

## THE GISSING JOURNAL

“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”  
 – George Gissing’s *Commonplace Book*.

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## V. S. Pritchett on Gissing

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Any scholar lucky enough to have worked in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin knows how extensive are its collections of modern British authors. Fortunately for us, among them are the papers of the essayist and fiction writer V. S. Pritchett, including his corrected typescript of a 13-minute, 48-second B.B.C. talk on Gissing. After one studio rehearsal at Bush House, in the Strand, he recorded the talk on October 10, 1946 for delivery over the B.B.C. Far Eastern Service, on October 15 at 11:55 Greenwich Mean Time. It also appeared in the B.B.C.’s weekly publication, *The Listener*, on November 28, 1946. After discovering the typescript of the talk on a recent visit to the HRHRC, I obtained the venerable author’s permission to reproduce the typescript, and he thanked me for my interest.<sup>1</sup>

And why wouldn’t I, and other readers of this *Journal*, wish to know what so eminent a critic has said about Gissing? After all, Pritchett’s talk and essay antedated by some fifteen years the revival of Gissing studies, which John Halperin has traced to new editions of his works that began appearing in 1961.<sup>2</sup> (Among them is a new edition of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in that year, with a Foreword by Pritchett.) Moreover, the talk is only one of a number of essays on Gissing by Pritchett, whose interest in the novelist has been largely overlooked.<sup>3</sup>

Not an academic (though he has lectured at universities), Pritchett brought special strengths to his reading of Gissing: his own independent study of the European fiction that influenced Gissing, and against which Gissing’s works must be measured, and a family background and youthful experiences that in some ways resemble Gissing’s.<sup>4</sup> Born in 1900, Victor Sawdon Pritchett was 46 when he formulated his ideas about Gissing for the B.B.C.,

almost exactly the age of Gissing when he died; and Pritchett is now 93, having lived twice as long as Gissing. Both came from lower middle-class families with roots in Yorkshire. Though his father's failures in different business ventures meant that as a child Pritchett knew many homes in and around London (hence the title of his first autobiographical volume, *A Cab at the Door*), he spent long periods in his paternal grandparents' "kind, grave" household at Sedbergh, in West Yorkshire, where his grandfather was a preacher. When at home with his preoccupied father and feckless mother, Pritchett received far less academic guidance than did Gissing in his more stable family, and it is not surprising that Gissing was the better student and set his sights on a literary career at an earlier age than did Pritchett. At Alleyn School in Dulwich, where Pritchett received his last formal education, he disclosed an ability to learn languages (another similarity with Gissing) and an interest in writing, but his hope of attending a secondary school was dashed by his failure to win a scholarship. At age 15 he was thrust into the leather trade in the Bermondsey District, London, and escaped only five years later, after the 1914-18 War, determined to change his life.

Arriving in Paris with only £20, Pritchett did not, like Gissing in America, manage to support himself by his pen, but he published several articles in the *Christian Science Monitor*, to which he gained access because his father had been converted to its religious beliefs some years earlier. Here we might think of Gissing's introduction to political journalism by the English Positivists.<sup>5</sup> After two years of low-paid unskilled jobs, mostly in the photographic trade (Gissing briefly assisted a travelling photographer to keep from starving in the United States) and without having gained any knowledge of the literary expatriates then flooding into Paris, Pritchett left to become a journalist for the *Christian Science Monitor*, first in Ireland, and a year later in Spain, where he wrote his first short story. Sacked by the *Monitor* for his dislike of political newsgathering – in this he was like Gissing – he trekked across Spain and wrote up his impressions for his first book, *Marching Spain*, published in 1928 – his counterpart to *By the Ionian Sea*. In the years since then Pritchett has published other travel literature, six novels, his autobiography, and many volumes of short stories and essays, mostly on literary topics. His honorary degrees, presidency of both the English and the International P.E.N., and a knighthood in 1975 all affirm his importance in the contemporary literary scene that goes far beyond what

was possible to Gissing in his lifetime, so grievously shortened by illness.

Composing his talk in 1946, Pritchett no doubt kept in mind how little he could expect his listeners to know about Gissing. They would have been English people living in the Far East, or persons who had learned English as a second language. To either group, the recently concluded war would have made a late Victorian writer such as Gissing seem remote. Pritchett therefore begins with Gissing's birth and death dates and places him in "the generation of Hardy and Meredith ... the elder of novelists like Kipling, Bennett and H. G. Wells." Those were names that would resonate with anyone familiar with nineteenth- and twentieth-century English fiction. He explains that Gissing is best known as the author of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and *By the Ionian Sea*, but adds that many younger writers seeking to deal realistically with social conditions find that Gissing's novels repaid study. Though Pritchett says he understands this attitude, he cites Virginia Woolf's dissenting view that (in Pritchett's words) "the pitiable figure of Gissing himself stands between us and everything he wrote," and the novelist "interests us more than the main part of his novels."<sup>6</sup>

In the biographical summary that Pritchett offered his listeners, Gissing emerges as "a gifted hypersensitive youth" who "by a freak of misfortune" received a classical education when

as a member of the lower-middle class “he could do nothing with it.” Consequently he “lived a lonely life in the ugly towns of the industrial north and in the mean streets of London, isolated in his private dream of classical Rome, hating the ugliness of life about him.” Burdened by his “gentility” and “that holier-than-thou aestheticism which used to sterilise the life of the petty bourgeois,” he “set out to describe the meanness and poverty he hated in a number of realistic novels” (p. 2).

To ground these biographical generalizations, Pritchett points to the “admirable portrait” of Gissing’s “mis-education” in Wells’s *An Experiment in Autobiography* (1934) and Virginia Woolf’s “not dissimilar conclusion,” probably a reference to her best known essay on Gissing, a review of his family letters in 1927 reprinted in *The Second Common Reader* in 1932 and again in a Pelican edition in 1944, just two years before Pritchett wrote his talk.<sup>7</sup> It is easy to see why he was predisposed to accept their views. He had become a novelist without knowing Greek and Latin, and had risen above the cultural deprivations of his background while viewing it more sympathetically and humorously than did his fellow novelist. Noting that Gissing wrote one

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of the best books on Dickens ever published, Pritchett suggests that Gissing would have been “happier, more esteemed, more useful and more prosperous today as a critic novelist” (p. 4) – that is, if he had been more like Pritchett, who had escaped from poverty by becoming both a critic and a novelist. Poverty and ill health are other causes Pritchett gives for the “embittered detachment” that undercut Gissing’s achievement. He also cites Gissing’s two unhappy marriages. Here it is relevant to note that Pritchett, living in a later period, was able to divorce his first wife when the marriage proved unhappy; in the same year – 1936 – he made a second, happy marriage, to which he attributes much of his later success as a writer.<sup>8</sup>

When Pritchett says in his talk that Virginia Woolf doubted “whether Gissing ought to have been a novelist at all,” he is overlooking for the moment her more generous comments about Gissing written before the autumn of 1912.<sup>9</sup> At that time she was probably influenced by *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, Morley Roberts’s fictionalized biography of his college friend. It damaged Gissing’s reputation by depicting him as a social misfit who in his dismal, unadorned London rooms took solace for his lack of success by reveling in the classics when he could snatch the time from novel-writing and tutoring.<sup>10</sup> Morley Roberts’s book probably also influenced Pritchett, though he seems not to have mentioned it till 1958, the year it was – in Pritchett’s words – “happily reissued.”<sup>11</sup> It is even possible that he read the anonymous short critique of the book in the *English Review* in February 1913, because Pritchett had been introduced to that monthly by his progressive schoolmaster two years earlier.<sup>12</sup> By one of those coincidences that occasionally light up literary history, the editor of the *English Review* at the time, and almost certainly the author of the review, was 40-year-old Austin Harrison, who had been a pupil of Gissing’s in the early 1880s.<sup>13</sup>

Following up his reference to Virginia Woolf and Wells as writers who thought Gissing was miscast as a novelist, Pritchett reminds his listeners that Wells and Arnold Bennett had been “far more successful” than Gissing in writing about his favorite subject, lower middle-class life. Why? Because he lacked “the spirit, the warmth” to engage the “social subject,” and was “a flat-footed writer.” Moreover, *New Grub Street*, *Thyrza*, *The Unclassed*, *Denzil Quarrier*, and *Eve’s Ransom* are “defective or awkward from a technical point of view.” Gissing had fallen between two stools: he was neither writing “in the elaborate, solid convention of the earlier Victorian novel,” with its great plots and striking characters, nor had he learned “the more

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economical methods of the later generation.” Without “focus,” his novels are like “an interesting

but haphazard piece of wasteland in the middle of a city” (p. 3).

But the battle between the Victorians and the moderns as staged by Pritchett was not over. Why, he asks, do we “look again with curiosity, respect and the expectation of learning something from Gissing’s novels?” In the introduction to his talk Pritchett provides a clue to his answer: as a novelist Gissing “was born too soon.” Developing the idea, he speaks of Gissing as “a new if uncertain voice in the English novel ... one of those who have cleared the ground,” and therefore both as a man and a writer he has “historical interest” (p. 4). To register a further claim for Gissing’s importance, Pritchett recalls Virginia Woolf’s observation that Gissing writes about people who think.<sup>14</sup> No matter how humble or unintellectual they are, Pritchett notes with admiration, Gissing’s characters ask themselves: “how can I preserve my soul, in this mean world of meagre circumstances...?” (p. 4) Clearly this is a question Pritchett had often asked himself, and in his own fiction he did not neglect such self-questioning types.

