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“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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Contents

<i>The Odd Women’s Creation of a Desire for Romantic Fulfillment, by Bonnie Zare</i>	1
Arthur Waugh Reminisces about Gissing: A Letter to Herbert van Thal, <i>by Pierre Coustillas</i>	19
Book Reviews, <i>by David Grylls, Michael Cronin and Pierre Coustillas</i>	24
Notes and News	33
Recent Publications	36

-- 1 --

*The Odd Women’s Creation of a Desire for Romantic Fulfillment*

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Since the rise of feminist literary scholarship in the 1970s, feminist critics generally have opposed the marriage plot. They have tended to search for subversion in Victorian romances and scoff at conventional plots which marry off the heroine and thus ensure her absolute dependence on men. For instance, in *Writing Beyond the Ending* Rachel Blau DuPlessis observes that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fictional explorations of the female character through her relation to male love and approval helped the world shun women’s skills, talents, and capacity for independence, and that because twentieth-century women have dramatically changed their status they have “destabilized” the marriage plot or the “relation of narrative middles to resolutions” (4).

George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* seems to destabilize the marriage plot by refusing to unite the dilettantish yet enlightened Everard Barfoot and the emancipator Rhoda Nunn. Furthermore, it contains a devastating critique of the institution of marriage, in the portrait of Monica’s and Widdowson’s life together. Yet it still may foster romantic desire, even in its modern feminist readers. This essay will specifically examine how and why a modern feminist reader might actually desire a traditional romantic outcome for the character of Rhoda Nunn, whose struggle between the choices of marriage and career forms the novel’s central plot.

With an awareness that feminists embrace (and debate) a variety of issues – recognition of

achievement in jobs traditionally considered to be inferior, political representation, lesbian rights, reproductive choices, etcetera – I will be using the word “feminist” to define people who would describe themselves as committed to independence for women, but still recognize the

-- 2 --

fulfillment women receive from intimacy with others, including male partners. Because I cannot and would not want to speak for all women, I am locating myself as reading from this position. I do not mean to essentialize the various practices of such a reader. Diana Fuss’ suggestion that we think of readers as sites of difference, enacting (sometimes simultaneously) various subject-positions as they read is helpful in this context, for all kinds of readers frequently experience internal contradictions during the practice of reading. Using the term “feminist reader” is problematic because it seems to ignore the common post-structuralist idea that identity is a surface that conceals an agitated complex of opposing desires. Constructionists, such as Judith Butler, have called for us to resist the invocation of identity categories whenever possible because they “tend to be instrument of regulatory regimes” (308 (b)). However, it is difficult to make functional argument without the use of some sort of subject structure. Linda Alcoff believes that feminists may attain a balance between these two objectives: my argument is made with the knowledge that a woman’s identity is

relative to a constantly shifting context, to ... objective economic conditions ... and so on ... The concept of woman is a relational term identifiable only within a (constantly moving) context; [and] ... the position that women find themselves in can be actively utilized ... as a location for the construction of meaning ... Identity politics is useful because identity is a posit that is politically paramount. (Alcoff 432- 434)

As anyone aware of Gissing’s personal circumstances will remember, his lack of psychological readiness for life’s temptations, especially those to which his sexual appetite would expose him, gave him bitter pain, making his novels become “cries of anguish and horror at the age as it had impressed itself upon him” (*TLS* Rev. 44). Gissing was in this way surprisingly ahead of his time: his novels present the pessimism which results from a chaotic environment; they signal the rise of modernism. This may be Gissing’s primary attraction for contemporary audiences; in addition, they presumably appreciate his candid and unpuritanical treatment of marriage and sexual matters. Significantly, the illusions of romantic love play a central role in nearly all of Gissing’s novels (Alden 21).

*The Odd Women* naturally poses the most interest for modern feminist readers because two of the main characters are solely preoccupied with helping the women’s movement.<sup>1</sup> These two intellectual activists, Mary and Rhoda, are both educated lower middle-class women without marriage offers. However, Mary has suffered longer from the consequences, and it is she who

-- 3 --

starts a school to train women to work in offices, thus avoiding the uncertain life of a governess or companion. Of the two it is Rhoda who is supposed to embody the so-called “New Woman” or avid champion of emancipation. Mary, in fact, is mild-mannered and seems almost complacent in contrast to Rhoda’s volubility and vituperation. It is not until we hear her give the novel’s only lecture that we fully are apprised of her intelligence, eloquence, and passion. Mary explains that she is not motivated by a desire to raise woman’s economic position so much as her social position, and desperately wants women “to become rational and responsible human beings” because “there must be a new type of woman active in every sphere of life: a new

worker out in the world, a new ruler of the home” (153-155).

Unlike John Halperin, I do not believe this last phrase suggests that Mary and Rhoda merely want to train women to be better companions for their husbands and better models for their children. For Gissing actually has Mary state that women, in order to gain self-respect, must invade the public sphere:

Our proper world is the world of intelligence, of honest effort, of moral strength ... I don't care whether we crowd out the men or not. I don't care what results, if only women are made strong and self-reliant and nobly independent! (153)<sup>2</sup>

Mary's words are inspiring and her goal is not so very different from the goals of many feminists to-day. Still, Gissing seems rather contradictory when he puts the following words in Mary's mouth: "I am a troublesome, aggressive, revolutionary person" (153). Unfortunately, the narrative's sharp focus on Rhoda and Everard forces Mary to the background and makes her proclamation that she is a "revolutionary" seem overstated. She shows great courage and perseverance, but her kindness seems to border on timidity, for she continually gives and receives simple laconic responses. Mary is clearly less threatening as a New Woman because her external behaviour is so full of "womanly sympathies":

She could have managed a large and complicated business, could have ... taken an active part in municipal government – nay, perchance in national. And this turn of intellect consisted with many traits of character so strongly feminine that people who knew her best thought of her with as much tenderness as admiration. (59)

Although she does not want to seize leadership and thus seems less committed than Rhoda, she

-- 4 --

is the only character who insists that nurturing qualities may coexist with women's ambition to be a vital part of the public world. Thus she piqued my curiosity and interest as much as Rhoda's character did, and it is unfortunate that Gissing does not allow us to become truly intimate with her.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to Mary, we do not need the occasion of a public address to discover and admire Rhoda's deep convictions and passionate nature – they appear when we first see her, at the age of fifteen, when she visits the Maddens and discusses "radicalism." Rhoda's commitment to and enthusiasm for her work is displayed in the determined and frank manner she treats Monica and others who seem uncertain of their role in life. She does not trifle with language which prettifies or partly covers the truth: "to make women hard-hearted" so that they may pour their energies into "social usefulness" is her goal. To her, marriage should not be regarded as a vocation, and she would teach women "that for the majority...marriage means disgrace" (111). Rhoda's centrality to the narrative is signaled not only by her early appearance (at the Maddens' home) but by the many times she speaks with candor and conviction. She thus quickly proves to be an intellectual and articulate woman whom the reader admires.<sup>4</sup>

"For most readers of the novel, the interest will lie chiefly in Gissing's absorbing account of the romantic power struggle between his enlightened hero and heroine," writes Elaine Showalter in her preface to the 1983 edition of *The Odd Women*, and notes most contemporary readers also shared this interest and disapproved of the ending which separated Rhoda and Everard (xix). The novel may ultimately leave the contemporary reader savoring feminist principles because of the generally sympathetic portrait of an emancipator, but it also may

produce a desire for a romantic conclusion which, admittedly, reinforces the status quo. The text even in a feminist reader may create the desire for Everard and Rhoda to marry; this act would fulfill the narrative's hints as to what this reform-minded couple might accomplish, and would assure readers that a woman who fights sexism also is able to realize the beauty of a loving relationship.

