

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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London Homes and Haunts of George Gissing
An Unpublished Essay by A. C. Gissing

Edited by Pierre Coustillas
and Xavier Pétremand

In our introduction to “George Gissing and War,” which was printed in the January 1992 number of this journal, we mentioned the existence of two other unpublished essays by Alfred Gissing, “Frederic Harrison and George Gissing” and “London Homes and Haunts of George Gissing.” The three of them were doubtless written in the 1930s when he lived with his sole surviving aunt Ellen at Croft Cottage. Alfred did not date these essays, but they all carry his address of the period – Barbon, Westmorland, via Carnforth. Although they were less ambitious pieces than the articles he published in the *National Review* in August 1929 and January 1937, they were doubtless intended for publication; yet there is no evidence available that their author tried to find them a home in magazines such as *T.P.’s Weekly* or *John o’ London’s Weekly*, which sought to offer cultural entertainment and information to a public that cared for literature and any easily digestible comment on writers’ lives and works.

The present essay, fourteen pages long, misnumbered from page 11 onward by the typist, whose mistakes were corrected only for pages 11 and 12, only shows a few corrections in the author’s hand and none of them has more than minor stylistic significance; for instance “noble

meaning” was changed to “dignified meaning” in the sixth paragraph. In two cases, misreadings of the typist were neatly corrected – “Cromwell” to “Cornwall” in Gissing’s address known to his familiars as 7K, and “grim ridge” to “green ridge” in a quotation from *New Grub Street*. The only alteration of interest other than stylistic is that which was made in the title, where a definite article originally stood in the place of London. Perhaps influenced by the title of the article which his father contributed to the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* for 16 August 1902, Alfred, by

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using the definite article must have belatedly realized that he was promising more than he was prepared to give. Dealing with all the homes – whether garrets or basements, flats or houses – in which Gissing had lived from the autumn of 1877 to December 1903 would have been a daunting task, and visiting them all or at least those that were still standing would have proved both time-consuming and expensive. Alfred even realized that listing and describing every single London home his father mentioned in his early letters (the diary, as it had been preserved by Gissing, was of no use) was too ambitious an attempt. He wisely did not reinstate the definite article in the title after crossing it out – his essay, as the final title indicates, only deals with a selection of Gissing’s London homes.

To readers who are familiar with the novelist’s correspondence, it is clear that his son was writing after consulting the letter to Algernon of 11 March 1880. “Why do you want my London abodes?” George asked. “Les voici!” Whereupon he drew up a list which would have proved most useful to those professional photographers who, from the early 1940s onwards, are known to have tried to find Gissing’s old dwellings. It begins with a coffee-house near King’s Cross (one night) which nobody will ever be able to identify, and goes on with 62 Swinton Street, a straight street that runs from Gray’s Inn Road to King’s Cross Road and is so close to King’s Cross railway station that young Gissing (after landing from the steamer *Spain* in Liverpool on 4 October 1877 and slinking to his mother’s home, where he only spent one day before travelling on to London) cannot have gone far from the nameless coffee-house before he found lodgings. Alfred does not refer to these lodgings which the French co-author of this introduction vainly attempted to photograph in the mid-1960s, arriving only a few weeks after no. 62 had been pulled down. Nor has any letter written from that address, where Gissing cannot have stayed more than a few weeks, been preserved. William and Algernon did not keep the earliest letters they received from George once he had – precariously – settled in London, an irreparable loss.

It is with the third address in the list that Alfred really started and it is apropos of it that he reveals his efforts to trace all those old homes of his father. In the present case he was disappointed, unaccountably, since the alley was (and still is) there, and the house Gissing lived in – we have evidence of this – remained standing until the early days of World War II. As he himself admits, his discussion is selective. While Gissing’s list goes on with 31 Gower Place, Euston Square; 70 and 35 Huntley Street, Tottenham Court Road; 38 Edward Street, Hampstead

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Road, and concludes with his current address, 5 Hanover Street, Islington, Alfred ignores the second home in Huntley Street as well as that in Edward Street. The homes he describes he doubtless saw, perhaps even photographed, as we have found among his papers a photograph of 76 Burton Road, Brixton, taken in the 1930s when his topographical enquiries extended to those Suffolk villages, Badingham and Dennington, where his ancestors had lived and laboured. His choice would seem to have been conditioned by the existence or otherwise of the houses concerned in the 1930s as well as of references to them in his father’s correspondence and works.

Where the list in the letter of 11 March 1880 stopped Alfred took over with the addresses printed in the collection of family letters issued by Constable in 1927 or at the head of the originals that were still in his possession. He skipped 55 Wornington Road, Westbourne Park, was content with a transparent allusion to 15 Gower Place, Euston Square, an address stigmatized by Gissing in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, and also skipped 29 Dorchester Place, Blandford Square. Of no. 17 Oakley Crescent, Chelsea, which he describes accurately, he must at least have caught a glimpse during a stay in London. Gissing's landlord and landlady, the Cowards, appear in various contexts in the letters and even indirectly in the scrapbook. Although duly mentioned, the next two addresses – 62 Milton Street, N.W., and 18 Rutland Street – are left undocumented perhaps because the former, under its new name of Balcombe Street, was not readily recognized by Alfred and because the latter one had already gone the way of all things human.

As could be expected, it was to 7K Cornwall Residences (later Mansions) that he devoted the most substantial part of his article. Not only because Gissing was in occupancy for six years and wrote there nearly all his novels from *Isabel Clarendon* to *New Grub Street*, but because he himself had visited the block of flats and the district. He knew, through his grandmother, uncle and aunts that by the end of Gissing's life 7K had, when he was prompted to reminisce about "the dear old horrors," nearly acquired legendary status.

Even though Alfred probably did not regard this pleasant piece as anything more than a topographical survey of his father's more characteristic London homes, he successfully conjures up a vision of bohemian life that we associate with the early Gissing, stressing the pathetic contrast between the literary man's intellectuality and his wretched living conditions. "There he lived, there he wrote," he wishes us to understand compassionately, echoing Henry Ryecroft. He

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rightly views the novelist's realism as the logical artistic compromise between cultural ambition and miserable living. He is perceptibly anxious to stress his father's humanity and to clear him of the accusation of having been a humourless highbrow. The discreet allusion to the days of the so-called Quadrilateral, when Gissing, Hudson, Roberts and Hartley socialized in an atmosphere *à la* Murger invites a congenial response from the reader. That Alfred was not more explicit and forebore from mentioning names is not hard to account for – if Hudson and Hartley were dead by the time the essay was written, Morley Roberts, the offending author of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, was still alive, and Alfred, short of snubbing him overtly (a course not to be contemplated in such an essay), could at least ignore him when in theory a passing mention might, in Roberts's own eyes, have seemed to be in order.

The image of a Gissing who, despite his poverty and his lack of sympathy for the people as a social mass, was capable, Dickens-like, of enjoying London life and his immersion in "a city full of folk," is another facet of Alfred's attempt to recapture elusive moments of his father's life. His familiar knowledge of *Thyrza* and *The Nether World* was doubtless helpful in this respect, as were the recollections of his cousin Willie Stannard, who as a boy, in the late 1870s, had known Gissing when he was still trying in vain to write a publishable novel. As Alfred correctly implies in his final quotation from *Henry Ryecroft*, those days of material and mental sufferings were looked back upon with some nostalgia by Gissing who, in 1903, contemplated revisiting with Gabrielle those places inseparable from his heroic past. Fate, however, willed it otherwise, and the visit was paid by proxy over thirty years later by his only surviving son. The fact that the passing of time has largely robbed his essay of its originality should not make us unfair to him. In the late 1930s, when virtually no holograph letter of the novelist was accessible to scholars and his diary was still in his son's hands, the following piece could only have been written by its author.

“London Homes and Haunts of George Gissing”

When George Gissing first settled in London and decided to seek a precarious livelihood as an author he was well-nigh penniless, which partly accounts for the fact that his experiences of lodgings and landladies was not that which usually falls to the lot of the more fortunate. So numerous were his removals from one abode to another – “flittings” as he would call them jocosely¹ – that it would be an undertaking of no small magnitude to refer to them all; so we

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must content ourselves with a glance at some of the most important of them.

His first taste of London life began near King’s Cross Station,² but no real settlement was made here, and we soon find him gravitating along Gray’s Inn Road to more central regions. One of the best known of his earliest lodging places is – or rather was, for neither the building in which he lived nor even the alley itself any longer exists – 22 Colville Place, off Tottenham Court Road.³ Here he made a moderately good start, for he succeeded in procuring a back bedroom on the top floor. Time, however, revealed that in choosing this garret in which to live and to carry on his literary work he had been somewhat ambitious. The rent proved too high for him, and cheaper quarters were immediately sought and found in the same building at a saving of sixpence a week. From the sublimity of the garret he now descended to the basement; to the cellar, in fact, for that is the more exact designation of the grim abode to which ever after he laughingly referred to as “the slum.”

He describes it in detail in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, and we learn that it was stone-floored, that its furniture consisted of a deal table, a chair, a wash-stand and a bed, and that a certain pallid infiltration of light percolated through a dirty window after having come in at an iron grating in the paving of the alley above. Upon the deal table lay, among other books, his Homer and his Shakespeare, and on that same table he wrote his first novel at the average rate of twelve pages of foolscap a day, in addition to some short stories, none of which saw the light.⁴ At night he would lie awake listening to the tramping of policemen over his head.

These conditions were certainly worse than those of Goldsmith in Green Arbour Court,⁵ but fortunately they lasted only for a time. They were not, however, beyond his endurance, for his health was good in those days, and given reasonable health it is possible to endure hardships with a fair amount of equanimity. In later years he used to laugh at such times of squalor, and I am not sure that he did not consider himself happier then than in days of success, when health had forsaken him.⁶

Colville Place, however, did in the end pall upon him. Just at this critical time, on his twenty-first birthday, some money fell due⁷ – a stroke of good fortune which enabled him to prepare for a removal to better quarters. Soon we find him in Gower Place,⁸ where, on account of delays in the payment of the sum due, he underwent semi-starvation.