Pritchett mobilizes other pro-Gissing arguments at the end of his talk, citing specific works. He begins with *The Odd Women*, perceptively suggesting that the women referred to in Gissing’s title are comparable to the “superfluous man” of Russian literature (on which Pritchett is an expert). He credits Gissing with abandoning British literary tradition by taking his spinsters seriously: “there is no more laughter at their expense” (p. 5). So clearly does Gissing see the reasons for feminism and “the economic and psychological roots of the marriage problem” that as soon as the reader picks up the novel, “all impatience with its old-fashioned narrative methods drops away” (p. 5). But if Gissing depicted the shop girl’s life with veracity, he did not do so with the “vivacity” of Wells, who “believes in himself,” in his ability to rise in the social scale. Gissing, in contrast, had an “innate pessimism” that “made him write flatly of the people who did not believe in themselves and who would not get out” (pp. 5-6). By calling Gissing’s pessimism “innate,” Pritchett, of course, begs the question, but the locution is understandable coming from a writer who faced obstacles similar to Gissing’s without succumbing to despair.

Pritchett finds Gissing a better writer when he turns from the shop girl to depict a woman of “will and brain” who “hates the economic dependence of women” and is “a fanatic” – Rhoda Nunn. Pritchett cannot imagine any other writer describing her sort “with such sympathy and veracity.” Indeed, he thinks Gissing handles all the major characters of his novel “with irony,

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justice and perspicacity” (p. 6). Though he offers no “great dramatic scenes,” and his setting is “the uninteresting streets and tasteless parlours of the lower middle-class,” Gissing takes the minds of his characters “as seriously as they take themselves.” He makes Rhoda, for example,

go to the full lengths of feminist argument, so that she is like one of those fierce, political women in trousers who might just as well be men, and then – when the crisis comes – makes her behave as irrationally as any woman ... and yet, in her extreme femininity, she is right. She and her lover were both moved not by love but by vanity...” (p.7).

Their situation, adds Pritchett, “would have satisfied the lovers of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*” but could not content “the high-minded Rhoda.”

While to-day’s fierce, political women in trousers may roll their eyes at Pritchett’s gendered language, they may see the force of his assertion that Henry James would have treated the situation “more graciously” but would have overlooked its “social implications.” Pritchett’s explanation of this difference is that Gissing, despite being unhappy with women, understood “how closely they were acquainted with necessity,” something James, in his relative affluence, presumably did not appreciate as fully (p. 7).

Towards the end of his talk, Pritchett adds Shaw's name to the contingent of writers who gave more "imaginative expression" than Gissing to the social ideas so richly stored in his fiction. Pritchett returns to the idea of Gissing's fascination with classical Greece and Rome sapping his "intellectual vitality" (p. 7). Though protesting that "escapist" is a word that has been applied too "recklessly" to Gissing, Pritchett uses it for *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, dismissing the book as "self-pitying, thin and mediocre," admirable only to "the intellectually undernourished." It represents Gissing's own "frustrated hunger for the life of scholarship and meditation" out of which paradoxically sprang his great achievement, his attention to the thinking as well as the feelings of ordinary people (p. 8). Pritchett ends his talk with a recollection of Wells saying to him years ago: "Poor Gissing. He thought there was a difference between a woman and a lady. There isn't, you know, there isn't." (This would seem to be Wells, the notorious womanizer, rephrasing Kipling's lines about "the Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady" being "sisters under their skins.") Pritchett responds: "No doubt that is so." But he adds that if Gissing had believed it, he would not have made "his distinctive contribution to the English novel of his time; the discovery that people are always thinking, thinking, thinking

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of how they can be different from what they are."

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Given his great productivity as a critic, and the absence of a complete bibliography of his works, it is hard to say for sure that the B.B.C. talk was Pritchett's first discussion of Gissing. It was certainly not his last. After 1946 he published some half dozen substantial essays on the novelist and commented on him in numerous others.

The first of the substantial essays appeared in 1947 in the *New Statesman and Nation*, for which Pritchett, like Virginia Woolf, wrote regularly, and which he served for a time as literary editor and director. This 1947 critique picks up where the previous year's talk had left off, with Wells's assertion, correcting Gissing, that there was no difference between a woman and a lady, "as we all know." Now Pritchett declares that "on second thoughts we know nothing of the kind," and he demotes the portrait of Gissing in Wells' autobiography to a "drastic yet moving cartoon." Gissing, Pritchett now suspects, "was not a deluded romantic but a man born out of his time."<sup>15</sup> He puts a new spin on this formulation, which comes from his B.B.C. talk and was used for the title of the printed version. He now argues that only after Gissing's lifetime did the expanding economy of England "guarantee that those members of the lower middle class who had impatience, clear-headedness and energy could get out of it." Coming later than he, Shaw and Wells were justified in their optimism; if England had "not continued to get richer," Gissing's stress on "the spiritual casualties of the class struggle" rather than on "material hopes" would have continued to be as appropriate as it was in Gissing's own day (p. 527). In any case, Gissing's characters foreshadow a type that has become commoner since his day: "the uprooted intellectual ... cut off by education from his own class and by economic and social conditions from any other place in society" (p. 531). Gissing was also prescient in having a character in *The Whirlpool* observe that under Kipling's influence "natural men" were revolting against the "softness and sweetness of civilisation" and were expecting "to see our boys blown into small bits by the explosive that hasn't got its name yet" (pp. 531-32, quoting the novel).

Pritchett, who has lived through two world wars, understands the pessimism and desperation of Gissing's characters, and he finds an explanation of it in William Plomer's introduction to a new edition of *A Life's Morning*, the occasion for Pritchett's essay. Plomer, he notes, sees Gissing looking ahead and discerning only more of the same economic misery that

darkened the late Victorian world, and sees Wells looking backward and thinking about how irrelevant to modern science and the struggle to get ahead is the old classical education so valued by Gissing (p. 527). Pritchett now concludes that while Wells's interests were material, Gissing's, especially in his feminine characters, were both material and spiritual, and that Plomer recognizes this when he quotes Gissing on Emma Vine in *Demos*: "It was her terrible misfortune to have feelings too refined for the position in which fate had placed her" (p. 528). "That class ache," Pritchett adds, "was and is profoundly true to the inner English life." Unfortunately, against Gissing's strengths in characterization must be set his lack of humor and fantasy, "stilted" language (though the slum speech is "alive"), and plots that "groan" (p. 528). Befitting his stress on the novelist's dark views and literary inadequacies, Pritchett calls this essay "Poor Gissing."

To explain the cause of Gissing's "class ache," Pritchett titled another essay on him in the *New Statesman* eleven years later "A Chip the Size of a Block."<sup>16</sup> Reviewing G. W. Stonier's edition of *New Grub Street*, Pritchett elaborates on Stonier's epithet for Gissing: "the English Gorki with a butterfly collar." Stonier was saying that Gissing had as much compassion for England's lower-middle-class clerk types, whose spread collars were an emblem of their "dream of gentility and respectability," as Gorki had for the denizens of Russia's "lower depths." But to Pritchett the epithet also suggests that Gissing brought "an alien's or exile's unconventional insight into English society." Whereas the great English novels have dealt with the success of the middle classes, Gissing's fiction says that "life is wretched and defeating" (pp. 126-27). Pritchett sees the force of Walter Allen's suggestion in *The English Novel* (1954) that this dark side of Gissing's fiction expressed his personal grudge against life – he had a chip on his shoulder. Pritchett partly justifies this grudge by tracing it to the novelist's awareness of a great social injustice: "Why," asks Pritchett, speaking for Gissing, "pass an Education Act giving clever Board School boys the chance to become cultivated men when they will only find themselves...without the means to live in some accord with their minds; and why educate ordinary boys so that they can become the customers for everything that is vulgar and trivial in popular, commercial culture?" (p. 127). Modern society also alienates the intellectual worker and artist, and *New Grub Street* treats their plight seriously. Pritchett, no doubt writing out of his own experience, suggests that except for Reardon's "morbid lack of will," the "touching and

terrifying" account of his day at his desk "would serve for any novelist" (p. 128). Sadly realistic, too, according to Pritchett, is the character of Reardon's wife Amy, who has a "natural" wish to marry a successful man, whatever his lack of scruple. Gissing, in short, treats his alienated characters with compassion tempered by an irony not understood by Morley Roberts (p. 129).

In a Foreword to the New American Library edition of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in 1961, Pritchett stresses the novelist's preoccupation with individual human behaviour as opposed to social issues like class.<sup>17</sup> He returns to the idea the following year in his text for a book of photographs, *London Perceived*.<sup>18</sup> And though in a *New Statesman* review of the Penguin *New Grub Street* in 1968 Pritchett uses Marxist rhetoric to discuss Gissing's treatment of the writer's world as a microcosm of English society "in which people have been turned into commodities" and "Money is the key to everything," he adds that Gissing was not responding to the voice of Marx and Ruskin so much as that of Turgenev, "the pure artist"; Murger, "the bohemian"; and "the classical scholar whose mind ... is not in the late 19th century, but in some lost Golden Age." *New Grub Street* is not a novel of protest but the elaboration of the Romantic myth of "the artist who must suffer."<sup>19</sup>

As a journalist rereading and rethinking Gissing in response to each new assignment,

Pritchett welcomed a variety of approaches to the novelist. He therefore valued *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, published by Pierre Coustillas in 1968, and reviewed it with the Penguin edition of *New Grub Street*. The best of the contributions, in his judgment, are by George Orwell, Jacob Korg, Irving Howe – all familiar names to students of Gissing – and by two lesser known scholars: Gilbert Phelps, whose “Gissing, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky” is reprinted from *The Russian Novel in English Fiction*, which appeared in 1956; and Greenough White, whose discussion of *The Whirlpool* from the *Sewanee Review* goes back even further, to July 1898. The most recent of the 16 essays in the collection is Pritchett’s own 1958 *New Statesman* piece elaborating on Gissing as “The English Gorki with a butterfly collar.” Without mentioning this reprinted essay, Pritchett returns to its theme of Gissing’s debt to Russian fiction, specifically to Turgenev (his portrait of Bazarov) and to Dostoevsky (the theme of spiritual crisis). Since Pritchett is an authority on Russian literature, his words carry special weight.