The vast popularity of the plot which details a power struggle between a heterosexual couple – whether it be in *Jane Eyre* or the most current Barbara Cartland paperback – illustrates that, although women fight being taught that power stems primarily from achieving intimacy with men, many twentieth-century female readers are not immune to the drawing power of this fantasy. In the contemporary romance novel, the sudden tenderness so often grafted onto the brutish hero (without any prior indication or explanation) satisfies women's essential need “to

-- 5 --

realize her most basic female self in relation with another,” writes Janice Radway (155). To explain why a heroine such as Rhoda may search for nurturing qualities in a commandingly assertive male lover like Everard, and why females like to read about such searches, let us follow Radway in turning to Nancy Chodorow's model of female identity-formation. I will not pretend that I can do full justice to the complexity of her work here, but I will briefly outline the main argument of *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Chodorow argues that the system in which the mother is the primary caretaker produces asymmetrical development of boys and girls. Girls have trouble differentiating themselves from their mothers because 1) they share the same sex, and thus the mother tends to identify with the daughter as a smaller version of herself, and 2) the father, who would perhaps counterbalance this intimacy, is frequently absent. The result of this is that girls tend to define themselves in relation to others, “to be continuous with and related to the external object world” (Radway 137). Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to end the fusion they feel with their mother, not only because this fusion necessarily contains a sexual element but because they need to establish their gender as differing from their mothers'. Young men, therefore, learn to reject any signs of dependence on their mothers and, by extension, on any females.

A fictional heroine's ability to make a powerful male reveal his nurturing qualities mirrors the actions of many young women, who search to reexperience with men the intimacy they shared with their mothers as children. Although the sample of responses may not have been representative, contemporary romance writer Kathleen Seidel found that people characterize romance as consisting of a feeling of surprise as well as safety. As Seidel describes it, surprise “knocks the adult self-consciousness out of you” and being served (in a typical romantic scenario, whether it be with wine, food, flowers, or words) allows one to be a child again – free, safe, and full of wonder (162).

Another reason that the marriage plot provides the fantasy of preference for women is that they desire to become part of an accepted institution in a society which has persisted in calling their talents into question. Although homosexual partners are still unfairly barred from marriage, marriage is otherwise one of Western society's most accessible institutions. Of course, marriage remains not only politically but personally oppressive for many women, some of whom experience domestic violence, or, on a less serious note, must struggle over child-raising, home responsibility, career goals, and geographical nearness to family. Women enjoy these novels

-- 6 --

because they want to preserve their dream that egalitarian marriage or relationship brings a large degree of peace and pleasure.

Thus a modern feminist reader may be unprepared for and even disappointed by the

ending of *The Odd Women* which negates the possibility of a union between Rhoda and Everard. Because it may be objected that Everard and Rhoda seem incompatible, I will first detail what appears to separate them and then show how the novel constructs a desire for Everard and Rhoda to marry and why a feminist still may desire this ending. It is easy to dispute Rhoda's claim that the two lovers have *nothing* in common (209), for both of them delight in verbal conflict and enjoy intellectual challenges (208). Also both have a cynical outlook on human nature, as is displayed when Everard threatens to cane his brother's cruelly selfish wife, and Rhoda tries to show how much she hates women's stunted development by her arch comment that "Many women deserve to be beaten" (206). This scene shows their shared interest in flaunting convention; earlier we learned that both reject marriage, domestic life, and childraising as their destiny, desiring extraordinary experience instead.

Of course, their motivations differ even if both seek this relationship to test themselves. Whereas Rhoda tells herself she would benefit from rejecting a proposal because her own self-knowledge and authority would be strengthened, Everard wants to see if his charm can conquer Rhoda to bolster his own sense of attractiveness. In fact, Gissing provides us with fertile ground to suspect Everard of possessing only a limited capability to love. From the first, we may doubt his ability to commit to anything, particularly as he announces to Mary on his return from Japan that he means to employ himself only in "enjoying life," shrugging off "social usefulness." Mary calls his behavior self-indulgent, though her former disappointment in his image (after the episode with Amy Drake) may be why she chooses to say severely, "Your purpose is intensely selfish" (93). The Paterian, aesthetic appeal of a fairly hedonistic lifestyle, "an infinite series of modes of living. A ceaseless exercise of all one's faculties of pleasure," cannot be denied (92). This rebel without society or cause would engender more respect if he had more ambition; however, as a man of independent means living in turn-of-the-century London, his contentment with an unstructured life seems merely a waste, rather than a surprising choice.

A greater obstruction to our admiring him is Everard's selfishness which seems to spring from a chivalrous desire for mastery. Clearly his first impulse to woo Rhoda stems from

-- 7 --

curiosity and the thrill of challenge: would he be able to melt such a woman, in whose face "he read chastity; her eyes avoided no scrutiny; her palm was cold" (148)? He is unmindful of his privileged position as he luxuriates in the "piquant" possibility of "making vigorous love to Miss Nunn, just to prove her sincerity" (106). As calculating as a detective at first, Everard sees his meddling in the life of another as an "experiment" or an "investigation."

Everard's serious interest in Rhoda as a partner gradually deepens and, as the reader spends more and more time inside his mind, Everard appears in a more favorable light. Still we have examples, even late in the book, of a sinister tone:

He was not downcast; for all that she had said, this woman ... would yield herself; he had a strange, unreasoning assurance of it ... He no longer cared on what terms he obtained her ... But her life should be linked with his if fierce energy of will meant anything. (210)

Gissing presumably uses semi-Gothic words to further our admiration of Everard; however, "this woman" and "fierce will" directly place Rhoda into the category of object to be arrested in flight and captured as a possession. Similarly, when they part after Rhoda's accusation (that Everard is Monica's lover), he leaves Rhoda and thinks, rather sadistically, that she must be suffering

and that certainly rejoiced him. The keener her suffering the sooner her submission ... She must declare her spirit worn and subjugated by torment of jealousy and fear. Then he would raise her, and seat her in the place of honour, and fall down at her feet, and fill her soul with rapture. (320)

This is poor prose, but the melodramatic word choices are not solely the basis for dismay; here Everard plainly sees their relationship as a power game and is waiting patiently for her to make herself vulnerable, so that he can control the terms on which he might choose to admire Rhoda or give her joy.

Still, given the relative unenlightenment of men at the time Gissing was writing, Everard does not seem so very incapable of cultivating emotional attentiveness. For instance, his long friendship with the esoteric and dreamy mathematician, Micklethwaite, underlines his lack of class snobbery and his respect for perseverance, academic rigor, and emotional generosity. Everard is cynical about emotional relationships, but he genuinely admires Micklethwaite's long engagement and eventual happy marriage. Everard's cynicism may, in fact, mask disappoint-

-- 8 --

ment: we can deduce from his support of Micklethwaite that he wishes life had catered to his own romantic aspirations.

The most fatal strike against Everard is that he has impregnated Amy Drake, and though he supports her child states that "the allowance ceased" after the child died. Kathleen Blake uses this episode to establish that Everard is a "male supremacist," distorting Everard's beliefs to suggest they are merely a more arrogant and intellectual version of Widdowson's insistence on dominance. Blake assumes Everard will be understood as a selfish connoisseur of the "female animal":

But, of course, his Don Juanish reputation reflects a habitual mode of sexual predation. Rhoda knows this from his insistence on domination in their encounters. (91).

Yet we have no proof that Amy was not, as he reports, an outrageously selfish and materialistic person who intended to entrap him. While his assumption that his sexual nature could not help but participate once invited (by Amy) is based on the pernicious double standard, this one incident should not be taken as a warning of irresponsibility and utter untrustworthiness. Unlike Brontë's Rochester, who feels he can treat women (such as Celine Varens) as property because he has "bought" them, Everard warns against ill-formed alliances, and his decision safely to avoid Amy the moment he sees her at the station speaks well for him. Mary's use of this episode as proof that Everard is incapable of loyalty surely reflects her unrequited love and gives her an excuse to feel relief that he never wanted to marry her (243).