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Colville Place and Gower Place! The term common to both is surely of an elastic significance. It can have a dignified meaning in the sense of the Italian piazza, or by a kind of irony it can be used synonymously for a yard. How odd Ruskin’s references to the great Piazza of Venice as St. Mark’s Place sound to our ears! But there are several intermediate varieties to which the term is applicable, and though Colville Place came low in the scale, Gower Place was distinctly higher. The house in which Gissing lived in 1879 no longer exists, so that we cannot decide upon its merits for ourselves; but we do know that, dingy though his room was, it was at least above the ground level, and that the immediate neighbourhood was some degrees superior to that of Colville. But in those days Gower Street Station – now Euston Square – was notorious

as being the most suffocating spot on the whole underground system. Gower Place was within a stone's throw of this descent into Tophet, and black fumes permeated the whole region and sought out Gissing's abode as though it were the one sole object of their mission to the open air.

Although the sum of money due to him had not yet been paid he was not long in exchanging Gower Place for better quarters in 70 Huntley Street, Tottenham Court Road;⁹ soon after which, when the legacy did at last reach him, we find him making ready for yet another departure.¹⁰ So numerous, indeed, were his dwellings at this time that even he himself later in life could not call to mind where they all were. Sometimes the people with whom he found himself in contact were such that he could not endure their proximity; in other cases he fled away from absolutely pestilential conditions. Four-and-sixpence a week was all he could afford for "lodgings with attendance," and for that modest sum he naturally expected but little in the way of comfort; a stair-carpet he came to regard as an extravagance; a floor-carpet in his own room was a luxury undreamt of; "a door that locked, a fire in winter, a pipe of tobacco – these things were essential; and, granted these, I have been often richly contented in the squalidest garret."¹¹

Such were the outward circumstances that prevailed during the progress of *Workers in the Dawn*. After its completion and publication we find him living in a region that was to play a prominent part in what is probably his most impressive work – *The Nether World*. Doubtless many of the grim localities described so graphically in this book were now seen for the first time, and made their first and deepest impression on his mind. Probably it was for the sake of this proximity to regions which promised material for artistic treatment that he decided to plunge into such a dreary waste of drab dwellings and forlorn streets when he removed to

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5 Hanover Street, Islington;¹² for although this new abode might perhaps be said to have been somewhat of an improvement upon those hitherto occupied, the district itself was, and still is, a ghastly one. Immediately to the south of Hanover Street passes the squalid Regent's Canal, and a little further in the same direction is the City Road; on either hand are streets and alleys whose names will be familiar to readers of *The Nether World*. The room which he occupied commanded a prospect of the Canal. It was certainly a dreary enough outlook, but its southern aspect might have allured an occasional ray of sunshine in at the window had the atmosphere in that deadly winter of 1879-1880 allowed it to do so. From November to February, however, fog of varying degrees of intensity brooded over London without intermission, and was pronounced by Gissing to be the worst he had ever known. For three or more successive days his lamp had to be kept burning on the table; and in looking out of the window he just succeeded in catching some momentary glimpse of blurred lights in the street beyond the canal, before the scene was again whelmed in a yellow impenetrable darkness which caused the panes to reflect the firelight into his own face.¹³

But he had had worse times even than these, for at an earlier lodging,¹⁴ when one of those black and yellow eclipses fell upon the city and remained brooding upon it, he found himself at the end both of his coal and of his lamp oil, and with no money to buy either with. In loneliness and depression he went to bed and awaited the return of daylight. But another day came without the slightest change, and when he rose in the darkness, stood at his window and looked down upon the street, he found to his surprise that all was clear below with brilliantly lighted shops as at night, and people going about their business in the ordinary way; but overhead upon the housetops lay thick and heavy a dense mass of smoky vapour.

Apart, however, from these worst of conditions, there is something appalling in the dreariness of the part of Islington in which he now dwelt. The house, and the straight unvaried line of similar houses of which it forms a unit, with other rows round about of precisely the same pattern, may fairly be considered as working-class dwellings of quite a superior kind, and

when Gissing engaged his lodgings there they no doubt bore an appearance of newness. Number 5 Hanover Street is near the western end of a row of which the main characteristics are a series of small flights of stone steps leading across basement areas to arched front doors, cement facing up to the bedroom windows, and finally, for the upper storey, brickwork surmounted by

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a mean cornice extending the full length of the row. In such a line of dwellings there is the essence of that ignoble commonplace, which was forever afflicting him during the whole of his early life, and with which he so pre-occupies himself in *New Grub Street* and others of his novels. The street itself is unutterably depressing – dusty, ignoble and forlorn – one of those many London bye-streets of which the quietness and emptiness serve but to intensify the sense of squalor and desolation which reign supreme—in which even the screaming of children and the shouting of hawkers would be a welcome relief to the monotony that prevails.

But happily he was never wearied for any considerable length of time by one particular locality. Before long we find him established in “better quarters”; and it was in these so-called better quarters that he contracted diphtheria—a result, so he always thought, of the custom of his landlady of using the enclosure beneath her staircase as a dump for refuse. Complaint was useless, for the good lady could never be persuaded that there were other places more appropriate for the disposal of rubbish than the interior of her house. The more the lodger persisted with his remonstrances the more her wrath increased, until it became apparent that the only remedy was for him to transfer himself to other quarters, which he did without further parley.¹⁵

The next dwelling-place may truly be said to be the best which had yet fallen to his lot. It was in Chelsea – next door, as it were, to Cheyne Row; and here, in the dignified block of houses which included his Number 17 Oakley Crescent, he settled down with a sigh of relief.¹⁶ But, unhappily, as time went on the number of those who resided under the same roof so increased, and the general noise and bustle became such a serious menace to his work, that he was obliged out of self-preservation to seek a roof elsewhere. A room was found at 62 Milton Street, N.W., and another later at 18 Rutland Street, Hampstead Road, which in its turn was given up.¹⁷

He was notoriously unhappy in his choice of lodgings. Even when the amount of the rent was not the primary consideration he succumbed to every possible pitfall and error of judgment, and was victimized by the worst of landladies. With some people there seems to be perversity in the very nature of things which is continually placing them under conditions that contrast oddly with those best adapted to their individual temperaments. In the case of Gissing such contrasts were often ludicrous. So great a sun-worshipper was he, for instance, that even a passing cloud would cast its shadow upon his spirits, yet he would more often than not find himself engaging

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lodgings on the north side of a house where no sun could possibly penetrate; highly cultured and refined though he was he would as a matter of course be thrown into contact with men of base calibre; pre-eminently a peace-lover, he spent by far the greater part of his life within earshot of quarrelling neighbours; so sensitive was he to every outward circumstance that even the bustle of a bank-holiday would throw him out of his routine of work, and yet wherever he went discord and uproar pursued him; he was repelled by the lives of the London poorer classes, and yet day after day he found himself studying those very classes as material for his books; the way in which these classes spent their days of *fiesta* maddened him with rage, yet his work obliged him to go to places of popular resort in all the turmoil of a public holiday; that he loved Italy and the serene sunlit regions of the south with nothing short of passion is well known, and yet

many years of his mature life were spent between the gaunt walls of the dreariest type of London street; and an idealist of the first order he devoted his talents to the producing of sordidly realistic fiction; he was a born student, and yet he was forever finding himself in situations where study of any kind was impossible; he loved home-life and friendly intercourse as much as anyone could, but circumstances persisted in setting up effectual barriers between him and the society most congenial to him.

I have said above that he was repelled by the lives of the London poor; and as neighbours they did repel him; but as material for his books he took the keenest interest in them, and few have studied them to such purpose as he has done. Contradictory though it may sound, he delighted in much of the low life of London when he came to deal with it in his books; otherwise, of course, his works would have lacked that power and vitality upon which his fame now rests.

Some of the evils of life were shaken off when at length he found himself the proud occupant of a set of chambers at the top of Cornwall Residences (later Cornwall Mansions) near Regent's Park.¹⁸ He was certainly at last out of the reach of the shrill voices of landladies, though even a landlady's voice can be better than no voice at all. However, we must look at the brighter aspect of these years. A flat bears some dim resemblance to a house of one's own, and when he ascended the four stories of the winding stone staircase leading to the door which bore the designation 7K, he felt himself right gloriously established. The postman's knock at his own front door delighted him, the suite of rooms was convenient in every way, and the independence and seclusion of his new life were truly astonishing. It is true that the old poverty still dogged his steps, for he was as yet but at the beginning of his career, having published no more than two

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novels – *Workers in the Dawn* and *The Unclassed*; but better times lay not far ahead, for in the lofty solitude of 7K he was to produce work which if it did not bring him a fortune at any rate raised him above a state of abject poverty and placed his name among those of the leading writers of the day.

The rooms were simply furnished, and the chief pictures that hung on his walls were a set of engravings of Raphael's famous Cartoons, which have survived the lapse of more than half a century and hang near me as I write – symbols of Gissing the idealist in rough contact with the jarring realities of everyday life. They were, of course, hung at the level of the eye; but to his amusement the agent for the flat,¹⁹ when he called one day to see that all was well, accustomed as he had always been to the foolish practice which Gissing abhorred of skying all such mural adornments, gazed upon them in evident astonishment and remarked that he had never before seen pictures hung so low.

Life at 7K viewed under some aspects was a grim affair; and yet beneath it all there was a certain humour. Gissing, at heart a humorist, did not fail to enter into the occasional fun of the situation. Just beneath him resided the popular composer Bucalossi,²⁰ and for hours the slow and laborious building-up of the compositions of this celebrated artist would strike his ears from the piano below. While Gissing's pen was moving rapidly over the pages of the novel, the famous "See-Saw Waltz" was in full progress, and he enjoyed the unique honour of being among the first of the public to become familiar with a composition that created a sensation in its day. Oddly enough he was not in the least troubled by what would have been the despair of most other people, for he professed a great liking for Bucalossi's rehearsals, on the ground that an even remotely musical noise was better than no music at all.

Apropos of this same composer the reader may recall a sentence in *New Grub Street* in which Reardon's dwelling is referred to: "In the flat immediately beneath resided a successful musician, whose carriage and pair came at a regular hour each afternoon to take him and his wife for a most respectable drive."²¹ Gissing viewed this trim equipage with a delight not

unmixed with laughter at the irony of things. He used to say that the presence of Bucalossi and his wife lent an air of dignity and respectability to the whole building.

The inhabitants of the floors beneath him seem to have been bent upon making their presence felt in one way or another by the solitary occupant of the topmost chambers, for the gentle, persistent strains of Bucalossi's piano were not the only sounds that ascended to his ears.