As his reiterated comparison of Gissing to Russian writers suggests, Pritchett likes to place him in suggestive contexts. The Russians are not the only novelists he has invoked. The

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typescript of his B.B.C. talk shows that he originally intended to compare Gissing’s “uncomfortable, puritan figures” to those of George Eliot and Meredith, but deleted the passage, perhaps out of a need to shorten his text (p. 2). The same reason may explain his deletion of a passage giving Somerset Maugham’s *Liza of Lambeth* as an example of fiction that, like Gissing’s, displays a realism that overvalues ugly fact (p. 4). His 1947 essay looks back to George Eliot’s heroines, who are “better off” than Gissing’s but have “similar aspirations,” and ahead to D. H. Lawrence’s women, who are such “sexual combatants and aggressors” that it is “refreshing” to recall Gissing’s thoughtful ladies (*Collected Essays*, pp. 528, 529). Reviewing a new edition of Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* in 1967, Pritchett finds the characters in this ground-breaking stream-of-consciousness sequence of novels like Gissing’s in being neither tragic nor comic but ordinary, and seen “flatly in their situation and their minds.”<sup>20</sup>

Finally, scattered in Pritchett’s *Collected Essays*, published in 1991, are these nice discriminations: Arthur Morrison’s realistic low-life novels “stand apart from the worthy and static pathos” of Gissing’s, and lack the “pools of self-pity” Gissing created (p. 270). E. M. Forster’s early characters recall Gissing’s in their “social pathos,” which is “unforgivable in works of art” (p. 607). Orwell’s essay on Dickens is “about the best thing done by an English writer” on the great Victorian since Gissing (p. 1183). George Grossmith’s *Diary of a Nobody* is “the sane answer to the sentimental Gissing” (pp. 65-66). And the notorious Frederick Rolfe, who called himself Baron Corvo, was “a Gissing turned inside out”: both were lower-middle class emotional “casualties” – witness Gissing’s two disastrous marriages and Corvo’s pederasty – but Rolfe was “all shady personality” while Gissing was “scrupulously without it” (pp. 1073, 1076). Such comparisons show that Gissing remains for Pritchett a living presence on the literary landscape.

<sup>1</sup>V. S. Pritchett to author, 24 July 1992; I am grateful to the HRHRC for copying the 8 pp. typescript headed “Studies in English Letters: George Gissing,” by V. S. Pritchett (with his MS initials), and to Pierre Coustillas for providing two articles by Pritchett.

<sup>2</sup>*Gissing: A Life in Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>But not by Joseph L. Wolff, whose *George Gissing: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Him* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974) refers to six Pritchett essays on Gissing but not the B.B.C. talk or its printed version.

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<sup>4</sup>Unless otherwise specified, biographical information comes from Dean R. Baldwin, *V. S. Pritchett* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987); Harry S. Marks, "V. S. Pritchett," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 15, pt. 2 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1983), pp. 464-71; and Pritchett's autobiographical volumes: *A Cab at the Door* (New York: Random House, 1967) and *Midnight Oil* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971).

<sup>5</sup>See my "Gissing and the Positivists: The *Vestnik Evropy* Articles," *Gissing Newsletter*, XXI (January 1985), pp. 1-13.

<sup>6</sup>Pritchett probably refers to "Gissing," *Nation and Athenæum*, XL (26 February 1927), pp. 722-23; in *The Second Common Reader* (1932; reprinted London: Penguin, 1944), pp. 167-72, my source.

<sup>7</sup>Probably a reference to *The Second Common Reader*, p. 168.

<sup>8</sup>See *Midnight Oil*, pp. 206-07, 216.

<sup>9</sup>On Woolf's changing views see "A Voice that Spoke Straight and Shapely Words," by Pierre Coustillas, *Gissing Newsletter*, XXIII (July 1987), pp. 1-29.

<sup>10</sup>On the damage done to Gissing's reputation by this book, see Pierre Coustillas, "The Publication of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*: A Literary Event," in *Twilight of Dawn: Studies in English Literature in Transition*, ed. O. M. Brack, Jr. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987), pp. 137-228.

<sup>11</sup>V. S. Pritchett, "A Chip the Size of a Block," *New Statesman*, LV (14 January 1958), p. 781; reprinted as "Grub Street," in his *Collected Essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991), pp. 615-19; also in V. S. Pritchett, *The Working Novelist* (1965), pp. 62-65, and in Pierre Coustillas, ed., *Collected Articles on George Gissing* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 128 quoted here.

<sup>12</sup>*A Cab at the Door*, pp. 105-06.

<sup>13</sup>See my *Frederic Harrison: The Vocations of a Positivist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 181-87, 327 (on Frederic Harrison's appearance in Roberts' book), pp. 324-25 (on the Harrisons' relations with Gissing in his last years and after his death); Pritchett does not mention but probably knew Frank Swinnerton's *George Gissing: A Critical Study*, which also appeared in 1912 and suggested that Gissing had no gift for fiction.

<sup>14</sup>Woolf makes the point in *The Second Common Reader*, p. 179, and earlier in her review of Sidgwick & Jackson's edition of Gissing's novels and a volume of short stories, "The Novels of George Gissing," *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 January 1912, pp. 9-12; reprinted in *Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol. I, 1904-1912, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1986), pp. 355-62.

<sup>15</sup>"Books in General," *New Statesman and Nation*, XXIV (8 November 1947), pp. 527-32; reprinted as "Poor Gissing," in *Books in General* (New York: Harcourt, Brace; London: Chatto & Windus, 1953), pp. 209-15; in *Collected Essays*, the source quoted here, p. 527.

<sup>16</sup>"A Chip the Size of a Block," *New Statesman*, LV (14 January 1958), p. 781; reprinted as "Grub Street" in *The Working Novelist*, pp. 126-30, in *Collected Essays*, pp. 615-19, and in

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*Collected Articles on George Gissing*, ed. by Pierre Coustillas, pp. 126-30 (source quoted here).

<sup>17</sup>"Foreword," *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (New York: New American Library: A Signet Classic, 1961), pp. vii-xvi.

<sup>18</sup>New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962, pp. 90-91.

<sup>19</sup>"Gissing: Our only Russian," *New Statesman*, LXXV (14 June 1968), p. 795.

<sup>20</sup>"Moral Gymnasium," *New Statesman*, LXXIII (5 May 1967), p. 619.

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## Gissing and Adolphus Ward: Another View

*Was man in der Jugend wünscht, hat man im Alter die Fülle* – Goethe

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In her excellent review of Jacob Korg's edition of Gissing's essay on Burns, in the April issue of the *Gissing Journal*, Martha Vogeler notes Korg's comment that Adolphus William Ward, Gissing's chief mentor at Owens College, responded to Gissing's generosity in sending him a copy of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* by writing a letter in which he "corrected" the interpretation of a Goethe passage which Gissing gave to Ryecroft; and quite naturally she wonders whether we ought to shudder at Ward's apparent pedantry. It is true that Ward's correction can be read as something of an affront, as we (the editors) suggested in our discussion of Ward's letter at the beginning of the introduction to Volume Three of the collected letters now being issued by the Ohio University Press. There we proposed the view that Ward used the Goethe quotation in order to connect the theme of failure in Gissing's novels with his past "failure" at Owens College. Our brief treatment of this idea was somewhat unclear, however, perhaps because we quoted only a short passage from Ward's letter.

That letter, which is in the possession of Arthur C. Young, will be printed in Volume IX of the letters, but I want to present the whole text of it here because I think that only when we read it all can we see clearly that Ward was not merely "correcting" Gissing's mistake: he was making a subtle point to his erstwhile student, who was quite rightly unsettled by it. In providing a context, however, I should like to develop a theory I have held for some time without sufficient evidence, but which has been renewed by Korg's quotation of Ward's

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marginal comment on the Burns essay. I quote it from Martha Vogeler's review: "I think that the style is simpler and pleasanter as a whole in this essay than in previous attempts. This will do very well." Korg points out (and we must all agree) that this comment was "not very enthusiastic." The man says nothing about substance, nothing about either originality or the ability to assimilate, and of the style only that it was somewhat more agreeable – it was, I think, a rather cool reception of a student paper, and it makes us wonder about Ward's real attitude towards Gissing. Any interpretation of that, of course, rests largely on speculation. At a distance of time we tend to assume that the relationship between a distinguished professor and a brilliant student must have been without impediment. In our daily lives as teachers, however, we know otherwise, and in dealing with the past we are sometimes driven to imagine what the documents of history cannot adequately reveal.

When he saw that comment of Ward's Gissing himself must have shuddered. We do not, of course, know precisely how Gissing regarded Ward in those student days because the evidence is so meagre. From Volume I of the collected letters we know that Gissing wrote his winning poem, "Ravenna," for Ward's Poem Prize Competition, and that later he thought it worth announcing to his friend Bowes that "I have finished Ward's paper & given it in." A little later he singled out his teacher for special praise, saying that "Ward on Thursday was splendid," and since he admitted that he was not sure "whether I shall attend any others" – presumably a series of lectures by several faculty members – it seems clear that he attended the one which everyone knew was to be good. And indeed Ward was a man eminently respected at the college: he was one of the most influential movers in developing the Owens College into the University of Manchester, and in view of his later honors and achievements it is reasonable to assume that in those days he demonstrated the brilliance which was to earn him such later fame. Among the

other things we know of him at the time is that in 1870 he delivered a remarkable lecture on Charles Dickens, a lecture which was published then and which years later the noted Dickens scholar J. W. T. Ley described as “the best criticism of Dickens I have seen since his death” (in his edition of Forster’s *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1918, p. 727). It is not unlikely that Gissing would do his best to impress this great man.