Finally, Rhoda's and Everard's equal shares of personal pride do suggest an obstacle to their life together: it is indeed Rhoda's insistence on proof of Everard's innocence and Everard's refusal to take any responsibility for the accusation that is their downfall. It leads to their misunderstanding, but the text does not convince me that it would prove an utter impediment in their marriage. Their struggle for power is alarming but appeals to us precisely because it is motivated by deep emotion rather than childish destructiveness.<sup>5</sup>

Because Rhoda maintains herself independently and possesses such strong principles, her battle with romantic impulses is all the more suspenseful; likewise, Everard's pursuit, which is marked by both passionate thoughts and provoking indifference, makes the reader feel as if she is in a maze with these two characters, unsure of the appropriate method of exit. The readers are in the position of Mary, who observes, "powerful was the incitement to curiosity in a situation

which, however it ended, would afford such matter for emotional hypothesis" (245).

It should be noted that not only do readers admire Rhoda's daring desire to test her commitment, but the very possibility of change excites us. As Peter Brooks has argued, it is only deviance from a state of passivity that is narratable: the protagonist, like the reader, must plot or actively seek something, for a narration or interpretation to progress (139). What mainly led me to desire change and thus to believe in the importance of a union between Rhoda and Everard, however, were the indications that Rhoda is selfish. I questioned rather than celebrated her rejections of a lover because Rhoda's actions cast doubt on her ability to feel love. Her motives seem mixed when she confronts 1) Bella Royston's history (her abandonment of the school for her lover and subsequent suicide) and 2) Monica's slow disintegration. Though Rhoda's point that abolishing marriage would help women assume independence and learn additional skills has some validity, her refusal to express even an iota of sympathy for Bella is alarming. She mocks at the idea of restraining Bella's "animality"; seeming to believe, like the author who created her, in the inevitability of chaos and violence in those who are not raised to treasure knowledge. For Gissing let his personal distaste for the poor overcome his better judgment on the question of labor reform: "While he genuinely wanted the lot of the poor to be improved, years of enforced intimacy with them had only aggravated his personal repugnance for them" (Fernando 110). Mary is equally contemptuous of the underprivileged, stating that she must call this class "lower, for they are, in every sense" (59), but Rhoda's more passionate commitment makes her snobbery all the more disappointing. Solidarity between all kinds of women in *The Odd Women* is thus sacrificed to Gissing's suspicion that the poor were primarily responsible for their poverty.

It is not only Bella's lower-class status but Rhoda's other foible – her disgust for romance and eros – that causes her to doubt Bella Royston's suitability. Clearly Mary believes Bella "has brains and doesn't belong to the vulgar" (63), but to Rhoda, Bella's surrender to desire brands her for time immemorial as "the profitless below average" (64). The pivotal issue in the discussion of whether to let Bella return is Rhoda's scorn for "sentimentalism" and her denigration of the "sexual instinct." Rhoda has no forgiveness for Bella's "being in love," asserting that "before the female sex can be raised from its low level there will have to be a widespread revolt against sexual instinct" (67).

Mary is better able to forgive human weakness: "A mistake ... mustn't condemn a woman for life ... Most women, whether they marry or not ... commit endless follies"(62-65). Rhoda replies that a new social order will change this, but Mary reiterates that she speaks "of human nature, not of the effect of institutions"(65). Rhoda's refusal to allow Bella back into their school disturbs Mary and the reader because it so callously denies the temptation of love. Perhaps Mary's belief in human fallibility may sometimes lead to "paralysis of effort" as Rhoda says, but Rhoda's brand of asceticism denies the pleasure-loving side of our consciousness.

Significantly, the debate between these two positions still goes on among feminists. Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* flatly condemns all images which could conceivably be labeled pornographic. This perpetuates the stereotype that women cannot and do not receive pleasure from any such image of a man or woman. Furthermore, because Dworkin dismisses the category of "erotica" as simply a euphemism for pornography, she leaves no possibility of depicting sex in a way that does not assault women's rights. In opposition, Avis Lewallen contends that although representations of sex (and actual sexual experience) may provide a troubling pleasure for women, ascetic avowals are also demanding:

Contemporary feminists who campaign against pornography do not go so far as to say that sex itself is an ordeal or insult to women, but what else can be meant by their frequent insistence that every representation of heterosexual sex – however softcore – is an insult to women...?

Just as Mary rightly believes that an aggressive puritanism will damage the cause of feminism, feminist critics must bear in mind that “the ideal we set up must be human.” Like Rhoda, it is possible to “harden our hearts with theory”(149) and to “believe that it isn’t personal feeling that directs a great movement in civilization” (150). Such binary thinking accents the reductive construction of passion and reason, thinking and feeling, and subject and object as opposites, even though, as Susanne Kappeler writes, we have no proof that this Western patriarchal mainstay is “an inherent psychic structure” (qtd. in Lewallen 100).

Rhoda appears in the worst light when she shockingly dismisses Bella’s miserable death as having “no effect whatever upon” her (144). She insists first to Everard and then to Mary that she feels no compassion, only “indignation,” at Bella’s story and its ending. Later Mary connects Rhoda’s inhumanity with an “emotional disturbance”: we are to understand that at the

-- 11 --

time Rhoda was gravely shocked and displeased with her enjoyment of Everard’s homage. However, no such excuse exists for Rhoda’s treatment of Monica Madden. Granted Monica has little intellect or common sense, she is a kindly creature who, like most women of her class, was raised to be a beautiful and obedient ornament and has few inner resources. Yet she is one of the most sympathetic portraits of the “pathetic lower middle class woman” in Gissing’s works.<sup>6</sup> Given her upbringing, it is understandable that Monica grasps at a definite opportunity for stability, especially because Widdowson initially does not betray his possessive nature. While Rhoda’s consternation at Monica’s lack of initiative and interest in training explains Rhoda’s disappointment at Monica’s choice, Rhoda’s narrow range of sympathy is striking; “Rhoda dismissed the subject [of Monica’s marriage] lightly, and henceforth showed only the faintest interest in Monica’s concerns” (135).

Rhoda’s consistency certainly merits admiration; however, her compartmentalization of worthy and unworthy women leads her to be overly mistrustful of Monica after seeing Monica with Everard and thus prolongs Rhoda’s misunderstanding with him. Rhoda circumscribes her duty so as to include only women that have the proper revolutionary spirit, in much the same way as current white middle-class feminists justly have been accused of neglecting their vastly less fortunate sisters. When Virginia asks for Rhoda’s help because Monica is 1) seriously ill, 2) separated from her husband and 3) asking after Rhoda, we hear “‘I’m afraid I can be of no use,’ Rhoda answered coldly ... Her dignity, her pride, should remain unsullied by such hateful contact” (332-33). Her stoicism and arrogance prevent her from discovering the truth. Traditionally, when readers know more than the protagonist about a situation, they feel superior. Thus to gain back the reader’s admiration of Emma in her novel of the same title, Jane Austen uses the character Knightley to help “retrain” Emma, but Rhoda is bereft of any such strong moral guide. The scene in which Rhoda listens to Monica’s confession is supposed to allay our fear that Rhoda may be incapable of learning to be more humble and generous. In this scene she is able to cast off the patronizing tone she uses at first and convey her moral message to Monica kindly. Yet it is this message and her strength in receiving information about Everard quietly that is emphasized more than her personal affection for Monica. This one scene does not convincingly portray her as changed.

Perhaps Rhoda’s attitude is particularly repellent because of Monica’s function in the narrative. The Maddens’ story is secondary to Rhoda’s, but the link between the two is Rhoda’s

girlhood friendship with the Madden sisters, and this link is disrupted by Rhoda's indifference to Monica after she marries. Furthermore, the thorough treatment of Monica's marriage makes it nearly a parallel plot rather than subplot – while two people are deciding whether to risk their ideals and marry, two others discover how poorly marriage solves problems or how a husband's belief in male superiority and a wife's need for financial stability may entrap them. While the text may not cause readers to powerfully identify with her we presumably think about what we would do in Monica's place. We are put off by Rhoda's dismissal of Monica because Gissing does not dismiss her, but instead dwells on her life and thus increases our concern for her.