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Suddenly one night, just after he had got into bed after the clock had struck twelve, he was shaken out again by a stupendous explosion, which quickly brought him upon his long staircase, where he met a crowd of other excited residents, who, like him, had been disturbed from their repose. What had happened? Was Bucalossi disporting himself in ways other than those to which his neighbours had grown accustomed? No, the noise had not its origin in the Bucalossi quarters this time, but had issued from some distance below him, and was louder in proportion to the vertical space which separated its place of origin from Gissing's aerial sanctuary. There had been an extensive leakage of gas on the ground floor during an absence of the tenants, and when they returned after midnight and entered the room in question with a lighted candle, the whole air burst into flame, and the resultant explosion shook the building as though there had been an earthquake. Much injury was done to life and limb.²²

But, despite these and other disturbances, there were distinct advantages attached to 7K, some of which we find enumerated in *New Grub Street*. At such a great height the street-noises were deadened; there could be no walking overhead – an advantage that meant much to one who had listened to the tramping of policemen above the cellar of Colville Place; the air up aloft was purer than that of the lower regions; and there was a flat roof immediately above him, upon which he sometimes sat of a summer evening when the rain of soot was not too severe. The view, of course, from such a point of vantage was magnificent; it included “the green ridge from Hampstead to Highgate, with Primrose Hill and the foliage of Regent's Park in the foreground; the suburban spaces of St. John's Wood, Maida Vale, Kilburn; Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, lying low by the side of the hidden river, and a glassy gleam on far-off hills which meant the Crystal Palace; then the clouded majesty of eastern London, crowned by St. Paul's dome. These things one's friends were expected to admire. Sunset often afforded rich effects, but they were for solitary musing.”²³

If the roof of Cornwall Residences was considered a lofty region when Gissing and his friends indulged in these aerobatics, it has certainly to-day lost much of its prestige; for the whole gaunt row with all its four stories has been broken into and demolished at one end, and is now dominated by a recent structure built right up against the old party-wall of Gissing's block of flats, and towering high above the roof immortalized in the pages of *New Grub Street*. It has been a narrow escape for 7K, but no doubt that too will go before long, or has it gone already?

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A pity that this old landmark should be lost to posterity; and yet, on the other hand, there are very good reasons why it should not be allowed to darken the locality any longer. Gissing's stay in that top flat was, despite the enlivening presence of Bucalossi and his carriage and pair, a dreary and difficult one; and so intense was that intangible atmosphere of gloom which began to brood over the premises from the very moment of his arrival there, and continued long after his final departure, that we are told on unquestionable authority that the unfortunate tenant who followed in his steps immediately fell a victim to it and committed suicide.²⁴ Who knows but that the same grim atmosphere pervades those quarters to this very day? Other victims may have followed in the trail of Gissing's ill-fated successor. If the flat is allowed to remain, there must surely be a definite risk that it will take still further toll of life.

After what has been said I shall no doubt be charged with contradiction when I affirm that Gissing was by no means a gloomy companion. Among friends or relations he became the life and soul of the party. His talk was animated; he would laugh, he would joke, until it became difficult to believe that here was the writer of such books as *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street*. Nor did the recollection of the old London homes and haunts ever quench his spirits. On the contrary he always had a certain affection for them. What were serious enough affairs at the time became later subjects of the utmost merriment, the thought of which reduced him to shattering laughter. He referred to the old regions of gloom and squalor as “the glorious black depths of London”; and what higher compliment could they receive?

“Some day,” he writes, “I will go to London and revisit all the places where I housed in the time of my greatest poverty.” And, after confessing that there was a time when the thought of them made him miserable, he continues: “Now, owning all the misery of it in comparison with what should have been, I find that part of life interesting and pleasant to look back upon – greatly more so than many subsequent times, when I lived amid decencies and had enough to eat. Some day I will go to London, and spend a day or two amid the dear old horrors.”²⁵

¹An old-fashioned Scottish and North country term, which Gissing could have found in Walter Scott’s novels.

²According to Gissing himself he stayed for one night in a coffee-house, near King’s Cross, on his arrival from Wakefield, prior to his looking for lodgings.

³Alfred was mistaken. Colville Place, a narrow alley, was still extant at the time he conducted his enquiry in the 1930s. The most part of it was destroyed by German bombing

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during World War II. However, before then photographs of the alley and of the inside of no. 22 as it was some six decades after Gissing lived there (from late 1877 to early September 1878) had been taken and are now held by Indiana University (see Heather R. Munro’s article, “Photographs of Gissing’s London: The Paterson Collection at the Lilly Library,” *Gissing Journal*, July 1991, pp. 24-29). Colville Place was such a small alley that Reynolds’s 1880 Map of London and Visitors’ Guide does not represent it. Alfred’s source for the material details he gives is *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Spring X).

⁴See letter of 30 January and 2 February 1878 to Algernon for the twelve pages of foolscap he wrote every day, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, I, p. 73. His handwriting was large in those days. At least one short story he wrote or rather rewrote at 22 Colville Place was published – “The Artist’s Child,” *Tinsleys’ Magazine*, January 1878, pp. 80-88. The two versions of the story have been collected by Robert L. Selig in *George Gissing: Lost Stories from America*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992. Gissing used Colville Place and the very basement in which he once lived as a setting for “The Last Half-Crown.”

⁵In 1758-1760 Oliver Goldsmith lived the life of a hack writer at 12 Green Arbour Court, a miserable alley between the Old Bailey and Fleet Market. Decades later the Court was destroyed so as to make room for the London, Chatham and Dover railway.

⁶Alfred echoes a passage from *Henry Ryecroft* (Spring X): “It is a very long time since I was moved to any sort of bitterness by that retrospect of things hard and squalid. Now, owning all the misery of it in comparison with what should have been, I find that part of life interesting and pleasant to look back upon – greatly more so than many subsequent times, when I lived amid decencies and had enough to eat.”

⁷This money, which came from his great-aunt Emily Williams, née Waller, had been thrown into Chancery pending his majority. See *Collected Letters*, I, p. 114.

⁸He moved with Nell to 31 Gower Place, near Euston Station, in mid-September 1878. The whole street was subsequently destroyed when the area was absorbed in University

extensions. See letter of 9 September 1878, *Collected Letters*, I, p. 105. In *Workers in the Dawn* Arthur Golding and Mark Challenger live for a time in Gower Place, as does Eve Madeley in *Eve's Ransom*.

⁹Huntley Street, half-way between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road, is still extant. He moved there on 3 January 1879, and the house is still standing. In *Workers in the Dawn* Golding and Challenger similarly move from Gower Place to Huntley Street, where Golding also takes a room for Carrie Mitchell. In 1890 Gissing alluded to his former abode in chapter V of *New Grub Street*: "From a certain point of Tottenham Court Road there is visible a certain garret window in a certain street which runs parallel with that thoroughfare; for the greater part of these four years the garret in question was Reardon's home."

¹⁰His next address was 35 Huntley Street. Very few letters he wrote in early 1879 have survived, but a letter from his brother William dated 4 April 1879 suggests that it was in April

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that George moved from no. 70 to no. 35. "It will be a grateful change getting two rooms." See *Collected Letters*, I, p. 164.

¹¹*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Spring X).

¹²Nowadays 60 Noel Road. This street is made up of what used to be Noel Street and Hanover Street. In *The Nether World* the Byasses lived in Hanover Street. The house in which Gissing lived is still standing.

¹³Alfred's sources are in his father's letter of 7 February 1880 to Algernon (*Collected Letters*, I, p. 238) and again *Henry Ryecroft* (Spring X).

¹⁴This anecdote cannot be dated with any certainty. Before living at 5 Hanover Street, Gissing had stayed for a few months at 38 Edward Street, off Hampstead Road. Alfred's comment is based on a passage in *Henry Ryecroft* (Winter IV).

¹⁵It has been established that the incident occurred at 15 Gower Place, where Gissing stayed from August 1881 to March 1882. It is echoed in *Henry Ryecroft* (Spring X). Contrary to what Alfred wrote in the next paragraph, his father's next dwelling-place was not in Chelsea, but at no. 29 Dorchester Place, Blandford Square, a house which was to be absorbed in Marylebone Station extensions.

¹⁶There he lived from early September 1882 to May 1884. The street is now called Oakley Gardens and the house in which he had rooms has been renumbered 33. A Greater London Council plaque, put up in 1975, commemorates his stay there. For an account of the ceremony see C. C. Kohler, "G.L.C. Blue Plaque for Gissing," *Gissing Newsletter*, July 1975, pp. 1-8.

¹⁷His correspondence shows that he used these two addresses respectively from May to December 1884; the removal took place in September. Milton Street has been renamed Balcombe Street and no. 62 is still standing, while the house in Rutland Street has been demolished. In *The Unclassed* Ida Starr lived in Milton Street as a child.

¹⁸This apartment house, which directories dating back to the 1880s and 1890s give as part of Allsop Place, is still standing.

¹⁹John Lane, whom Gissing occasionally mentioned in his correspondence and diary. His office was in the same block of flats, at no. 11. Gissing had bought the cartoons in London on 9 September 1884. See *Collected Letters*, II, p. 256.

²⁰Procida Bucalossi (c. 1834-1918) is mentioned by Gissing very soon after his settling at 7K Cornwall Residences in December 1884. See *Collected Letters*, II, p. 278.

²¹Ch. IV.

²²The accident is related in the letter to Algernon of 28 February 1885 (*Collected Letters*, II, p. 294).

²³Ch. IV.

²⁴The unquestionable authority was John Lane, the manager of Cornwall Residences:

“Morning looked in to see old Lane [...], and learnt from him that my successor in 7K committed suicide – not at home, but in the City. The atmosphere I left behind me, some would say, overcame the poor man.” *Diary*, 2 September 1893, p. 314.

²⁵*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Spring X).

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The Critical Response to Gissing and Commentary about him
in the *Chicago Evening Post* (concluded)

Robert L. Selig, Purdue University Calumet
with the assistance of Pierre Coustillas

Shan F. Bullock, “Shan F. Bullock Estimates
Art of Late George Gissing...,”
16 January 1904, p. 5

Poor Gissing! He is a great loss. He leaves a wide gap in the broken ranks of our novelists. He has gone too soon – gone just as he had begun to taste the sweets of leisure and competence, to revel in the southern world he loved so well, to hear his name go resounding about the world. Yet I doubt if he was loath to go, and I feel sure that his best work was done. Really, his last book [*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*] is not less hopeless and drear in mental outlook than the book[s] which gave to Londoners a new reading of themselves and their environment. Its matter is less sordid and somber, its undertone less bitter and carping; but behind it you can always see the Gissing who wrote “The Unclassed” and lived the tragedy of “New Grub Street.” And, for his work, surely you have only to compare “The Town Traveler” with “The Whirlpool” (that fine novel) to see clearly that the critics had their tongues in their cheeks when they praised his development toward sunshine and humor.