But we do not have any firm idea how the great man regarded this precocious and ambitious boy. Gissing never says a word about this – no mention of any particular kindness,

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any words of encouragement, or any gesture which might indicate that he felt he had impressed his principal mentor. Perhaps it is merely the lack of such evidence which gives the impression that the man was in fact somewhat cool towards him. The comments on Gissing’s Burns essay were certainly cool enough, and Gissing can hardly have failed to realize this, but a teacher also betrays his coolness in small ways, and a student eager to impress him knows that very well too. When Gissing, then, reveals to his friend Bowes the results of the Shakespeare competition, saying that “Ward showed us our marks yesterday” but that he had received only an “honourable mention,” he is describing a failure. The four candidates “were all very near together,” but he had come in third. Like the phrase “also ran,” “honourable mention” is a failure in itself, but it is more importantly a failure to impress the man who was very likely his scholarly model. And when Gissing was later expelled from the college, that was a more crushing failure – a failure to fulfill the expectations he had doubtless aroused at the college, yes, but a deeper failure to secure the esteem of his chief mentor.

While much of this is admittedly speculative, yet it prepares us to interpret the two later occasions on which Ward came into Gissing’s life, and perhaps the earlier and the later parts of the story, though less convincing in themselves, may be seen to corroborate each other reciprocally. What we do know is that Gissing never forgot his old teacher, and, as students do, perhaps never stopped secretly hoping to impress him in some way, to make up for the past, although such a dream is never within a person’s deliberate control. We can, however, turn to the topic for which Ward was particularly well known, and speak of Gissing’s decision to write a book on Dickens. He had many reasons for wishing to do that, of course, but one off-hand comment seems to suggest a good deal more than it says. Gissing mentions his projected book several times during the weeks before he left for Italy late in 1897, and even records his conviction that it will be a very good one. Then on September 9 he provides Colles with a fuller statement of his purpose, his aim, and his plan, ending with the following assessment: “In short, I mean to make a readable little volume – one decidedly more alive (I trust) than that in the ‘English Men of Letters Series.’”

An innocent enough observation, of course, but it is at least interesting that Gissing does not mention the author of the English Men of Letters book, who was none other than his erstwhile mentor, Adolphus William Ward. No matter how one may dispute the relative scholarly merits of these two books, there seems no doubt that Gissing’s was the more “lively”

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because he set out to make it so: it was to be primarily critical rather than scholarly, to be as sympathetic as possible at a time when Dickens’s reputation had waned considerably, “to estimate his work as an artist, as a philanthropist, as a democrat,” as he says in his letter, and to be “as bright & interesting as possible.” Here, in short, was a real chance, which had been granted to him quite by accident, to show his old teacher that he was not a failure, and in effect to beat him on his own ground. And Gissing did what he set out to do. We have no idea whether he sent a copy to Ward—there is no evidence in the diary or the letters that he did so, but there

was every reason not to do so: some things are best left to speak for themselves.

Five years later, however, the old teacher, who was now Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, still came into his mind, and Gissing included his name on the list of people to receive an author's complimentary copy of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. It was not a personal copy, signed, for that would have been an appeal, a sign of weakness. This tactic called for a different kind of response, if one were to come, and that brings us to the letter which Ward wrote to Gissing, the one mentioned by Korg as containing a correction of Gissing's interpretation of the Goethe passage. Here is the full text:

Peterhouse Lodge,  
Cambridge.  
February 8, 1903.

Dear Mr. Gissing,

I should have written sooner to thank you for your most kind thought of sending me the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*; but it occurred to me that the rule which like some other discreet persons I generally follow of acknowledging a book before I have read it would in this instance be honoured rather in the breach than in the observance. And indeed I had read the early pages of it in a magazine, had come to the conclusion that with the aid of your great power of representing men as they are you were mystifying the public. On reading your Preface I of course sympathised with the real Henry Ryecroft, and maybe I must adjust my impressions. I have now read the whole, and think it a powerful book. The man is a reality to me, and will always be so when I think of him. And I shall think of him often enough, for there is much in his philosophy that comes home to me, especially as summed up in Goethe's saying of which H. R. [i. e., Gissing] does not bring out perhaps all the irony: Was man in der Jugend begehrt, hat man im Alter die Fülle.

You see I criticise you with the old freedom of the pedagogue; and this license emboldens me to say to you that in your writings, of which I have read many though not

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all of them are as sympathetic to me as Henry Ryecroft, there is one thing which always thrills me. And that is the infinite pity for those who fail which is always present to you. I notice with pleasure how the human kindness which is at the root of this makes you just to Dickens, with whom it is so easy to find fault.

With warmest thanks I remain, dear Mr. Gissing,

Yours very truly,

A. W. Ward

Clearly Ryecroft (Gissing) took the Goethe passage merely at face value – what a man wants in his youth, in his older age he gets to the full. But why did Ward want to correct that? There was no earthly reason to do so: it passes belief that a man of Ward's stature simply intended to embarrass his former student, or even that he was just meanly and annoyingly pedantic. He must certainly have had a point to convey. And indeed, what did Goethe mean? More important, what did Ward think he meant?

Ward's letter is a very curious one: it calls attention to itself as worded with extraordinary and suspicious care, and if it is perhaps not quite "cool," neither is it quite "warm." Technically, he does praise Gissing's work, briefly calling it "a powerful book." Certainly a graceful concession, but although he had read "the early pages of it in a magazine" (for he cannot remember which one) and concluded that Gissing was simply "mystifying the public," he

apparently read no further then. Yet in reading the Preface, he says, he did “sympathize with the real Henry Ryecroft” – that is, Gissing himself – and now that he has read the whole, he says, perhaps he should “adjust my impressions.” He will think often of Ryecroft (Gissing) because “there is much in his philosophy that comes home to me...” and if we quickly wonder just where he found it, we are as quickly put at rest, for it is that philosophy “especially as summed up in Goethe’s saying of which H. R. does not bring out perhaps all the irony.” In other words, it is summed up in a quotation which Ryecroft (Gissing) does not quite fully understand.

But the irony is there nonetheless, and Ward meant Gissing to see it. As if to make sure of that, he goes on to explain the point in the final paragraph of his letter. He says first – cordially, of course – that “I criticise you with the old freedom of the pedagogue,” but when he adds that “this license emboldens me to say to you that in your writings ...there is one thing which always thrills me,” he must have surprised even Gissing, for here is what he means: “that is the infinite

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pity for those who fail which is always present to you.” It is extremely hard to resist the inference that Ward had Gissing’s own failure in mind here. Gissing had every promise of a distinguished academic career, one perhaps even surpassing that of his mentor – an eventuality which every authentic teacher is supposed to enjoy – but that career was lost forever. It was that failure which ruined Gissing’s life, he seems to be reminding him, and which still informs Gissing’s books as if they constituted a perpetual enactment of the irony in Goethe’s epigram. And now here is yet another failure, but it can be seen as an intellectual one, and Ward is therefore all the more thrilled to recognize in his former student an authentic human being, a kind of grand failure. He is pleased to say that “the human kindness which is at the root of this makes you just to Dickens, with whom it is so easy to find fault,” but the failure can never be overcome. In this way do men in their older years reap the rewards of their youth. Gissing got the German quotation from Bertz, and it is unfortunate that Bertz misquoted it in a way that devastatingly played into Ward’s hands – and which Ward did not correct – for it made the epithet more clear and applicable. Where Goethe had written in *der Jugend wünscht*, Bertz substituted in *der Jugend begehrt* – a word useful to Ward because it denotes a far more intense desire and even a sexual craving, as it is used in the German translation of the tenth Commandment: *du sollst nicht begehren deines Nächsten Weib*. It was, after all, a woman for whom Gissing had stolen money, and in such a way could Ward remind Gissing in his age of what he had done in his youth. The verbal substitution was so propitious that one wonders whether the perception of it was the chief cause of Ward’s decision to write.

Did Gissing himself get the point? Well, at least he was unsettled by it. He must have written to Bertz after long and deliberate meditation, for Ward’s letter is dated January 8, and on February 15 Gissing thanks his German friend for replying to his question: “Again, you are certainly right in your last thought on Goethe’s sentence. Undoubtedly it is ironical. I ought to have seen that more clearly. My attention has been drawn to the fact in a letter from a Cambridge Don, Dr Ward, the historian – who was once my professor at Manchester.” But in fairness we must acknowledge that Gissing was uneasily aware from the beginning that something may have been amiss in his comprehension of Goethe’s epigram. On September 30 of 1900 he had written to ask Bertz about it: “By the bye, what did Goethe really mean by those words of his – ‘Was man in der Jugend’ &c? Is it a general expression of optimism? Common

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experience seems flagrantly to contradict it. I should like to know your own real opinion some day.” We have no evidence of Bertz’s reply, but clearly his friend failed him. To Gissing’s credit, he understood the fundamental truth that Goethe’s epigram, if taken merely at diplomatic value,

simply runs contrary to the actuality of human experience. He did not rise from that saving truth to see the immense irony of it, however. His old academic mentor did that for him. But while the pedagogue's "correction" of Gissing's interpretation of Goethe served to remind his old student of failure, we may credit Ward's courtesy in using his critique of Ryecroft to praise – however obliquely – Gissing's book on Dickens.