Putting Rhoda's somewhat callous actions aside, it is the potential Rhoda and Everard have to do good as a couple which also creates a desire for their eventual union. First, we recognize that Rhoda and Everard share the same appreciation of honesty, outspokenness and the life of the mind that could have made them a "socially useful" team. Rachel Blau DuPlessis has noted that

The plot of courtship ... begins to break by the latter half of the nineteenth century ... romance (whether marriage or courtship) is less able to be depicted as satisfying the urgencies of ... self-development, desire for useful work, ambition, and public striving. (15)

Although Everard never directly mentions Rhoda continuing her work after their union, whether it be with or without the legal forms, he states that his partner "would be as free to live in her own way as I to live in mine" (206). Clearly Rhoda would never be content to give up working for the cause, and Everard would need to understand that. Perhaps he has not developed sufficiently to do so, but the issue is not even raised by Rhoda.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is conceivable that Rhoda's imagination and assertiveness have failed her when she thinks she must choose between her vocation and marriage to Everard.

Everard's idea of union appeals not only to the emancipated Rhoda but may appeal to a feminist reader, because Everard himself challenges the patriarchal definition of marriage as ownership of another body:

For him, marriage must not mean repose ... but the mutual incitement of vigorous minds ... there must be passion ... [but] Let beauty perish if it cannot ally itself with mind ... intellect was his first requirement. A woman with ... reasoning; free from superstition, religious or social ... who would scorn the vulgarity of jealousy... (201-02).

Although Everard only linked his ideals specifically to political goals once (at Eton), his determination to stay with engineering for twelve years must reveal, contrary to Mary's account, something more than obstinacy; he still may be inspired to reform the world, since he originally believed that only practical work "was worthy of a man with his opinions" (96).

Twenty-three years after *The Odd Women* appears, D. H. Lawrence will argue through Rupert Birkin that no strong union can exist unless the two people retain their inviolate identity. Gissing's main male character is a nascent, somewhat inarticulate Rupert Birkin; Everard's fervent desire to find a middle ground between traditionally possessive and therefore cloying love and the isolation of independence appeals to many people who seek change and redefinition, including feminists. His thoughts, as the above passage shows, occasionally

express liberatory beliefs, and though we condemn his chauvinistic frame of reference we do identify with his yearning to expand what has historically been one of the most static social and economic structures – marriage. Even if Everard’s catalogue of friends’ unhappy marriages often indicts the wife, Everard is careful to acknowledge that not only women’s lack of education but men’s lack of expectations and encouragement contribute to strife-ridden marriages made for selfish reasons. Consequently, it is deflating when Everard suddenly convinces himself that he has greater sympathy with people who are not “in declared revolt against the order of things” (367) and chooses to be with Agnes Brissenden, from whom he learns humility (as he discovers she is wiser than he suspected). We know little about Agnes, and Everard thinks of her early on as an easy choice, which proclaims her status as a consolation prize rather than a woman who will foster Everard’s intellectual or spiritual growth. An increase of humility in Everard is certainly something to celebrate, but the implication of “softening” also extends to his desire for reform, which sadly, might have been cultivated by Rhoda.

Although in the distant past readerly pleasure may not have received academic legitimacy (following the Western trend to denigrate sensuous experience), I should not be expected to repress my honest reactions, even if they vie with my feminist concerns. I suspect I am not the only feminist who, as she literally reads this work, may prefer to imagine scenes of sexual fulfillment rather than think of Rhoda as remaining with “Nunn”/none. For one thing, Everard’s vulnerability to passion appeals to our memory of desire as he thinks, “Strange how her face had altered to his perception since the first meeting... He was getting to know it so well, to be

-- 14 --

prepared for its constant changes, to watch for certain movements of brows or lips when he had said certain things” (161). Just as following the mood swings of Brontë’s Rochester does, Everard’s turmoil is appealing because of the novelty of watching a man, particularly during the Victorian era, be controlled by his feelings for a woman: “But this was something very like being in love, and he by no means wished to be seriously in love with Miss Nunn” (161). Early on Rhoda thinks to herself, “To reject a lover in so many respects desirable ... would fortify her self-esteem, and enable her to go forward in the chosen path with firmer tread” (168). Thus she already anticipates the pleasure of gaining power over someone who has more power in society. When Everard openly avows his love for her, Rhoda enjoys her mastery of the situation:

A raising of the finger and Everard Barfoot would marry her... She felt a new contentment in life; at times ... a rush of joy would suddenly fill her heart, and make her cheek glow... She exercised more patience, smiled where she had been wont to scoff. Miss Nunn was altogether a more amiable person. (213)

It is difficult for the feminist reader to turn her back on Rhoda’s newfound pleasure and her new sense of balance and assume, as Rhoda does, that this knowledge was all she desired. For instance, although Rhoda tells herself she is glad only that she will pursue her vocation with “less bitterness” (213), “exhilaration appeared in her behaviour through the day” shortly after she receives Everard’s letter from abroad. Every night she rereads it “more than once” and thus we are apt to agree with the writer of this letter, who says, “Rhoda, if you never love me, my life will be poor to what it might have been; and you, you also, will lose something” (218).

Rhoda’s embrace of asceticism after the lovers’ misunderstanding increases readers’ doubt about Rhoda and Rhoda’s lack of trust in Everard. To avoid curiosity from Mary, Rhoda strains “her nerves to the last point of endurance” and continues her vacation after her fight with Everard; when she returns home she had “arrived at a morbid delight in self-torture ... and persuaded herself not only that... Everard ... was hateful to her soul, but that sexual love had

become, and would ever be, to her an impure idea, a vice of blood” (322). She throws herself back into work and even restricts her diet, refusing wine or anything that especially appeals to her palate. This does not block out her emotions: even a wish for death overwhelms her when alone, though she gradually resigns herself to living without Everard.

-- 15 --

Kathleen Blake contends that critics who judge Rhoda as too rigid or puritanical neglect 1) the historical fact of an “ascetic strain within the movement” and 2) the logic of abstaining from sexual experience, given men’s threat to “women’s development” (95). Admittedly, the appeal of asceticism during this period is documented; however, this tendency does not neatly explain all of our questions about Rhoda’s motivation. After all, Blake’s argument frees her to claim that Monica’s, Rhoda’s, Bella’s and Amy’s histories all show that men threaten women’s development. Yet we have absolutely no idea if Amy’s decision to impregnate herself with a near-stranger can veraciously be read as a masculine assault; furthermore, Rhoda’s long struggle shows exactly how difficult it is to measure the threat of this particular heterosexual male.

The two final scenes portray Rhoda saying goodbye to Everard and visiting the Maddens, and the narrator’s brilliant objectivity leaves open the possibility of judging her either as a zealot or an admirable activist. For instance, Rhoda’s nobility is emphasized, and her poise and strength during the farewell scene are admirable, when she declares, “You never loved me with entire sincerity. And you will never love any woman – even as well as you loved me,” to which Everard replies, fascinated, “Upon my soul, I believe it” (375).<sup>8</sup> Everard has proclaimed that he loves Rhoda, but his sudden conventionality (he will not connect cohabitation with any sort of political statement) makes him appear less open to challenge than she evidently can withstand. Though she plainly has resolved to separate from him, “a threatened sob made her break off” her goodbye to Everard (375); nostalgia for what could have worked still lingers in the air.