To think of Gissing as a humorist, except of the grimmest and most unconscious type, is like thinking of flowers in an East End slum. Into him, through years of poverty and suffering, was ground the horrible inhumanity of London; and what oppressed his soul and mind came out in his books. People say that he told the truth about himself in the Ryecroft book, but there he only played with truth. Really the truth about himself could not be told, but if you want to guess at it read it between the lines of his earlier books. His real tragedies were not the everyday tragedies of poverty and neglect, of striving and despairing; they were tragedies of the soul and mind and conscience. His life was storm-tossed, full of cark and care. He supped sorrow to the dregs. And his books are his witnesses.

But they are fine witnesses. Not one perhaps attains to greatness, for Gissing, the novelist, had very straight limitations, but a good dozen of them are in the first rank of fiction. Always the scholar, a close student of French literature and a disciple of Balzac, Gissing perhaps more than any other modern English writer attained to the standard of perfection in form and style that marks the French novelists. Even at his grayest it is always a delight to read him. With a certain cold and mordant accuracy, a convincing power, a grim directness, he works on, self-centered, passionless, conscientious, adding gloom to gloom in his marvelous picture of modern London. You can no more doubt the reality of his stories than the reality of a London

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fog. We go shivering through his mean streets, shudder in his joyless homes, and the men and

women he shows us are the same that any day you may find anywhere within the radius.

They are not books to read at bedtime or to pack for a journey, but they distinctly are books to be studied by all who care for literature. And I think it true that as pictures of certain grades of London life they have permanent value.

Shan F. Bullock, "List of Literary Pensions Has Sad Suggestions....",
16 July 1904, p. 4

Masters [Walter] Leonard and Alfred Gissing get £74 jointly, in consideration of their straitened circumstances.... It is not conducive to cheerfulness to read such a list and to reflect on all that lies between its curt and passionless paragraphs.

Shan F. Bullock, "George Gissing in Chicago. H. G. Wells Relates
How British Novelist Narrowly Escaped Starvation in Chicago,"
27 August 1904, p. 4

The representatives of George Gissing having objected to the preface which Mr. H. G. Wells wrote to "Veranilda," Gissing's posthumous story, Wells has published it in one of the monthly reviews. It is not the first of Mr. Wells's indiscretions. He says he devoted to its preparation "all a man's energies for four whole days." He says, and shows, that he knew Gissing well, and he more than hints that if he would he could a tale unfold about the inner and outer life of his friend. But, then, more than energy, four days' work and intimate knowledge are necessary to the true revealing of a personality such as Gissing's through literature to the world. And this more Mr. Wells has not got. True, he gives us some interesting and fresh revelations: such as that Gissing was once a classical tutor in Boston; that he came near to absolute starvation in Chicago; that it was in Chicago he began his career as a novelist and there published his first attempt at fiction; that at one time he wrote unceasingly and ate scarcely anything; at another lived on bread and drippings, stewed tea, cheese occasionally, and "dessicated soup"; at another occupied a flat near Regent's Park and moved in cultivated society. Also we get from Mr. Wells a curious and quite scientific analysis of Gissing as a social monster, and a still more curious and quite absurd appreciation of Gissing as a novelist. But from Mr. Wells we never get, and indeed never expected, an avowal of the great things that he discerned in his friend's life and work.

Perhaps he did not discern them. Perhaps what interested him most were those dietetic and social idiosyncrasies – the things belonging to bread and dripping, flats in Regent's Park and bishops' wives – which undoubtedly Gissing might not hide from any prying friend. Anyhow Mr. Wells in those four whole days of energetic toil managed to express a good deal which is hardly worthy of him, and to suppress much which might be worthy of Gissing. Certainly he need not be surprised that his preface to "Veranilda" was refused by Gissing's friends and that one by Mr. Frederic Harrison will replace it.

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Anon., "George Gissing's Historical Novel,"
25 March 1905, p. 6

George Gissing's posthumous historical romance, "Veranilda," is radically different in style, subject matter, purpose – everything but careful workmanship and conscientious attention to detail – from the vigorous works that placed the author in the front rank of realistic novelists. To admirers of his studies of contemporary life among the British middle classes it will be an unwelcome surprise. These readers, who have looked upon his previous books as wonderful

studies of human nature, bearing the stamp of absolute truth, will marvel at the opinions of Frederic Harrison, who writes the introduction.

Mr. Harrison judges "Veranilda" to be "far the most important book which George Gissing ever produced: that one of his writings which will have the most continuing life." Further than this, he avers that "it is composed in a new vein of his genius, with a wider and higher scope, a more mellow tone," than the books which first made his fame; and that it "contains his best and most original work." After which rather pronounced laudation, he confesses that he does not like the earlier books and has not even read all of them. Therein lies the secret of his amazing contradiction of the true estimate of Gissing's works – a secret that, once divulged, needs no further comment.

Apart from Mr. Harrison's judgment of the value of "Veranilda" as compared with the rest of Gissing's writings, one has no disposition to dissent from his praise of it. A romance of Rome in the sixth century, the age of Belisarius and Justinian, it deals with historical personages and actual historical events. Its epoch is one of which even classical scholars know little, the ordinary reader, nothing; and the minuteness and fullness with which the author has depicted characters, scenes and events indicates an endless amount of study and research. The story affords scope for what Mr. Harrison calls "his poetical gift for local color, his subtle insight into spiritual mysticism, and, above all, his really fine scholarship and classical learning."

Mr. Gissing died before "Veranilda" was completed, nor did he leave any adequate materials to show how he intended it to end, but not enough is missing seriously to impair its interest. It is not a mere fragment, not yet is it a "first draft," but is finished and polished with all the art of its writer.

The book appeared in England some time ago, with a conclusion added by H. G. Wells; but the result was not satisfactory to Mr. Gissing's family and friends. The present edition is the first to make its appearance in America.

Shan F. Bullock, "London, June 29. - (Special Correspondence
of *The Evening Post.*)",
8 July 1905, p.7

When I was younger it seemed to me that one could obtain all the good books in the world for very little money. I had the customary student's weakness for collecting a library. I thought –

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perhaps I think now – that the ideal life might be spent in a cottage among the hills, near a river and a wood, far from civilization and madding crowd, with a companion and a houseful of books.

Poor George Gissing, you may remember, had the same notion. He, too, while leading the life of a hack in the slums of Bloomsbury, while starving and moiling and fretting his soul, kept always before him the hope of one day attaining to the heaven of a library in a cottage in the country. And in that book of his life, "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," he tells us how at last he attained his hope, got his cottage in the West of England, had solitude and rest and competence, yet somehow was not completely happy.

Whoever is completely happy in this world? Children are. But children grow up. Gissing thought, and expounds his thought admirably in that admirable novel, "The Whirlpool," that the bane of humanity was the curse of sex. Anyone who has children of his own will understand what Gissing means and may be inclined to agree with him: but I should like to hear the views of some imaginative man on that other bane of humanity, the curse of thought. Children do not think; nor animals, nor flowers, nor the dead, nor any happy thing. It is not that they know better; they just don't. But we are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought: and what with

sleepless nights and hag ridden days, we only affect happiness. How much of our happiness is real, is downright joy? Not much, I fear. Always at the heart of the rose is the worm that dieth not.

Anon., "Gissing in Calabria,"
16 September 1905, p. 7

A few years before his death, George Gissing, already ill – ill of life chiefly – escaped from London to seek for spiritual and bodily health in Italy. In 1901 the record of his experiences appeared under the title "By the Ionian Sea." It was a significant book, though it was a pitiful confession (in the last analysis) of failure. Gissing went to Calabria, which was no place for him. And he took Gissing with him. It was too late. The East Side had worked its will upon him, and he could not escape its shadowy imprisonment. "By the Ionian Sea" is not a book to see Italy through. But it has its interest as commentary on a tragic human life. Its appearance in a new edition is to be noted.

Anon., "New Fall Fiction,"
31 October 1905, p. 6

The late George Gissing left among other MSS. a novel which has now been published under the title "Will Warburton." It is a study of middle-class London life and relates how a young man of good family, having lost his own and his mother's small fortunes in an unfortunate business venture, buys a retail grocery. At first he is anxious to cover up his identity, and it is as a tradesman that he meets among his patrons the woman whom he marries after various tribulations, social and objective.

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The story is a kindly, painstaking and exceedingly able picture of conditions in his "New Grub Street" manner, with some amelioration of the depressing elements of that type. There is a happy ending, involving a situation more comprehensible in America than in England.

Gissing's humor and fine sympathy for common traits and foibles are delightfully displayed, and the book is full of sound, if indirect, and implicit commentary on human life. Lovers of Gissing will be glad to have it, and it may be commended to readers of the more serious type of fiction.

Francis Hackett, "Gissing's Last Stories,"
1 September 1906, p. 7

George Gissing's career ended in December, 1903, in the fishing village of St. Jean de Luz, on the Bay of Biscay. Poverty had chained him to London during years of his slow decline. Toward the end – he was 46, two years older than Robert Louis Stevenson, when he died – he had been able to escape from the squalor and hardships of the poorer quarters of his great city. For a little while he had been able to indulge his dear dreams. "By the Ionian Sea" in 1901 told of the satisfaction that at last had come to him in his ramblings in southern Italy – the flower had turned to the sun even near the twilight hour. It was too late, however, to change the character of his achievement. Gissing's twenty novels belong, as did his life, to the imperial city.

He starved in London, body and soul. Sensitive, apprehensive, his temperament required stimulus, encouragement, sympathy. His imagination became acrid in an atmosphere of meanness and petty need. Had he been a powerful animal like Balzac, with the deep chest and stubborn neck of an ox, he would have struggled through, defiant and supreme. Had he been

spared intimacy with shabbiness and dirt he would, like Whistler, have been content with the monotone beauties of London – warehouses and wharves so decorative in the etching from which the hint of social suffering has neatly been excluded.