There, one expects, the story should end. Ward was evidently unwilling to let his old pupil feel that he had at last fulfilled the early expectations of his revered mentor. We are disappointed that this story should end in the kind of failure which Ward judged was so celebrated in Gissing's novels. We regret too that Ward, uniquely positioned to bring a particular kind of pain, was granted the opportunity to inflict it on a man whose capacity for pity he claimed to admire without being moved to emulate it. Luckily, Ward could not know the effect of his letter, for Gissing could hardly respond to it with dignity after so many alien years, and doubtless he had the wisdom to see that in silence alone could he deny any final satisfaction. Yet Gissing could not help but be hurt: we see his bewilderment in the delayed recourse to his German friend, when we might have hoped that Gissing would hold firm to his decisive interpretation of an epigram on which he had earlier sought his friend's help, and which Ward himself declined to explain. After all, the energy of the epigram is that it does not reveal itself: it is not *necessary* to read it ironically.

But the story does not end there: an ironic sequel to these events provides us with a final unexpected chapter. It cannot be doubted that Gissing discussed the whole tale and the pain of it with Gabrielle, who would of course be moved to support him both personally and intellectually, but without having the real means to console him. At some point the whole problem must have worked itself keenly into her sensibility, for after several months she turned for help to a person they had both known a year earlier in St. Jean-de-Luz, Stella Webster, the daughter of a man who had been Anglican Chaplain there. Wentworth Webster was advised, even as a young man, that he must live in the south of France for reasons of health, and so he spent considerable time at Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Biarritz, becoming a Basque scholar and the Anglican Chaplain at

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St. Jean-de-Luz until 1881, when he settled at nearby Sare, writing on the Basques and on church history and theology. Probably Gabrielle felt closer to his daughter Stella, who also seems to have been a highly educated person – her response to Gabrielle's query about the meaning of Goethe's passage is now in the possession of Gissing's great-grandson, Xavier Pétremand. It is indeed an interesting letter, dated August 31, 1903, in which she says that the quotation cannot well be understood without the context, which she thereupon provides by quoting Goethe himself in German. The epigram forms the motto for Part II of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where the language is only slightly different from that which Ward gives it: *Was man in der Jugend wünscht, hat man im Alter die Fülle*. The discussion of it, however, occurs in Book IX, where Goethe says that he wants to "take the opportunity of vindicating the motto prefixed to the present volume with those who may have entertained some doubt about it." Significantly, he now gives it an altered wording: *Was einer in der Jugend wünscht, hat er im Alter genug*. Here is his explanation in the translation of R. O. Moon:

I knew, indeed, very well that against this honest, hopeful, old German saying: "what one wishes in youth, one has abundance of in old age," much contrary experience may be brought forward, much trivial comment made; but much also may be said in favour of it, and I will declare what I think on the matter.

Our wishes are presentiments of the capabilities which lie in us, harbingers of that which we shall be in a condition to perform. Whatever we are able and would like to do, presents itself to our imagination, as without us and in the future; we feel a longing for

that which we already possess in secret. Thus a passionate anticipating grasp transforms the truly possible into an imaginary reality. If such a bias lies decidedly in our nature, then with every step of our development will a part of the first wish be fulfilled; under favourable circumstances in the direct way, under unfavourable in the circuitous way from which we always return back again to the other. We see men by perseverance arrive at earthly wealth, they surround themselves with riches, splendour... Others strive yet more securely after intellectual advantages etc. etc...

Clearly this explication by the author himself presents us with a quandary. One lesson Ward might have learned from it is that, if he wanted to correct Gissing's interpretation of Goethe, he had better know a good deal more about Goethe, and we might confront him with another saying, that in unexpected ways a little learning is a dangerous thing. What we might

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learn is that Gissing was right all along, that he need not have been intimidated by an academic title, that one must have the courage of his intellectual convictions, and that Ward had fallen into the kind of personal arrogance that is perhaps not altogether uncommon in scholars who become uncommonly distinguished. Gissing was fond of encouraging his brother with fragments of the old phrase "take heart of grace," and here a bit of it seems to have dropped onto his path, for some of life's reversals seem to come to us as "a peculiar grace, | A leading from above, a something given." And so we have a story which began in pain, but thereof came in the end – although the epiphany perhaps too late – vindication and gladness.<sup>1</sup>

To complicate matters, however, we must not neglect the equalizing factor here, for Goethe was not the author of the epigram: it was merely an old German saying, and in that case, Ward, Gissing and Goethe alike stand only as interpreters of it. Ward chose the ironic and cynical meaning, while Goethe rose to the literal one and Gissing, having an inkling of trouble, descended to it. The parallel is at least interesting: Gissing took the phrase literally, and was attacked for it by a man who thought he was interpreting Goethe: but Goethe also took it literally, and had to defend himself against those who questioned him about it. It is tempting to advance a theory that old sayings are subject to alteration in history, so that if one of them can lose its irony to time, another can acquire it: Goethe's old German saying, simple in origin, may have accrued new meanings. Old adages, however, can be treacherous in their antiquity, for their origins are often obscure, and ambiguity seems to be common. In his complex explication of simplicity, Goethe was not, of course, trying to restore an ancient meaning. Yet in the compelling ingenuity of his defense one cannot help feeling that he resorted to a theory of prescience and mystery and an imagination as palpable as that of Keats on explaining Adam's dream of Eve—he awoke to find her real<sup>2</sup>: and when he argues further that even when a man finds his youthful expectations unfulfilled, and he sees "that performed by others to which [he himself] felt an earlier call," then "the beautiful feeling enters the mind that only mankind taken together is the true man" and so he can at least "be joyful and happy when he has the courage to feel himself in the whole" – then we may be permitted to wonder what has become of his argument. In defending himself Goethe employed yet another verbal tactic, for in changing *die Fülle* to *genug* he so far removed the probability of ironic content that the interpretation he was defending did not need it: it was not the same adage.

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Goethe may not have been right. But then the possible ironic interpretations of the old German saying present their own difficulties, as one might imagine if so fertile a mind as Goethe's were to exercise itself upon them. Here, at least, Gissing was the only one to be aware,

however dimly, that the matter is a good deal more complex than anyone thought. Luckily, we do not have to settle the issue here. The final chapter in our story is resolved by the recognition that Gissing must have gone to his death comforted in the knowledge that, right or wrong, Goethe was on his side. Perhaps after all that was better than having Adolphus William Ward on his side.

<sup>1</sup>See Wordsworth, “Resolution and Independence,” stanzas 7 and 8.

<sup>2</sup>See Keats’s letter to Benjamin Bailey of 22 November 1817: “The Imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream—he awoke and found it truth.”

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### Book Reviews

Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing. Volume Three, 1886-1888*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992. xxxiv + 354 pp. *Volume Four, 1889-1891*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1993. xxxiv + 363 pp.

As the *Collected Letters* continue to roll out, Gissing’s life once more unfolds before us. Foreign travel, a fatal marriage and his finest novels are the crucial developments in the period covered by these volumes.

Gissing’s first trip abroad was to Paris in March 1886. “It is wonderful past all hooping!” he exclaimed. Though brief, the experience whetted his appetite to visit his beloved Italy, golden land of his classical studies. In 1888 he reached his earthly paradise – curiously, on the proceeds of *The Nether World*. The sight of the Mediterranean choked him with joy, and Naples – uproarious, colourful, its streets crowded with monks and goats – dazzled and delighted him. It was also marvelously inexpensive – “*white grapes at one penny a pound*,” he announced gleefully (much later, back in England, he pronounced this “the sole instance in which my anticipation of cheapness was ever realized”). He could live in Italy, he declared, on a pound a week (about £40 in modern values). But it wasn’t mainly cheapness that appealed to him: rather, the wealth of historic association. That was why he found the Colosseum “awesome – almost

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too much to endure,” while deploring modern Rome as “detestable” and dismissing as largely uninteresting the Christian art of Renaissance Florence. The same classical slant governed his perception of Greece, which he visited in 1889. But on this second tour of the Continent – to Athens and then to Naples again – a new note creeps into his correspondence. His solitude, he laments, “spoils everything.” “No one can imagine what I have lost by making these journeys without a sympathetic companion.” As ever with Gissing, external reality is darkened by inner turmoil.

The simplest view of Gissing’s personal life during these years would be that, having fortunately lost his first wife, he unfortunately gained a second. But this view distorts the complexities of his emotional and creative needs. Although he had long been separated from Nell, her death in February 1888 plunged him into a despairing depression – in which mood he wrote *The Nether World*. The correspondence confirms that his trip to Italy only postponed his emotional crisis – which arose from the fact that, being free to remarry, he now felt his loneliness more acutely. He found that his second sojourn abroad was powerless to allay this sense of frustration. On returning in February 1890, he entered a period of psychological torment which resulted in his marriage to Edith Underwood almost exactly a year later. It is customary to comment on the folly of this move, and indeed in the cheerless light of later events

Gissing's dogged reassurances – "The girl is peculiarly gentle & pliable," "It will be a great thing to secure for myself a very simple, quiet home" – make painful and poignant reading. But the fact remains that to this temporary relief, however deluded, we owe *New Grub Street* and *Born in Exile*, the twin peaks of Gissing's achievement.