The final scene, in which Rhoda visits the Maddens, concludes with Rhoda leaning over Monica’s sleeping baby daughter: “Rhoda’s vision grew dim; a sigh made her lips quiver, and once more she murmured, ‘Poor little child!’” This scene obviously affirms Rhoda’s ability to be compassionate. However, it is so brief that it does not form a convincing proof that Rhoda has fulfilled herself by denying herself Everard and, possibly, the start of a family. Although she no longer makes “vows to crush the natural instincts” (334) and her “conception of life was larger” after her experience with Everard, I was left questioning Rhoda’s belief that she must refuse a loving partnership with a man to remain a true worker for the feminist cause.

According to critic Lloyd Fernando, although Gissing wanted greater opportunities for women, *The Odd Women* proves Gissing was “adamant in his belief that the relations between

-- 16 --

the sexes needed no change. Any departure from the convention of life-long marriage could not be justified on grounds of morality, or even of simple expediency” (116). In fact, Fernando’s assertion is odd, considering that Widdowson, Gissing’s most developed study of a man who has a rigidly traditional, Ruskinian attitude towards women, is very unlikable. Gissing does not unfairly villainize him: plainly society has convinced Widdowson of his inferiority (due to his class and occupation) and his right to take this out on his wife by making her his subordinate. His monochrome statements and platitudinous letters bore us; he convinces us that one obsessively jealous partner destroys both partners in the marriage. Through the alliance of Monica and Widdowson, *The Odd Women* reveals what are often the horrific results of the myth that a marriage based on male rulership is the ideal model for adult happiness. As others had before him, Gissing faults novel-reading for making women “imagine themselves noble and glorious when they are most near the animals” (64).

All of this appeals to the side of me which longs to liberate women from narrow visions of their potential destiny. Yet – and I admit that it is ironic – this novel still brings out my desire for a closure which includes romantic union. To add to the irony, Everard has disturbing weaknesses, which are clearly not too severely criticized by the narrator’s tone. However, we can acknowledge Everard’s unsuitable aspects without abnegating the hopes that these two will discover a new form of union. This desire stems from a fundamental human need for relationship. We do not want Rhoda and Everard to curl up in a rose-scented, candle-lit boudoir of flattering whispers: instead we are frustrated by their inability to invent a new kind of commitment. As Adrian Poole so astutely writes, we are still tantalizingly far from realizing what Lawrence will only be able to express in transcendent metaphors of “star polarity” and the “Pentecostal flame”: a relationship based on respect for the inviolate, autonomous self of the other which still answers our need for admiration, sexual affection, and moral support.<sup>9</sup> Mary asks Rhoda a question that applies equally to today’s women: “Do you think now that we know one single girl who in her heart believes it is better never to love...?” (66). Even feminist readers, who are apt to champion endings that defer or challenge the traditional “marriage plot,” may find the ending disappointing: with Everard, we may still believe that no matter how you “think...about man and woman, you know that there *is* such a thing as love between them, and that the love of a man and a woman who can think intelligently may be the best thing life has to offer them” (207).

-- 17 --

<sup>1</sup>In fact, this entire novel, unlike many of Gissing’s others, centers around women, and even the other prominent set of characters, the Madden sisters, who are markedly in need of mental fortitude and acuity, are presented fairly sympathetically.

<sup>2</sup>Although she adds that improving women will indirectly improve the condition of men, Mary couples that thought with the dismissive “if you like to put it in this way” (154).

<sup>3</sup>Other readers also want to see more of her; for instance, critic Wendy Lesser, who identifies herself as a socialist and feminist, goes so far as to state that Mary is “in many ways the most sympathetic [figure] ideologically” (214).

<sup>4</sup>Naturally, not all readers agree; for instance, Jenni Calder faults Gissing’s misogyny and ambivalence for this “very unpleasant” portrait of a New Woman. She is “obsessive and dominating ... She is a prig and a puritan” (201). Calder’s comment bypasses the charm and appeal of Rhoda’s courage, an appeal that endows her with an aura of intrigue. Similarly, Alice B. Markow complains about Rhoda’s “sexual antipathy” and her inability to blend “emotion and intellect” (68), which makes her amount to a “parody of the Victorian radical feminist” (65). But in fact, Markow persistently misreads the text because she is so interested in comparing it to a feminist checklist for fiction. The title of her essay “George Gissing: Advocate or Provocateur of the Women’s Movement?” betrays the questionable assumption that an author’s literary works ought to resemble political pamphlets. As stated, I believe that many readers respond with more sympathy than these critics suggest.

<sup>5</sup>As Wendy Lesser so aptly emphasizes: “Fierceness is the root of their love as well as its poison, and the tension between them is what makes the affair Lawrentian in stature and strength” (213).

<sup>6</sup>Of course, Monica shines in comparison to her feeble sisters, one of whom vents her suffering and ineffectuality in repetitious prayer, and the other in gin.

<sup>7</sup>Part of the difficulty in imagining how such a lifestyle might be lived arises from the novel’s publication at a time in which progress on this issue was quite unclear. One 1899 number of the *Lady’s Realm* was devoted to the question “Does Marriage Hinder a Woman’s Development?” and contributors from both sides made themselves heard: some affirmed that “matrimony is in itself a career” and others praised men for encouraging their wives’ talent (qtd.

in Calder 168).

<sup>8</sup>Karen Chase has read their farewell as depicting Rhoda's "clerical literal-mindedness" fighting successfully against Everard's frequent use of irony. She argues that Rhoda turns her tendency towards repetition and paraphrase into a weapon by gently parodying Everard's original words: she thinks he is "not quite serious" in his marriage proposal (as he was not with his proposal of free union). Chase points to the "abrupt, harsh tone" of Rhoda's direct refusal as evidence that she is desperately trying to speak with both "sincerity and sarcasm" (242). While Chase's argument deserves praise for its historical accuracy and originality, many contemporary

-- 18 --

readers probably do not experience the ending this way, not having noticed Rhoda's literal-mindedness nor the book's exposure of the new clerical ideal of "accuracy without understanding" (235).

<sup>9</sup>This comparison originates from Adrian Poole's brilliant conceptualization of relationship in his study *Gissing in Context* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 190-93.

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-- 19 --

Arthur Waugh Reminisces about Gissing  
A Letter to Herbert van Thal

Pierre Coustillas

What *littérateur*, when reminiscing about the famous persons he once knew or merely came across, can estimate whether the passing of time is likely to increase or diminish the interest his letter will have the next day for its recipient? Historical interest is a favour granted by time very sparingly. As a rule letters are written for some practical reason and, unlike Samuel Johnson rejecting Lord Chesterfield's belated offer of assistance, literary men do not strive after effect in private correspondence, that is in what is left of it, especially nowadays, after the telephone has taken the lion's share. The letter from Arthur Waugh to Herbert van Thal printed below<sup>1</sup> was a modest reply to a note of enquiry about Gissing. Waugh doubtless never thought that his purely private letter would be worth printing half a century later, but time has given his recollections a flavour which, we think, can be shared with pleasure and interest by those students and readers of Gissing who are aware that he once wrote a highly laudatory article on the novelist's works and that his correspondent did his best, though with scant success, to promote the same works one or two decades later. As is often the case, one would like to have both sides of the correspondence, but in view of van Thal's professional situation in 1939 and of his post-war efforts to make Gissing's books available again, the gist of his enquiry can hardly be an obscure one to any reader even moderately familiar with the subject.<sup>2</sup>