But Gissing never arrived at objectivity. He was always harrowingly conscious of his own relation to London – conscious of his inadequacy to succeed by force of will, thwarted by his uneasy contempt for the aesthetic and moral exigencies of commercial success. This did not divert his sympathy entirely to himself, however. He aspired to share, not to receive, sympathy, and he found in one at least a companionship which made life in London possible. His critical study of Charles Dickens in 1898 acknowledged a debt that was in reality repaid in the charity with which he entertained, in his own dry, ironic way, the curious persons whose little lives have no attraction until seen with an artist's eye.

That “low vitality” of Gissing, pointed out by Thomas Seccombe in his critical survey introductory to “The House of Cobwebs,” a collection of fifteen of the novelist's last stories, did

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not prevent him from observing the life of lodgings, cheap apartments, workshops. He was not so much an accomplished writer, slowly and carefully spinning out his thin yarn, as a studious writer, keeping cautiously and zealously to his model, putting fidelity and accuracy above brilliancy; relying on the inherent persuasion of truth to interest and convince the reader, rather than on the arts of the professional novelist.

The stories in “The House of Cobwebs” have no false allurements. They justify themselves, they attract, especially as one becomes familiar with the personality behind them, but they never scintillate or dazzle. The plain gray daylight of London settles on each page. Trite life, the life of weekly salary and weekly board bills, of new heels for old shoes and bundles of laundry for the washerwoman, of employment and discharge, of sniffing penury and sallow care, dogs the reader from story to story.

Not absolutely, indeed. Some of the tales take one away from Islington and Tottenham Court road. “Workers in the Dawn,” “The Unclassed,” “Demos,” “The Nether World,” “New Grub Street,” “The Paying Guest,” “The Whirlpool – those novels so often harsh and repellent in title – are forgotten in little glimpses of men who have ceased to heed or to feel the goad of want, men who at last are prosperous or never will be.

Because his qualities are not palpable, flagrant, the glib have decided that Gissing lacks both poetry and humor. It is true, of course, that he has not verve and vividness after the manner of, say, Dickens. But he presents with a calculating restraint the most delicious situations imaginable. He feels the humor, the true humor of life, which lies not in points but in planes. And if his note is not commonly lyrical he is no pragmatist. This, for instance: “Strong and silent the tide of Thames flowed upward, and over it swept the morning tide of humanity. Through white autumnal mist yellow sunbeams flitted from shore to shore. The dome, the spires, the river frontages slowly unveiled and brightened...” He at least, if not his shabby clerks, has seen for a moment the pageant of cloud and sun.

Mr. Seccombe's introduction to “The House of Cobwebs” is extensive. It is a competent review of Gissing's novels, with an occasional word as to the author's life. “By the Ionian Sea,” “Charles Dickens” and “The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft” are selected, in conjunction with “New Grub Street,” “Thyrza” and “The Nether World,” as the likeliest to survive, which seems a good conventional opinion.

The interest of the present volume is heightened, as the editor notes, because the stories in several instances represent the moods and the material of the novels. They are considered to be “perfectly characteristic and quite admirable specimens of Gissing's own genre, and later, unstudied but always finished prose style.”

Without having read the novels it is not possible to agree with this, but on their own merits

“The House of Cobwebs” and its companions should be accepted. They are sharp, definite, convincing parables of contemporary middle-class England. They are not for the jaded novel reader. They are rather for those who, like Gissing, would meet the ills of life by explaining them.

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Anon., “Gissing as Ryecroft,”
27 December 1912, p. 5

Apropos of a new life of Gissing [Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*], comment has been made upon the difficulty of getting at, still more of relating, the real facts as to this strange, shadowy and yet curiously impressive figure in English literature. Certainly no such attempt can be made without drawing very largely upon his self-revelation in “The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.” The book exhibits the inner soul of a man who was by natural preference a recluse, a student of the classics, and one subtly sensitive to every phase of nature. Through it Gissing expressed the essential sweetness of nature discerned by his few friends underneath the depression which caused most of those who knew him to call him “a lonely pessimist.” A worthy edition printed from new type on handmade paper has just been issued by the Duttons, ten years after its author’s death.

Shan F. Bullock, “London Letter,”
3 January 1913, p. 4

Wells, in an article in the current number of *Rhythm*, writes his impressions of Morley Roberts’ fictional biography of Gissing. He is characteristically outspoken. Generally he is severe upon Roberts, and more severe upon his book. He says that Roberts exceeded Gissing’s instructions not to spare the truth in what he should write, for he speculates upon probabilities and possibilities, gives facts a fictional gloss, is wrong in his moral values, shows “a gross sentimentality which affects an unconventional candor,” belabors “the poor, tormented, miserable, angry servant girl who was Gissing’s second wife, and idealizes Gissing’s last companionship to an unjustifiable degree.”

As for Roberts’ book, Wells finds it “downright bad, careless in statement, squalid in fact, poor in criticism, weakly planned and entirely without any literary distinction.” Even the book’s title exasperates Wells. “Why in the name of apologetic folly call Gissing, ‘Maitland’... if the book is not to be simply paragraphed but advertised as a life of Gissing?” Who, he asks, that knew Gissing can be spared a solitary pang by the thin veil of pseudonymity in a story which is “a mere recital of distressful facts and of an ugly possibility, unlit by humor or mercy – in fact, scandal – and scandal merely?”

It seems a pity that all this must be written over the incommunicable dead. The making of books is often a cruel business. How is it that humanity is dowered so universally with an ignoble curiosity, and that men of culture and breeding yield themselves so easily to the satisfying of it? I see no good at all in exhibiting poor Gissing – who in life consigned himself to the torments of hell – as a kind of literary monster. By all means let us have good biography, relentlessly true and actual; but let the bastard biography, part fact and part sensual imagination,

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be tramped on. Whether Roberts’ book is what Wells says it is, I do not know or care. Had it been a novel dealing with the temperament and inner life of a man such as Gissing, I should have been interested in it. As it is merely veiled portraiture, “a literary masquerade,” it appeals

only to the ignorant curiosity of the self I try to despise.

Shan F. Bullock, "London Letter,"
4 April 1913, p. 4

Strong and somewhat indignant opposition is being given to the proposed memorial to Gissing in Manchester University—the ground of objection being that to found a Gissing scholarship in the place from which he himself was ignominiously expelled for crimes against his fellow students would be an offense against morals and good taste.

[Professor Selig's work on this article was facilitated by a Scholarly Research Award from Purdue University Calumet.]

Book Reviews

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, edited with an introduction by John Goode. The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

If there are still people who doubt that Gissing has finally established himself as a force to be reckoned with, this new edition of his most widely known novel under the prestigious imprint of Oxford University Press should serve to remove those doubts once and for all. The suggestive, if slightly anachronistic, cover illustration with its portrait of a moody, vulnerable and introspective young man at once introduces what may be regarded as *New Grub Street's* greatest strengths, its subtle psychological insights into a certain type of character and the way in which these insights are turned to good account in the characterisation of Gissing's typical heroes and heroines. It is this very quality that the narrator attributes to the works of Edwin Reardon: "Their interest was almost purely psychological. It was clear that the author had no faculty for constructing a story... But strong characterisation was within his scope..." (62). Thus providing one of numerous instances pointing in the direction of an autobiographical kinship between Reardon and his creator.

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Though John Goode in his introduction is prepared to assert that "[m]uch of the novel is related to Gissing's own experience," he rejects the simplistic reading of the novel as autobiographical transcription. Goode is less than convincing however when he attempts to argue against *New Grub Street* as disguised autobiography. Surely it is fallacious to assess the actual nature of a work on the basis of an author's expressed intentions rather than through a close analysis of the work itself. And it would seem slightly confusing to admit in one and the same paragraph that "much of the novel is related to Gissing's own experience" and, more tentatively, that Gissing "used some of his own experience." A confusion that cannot be spirited away by claiming that much of Gissing's life was "representative and it is that representativeness which gets transformed, in part, into *New Grub Street*."

Now if one turns to Gissing's Diary for late August to mid-December 1890, the record of his agonizing struggle to begin, let alone finish, *New Grub Street*, the novel he had been trying to write since the spring of that year (*Diary*: Wed. May 7. [1890]. Made new beginning, putting my first scene in Brit. Museum reading-room.) strikes one as anything but representative. Much of the fascination with Edwin Reardon, a man out of touch with the (literary) developments of his day, lies in the moving realization of his unique individuality by an author who had lived and

suffered Edwin Reardon's plight. Compare with these *Diary* entries the opening paragraphs of chapter IX ('Invita Minerva') in which Reardon's working methods are systematically and seemingly dispassionately described in the language of the literary sociologist: "sixty written slips of the kind of paper he habitually used would represent...a passable three-hundred-page volume. On an average he could write four such slips a day; so here we have fifteen days for the volume, and forty-five for the completed book" (121). The outcome of the comparison allows of only one conclusion: in *New Grub Street* Gissing was writing selective autobiography with only marginal modifications of the facts of his life as recorded in the *Diary*. Gissing took 52 working days to complete *New Grub Street* (October 6 to December 6, excluding Sundays), filling 209 slips, i.e. an average of 4 slips a day. He finished the first volume in sixteen days and took eighteen days over volumes two and three. Reardon finishes his second volume at the end of November, Gissing completing the second volume of *New Grub Street* on November 15. Both authors fighting off bad bouts of lumbago, doggedly producing their daily *pensum* of words until the completion of the third volume. Gissing getting there on December 6, 1890 and Edwin

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Reardon on December 14, 1882. To support the notion of selective autobiography it may suffice to point out that these months of Gissing's literary despondency were also the time when he courted Edith Underwood!

John Goode, whose reputation as a Gissing scholar was established by his *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction* (1978), in an appendix makes much of the local specificity of the novel and he convincingly demonstrates Gissing's indebtedness to that great late-Victorian gold-mine of London statistics, Charles Booth's *The Labour and Life of the People of London* (1889). The numerous references to Booth in Gissing's as yet unpublished Scrapbook also testify to his continuing determination to feed his imagination on a fare of ascertainable facts about London and its people.