Even after nine months' marriage to Edith, Gissing is "more than satisfied with her." It is Edith's advent that allowed him to break out of a protracted bout of creative barrenness and convert his anguish into art. One point re-emphasised by these volumes is how much labour Gissing wasted – not only on a completed novel, "Clement Dorricott," which he declined to let Bentley publish in book form, but also on false starts such as "Sandray the Sophist," "Dust and Dew," "The Head Mistress" and "Storm-Birds." Pride, panic, misery and perfectionism all contributed to this diffusion of effort. And yet perhaps it was not wholly wasted, for Gissing was adept at recycling material. "Sandray the Sophist" – "a satire on the modern cultivators of literature" – evidently anticipated *New Grub Street*, and researches for "The Head Mistress" were almost certainly re-used in *The Odd Women*.

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Given the time expended on foreign travel and false starts, it is astonishing to record how much Gissing wrote between 1886 and 1891: *Demos* (or most of it), *Thyrza*, *The Nether World*, *The Emancipated*, *New Grub Street*, *Born in Exile*, *Denzil Quarrier*. A fierce ambition seems to have driven him during this middle phase of his working life. "I can't endure to be nobody," he told his sister Ellen in 1886, adding in 1887, "I cannot & will not be reckoned among the petty scribblers of the day." By 1889 he was even more emphatic: "I cannot stand obscurity." As the editors note in the introduction to Volume Three, he is constantly announcing that a new life has begun, that the day of his emancipation is at hand. And yet despite some encouraging breakthroughs, his literary career stays stubbornly grounded. His reputation is modest and restricted. His finances only sluggishly improve.

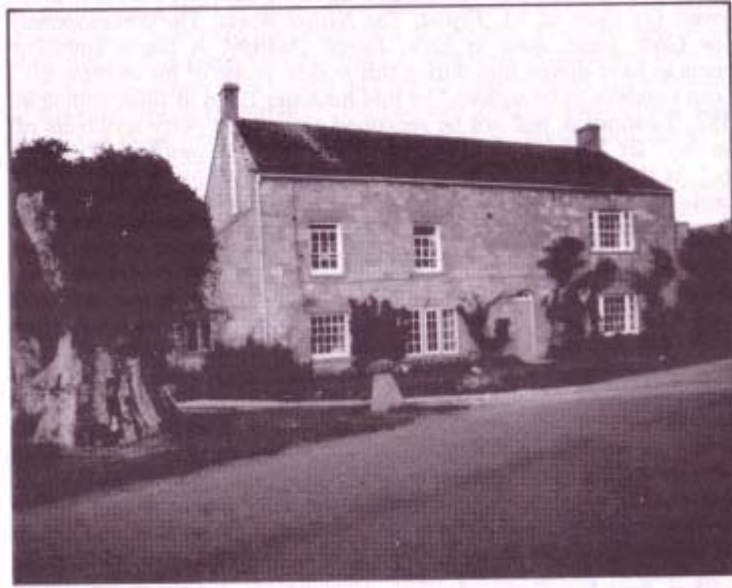
The main reason for Gissing's lack of success was no doubt the nature of his fiction, but his self-imposed solitude cannot have helped. For quite long stretches his only friend in London was his fellow-student from Manchester, Morley Roberts (some of whose letters from America are included in Volume Three). Most of his correspondence during these years is still to members of his family: emotionally and even practically he is tied to his Wakefield origins. He accompanies his female relatives on holidays to Seascale, the Channel Islands and Paris, and even while travelling on the Continent remembers to mention the burning issues back home ("I hope mother's teeth will not give her much trouble at York"). His most emotional letters are those to Ellen – "my dear sister, who is the truest & nearest friend I have." It is Nelly he implores to visit him after the trauma of his first wife's death, Nelly whose good opinion most delights him, and Nelly whose study and reading he guides in the hope of expanding her horizons. This didactic mission was only partially successful. Nelly's shock at *The Emancipated*, and the tensely suppressed anger of Gissing's replies, exposed the cultural gulf between them: thereafter his letters to Wakefield were brusquer and less confiding.

With Algernon he was intellectually more at ease, though the burden of commenting on his brother's dismal novels put an evident strain on his magnanimity. At one point, almost inadvertently, he slips out the devastating judgment: "It has not that which attracts the vulgar, & it falls short of that which satisfies the reader of intelligence." He also privately deplores his brother's habit of moving constantly from place to place – "ruinous" and perhaps "merely trying to run away." This last insight might equally apply, of course, to Gissing's own restlessness.

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West End Farm, Broadway, Worcestershire





This house was visited by all the members of the Gissing family in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. It was the home of Mrs. Gissing's first cousin, Emma Shailer, *née* Woodward (1839-1909), whose husband, Frederick Jackson Shailer (1830-1874), was an appraiser and house and estate agent. There, too, lived Tom and Mary Bedford, their nephew and niece, after their parents' death in 1867. Gissing often refers to these relatives in his diary and correspondence as to the Broadway people, but he rarely saw them. Mary married Augustine Read Williams in 1894 and Ellen attended the wedding. Their only son, Arthur Bedford Williams, was born in 1898. A postcard he sent to Miss [Margaret] Gissing on 26 October 1906 ("Very many happy returns of the day. With love from A. B. Williams") has recently been discovered. It shows the Old Cottages, Church Row, Broadway, a short walking distance from West End Farm.

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Relatives aside, Gissing's most regular correspondence was with his German friend Eduard Bertz, letters to whom appear in these volumes from 1887 onwards. Bertz – "the only man of *European* culture with whom I have been intimate" – was the recipient of Gissing's most carefully crafted intellectual and cultural reflections. For Bertz's consumption Gissing garnishes extracts he claims to be copying direct from his diary. Concentrating on literary topics, he fails to tell Bertz of the birth of his son. Since Gissing's surviving letters to Bertz were first published over thirty years ago in Arthur C. Young's annotated edition, their reappearance in the *Collected Letters* gives readers an opportunity of examining the editorial procedures of this latest and huge undertaking. One's impression is that the *Collected Letters* both subsumes and supersedes Young's edition. Several footnotes, it is true, simply duplicate Young's: the summary of Bertz's novel *Glück und Glas*, for instance, is reproduced verbatim. On the other hand, advances in scholarship have enabled the editors often to amplify and sometimes to correct Young's earlier notes. For example, where Gissing mentions to Bertz that "Roberts is doing 'art criticism' for the *Scottish Review*" (January 20, 1889) Young's footnote stated, "There are no 'art' criticisms in this magazine," but the present edition supplies the solution: "Gissing meant the *Scottish Art Review*, where we find" – and full details follow.

In general the editorial matter in these volumes is well up to the standards already established. In addition to the regular Chronology of Gissing's life each volume comes equipped with its own Introduction. Both are excellent, though the introduction to Volume Four seems to

adopt a more partisan tone (about Gissing's values, disputes and so on) than that discernible in Volume Three (and certainly than in the first two volumes). In their introduction to Volume Three the editors reflect philosophically:

It has often been thought that Gissing suffered terribly from the unfair treatment of publishers, and while there is of course a great deal of truth in that, yet some instances are insufficiently documented, and at times the issue is at least doubtful; publishers, after all, cannot be generous to an author whose books do not sell.

Given the temperate nature of this judgment, it is surprising to be notified in Volume Four of the "crookedness" of Gissing's "unscrupulous publishers," their "meanness," "gross discourtesy" and "shady proceedings," their "typical lowbrow and crassly commercial" complaints, their

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"flagrant confession of greed." It is not clear why the more cautious interpretation has been so resoundingly abandoned.

However, the hallmark of the *Collected* edition is its minute, copious annotation, a tremendous labour of scholarly retrieval which elucidates all corners of the correspondence. The editors' assiduity in tracking allusions, checking asides, and establishing contexts is exemplary and highly impressive. It is also good to have in the footnotes some unfamiliar perspectives on Gissing from those who knew him personally. Particularly noteworthy are the views of his sister Madge on their holiday together in the Channel Islands. Though Gissing reported crushingly to Bertz, "My poor sister is a Puritan, and we can talk of nothing but matter of fact," Madge herself wrote to Ellen, "all George & I want is you to brighten us into laughter & fun & we should be perfect." Even more surprising is the testimony of Gissing's ex-pupil Walter Grahame after visiting Gissing and Edith in Exeter: "his wife was evidently devoted to him, and he was very proud of his baby son." The date of this visit was 1893. Was Grahame merely impercipient, or did Gissing misrepresent Edith?

One should mention finally the illustrations in these volumes. They include the first available photograph of Nell (looking somewhat simple but also shy) and a formal portrait of Gissing aged thirty – handsome, debonair, sensitive and frail; an aesthete, destined for destruction.

David Grylls (University of Oxford)

George Gissing, *Born in Exile*, ed. David Grylls. London: J. M. Dent, Everyman Library, 1993. xx + 439 pp. *The Day of Silence and Other Stories*, ed. Pierre Coustillas. London: J. M. Dent, Everyman Library, 1993. xxv + 230 pp.

The simultaneous appearance of these two titles in the venerable Everyman series is a significant event, and makes some of Gissing's best work available to a wide public.

*Born in Exile* has been reprinted a number of times over the years, but it is encouraging to see it among the classic titles of the Everyman series, and David Grylls' edition has some advantages over the earlier ones. The editor has provided an introduction, some useful explanatory notes, and a selection of critical commentary. The text is based on the one-volume edition of 1893, but has also been collated with the manuscript, and the editor has provided some needed corrections.

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*New Grub Street* is no doubt Gissing's finest novel, and *The Odd Women* has attracted many readers interested in feminism, but *Born in Exile* deserves an important place among his books because it approaches something like philosophical seriousness without compromising fictional qualities. It is also, as Grylls observes, a novel which foregoes action, and focuses on the psychology of its characters as they participate in a moral drama.