Van Thal himself supplied the background of Waugh's letter in his autobiography, *The Tops of the Mulberry Trees*, a slim, unpretentious, highly readable volume published by Allen & Unwin over twenty years ago. At the time he wrote to Waugh, he was working for the once leading firm of Chapman & Hall, the history of which, *A Hundred Years of Publishing*, had been published by Waugh nine years before on the occasion of his retirement. In other words, a junior member of the firm, a man in his mid-thirties, was addressing its former managing director who, in the previous decade, had also been Chairman of the Board. Known in professional circles as Bertie, van Thal was to make a reputation for himself as bookseller, publisher, agent, biographer, editor and anthologist. He had joined Peter Davies, the publisher, in 1928, and left him to try his luck with Chapman & Hall a few years later, that is at a time when the firm's prestige was most certainly declining. Founded in 1830 by Edward Chapman and William Hall, the old publishing house had numbered Dickens, Carlyle and Trollope among its authors. Edward Chapman had been succeeded by his nephew Frederic Chapman, nicknamed the liar, in 1880, and both men, from 1860, had relied on George Meredith for the choice of their titles. It was with both Meredith, for the literary aspect of his books, and Chapman for the commercial one, that Gissing had been in touch concerning *The Unclassed* and *Isabel Clarendon*, and he had easily

-- 20 --

drawn a line between the former, whom he could respect, and the latter, who could not be trusted. (Eventually Meredith had left the firm after quarrelling with Chapman, and gone over to Constable.) Gissing would probably not have turned to Chapman & Hall again in 1901, but he had given his agent, James B. Pinker, a free hand, and thus *Our Friend the Charlatan* and *By the*

*Ionian Sea* had appeared under the old imprint, after the death of Frederic Chapman in 1895. William Leonard Courtney, who edited the *Fortnightly Review*, was his successor, and Gissing and his agent had found him a more reliable director than Chapman. Not only did he publish the two titles just mentioned, but he also serialized *By the Ionian Sea* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in the *Fortnightly*. One would imagine that such a policy implied a good knowledge of Gissing's previous works, yet such was not the case. When, shortly before the novelist's death, Courtney devoted an article to his books, he made a very poor job of it, revealing that he only knew the two books he had serialized!<sup>3</sup>

As he says in his letter to van Thal, it was on January 31, 1902 that Waugh joined Chapman & Hall, that is just after the arrangements for *Henry Ryecroft* had been made. He was then a thirty-five-year-old coming man, an Oxford graduate who had been correspondent to the *New York Critic* from 1893 to 1897, combining this work with the sub-editing of the *New Review* in 1894, under Archibald Grove, then with that of literary adviser to Kegan Paul & Co. from 1895 to 1902. His publications, which were extensive and varied, included a study of the life and work of Tennyson as well as an edition in six volumes of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, and he was currently editing the Biographical Edition of Dickens in nineteen volumes. F. A. Mumby, in *Publishing and Bookselling* (1930), adds to this brief record that Waugh had won the "Newdigate" at Oxford and contributed to the *Yellow Book*, alluding to the two sons, Alec and Evelyn, born in 1898 and 1903, whose reputation was to outshine their father's.

Of course Waugh does not tell the whole story of his relationship with Gissing and his work – he did not have to – but the main gaps will be filled by Volumes 8 and 9 of Gissing's correspondence and by the full-length bibliography of Gissing's works that will follow. He could have added in particular that he commissioned Gissing to revise and abridge Forster's *Life of Dickens*, which was published simultaneously by McClure in America and reissued in collaboration with Cassell in England in a special edition of Dickens's works. Also, perhaps because he himself had half-forgotten this ephemeral piece that was to be revived in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, he could have mentioned his glowing review of *The House of Cobwebs* in the *Daily Chronicle* for 26 May 1906. In that piece he managed to pay homage to both Gissing and his main publisher of the 1890s: "Mr. A. H. Bullen, one of Gissing's most discriminating admirers, has always maintained that his genius was seen to peculiar advantage in the short story, and a further study of *Human Odds and Ends*, combined with the recent reading of *The House of Cobwebs*, confirms me in the conviction that Mr. Bullen's judgment is here, as so often elsewhere, infallibly sound."

His last writing on Gissing was apparently his review of *Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative* in the *London Bookman* for April 1929 (pp. 9-10). He noted with pleasure that

-- 21 --

"Gissing's reputation is wearing wonderfully well," that "his name appears more and more frequently in current estimates of the modern novel, while his work is more and more sympathetically acclaimed for its integrity of purpose and for the consistency of its workmanship." He praised Alfred Gissing's editorial work and predicted that "so long as inequalities exist and injustice tortures the deserving, so long will the novels of George Gissing make a permanent claim upon the sympathy of the age."

14A, Hampstead Lane,  
Highgate, N. 6.<sup>4</sup>  
June :ix: 1939

Dear Mr. van Thal:

I am afraid I cannot be of much help to you about Gissing, because the firm's business

with him was mostly anterior to my taking up my duties there on Jan. 31, 1902.

C & H had then just lately published "My Friend the Charlatan,"<sup>5</sup> without much success, and had made an absurd error in turning down the bookrights in "Henry Ryecroft." Pinker<sup>6</sup> offered C & H book & serial rights, with a view to getting Courtney<sup>7</sup> to take it for *The Fortnightly*, & so put some money into Gissing's pocket, over & above the bookrights. Courtney accepted it for *The Fortnightly*, where it appeared under the title "An Author at Grass," but actually declined the book, on the ground that no one would read it. Of course, this suited Pinker finely, and he took the book to Constable, who did very well with it.<sup>8</sup> "O God! O Montreal."<sup>9</sup>

Another book of his arranged for before I came was "By the Ionian Sea,"<sup>10</sup> which for years remained a steady seller. It was first of all published with coloured illustrations, in a sort of royal quarto, & didn't sell much; but in cheap form (? 5/ ?3/6 – I forget now) it went on & on, as it deserved to do – for it is beautiful stuff.

I never met Gissing to talk to for any length of time, but I was present on a memorable occasion in the summer of 1895, when the Omar Khayyám Club dined at the Burford Bridge Hotel.<sup>11</sup> I was the guest of Max Pemberton.<sup>12</sup> It was a notable gathering. Thomas Hardy was there, Edmund Gosse, Edward Clodd, & all sorts & conditions of notabilities. During dinner some enthusiast conceived the idea of going up to Box Hill & inducing George Meredith to come down to dessert. He consented, & when he entered the room, all the company rose & cheered. Meredith was quite overcome. "My friends! My dear friends!" he murmured. Then Thomas Hardy rose, & told how he had sent his first MS. to C & H, & had been asked to call & see "our reader," when he was received with the greatest courtesy & given the most wholesome

-- 22 --

advice. Then George Gissing, very shy & rather awkward, got up & gave a similar reminiscence about himself & Meredith. It was really quite impressive.<sup>13</sup>

I wrote an article on Gissing for *The Fortnightly* after his death, which was reprinted in my "Reticence in Literature" volume (1915),<sup>14</sup> of which, I believe, J. G. Wilson of Bumpus has still copies on sale.<sup>15</sup> But I am afraid it would not be of any use to you.

Nor, I fear, will these desultory notes. But they are the best I can do.

With all good wishes

Sincerely yours

Arthur Waugh

<sup>1</sup>The present owner of it is Mr. Michael Meredith, Head of English and College Librarian at Eton College. Warm thanks are due to him for his kind permission to publish it, as well as to Mr. Michael Meyer, who drew my notice to the existence of this letter, parts of which were published by Herbert van Thal in *The Tops of the Mulberry Trees* (George Allen & Unwin, 1971), a book which contains various passages on Gissing, his son Alfred and William Plomer.

<sup>2</sup>In his autobiography van Thal relates that he would have liked to publish Alfred Gissing's biography of his father, but was not able to do so for material reasons. Very shortly after the war, together with his friends Margaret Douglas-Home and Gwylim Fielden Hughes, he founded the publishing house of Home & van Thal, and reprinted *A Life's Morning*, with an introduction by William Plomer, in 1947. Under that imprint he brought out a series of short critical studies entitled "English Novelists" and commissioned Myfanwy Evans to write a volume on Gissing, but the firm of Home & van Thal collapsed before the book appeared. Later van Thal became general editor of the Doughty Library, published by Anthony Blond. *The Odd Women* was reissued in that series with an introduction by Frank Swinnerton in 1968. Stein & Day published the same title simultaneously in America. There was some correspondence about Gissing and this Doughty Library edition in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

<sup>3</sup>W. L. Courtney, "George Gissing," *English Illustrated Magazine*, September 1903, pp. 188-92. On p. 189 is reproduced one of the Elliott & Fry portraits of Gissing in 1895.