The people in *New Grub Street* are preponderantly literary people who can be readily assigned to one of two camps. Either that of the commercially-minded coming literary man of 1882, Jasper Milvain, or the camp of literary has-beens, like Alfred Yule and Mr. Quarmbly, who may once have been relatively successful at making a living by literature, but who are about to be marginalized for good by the Milvains of the world who have no scruples about giving the vulgar quarter-educated what they like best: a diet of gossipy tit-bits, chitchat and tittle-tattle. Edwin Reardon's artistic aspirations are as alien to Jasper Milvain (who is significantly interested in trains, reaping-machines and steam-engines) as they are beyond the journeymen literati like Yule. Yet it is with the defeat of Edwin Reardon as a denizen of New Grub Street that the novel seems ostensibly concerned. Despite the obvious emphasis on the theme of books and their production, the novel perhaps affords its greatest pleasure to those with an eye and ear for the private moment: Amy and Edwin trying to avoid the ever approaching breakdown of their marriage, the confrontation of the despotic and pathetic Alfred Yule and his daughter Marian, the pathetic and brief attempts at intimacy between Marian and her Cockney mother, and best of all the almost surreal plangency of Biffen's suicide.

Although Goode's qualification of Reardon as a "misfit unable to survive in this world" seems entirely justified, such a dismissal in purely social darwinist terms does perhaps less than justice to Gissing's fascinating account of Reardon's subtle and sensitive struggle with circumstance and fate before his final surrender.

Given the prominence of the novel on the reading lists of many an English department to-day, students (and other readers) will be grateful for the extensive list of annotations the

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editor has provided. In one of them he suggests a comparison between the careers of Marian Yule and Gissing's contemporary Margaret Harkness, as both of them representing the "modern literary girl." Margaret (Elise) Harkness (c. 1861-1921) was a writer who took a great interest in labour questions and in 1889 under her pseudonym John Law she published a novel, *Toilers in London* (Hodder & Stoughton), which dealt specifically with the problems of female labour. Gissing made a note of the publishing details of the novel in his *Scrapbook*. In a sentence on p. 106 of *New Grub Street* Gissing does indeed seem to allude to Margaret Harkness' novel when he writes: "Through November rains and fogs Marian went her usual way to the Museum, and toiled there among the other toilers." Another note that could have done with a bit of pointing up is Goode's somewhat offhand explanation of the recurring motif of two diametrically opposed reviews of the same novel – Miss Hawk's *On the Boards* (21). David Grylls in an important article in 1991 pointed out that such an incident, similar in all details, had in fact occurred and that again Gissing turned for the details to an entry (newspaper cutting) in his *Scrapbook*: a letter "To the editor of the *Standard*" from Harriett Jay (1857-1932) about her novel *Through the Stage Door* (1883), which had first been ridiculed and two months later highly praised by the *Spectator*. Information of this sort would at once have been more pertinent and have thrown an intriguing light on Gissing's methods of composition. And apropos of notes: have things in this quarter-educated world of ours really come to such a pass that there is a serious need to explain *Britannica*? (= The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a standard reference work). Finally, in view of the thematic importance of the three-volume novel, it is sad that there is no trace of the original division of the book into three parts.

Despite these quibbles there is every reason to welcome the appearance of this attractively produced and copiously annotated edition of the book that has done most for Gissing's reputation.

Bouwe Postmus, University of Amsterdam

[With regret we announce the death of John Goode on 12 January at the age of fifty-four. His contribution to Gissing studies included the critical study subtitled "Ideology and Fiction" (Vision Press, 1978), several chapters in *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Routledge, 1966) and the present edition of *New Grub Street*. An obituary article from the *Guardian*, sent to us by C. C. Kohler, relates the main stages of his academic career. Its author, John Lucas, describes him as "an immensely gifted, dedicated teacher" who made his mark as a critical theorist, a man whom his friends often heard "laughing at pomposity."]

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The Odd Women. A play by Michael Meyer after the novel by George Gissing. (London, New York, Toronto, Hollywood: Samuel French), 1993.

On 21 November 1992, a fortunate group of Gissing enthusiasts witnessed a sight that few of us ever expected to see: a stage presentation of *The Odd Women*. It was performed at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, an occasion described by Pierre Coustillas and Gillian Tindall in the January, 1993 number of the *Gissing Journal*. Gissing's attitude toward the theatre was divided. He loathed its popular appeal, but nevertheless made some effort to write for the stage himself. This production demonstrates that his treatments of plot, character and dialogue have at least potential dramatic qualities.

The Odd Women has been a candidate for dramatization before. In 1981 an American group called the Odd Women Production Company produced a script for the first part of a television series based on the novel, and a plot outline for the rest. This effort never reached production. It has been left to Michael Meyer to adapt the book successfully, and his play has now been published in the French series often used as scripts by drama groups.



Lucy Scott as Monica Madden

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Mr. Meyer has exercised a good deal of ingenuity in getting into dramatic form the essentials of the two plots – the one involving Monica Madden and her marital difficulties, and the love affair between Everard Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn. Of course, many of the minor attractions which Gissing provided have had to be omitted. Micklethwaite and his serendipitous marriage are not mentioned; Mildred Vesper and Mrs. Cosgrove have disappeared. The conversation in which Mildred warns Monica about the dangers of her intended marriage to Widdowson is transposed into one in which Rhoda gives Monica more pointed warnings. I particularly regretted that there was no chance to develop the character of Alice and her alcoholism more fully.

On the other hand, Mr. Meyer has made some excellent additions. One example: he has introduced an effective scene in which Mary Barfoot sets a typewriter before the Madden sisters to symbolize the way in which women may gain employment and greater freedom.

It is hard to resist comparisons between the novel and the play. Gissing narrates the first meeting between Monica and Widdowson in general terms, but Mr. Meyer has opened his play with a newly-invented conversation that encompasses this scene. Right after the curtain rises, Widdowson approaches Monica, who is sitting on a park bench with a book, by asking what she is reading. Monica's book is *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and one might speculate that Mr. Meyer expects his reader to sense in the opening episode, where Henchard sells his wife, a foreshadowing of marital betrayals to come. This makes Monica somewhat more intellectual than Gissing's character, who is never seen with a book. In the novel, Monica is not reading at all, but musing vacantly about her unsatisfactory life. In both the book and the play this scene ends with Widdowson stiffly presenting his card, and the two agreeing to meet on a future Sunday.

The play sharply abbreviates the next meeting between the two, the boat ride past Chelsea Embankment. In the novel, they exchange brief life histories, and discover that they have a birthday in common. All of this is deliberately flattened in the play, and replaced by Monica's account of her meeting with Rhoda, so that the relation between the two lacks even the faint emotional resonance of the conversation in the book.

Oddly, Mr. Meyer's Widdowson leans toward becoming a Henry Ryecroft type. In the first scene he says: "I live alone and sometimes do not speak to anyone for several days except my

housekeeper.” His attachment to the house he has recently bought – “I was like a child with a

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toy” – is from language that Gissing gives the character, but in this context it echoes Ryecroft’s joy in private domesticity. He says he is “semi-retired” on inherited money, and that “Reading is my life,” which sounds Ryecroftian. What is missing here is Gissing’s fuller explanation of the lukewarm motivation for this “reading”: “Self-educated, Widdowson deemed it his duty to make acquaintance with the great, the solid authors... Todd’s ‘Student’s Manual,’ had formed his method and inspired him with zeal.”

While Rhoda’s eloquence has had to be sharply curtailed for stage treatment, the play certainly gives her ample opportunity to express her views about female emancipation. It has a transformed and abbreviated version of the discussion about marriage between Everard and Rhoda. In the novel, when Rhoda raises the question of children in a failed marriage, Everard answers that the husband is right to save himself. The play modernizes this issue by having Everard recommend contraception, an allusion that would have startled Gissing.

While most of the lines in the play are original with Mr. Meyer, it is interesting to note that he sometimes found Gissing’s dialogue suitable for the stage. There are occasional borrowings of individual remarks, and the scene in which Everard declares his love to the unreceptive Rhoda is constructed nearly entirely of lines from Gissing’s treatment of it. As in the novel, the play’s characters part without agreeing, but Mr. Meyer has added some dialogue in which Rhoda lets Everard know that she has heard about his seduction of Amy Drake and the child that was the result of it. This creates a dramatic contrast. Shortly before Rhoda has said that she won’t marry because she will never desert her women, and Everard replied with his “Magnificent!” But now the fact that he is a father who has deserted his child constitutes a telling exposure of his lack of character.

At the end of the first act, we are treated to a scene new to the play – a dinner party at the house of the newly-married Widdowsons. Here an entirely new character, a servant named Alfred, ushers in the guests, serves the food, and counsels the inexperienced hostess, Monica, about the proper procedures for the affair. Mr. Meyer has economically put this invented scene to excellent use. It gives Rhoda an opportunity to explain her school, and to exchange her views about female equality with both Widdowson and Everard; it allows Everard to reveal more of his ardent personality; it arouses Widdowson’s misplaced suspicions as he sees Everard conversing with Monica, and it displays Virginia’s interest in alcohol, as she finishes off the wine that has not been drunk.

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Tilly Tremayne (left) and Susan Tordoff (right) as Virginia and Alice Madden

The quarrel between Monica and Widdowson is transplanted from Guernsey, its scene in the novel, to take the place of a sequel to this dinner-party. The play again makes use of Gissing's original dialogue as Monica and her husband, after their violent disagreement about the duties of a wife, reach a mood of reconciliation. As in the novel, the stage Widdowson falls on his knees, and the play employs the words of the novel's characters as they kiss and temporarily make up. Two significant touches are added. Monica asks and obtains permission to visit the Royal Academy, where she will encounter Bevis, the man who leads to her downfall. And she meets with "a look of revulsion" Widdowson's hope that their union will produce a child.

The meeting with Bevis is gracefully managed as Monica and Everard meet at the Royal Academy, and Everard introduces Bevis who, as the occupant of the flat below his, is a plausible companion. In the novel, Gissing had to resort to the use of the dangerously open-minded figure named Mrs. Cosgrove to bring Monica and Bevis together. Widdowson has of course surreptitiously followed Monica to the gallery, and his jealousy is inflamed as he sees her talking to Everard, but he leaves the stage when she meets Bevis.

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In the novel, the affair between Monica and Bevis takes shape a step at a time, but the play plunges them into passion for each other abruptly in the scene where Monica comes to Bevis' flat for tea. Widdowson dramatically confronts his wife about her falsehoods, mistakenly mentioning Everard as her lover, and the two plots join when Rhoda receives Mary's letter, confronts Everard with it, and the lovers separate. The other love affair also winds down as the Madden sisters tell Rhoda that Monica has been deserted and is pregnant. (Readers will recall that in the novel something was chastely whispered into Rhoda's ear, leaving it to the reader to guess what was said.) The play quietly introduces a notion foreign to the novel here, as Rhoda suggests abortion. In the scene where Monica comes to Rhoda to clear up the confusion about Everard and to receive counsel from her, the play oddly takes a year off her age, making her 21 instead of 22, while adding a year to the age Rhoda admits, making her 33 instead of 32. Some of Gissing's language is used in this scene, but the end is significantly changed to bring forward Rhoda's bitterness. In the novel, Monica does not dare to ask a question. In the play, however, she suggests that Rhoda and Barfoot can now patch it up, but Rhoda says they can't, and

understandably turns away when Monica offers to kiss her, instead of embracing her, as in the novel.