The editor makes a number of interesting points in his introduction. He devotes its first part to the aspects of Gissing's life and character that correspond in some way with those of his protagonist, Godwin Peak. There is a good exposition of the queer social-sexual ambition which led both Gissing and his character to regard marriage with a well-bred woman as a kind of ideal – and which Gissing, unlike Peak, considered an unattainable ideal. Grylls then turns to the theme of the “deracinated intellectual.” Peak, unlike other fictional characters of this kind, does not revolt against the prevailing social order, but seeks to join it. Grylls points out that while he shares certain upper-class attitudes, he does not accept the religious views of the people he would like to associate with.

The novel presents many discussions of the science-religion controversy, evolution, and related topics, but Grylls feels that it treats these ideas as pawns in the game of social acceptability, and not as subjects for serious analysis. That is certainly Peak's approach. Abnormally sensitive about his social position, he is also keenly attuned to the social values that, he believes, control the world of ideas. When he surveys the contemporary rivalry of science and religion, he speaks contemptuously of the “respectable,” of a “vogue,” of the “marketable” and “good form.”

Grylls notes that Gissing's text employs many of the terms and concepts associated with evolutionary theory. His observations that evolution is “a metaphor that colours the book's conception,” and that some of the characters exemplify it are especially interesting, for they show that evolution had become a constitutive element in Gissing's thinking, as it had in the minds of many of his contemporaries. This was a change. The Darwinian revolution had apparently passed Gissing by in his Positivist phase, for at that time he was critical of those who accepted evolutionary theory without adequate proof. However, perhaps in response to the fact that Darwinism was such a familiar part of the intellectual scene, or simply because he wished to know more about it, he read Grant Allen's book on Darwin while writing his novel in the spring of 1891, and was sufficiently impressed to borrow *The Voyage of the Beagle* from the

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library some months later. Grylls' observation implies that when Gissing wrote *Born in Exile*, evolution was not merely a topic of his characters' dialogue but had become a part of his own pattern of thought.

The introduction shows that much of the novel's significance, especially its ironies, arises from repetitions, contrasts and parallels that appear only when we transcend the linear structure of the normal realistic novel and see *Born in Exile* as a whole. This approach, a familiar one since the appearance of Joseph Frank's “Spatial Form in Modern Literature” in 1945, was probably not available to Victorian readers, who generally thought of their novels as serials. It is clear from Grylls' remark that *Born in Exile* does not suffer when seen in a modern critical perspective, but acquires new resonances.

A more radical post-modern perspective also seems promising. By saying that *Born in Exile* characteristically opens up questions rather than resolving them, Grylls raises the question of whether it might be useful to read this novel, and perhaps other works by Gissing, with the insights provided by post-modern critical theory. Grylls' discussion certainly suggests the possibility. His brief and cogent analysis of Peak's inconsistent actions which, as he says, “erode the notion of personal identity,” points clearly toward the post-modern attack on the concept of the unitary subject. Grylls observes that the novel anticipates Freud, and there are passages in

*Born in Exile* concerning Peak's motivation which suggest that Gissing was aware of something like the unconscious. In discussing the various inner promptings to which Peak responds, Grylls concludes that "No single discourse can claim authority," and that even the author's narrative voice is inconsistent with itself. Thus, Peak's view that "truth is indeterminable" seems to be a principle adopted by the novel as a whole. It follows from Grylls' analysis that Peak's history does not provide any firm moral position from which the reader may judge him and his actions. That judgment, as Grylls says in concluding his introduction, must be made by the reader himself.

Pierre Coustillas has been very energetic, over the years, in editing Gissing's stories from manuscript or periodical sources and giving them the prominence which they deserve. As we should expect, his choice of stories for the *Everyman* volume offers a good representative selection. He has provided an apparatus consisting of a crisp biographical note, a chronology aligning the course of Gissing's life with literary and historical events, a handful of explanatory

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notes, and a selection of critical comments. His introduction traces the development of Gissing's work in the genre of the short story. It is something of a surprise to learn that our author, who wrote 22 novels, a number of other books, and enough letters to fill nine volumes, also wrote, by Coustillas' count, 115 short stories.

Coustillas divides the short stories into three groups. The first are those written and published in America, which were republished in *The Sins of the Fathers* (1924) and *Brownie* (1931), and in the recent collection of largely unknown stories retrieved from 19th-century American newspapers by Robert Selig, and published in his volume, *Lost Stories from America*.

The second group were written after Gissing returned to England, between the years 1878 and 1884, in an effort to enter the short story market at home. He found it much, much harder to place his stories in England, however. All but two of the short stories written while he was working on his first novels were rejected, and one did not achieve publication for many years. (The others have been edited and published from manuscripts in the Berg Collection by Professor Coustillas.) This experience apparently convinced Gissing that he had no talent for the form and he gave it up. As late as 1889, he wrote to his brother Algernon: "This whole matter of short stories is an exceedingly difficult one. I myself cannot write them..." But in 1891 the publication of a story that had been accepted "six or seven years ago" surprised him and apparently gave him new confidence. In August of that year his disagreement with the family who had rented part of their house to him in Exeter led him to believe that "out of these miseries" he might construct a volume of short stories to be called "At a Week's Notice" about the trials of living in lodgings. This book was never written, but the theme is prominent in the stories Gissing was to write after that time.

Gissing's diary records some failed efforts at short stories during the time he was writing *Denzil Quarrier* and just afterwards, and the one story he did complete at this time, "A Casual Acquaintance," was rejected by *Macmillan's Magazine*. Gissing might have been expected to give up the idea of the short form after this, but he was actually on the brink of success with it. In November of 1891, a month before the rejection from *Macmillan's*, he wrote "A Victim of Circumstances," and submitted it to *Blackwood's Magazine*. It was accepted, and a clue to the reason for this change in his short story fortunes appears in a footnote in the *Collected Letters* giving information that someone had written a note on the author's covering letter identifying

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the writer as the author of "Demos, Thyrsa, &c &c." The story is a clever and ironic tale about a

painter who is working on a grandiose historical canvas while his wife amuses herself by painting small water-colors. The painter himself is a failure, but the beauty of the water-colors is recognized, and the pair fall into the practice of selling them as the work of the painter himself. Years later, when his wife has died and he has accomplished nothing, the painter speaks of the water-colors, which are highly regarded, as his sole achievement, apparently believing by this time that he had painted them himself.

Nothing further was heard about "A Victim of Circumstances" for about a year after its acceptance, until Gissing wrote demanding payment or the return of his manuscript. He was astonished to receive a payment of £20 for it two days later. When the proofs came from Blackwood's, they were accompanied by an invitation to submit more material, and the story eventually appeared in the January, 1893 number of the journal.

This was the beginning of the third, and by far the most productive of Gissing's short story periods as Coustillas has outlined them. A few months after the appearance of "A Victim of Circumstances," Clement Shorter, the editor of no fewer than three of the periodicals of the day, wrote to Gissing in March, 1893 asking for a short story resembling the holiday scene in *The Nether World*. This overture was, of course, a radical change for Gissing, after so many rejections. There was no question of rejection when he submitted "Lou and Liz" to one of Shorter's magazines. As the prolific author of a number of well-known novels, Gissing could now count on attracting the attention of editors in search of short fictional pieces, and with the aid of literary agents he wrote and published scores of short stories in the next ten years, many of them on a commissioned basis.

The stories in Coustillas' volume are all from this period, the last years of Gissing's life. In them we meet representative Gissing figures, the bookish recluse, vulgar working-class people, proud single women, and respectable folk without resources who find that there are even lower depths of poverty. The introduction links some of the stories with Gissing's novels and with each other. Generally, the stories follow two types of plot structure. There are those with the classic surprise ending, a twist that ironically negates expectations that have been set up earlier, revealing possibilities that had not been seen before. An example is "Humblebee," whose protagonist saves a schoolmate, the son of a wealthy manufacturer, from drowning and in later years meets him again, and is promised a fine new position that will double what he earns as a

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commercial clerk. However, as so often in Gissing's work, the unscrupulous speculators of the new enterprise fail, and Humblebee, having resigned from his old job, is left adrift. The story ends "He had to begin life over again – that was all." But the event is presented within a perspective that can be read as both encouraging and pathetic. As he learns of the disaster, Humblebee looks at the girl he loves, and the line before the last reads, "He saw that she would not forsake him."

In the second type of plot, there is no ironic reversal, but simply a deepening and confirmation of the original situation. In "A Poor Gentleman," the protagonist, who has seen better days, pretends that he lives in a slum in order to help the poor. When a friend gives him five pounds for his charitable works, he buys a pair of much-needed boots with it, and feels compelled, in the end, to acknowledge his dishonesty as well as his poverty. The heroine of "The Foolish Virgin," expecting to marry, leaves the family she has been forced to live with, but is disappointed, and has to beg pathetically to be taken back.

In advising Algernon about short stories, Gissing wrote: "...there must be one of two things: either a peculiar strangeness of situation, or an exceptional vividness in the picturing of individuals." One of these stories follows the "peculiar strangeness" principle, and in it Gissing displays an unusual flight of imagination. In "A Freak of Nature" the respectable Mr. Brogden finds relief from the pressures of his life by performing irresponsible and outrageous pranks. In

the most elaborate of these, he claims to be his employer. Playing this role, he befriends a country clergyman, suggests that he is in a position to give his nephew employment, and accepts an invitation to spend a night at his house. But he runs away during the night (a possibility Godwin Peak, of *Born in Exile*, considers in the midst of his deception), disappears for a while, and ultimately confesses all to his employer.

