ and as likely as not, will whelm all the laborious advances of mankind in blood-drenched chaos.” Pierre’s analysis of Gissing’s pacifism in the context of British imperialism reveals the intrinsic value sustained in the latter’s works even for modern society. This is noticeable in examples such as our reaction to the recent statement of a particular U.S. President that he was ready for a new nuclear arms race and confident of final victory. At all events, my gratitude for Pierre’s contribution to those critical anthologies is beyond words.

Let me cast back to the summer of 1964, which saw Pierre rendezvous with Jacob Korg (US) and Shigeru Koike (JP) at and around the British Library to begin publishing *The Gissing Newsletter*. Moreover, a few weeks later, Jacob solicited Herbert Rosengarten (UK) to complete the multinational group with his participation. Pierre took over the editor's role from Jacob in January 1969. From then on, H el ene reportedly served as assistant editor of the *Newsletter* and its subsequent serial publication, *The Gissing Journal*. With Pierre's permission, I digitized all the back numbers of the *Newsletter* (1965-90) and the *Journal* (1991-2000), and H el ene patiently proofread all 144 issues. You can now open and read PDF files up to vol. 46, no. 4 (October 2008) at "Gissing in Cyberspace." I intend to ask H el ene for the rest of the camera-ready copies on which Pierre worked as editor of the *Journal* until January 2013. I see it as my duty and as a mark of respect for the immortal Coustillas to perpetuate his great scholarly fame online.

I am currently editing a new critical anthology entitled *Dickens and Gissing: Subterranean Similarities and Differences*, scheduled for publication in December. It seems fittingly poignant to dedicate this book to Pierre as a *liber amicorum*. The last book that I presented to him was my Japanese translation, published in 2016, of Gissing's early short stories including "R.I.P." Let me conclude this valedictory with a prayer that Pierre's soul may rest in peace. And may H el ene, who is such an angel of a woman that she expressed concern for my family and my cat even during this sad time, go on forever!

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