<sup>4</sup>This was Arthur Waugh's address until his death on 26 June 1943.

<sup>5</sup>He means *Our Friend the Charlatan*, first published in blue cloth at 6s. in May 1901. The book was made available in green pictorial cardboard covers probably in 1902. A new and cheaper impression, undated and issued in light green cloth, was published in June 1903 at 2s.6d, and later, like the first edition, reissued in green pictorial cardboard covers at 2s. A sixpenny reprint, now extremely scarce, was published in June 1906.

<sup>6</sup>James Brand Pinker (1863-1922), the well-known literary agent, who took over the management of Gissing's literary affairs in 1898.

-- 23 --

<sup>7</sup>William Leonard Courtney (1850-1928), an Oxford graduate, taught for a short period before he became editor of *Murray's Magazine* in 1891, and three years later editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, published by Chapman & Hall. At the time he was director of Chapman & Hall, he did much book reviewing for the *Daily Telegraph*, in which he commented at length on *Our Friend the Charlatan* (31 May 1901, p. 11), *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (4 February 1903, p. 12), and *Veranilda* (28 September 1904, p. 6). He wrote on philosophical, religious and literary questions. His autobiography, *The Passing Hour* (1925), throws much light on the literary world he lived in.

<sup>8</sup>*Henry Ryecroft* was serialized in the *Fortnightly Review* in four instalments from May 1902 to February 1903. As will be seen in Volume 8 of the *Collected Letters*, the Gissing-Pinker correspondence offers a somewhat different account of the circumstances under which the publication in book form was undertaken by Constable. That Constable did well with the book need not be demonstrated. The number of English editions until 1939 was impressive. In America the sales were also remarkable, but all the editions did not mean royalties for Gissing's son.

<sup>9</sup>From Samuel Butler's *Psalm of Montreal*.

<sup>10</sup>First published in June 1901 at 16s., twice reprinted in March and June 1905 at 5s., and again in February 1917 at 2s6d and in June 1921 at 5s.

<sup>11</sup>This memorable dinner took place on 13 July 1895, and it was widely reported in the press. Gissing was C. K. Shorter's guest, each member being entitled to bring one. Arthur Waugh himself gave an account of the meeting in his "London Letter," *Critic* (New York), 3 August, pp. 76-77. Henry Norman devoted a leader to it in the *Daily Chronicle*, "Daily Chronicle Office," 15 July, p. 7. Among the other articles which have been exhumed from the journals of the period, one can list: Claudius Clear [i.e., William Robertson Nicoll], "George Meredith's Maiden Speech," *British Weekly*, 18 July, p. 201; "Literary Gossip," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 August, p. 4; "News Notes," *Bookman* (London), August, p. 129; W. Robertson Nicoll, "London Letter: George Meredith's Maiden Speech," *Bookman* (New York), August-September, pp. 34-36. *The Book of the Omar Khayyám Club 1892-1910* (London: Printed for the Members for Private Circulation, 1910) contains much valuable information on the Club and on the famous dinner, notably "George Meredith with the Club," pp. 191-93, and "To Omar's Friends at Burford Bridge," a poem read by Andrew Lang at the Dinner. The former piece, unsigned, may have been contributed by George Whale. An eight-line poem written by Edmund Gosse for the occasion can also be found in the volume, on p. 48.

<sup>12</sup>Pemberton (1863-1950), novelist and miscellaneous writer, was on the staff of Cassell & Co. at the time. He was general editor of Cassell's Pocket Library, in which *The Paying Guest* was shortly to appear.

<sup>13</sup>Hardy's first novel was "The Poor Man and the Lady," which he later destroyed. The Gissing novel that Meredith discussed was of course *The Unclassed* (1884).

<sup>14</sup>“George Gissing” was published in the *Fortnightly Review* for February 1904, pp. 244-56, and reprinted in the American journal *Living Age* for 19 March 1904, pp. 714-23. In

-- 24 --

*Reticence in Literature and Other Papers* (London: J. G. Wilson, 1915) Waugh explained in a letter to his elder son, Alec Raban Waugh, how he came to collect this article (pp. 161-82) and the others (pp. vii-viii). Waugh's piece is a warm tribute to the novelist who had died a month earlier.

<sup>15</sup>J. G. Wilson was indeed the managing director of Bumpus's in Oxford Street, and one of the leading English booksellers of his time. Frank Arthur Mumby had this to say of Wilson and Bumpus in *Publishing and Bookselling*: “Before he came to London Mr. Wilson had some twenty years of sound bookselling training in Scotland, where the antiquarian and modern sides are still combined on the traditional lines imported from the Continent in the days when it was easier to cross to the Low Countries than to travel by road to London. His own efforts to improve the status and increase the educational equipment of the young bookseller of to-day are well known throughout the trade. The dream of many a book-lover is realised in Bumpus's extensions down Marylebone Lane, in the Old Watch House, with its memories of Jack Sheppard, Dick Turpin, and other rogues of bygone Tyburnia, as well as its more appropriate associations with the House of Harley – the coat-of-arms of the vanished Earls of Oxford still surmounting one of its eighteenth-century doorways – where Mr. Wilson has created a modern Temple of the Muses which would have filled the founder of the firm with legitimate pride. That worthy was John Bumpus, who set up as a bookseller-publisher in Clerkenwell about 1790. When he moved to Holborn Bars his shop was handy for the Hampstead coach, which started from the neighbouring ‘Blue Posts,’ Mrs. Bumpus's hospitable back parlour becoming a familiar haunt for students and book-lovers before taking their seats. Thomas Bumpus, the next in succession, was on friendly terms with many of the great literary figures of Victorian days, Dickens in particular being indebted to him for a good deal of advice about his copyrights and the like. The Oxford Street business, now known as John and Edward Bumpus Ltd., was started in his lifetime by his son John. With the additions of the Old Watch House and the New Court House, it has now grown into one of the finest book-shops in the world.”

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#### Book Reviews

Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing. Volume Five, 1892-1895*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994. xxxvi + 372 pp.

Covering the period from January 1892 to June 1895, Volume 5 of the *Collected Letters* finds Gissing living outside of London, mostly in Exeter, Brixton and Epsom. His ties with his Wakefield relatives are weakening, but his new family life is squalid and grim. However,

-- 25 --

despite the familiar note of bitter unhappiness and desperation, his attitude towards his professional affairs has become more practical and purposeful. This is evident in his dealings with editors and agents and his decision to raise money by writing short stories. Even so, during this period, he publishes no fewer than five novels: *Denzil Quarrier*, *Born in Exile*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee* and *Eve's Ransom*. He also virtually completes an unpublished

novel, "Gods of Iron."

Whereas earlier Gissing had corresponded constantly with his family of origin, he now seems to be drifting apart from them. His visit to Wakefield in 1895 was, as he notes, the first in five years. He still gives advice to his brother Algernon, whose literary career continues to founder, and takes advice on such technical matters as bottle-feeding a baby. But he fobs off his sister Ellen with the excuse that "Letter-writing is ... so uncongenial to me, that I practise a great deal of dilatoriness whenever the thought of it comes up" – a startling sentence to come across in so voluminous a collection of letters.