The main strength of these stories, it seems to me, springs from Gissing's second principle, and rests on his talent for creating highly individualized characters, even in the small space allowed by the form. Social and economic conditions are strongly determining factors for Gissing, and he always specifies them with precision. One woman "worked at home making quill toothpicks;" a pair of friends are "salesman at a large boot warehouse" and "a coal merchant's clerk;" another man is "draughtsman in the office of a geographical publisher," and so on. In most of these stories, as in Gissing's work in general, these socio-economic conditions

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form the framework of the narrative conflict.

The short stories reflect Gissing's resolve, in the middle of his career, to achieve his effects through more economical and dramatic means, in accordance with the new fashion in fiction. One of his pieces of advice to Algernon was: "Let the reader analyse character and motive, if he be capable of it; do you simply present facts, events, dialogue, scenery." Gissing was never fully committed to this objectivity, but the ideal had an obvious effect on his work, and is strongly felt in the short stories. Their spare, economical style led Conrad Aiken, in a review of 1927 which is excerpted in the critical comments in this volume, to say that Gissing was "very much ahead of his time," and to compare his stories with those of Katherine Mansfield. "He seldom shapes or heads his narrative ... attaches less importance ... to dramatic climax. He is content with a bare presentation of a scene or situation ... we must unquestionably accept him as an artist of the Chekhov generation and a good one."

Jacob Korg (University of Washington)

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#### Notes and News

Very little is known of the literary exhibition which was held in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, from 13 March to 21 August, an exhibition entitled "'A Strange Northern Accent': Manchester's Literary Heritage." *The John Rylands Research Institute Newsletter* of last May makes a distinction between the Manchester-born literary figures such as De Quincey and Elizabeth Gaskell, and the writers who passed through the city via school and University. Gissing is named first among these.

Shigeru Koike's translation of *By the Ionian Sea*, which was published by Shûbun International a few years ago, will very likely be reissued in a revised form in the Iwanami Library, one of the best-known paperback series in Japan. *The House of Cobwebs* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* were once available in it. The former title is now out of print and apparently not to be reissued, while the latter volume is currently available in a special large-format edition.

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Bertz's 1900 volume on the philosophy of the bicycle is of all his works the only one that is occasionally mentioned or quoted from in the German press. Wulfhard Stahl draws our

attention to the latest example in *Wochenpost* for 15 July 1993. This political and cultural journal selling at 2 DM. devotes two large pages to extracts from Bertz's *Philosophie des Fahrrads* under the title "Ein Velo für den Europäer." Three illustrations set the tone. The first one ("Das Fahrrad mit Tretkurbel") shows an antiquated kind of bicycle dating back to 1855 with pedals on either side of the front wheel. The second one shows an attractive young woman with a period hat followed by two men of markedly different ages smiling with knowing airs in her wake. The legend would be appropriate for an illustrated edition of "The Schoolmaster's Vision" or *Our Friend the Charlatan*: "Für Frauen war das Fahrrad ein Mittel zur Emanzipierung." Of the three bicycles we only see the front wheels – of chance. The third illustration features eight male cyclists in very odd postures on bicycles of the oldest possible type. The legend reads: "Mit dem Velo kam auch das Kunstradfahren in Mode. Kein Variété ohne diese Darbietungen." An Austrian reprint of the first edition of the book was issued in 1984. The fifty copies have all been sold.

*The Odd Women*, the play by Michael Meyer, is soon to be available from Samuel French Ltd. Another publication we may look forward to is a booklet on Gissing and Wales by Gwyn Neale, of Pwllheli, who has very carefully enquired into all the aspects of the subject in *The Whirlpool* and in the correspondence. This unexpected item will be available sometime in the New Year; the illustrations will be an attractive feature of Mr. Neale's detailed study of a subject on which no article, it would seem, has ever been published.

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#### Recent Publications

Articles, reviews, etc.

Robert M. Cooper, *The Literary Guide and Companion to Southern England*, Athens, Ohio, and London: Ohio University Press, 1985. Contains nine passages about or mentions of Gissing as well as illustrations of marginal interest such as Meredith's chalet, Hardy's cottage at Higher Bockhampton, and Exeter Cathedral.

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Dorothy Eagle and Hilary Carnell (eds.), *The Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to Great Britain and Ireland*. Revised edition by Dorothy Eagle, London: Spring Books, 1987, of *The Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles* (1977). Numerous mentions of Gissing and his works.

Frederick R. Karl, "Contemporary Biographers of Nineteenth-Century Subjects," *Dickens Annual Studies: Essays on Victorian Fiction*, Vol. 17, New York: AMS Press, 1988. Interesting comment on Gissing and his so-called biographer John Halperin on pp. 303-06 and 310.

Diane M. Smith, "Confronting Socialism: The Naturalist Novel and Its Reception in Europe," *Works and Days*, Fall 1989, pp. 81-90. Partly devoted to Gissing.

Michael Foss (ed.), *On Tour: The British Traveller in Europe*, London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 1989. This illustrated book contains eleven long passages from *By the Ionian Sea*.

J. F. C. Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain 1875-1901*, London: Fontana Press, 1990. A good study of a period which largely coincides with the years of Gissing's literary activity and which is concerned with major subjects such as the Victorian achievement, the social structure, perceptions and values, and the processes of change. Harrison has read *Workers in the Dawn*.

Emanuela Ettore, "Recensioni," *Merope*, Anno 3, no. 4, June 1991, pp. 175-77. Review of *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft*. The same author reviewed Vol. I of the *Collected Letters* in *Merope*, Anno 4, no. 6, June 1992, pp. 241-43.

Anon., *University Press Book News*, December 1991, p. 38. Notice of Vol. II of the *Collected Letters*.

Martha M. Johnson Humber, "Literature, English," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, December 1991, p. 2149 A. Abstract of a Ph. D. dissertation on "George Gissing's females: Fictional women, factual wives."

Chiara Galletti, "'Curiouser and Curiouser': *The Old Curiosity Shop and Little Dorrit*. – A Dickens Curiosity Story," *Acme* (Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, State

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University of Milan, Vol. 45, Fascicolo 3, September-December 1992, pp. 43-60. Gissing's opinion is quoted on p. 44.

Constance D. Harsh, "Gissing's *The Unclassed* and the Perils of Naturalism," *Essays in Literary History*, Winter 1992, pp. 911-38.

J. R. Hammond, *H. G. Wells and the Short Story*, London: Macmillan, 1992. Occasional mentions of Gissing.

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic to Modern Texts*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1992. Chapter 3 is on Gissing and *New Grub Street*. The book consists of articles originally published in *The Independent on Sunday*.

Elaine Showalter, "Feminists under Fire: Images of the New Woman from the Nineties to the 1990s," *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1993, pp. 14-15. Refers to Gissing and *The Odd Women*.

Peter Morton, "Books: Home Truths about an Author," *Quadrant* (an Australian quarterly journal), June 1993, pp. 84-86. Despite two regrettable factual errors, this is one of the best reviews of Vols. I and II of the *Collected Letters* that have appeared to date.

Russell Kirk, "Letters from Grub Street," *Modern Age*, Summer 1993, pp. 369-71. A warmly appreciative review of Vol. III of the *Collected Letters*.

Michael Meyer, "Grubbing Around," *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 1993, p. 21. Yet another perceptive review of the *Collected Letters* (Vol. IV), with one of the two portraits taken by Alfred Ellis in 1893. This is apparently the first time a portrait of Gissing appears in this journal.



Martha S. Vogeler, "The Two Georges," *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies*, nos. 22-23, September 1993, pp. 22-31. A well-researched article on George Eliot and Gissing.

Grevel Lindop, *A Literary Guide to the Lake District*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1993. Various references to Gissing, *The Odd Women*, and the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway.

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Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993. This important book will be reviewed in a later issue. Gissing appears in several chapters. His portrait taken by Naudin in 1884 is reproduced on p. 139.

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (A Norton Critical Edition: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Early Reviews, Criticism), edited by Fred Kaplan, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993. In the section on criticism, this impressive work contains substantial extracts from Gissing's introduction to the novel in the Rochester edition, reprinted in *Critical Studies of the Works of Charles Dickens* (1924) and *The Immortal Dickens* (1925). The critical material covers about 250 pages and Gissing's critical comment (pp. 421-26) comes after that of Henry James and before that of Graham Greene.

As announced in our last number, Mr. Masahiko Yahata, Instructor in English at Beppu University Junior College, has kindly sent us offprints of the following essays from his pen:

1. "Deai wo motomete" (In Search of Encounters: My Trip to England and Ireland), *Mu*, no. 4, May 1990, pp. 11-50. Part of the essay is an account of Mr. Yahata's visit to Wakefield in July 1989. *Mu* is a yearly literary magazine published by a literary circle of which Mr. Yahata is a member.

2. "Futatabi deai wo motomete" (In Search of Encounters Again: The Light and Shade of England and Ireland), *Mu*, no. 5, June 1991, pp. 13-55. An essay about Mr. Yahata's second visit to both countries in the summer of 1990, giving a longer account of his encounter with Douglas Hallam and Clifford Brook in Wakefield, and relating his search for Gissing material in the University of Manchester Library.

3. Japanese translations of "The Poet's Portmanteau" and "Humplebee," *Mu*, no. 6, July 1992, pp. 1-36.

4. "George Gissing's Short Stories from the United States: Emphasis on the Unsigned Stories," *The Journal of Beppu University Junior College*, no. 11, January 1992, pp. 1-14.

5. "The Modernity of George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893): Feminism at the End of the Century," *The Journal of Beppu University Junior College*, no. 12, January 1993, pp. 1-9.

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#### Information for Contributors

*The Gissing Journal* publishes essays and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with biographical, critical, bibliographical and topographical subjects. They should be addressed to the editor, Pierre Coustillas, 10 rue Gay-Lussac, 59110 La Madeleine, France.

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