The scene in which Everard renews his offer of marriage to Rhoda is an abbreviated version of Gissing's, using much of his dialogue but there is a significant addition. Instead of offering marriage three times, Everard, after a first offer is refused, retreats to the idea of a "free union," but this is also rejected, and the two part as friends. Everard's fallback lover, Miss Brissenden, has no part in the play.

Mr. Meyer has changed Gissing's ending radically. In the novel, Monica dies as a result of childbirth, and Widdowson remains unforgiving, handing the child over to the Madden sisters. The play dramatizes his resentment powerfully. We see him telling the bedridden Monica that he hates her and the child and will refuse to support them, and she bitterly sends him away. In a final scene, the Madden sisters say they will manage by opening a school, and Rhoda encourages them with a closing speech which implies that they have become self-reliant women who "hold the future." She holds the baby and kisses it as the curtain comes down, providing an upbeat ending that contrasts sharply with the pessimistic and tragic ending of the novel.

As several critics have said, Mr. Meyer has succeeded in emphasizing the aspects of Gissing's story that are most relevant to current conditions. This has involved some radical

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changes and additions, and even some anachronisms. His most serious change is, of course, the change from a sad ending to a happy one. But he has preserved the tensions and issues that give Gissing's novel its vitality, and brought forward their contemporary relevance.

Jacob Korg, University of Washington

[Photographs by Stephen Vaughan. Courtesy of the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre.]

Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993.

For many years the appeal of the British 1890s has been so great that it is now the most thoroughly researched decade in the nineteenth century. Not only have numberless books been devoted to the writers who were active at the time, but surveys of the yellow or mauve or naughty nineties have succeeded one another steadily in the last thirty or forty years. Holbrook Jackson, who was, it would seem, Karl Beckson's earliest predecessor, was a pioneer in 1913, but his book has aged rather badly. Five years ago John Stokes discussed the same decade in a more sophisticated manner, but he focused his attention on only half a dozen aspects of the period, leaving out many more than he discussed. Indeed so many cultural events took place in the last ten years of Victoria's reign that apparently no one will ever cover them all in one book. The recently published *Encyclopedia of the Nineties*, edited by George Cevasco, to which Karl Beckson and the present reviewer contributed, is a 700-page book, and one often closes it with the impression that it should have been three times bigger. So one turns to the new volume brought out by W. W. Norton & Company with expectations that are at once boundless and limited.

The subtitle is fully justified. We are not offered a literary history of the 1890s, such a book as could have been written by Lionel Stevenson if he had, following the approach he adopted in his *English Novel*, chosen on the one hand to concentrate on one decade, on the other to extend his enquiry not only to other genres than the novel, but to all other cultural areas than literature – say, those enumerated and sketchily dealt with by R. C. K. Ensor in Volume XIV of the *Oxford History of England*. Thus such subjects as progress in education, the new scientific discoveries, architecture, music and painting could have been discussed at some length. If they

are not altogether absent from the book under review, it is clear that its author decided,

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possibly because he was curbed by his publishers, to leave out much that was the subject of book-length studies in the last twenty years. For instance the feminist literature published by women writers is hardly touched upon, but we know to what books to turn for a survey of that kind. Nor is the cultural revolution consequent upon the demise of the venerable three-decker more than alluded to – but what could have been added to Guinevere Griest's book and the other specialised studies that followed in its wake? The titles of Karl Beckson's fifteen chapters, more telling than those of John Stokes's volume, will immediately inform the impatient reader of the pabulum he will find in the 450 pages that await him. We start with Socialist Utopias and Anarchist Bombs, shift to the Damnation of Decadence, Tragic Rhymers and Mythic Celts and reach one of the most entertaining chapters with the retrospectively comic Quest for a Poet Laureate, feeling that *la montagne accoucha d'une souris*, and a thoroughly unattractive *souris* at that. We then take a close look at Prostitutes on the Promenade, veer to some startling examples of novelty, the New Woman, the New Drama and the coyly styled Uranians, reaching in chapter 9 the expected series of Trials and Tribulations. A very small portion of the press, the new press, comes under discussion with the study of those ephemeral journals which tried to defy the commercial periodicals. Whistler, Wagner and Zola then beckon us to witness the extent of their influence, and the guided tour comes to an end with the Empire Builders and Destroyers. The worlds – if we are inclined to see areas of contemporary life through the lens of the Gissingite – of Edward Clodd, Clara Collet and Eliza Orme, C. K. Shorter and Henry Norman, and of the hack writers living in New Grub Street, with or without the assistance of A. P. Watt, William Morris Colles and James B. Pinker, are out of bounds.

Conversely, because the limits of any decade are largely arbitrary, we often cross the borders of the Nineties, though never for long. The ebullient personalities of Wells and Shaw, for instance, invite the commentator to have a peep at the 1900s if not further, while Mme Blavatsky, that eternal self-proclaimed virgin and ubiquitous impostor, and her acolyte Annie Besant (whose insolent review of *Workers in the Dawn* is a superfine example of intellectual myopia) force him to hark further back than the foundation of *The Theosophist* (1879). This penultimate chapter (“The Dance of the Occult Mysteries”), be it said in passing, will certainly enlighten anyone who might have wondered why Gissing, late in his career, at the time Wells published *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (which is concerned with the same subject), wrote his novel

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“Among the Prophets,” now irretrievably lost, but for which Autumn IX of the *Ryecroft Papers* offers some compensation. And on the borderline of this world, we catch a few glimpses of a cultural area keenly observed but never turned to any literary account by Gissing, the area, explored by Wells in *The War of the Worlds*, which was a favourite terrain for all the voices prophesying war from George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) to Erskine Childers's invasion scare story of the early 1900s, *The Battle of the Sands*.

Although *London in the 1890s* covers well-trodden ground, and ground partly trodden by Karl Beckson himself in most of his books published in the last thirty years, at no time does it give us that feeling, often conveyed by similar cultural surveys, of a perfunctory discussion of material collected among similar books. We have in hand the volume we expected from one of the authorities on the period, well informed and well written, made entertaining by a clever marshalling of facts that speak of their own accord or are presented with discreet humour. The approach that almost systematically prevails is that of an urbane, skilful commentator whose humour is more often implicit than explicit. A delightful remark like the jibe at British critics

who “had as little difficulty in misinterpreting Zola’s novels as they had Ibsen’s plays” is quite exceptional. Absurdity and narrow-mindedness certainly have a sore back by the time the narrative comes to a close, but rarely are we given an opportunity to watch a stunning blow being dealt with anything more impressive than a carefully chosen epithet. A passage like that on the reactions to the project of a Channel Tunnel a hundred years ago should convince the gloomiest philosopher that, on the eve of the formal opening of the Tunnel, man’s better instincts have triumphed in this part of the world. The time when “the potential threat from France through the tunnel was felt not only by the man in the street but also by such figures as Tennyson, Browning, Cardinal Newman, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as by fifty-nine generals and seventeen admirals, who all signed a petition opposing its construction,” is now fortunately remote.

Gissing fares well in this book. As he moves from chapter to chapter, the specialist will occasionally add mental footnotes supplied by his familiarity with the novelist’s works, correspondence and private papers, but he will also find Gissing mentioned or quoted more than once when his voice can hardly be silenced. *Demos*, *Thyrza*, *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Whirlpool* are cited, and a reference to *The Crown of Life* apropos of the pacifist and pro-Boer literature that appeared at the turn of the

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century would not have been amiss. In one or two places the diary and correspondence supply an illustration, as when Orwell’s perceptive remark that Gissing “wanted to speak not for the multitude, but for the exceptional man, the sensitive man, isolated among barbarians,” needs some confirmation from the novelist himself. We can surely agree that “though not a committed Naturalist, Gissing was a reader of Zola and Schopenhauer”; and that “in his determination to reveal the sordid truth of slum existence, Gissing revealed a deep-seated Schopenhauerian pessimism redeemed by his aesthetic devotion to art.”

Understandably the book has no bibliography – it is scattered among the thirty pages of notes – but it contains a useful Selective Chronology with three columns, headed Biography, The Arts and History/Science, which covers the years 1880-1910. Altogether this is one more book which offers a series of *aperçus* of Gissing in context, and which, in a neatly defined framework, does him full justice.

Pierre Coustillas

Thesis Abstract

Social and Moral Values in the Novels of George Gissing.
PH.D., University of Rajasthan, Jaipur 302 004, India, 1993, pp. 204.
By Chandra Shekhar Dubey.

The problem of social and moral values can be studied in the abstract as philosophers do or with reference to the changing social and psychological climate as is done by sociologists. This study, however, is not intended to make excursions into philosophy, sociology or psychology; it is centred on the theme of social and moral values in the novels of George Gissing. Gissing was the apostle of a new morality. His criticism of the Victorian way of life, manners and education is an index to his ideals in all fields of existence – social, political, economic, cultural. It aims at defining these ideals through his denunciation of social inequalities, economic exploitation, the low standard of cultural achievements, the commercialization of art, the subjection of women. This study shows Gissing’s concern for

spiritual freedom, as reflected in many of his characters.

Gissing's novels present man in a multiplicity of relationships with his fellow beings, with time and society as a whole. They show that no man is an island cut off from the vast territory of

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society. They point to what happens when the creeds that bind man with the realities external to himself are severed and he is cut adrift. Poverty, an uneven social order and a low cultural level not only handicap a person but also threaten his moral fabric. They may entail defeat and destruction. But at the same time they are a challenge to his sense of honour and instinct for survival. Among a variety of characters created by Gissing some wither away, others approach the heroic in their determination to act independently, while others again attempt to overcome social and moral barriers with the sole aid of their inner resources. They all serve as acutely impressionable centres of consciousness reflecting, on the one hand, the dislocations of life in a period of transition, the experience and vision of their creator on the other. Viewed as a whole these characters fall into a pattern of quest and discovery.

Gissing's novels present a central moral problem with social dimensions. Some of his characters, unwilling to relinquish their egoism, fail to resolve their problems even partially, society with all its forces being so impervious that individuals fail to infiltrate it. This central moral problem implies the necessity of choosing, and Gissing explores the ways in which the individual can achieve personal satisfaction by making decisions which integrate such factors as personal ambition, feelings and knowledge. Revealing the far-reaching effects of even minor decisions, his novels focus on three primary interrelated life-choices – marriage, money and career; they examine the ways in which heredity, environment and innate qualities shape personal lives and bind individuals together into various relationships.

A number of political, social, economic and cultural forces of the Victorian age have been used as tools for a sociological investigation of working- and middle-class values, for instance the impact of Naturalism on Gissing's early novels.

Chapter I examines the major trends of Victorian society, religion and polity, and the relation of these with Gissing. It surveys the major approaches to the study of Gissing to date.

Chapter II analyses the different aspects of such social values as family, marriage and manners as well as the commercialization of art and of social and moral values.

Chapter III deals with the theme of class-consciousness and its evolution towards self-consciousness with the changes in the values affected by this process.

Chapter IV is devoted to Gissing's working-class and middle-class female characters, to their respective values and to the roles they play in society. The feminist approach to the subject has been discussed.

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Chapter V is concerned with the evolution evinced in structure and narrative technique from the earlier to the later novels. It also shows to what extent Gissing's plot device was suited to his themes.

In conclusion Gissing's criticism of English society is shown to be essentially satirical. His exposure of social and cultural inadequacies reveals a passionate determination to raise a moral point. His main butts are cultural sterility, wanton indulgence in the pleasures offered by a materialistic world and above all the dissipation of human inner resources. His criticism of matrimonial life, unemployment, housing, and the commercialization of art are particularly relevant to our modern age, if not to all ages. Ultimately, if somewhat paradoxically, Gissing does not appear to have been a pessimist, but a defeated optimist. In retrospect his work, so idiosyncratic in many respects, reflects many nineteenth-century cultural and intellectual

currents as much as the original attitudes of an uncommon man who persisted in following his own genius. Gissing sensed that when a society wastes the talents of a large portion of its population, exploits an entire sex and disrupts the lives of all its members, it carries contradictions that will eventually either destroy or transform it. This study must be read as a tribute to Gissing's social-sociological understanding as well as an attempt to draw attention to other possible areas of research.

Chandra Shekhar Dubey, University of Rajasthan

Notes and News

“The Orangery, an urban oasis adjoining Wakefield Westgate Station, has been refurbished and restored to its former glory.” So wrote the *Wakefield Express* in its Midweek Extra number of 20 January 1994, which carried a good photograph testifying that Gissing's old school, Back Lane School, as it was called over a hundred years ago, now looks newer than it ever did on any of the photographs of it we have seen. Even the oldest of them known to us, which Gissing had kept in his papers, cannot compare with this very recent one. “To fully appreciate the building 24 hours a day,” says the *Express*, “it was decided that it should be illuminated at night time... The Orangery was built in 1760 for Mr. Pemberton Milnes, one of the most prominent members of West Riding society.” In 1994 the building has planning permission for office use.

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Shigeru Koike, whose translation of *By the Ionian Sea* was published in 1988 by Shûbun International Ltd, has sent an attractive new edition of it, reissued on 16 February, with a postscript by himself, in the well-known Iwanami Library. Not unreasonably the new publishers have decided to use Gissing's subtitle “Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy” as a title because it is more specific and more likely to appeal to the average Japanese reader, to whom the Ionian Sea is culturally alien. Professor Koike also reports that an interesting volume, *Dokushojin Shigan*, by Minoru Morimura, was published by Seiei-sha Ltd (3-11-2 Kanda-Ogawamachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101) on 9 October 1993 at 2,800 yen. The author, who subscribes to this journal, has compiled an anthology of memorable quotations on books and reading from a wealth of writings old and new, Japanese and foreign. The title can be translated literally as *An Aspiring Bookman* but it really consists in “a collection of sayings by booklovers,” perhaps a more suitable equivalent. There are 704 items in the 362-page volume, and four Gissing entries in the index. Item 125, pp. 77-78, is about *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*; Mr. Morimura comments upon and reminisces about the book, saying that when he comes across references to the *Ryecroft Papers* in any book, he feels intimate with the author. Nine names follow including those of the late Mr. Yukio Otsuka and of Mr. Koike. Item 539, pp. 287-88: “I know every book of mine by its scent, &c.” (Spring XII). Item 651, p. 343: a casual reference to the *Ryecroft Papers*. Item 698, p. 360: “If I could but start again, with only the experience there gained! I mean, &c.” (Winter XVI). That Mr. Morimura is a true admirer of Gissing requires no demonstration.

Among recent good news is the announcement in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 25 February of *The Poetry of George Gissing*, edited by B. P. Postmus (Edwin Mellen Press), 204 pages. Details will be given in our next number. Equally gratifying is the forthcoming publication, next October, of a new edition of *In the Year of Jubilee* in Everyman Paperbacks. The editor will be Paul Delany.

The *New York Times* quoted from Gissing in significant contexts several times lately, as appears on press cuttings sent by Shirley Slotnick, Syd Penner and Jacob Korg. In "A Writer Finds a Way to Heal a Sore Heart," Vivian Gornick wrote: "On the street I regain perspective, a feeling for foreground and background, pain in context. I think sometimes of those who have come before me, other writers who have tramped city streets feeling marginal as I do – Gissing

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in London, Poe in New York, Brenner in Jerusalem—alive to the motion of the crowd, solaced by the immensity of its play" (17 October 1993). Two months later Nina Auerbach, author of *Communities of Women*, which contains a very good chapter on Gissing, reviewed the notoriously offensive book by John Carey, *The Intellectual and the Masses*, and tore it to pieces. Gissing is one of the "revered and disparate literary heroes" whom she vigorously upholds (*New York Times Book Review*, 26 December 1993). More recently, "A Book in Search of a Buzz: The Marketing of a First Novel," by Michael Norman, carried an epigraph from *New Grub Street* (*New York Times Book Review*, 30 January). Another unexpected allusion to Gissing occurred in the New York journal *Voice* ("End Games," 12 October 1993). In her review of Victor Nunez's film *Ruby in Paradise*, Georgia Brown comments on the heroine's name, Ruby Lee Gissing, "one of George Gissing's 'odd women,' meaning women without men," and explains that "Gissing's 1893 *The Odd Women* was a particularly prescient understanding of women's dilemmas."

Our attention has been drawn to one of the very positive aspects of the Everyman edition of *Born in Exile* published a year ago – its explanatory notes, 118 in number. Not only does David Grylls throw useful light on aspects of the text which had so far remained obscure, but he corrects a few inaccuracies or errors in older editions of the novel. A good deal of information which has surfaced in the last two decades has been integrated into the notes. Among the most striking elucidations are those concerning "the story of the countess" on p. 129 of the Everyman edition and Professor Pfaff of Erlangen. The article published by Mrs. Deledalle-Rhodes in this journal in April 1992 has duly been taken into account and the "capital epigram" of the Master of Trinity identified. On p. 268, Dr. Grylls is surely right in construing the reference to the recent "scandal" as an allusion to the case of Sir Charles Dilke. Other examples of notes that definitely break new ground could be offered. Perhaps those just given will convince students of Gissing's works that David Grylls's edition of *Born in Exile* deserves a place on their shelves by the side of earlier ones.

In the *Sunday Times* for 21 November 1993 D. J. Taylor, who has often expressed his interest in Gissing in recent years, remarked that the successive volumes of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing* have become an annual treat. Is he aware that in 1994 he may have to absorb the contents of two tomes? The production of Volume 6 was at proof stage in early March.

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Forthcoming volumes will contain a number of pictorial documents of some interest to anyone who has patiently been expecting to know more about some of Gissing's friends and acquaintances, for instance E. L. Allhusen, Herbert Heaton Sturmer, Julia Sprague and Marie E. Zakrzewska.

An invitation reached us to attend a public discussion of Dr. Mauro F. Minervino's book, *La vita desiderata: George R. Gissing, un vittoriano al Sud*, which was to take place at the University of Calabria on 16 February. The speakers were Professors Mario Bolognari, Cesare

Pitto and Carlos Giordano. The author was present.

Recent Publications

Volume

George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Ltd, 1994. Translated by Shigeru Koike, with notes, a map, Gissing's black and white illustrations and a postscript by the translator. Paperbound with pictorial dust-jacket. 208 pp. ISBN 4 00 3224 74 4. Yen 410. The publisher's address is 2-5-5 Hitotsuhashi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 101-02 Japan.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Augusto Placanica, "Solo spiaggia solo mare?", *Rinascita* (Settimanale di informazione, politica e cultura), New series, First Year, no. 4, 4 March 1990, p. 31. Short passage on Gissing in Catanzaro.

Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991. Comments appreciatively on the influence of Gissing on Orwell and quotes from Anthony Powell on the subject in *Keep the Ball Rolling*.

John Halperin, "Recent Books: British and Irish," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Summer 1992, pp. 504-06. Review of Vol. 2 of the *Collected Letters*. Volume 3 was reviewed by the same author in the Winter 1992 number, pp. 956-57, under "Book Reviews – British, Irish, and Postcolonial."

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Cassiodorus: Variae, translated with notes and introduction by S. J. B. Barnish, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992. Barnish is aware of Gissing's admiration for the *Variae*; he mentions him several times and quotes a significant passage from *By the Ionian Sea* in his epigraph.

G. K. Chesterton, *Criticisms and Appreciations of the Works of Charles Dickens*. Introduction by Michael Slater. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1992. Slater comments on Chesterton's response to Gissing's criticism of Dickens.

Carlo Carlino, "Nel 1897 il viaggio in Calabria dello scrittore George Gissing: un inglese nelle città del silenzio," *Gazzetta del Sud* (Messina), 7 August 1993, p. 3.

Francesco Badolato, "Scrittori stranieri: Crotona nei ricordi di F. Lenormant, G. Gissing, e N. Douglas," *Calabria Sconosciuta*, Anno XVI, no. 60, October-December 1993, pp. 47-48. A survey of the three writers' recollections of Crotona with portraits and a photograph of the only standing column of the Temple of Hera Lacinia. The same author published an illustrated article on Lenormant in the previous number (July-September 1993) of the same quarterly journal (*Rivista trimestrale di cultura e turismo*), published in Reggio Calabria.

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