One obvious reason for diminished contact was the fact that he was living virtually in exile with a highly unpresentable wife who hated his relatives. Although they very occasionally visited, all attempts at friendly intercourse failed. The editors blame Edith wholly for this, drawing attention to her "characteristic lower-class prejudice," "primitive instincts" and "oppressive commonness." But Edith had been pressured by Gissing into marriage and patently resented her isolation. At this distance in time it might seem more neutral to regard the breakdown in their marriage as predictable, given the hopeless gulf between them both socially and educationally. At any rate, Gissing came to despise her, though his feelings are still toned down in the letters compared with his diary entries. The birth of Walter in 1891 only made the situation worse. He was born with a hideous mole on his forehead ("The poor little chap is deplorably ugly") and was prone to constant attacks of tonsillitis. Though Gissing gradually became a doting father, he seems at first to have regarded his son as less a joy than a burden. Domestically, conditions deteriorated further. "The house is getting inches deep in sheer filth," Gissing reported to Algernon, "& it is long since I drank out of a tea-cup that had been washed." A family holiday to Eastbourne did little to lighten the atmosphere: "We got back yesterday – Edith ailing, the boy with a severe cold, & I with slight bronchitis. A hideous week – fog, drizzle & gales."

The recipient of this lowering verbal snapshot represented the one bright spot in Gissing's life, the feminist sociologist Clara Collet, whom Gissing met after she had lectured on his work.

-- 26 --

Though his earlier letters to her have been lost, it is clear that she was not only an intellectual companion, but a sympathetic confidante and dependable friend. Gissing said he could deal in veracities with her, and except in one or two areas (for example, the sexual morality of Zola) they seem to have shared very similar values – though her character was distinctly different from his, being cheerful, extrovert and practical. She seems to have divined Gissing's marital predicament without explicit explanations, and she acted with extraordinary tact and delicacy in attempting to alleviate his miseries. She offers to bear the costs of Walter's upbringing if Gissing should ever "break down," and this "wonderful piece of kindness," as he calls it, is rapidly followed by generous gestures towards the whole family. She brings a box of bricks for Walter and sends him a copy of *Struwwelpeter*. She despatches a bouquet of flowers at Christmas and lace for Edith on her birthday. Hearing that the family are visiting the south coast, she suggests an appropriate boarding house, and when the boy succumbs to bronchitis, comes down to the coast to help out. No wonder Gissing declares in gratitude, "You have the art of benefaction." But he also finds her kindness embarrassing since he is scarcely able to reciprocate. "I say again, I am ashamed, & please don't," he cries, overwhelmed by her generosity.

Wretched and chaotic as his home life was, Gissing's professional life during this period was marked by growing recognition and a greater sense of practical direction. As he notes with modest satisfaction, "Frequent references in periodicals prove to me that I am becoming pretty well known." This statement is confirmed by the fact that periodicals regularly solicit his opinion. Asked by *Pearson's Weekly* to name his favourite novels, he mentions *Villette*, *The*

*Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *The Return of the Native*. Requested by the *Idler* to select the next Laureate, he explains that it must be Mr. Swinburne (it was, in fact Alfred Austin – chosen, as the editors bleakly remark, “chiefly for his services to Tory journalism”). By the early months of 1895 recognition of Gissing had become unmistakable: his name was frequently included in lists of major authors. At the same time, despite his reclusive existence, he was coming into contact with other writers, among them John Davidson, Mérie Muriel Dowie and Edward Clodd. He even joined the Society of Authors, but this was for purely expedient reasons. He dismissed his dinner at the Authors’ Club as a “dull & stupid evening.”

The main problem, as he mentioned to Bertz, was that his income remained small compared to his reputation. And yet he was taking firm practical measures to maximise his

-- 27 --

earnings. Although he declared “no doubt mine is an extreme case of inaptitude for practical affairs,” it is noticeable that he is now more consistently alert to commercial opportunities. One sign of this is his increased readiness to raise money through writing stories and sketches. A second is his decision to employ a literary agent – William Morris Colles, many of Gissing’s letters to whom are published here for the first time. And a third is the sharper tone he is willing to adopt towards publishers and editors – with good reason since, as this volume reveals, at least one of the publishers (Bentley’s) was blatantly lying to him.

But despite these signs of greater purposefulness, Gissing’s literary conscience remains intact. “I am entered on the commercial path, alas!” he confesses. “But I shall try not to write rubbish.” He explains to Colles that he means to produce books that will be read not only now but “some years hence.” And indeed the seriousness with which he takes his art is evident everywhere in the volume, which contains some of his best-known statements on his own books and the principles of fiction: his letters to Bertz on *Born in Exile* and *The Odd Women*; his artistic apologia to Morley Roberts, arising from an attack on *Jubilee* in the *Spectator* (the author of that anonymous piece is identified); his articles on “Why I don’t write plays” and the place of realism in fiction. One is struck once again by how good Gissing is as a critic and analyst of literature. His occasional comments on his own work are invariably illuminating. To an obtuse enquirer about the ending of *Thyrza* he offers a wonderfully compact explanation of the significance of its final words. And it is interesting to find him warning of the danger of attributing a character’s views to the author. He mentions specifically his objection to being credited with everything spoken by Lionel Tarrant in *In The Year of Jubilee*.

As readers of this series have come to expect, the standards of editing in this volume are exemplary. As well as the usual apparatus (introduction, notes, chronology – all excellent), there is a brief collection of “corrigenda” for Volumes I, II, III and IV. Its brevity is a tribute to the thoroughness with which the editors have performed their task, and one searches the present volume in vain for material that might be included in a similar section in the future. Perhaps the name of Mrs. Hamlyn, who eloped with Roberts, is rather abruptly introduced: it might have been helpful to say something about her, as in the Harvester edition of the *Diary*. And *pace* the introduction to this volume, Gissing’s statement to William Blackwood concerning the education of women (“the *one* interest of our time, the one thing needful”) has been noticed in print before: it is quoted on p. 184 of Halperin’s biography. These, however, are tiny reserva-

-- 28 --

tions. This series continues to do handsome justice both to Gissing and the world he lived in.

David Grylls, University of Oxford.

[Mrs. Hamlyn (c. 1852-1911) is briefly identified in note 6 to the letter to Ellen of 7 October

1890. Further details will be given in a note to the letter to Gabrielle Fleury of 4 November 1898. - Ed.]

*Merope*, no. 10, September 1993, Chieti: Marino Solfanelli Editore.

The tenth number of *Merope*, the periodical published by the Department of Linguistic and Literary Sciences at the “G. D’Annunzio” University of Chieti-Pescara in Italy and edited by Professor Francesco Marroni, is a special issue dedicated to George Gissing. It contains eight critical articles on various aspects of his work and two reviews devoted to recent publications about him.

Two of the contributors look specifically at Gissing and Italy. Jacob Korg, in “George Gissing and Italy,” offers an interesting synthesis of Gissing’s Italian experiences, describing the three visits that the writer made there. He notes Gissing’s use of his stay in Naples for the setting of *The Emancipated* and draws attention to the novelist’s exploitation of his diary records in a variety of his works. As Professor Korg indicates, Gissing’s first-hand knowledge of ancient sites enabled him to describe accurately the places that he wished to re-evolve in *Veranilda*, and his sensitive observation of ordinary Italian people and daily life, both in their positive and negative aspects, is one of the distinguishing features and achievements of *By the Ionian Sea*. Gissing is a traveller who, while having precise objectives, remains susceptible to the influence of new experience, and this emerges vividly in Mario Curreli’s “Grand Tour and Sentimental Journeys: Dickens and Gissing in Italy.” Curreli compares the responses to their first experience of Italy of Dickens (1846) and Gissing (1888). Drawing principally on Dickens’ *Pictures from Italy* and on Gissing’s diary and letters, he finds the contrast a stark one. Dickens emerges in a highly unfavourable light, manifesting a condescending distaste for the little he saw of ordinary Italian life and people and indulging at times in what could be defined as a form of poor picaresque in his comments, that on occasion border on the racially offensive. The difference in approach and interest is perhaps best explained, as Curreli points out, by the fact that Dickens came to Italy with no particular motive and could as easily have finished up in

-- 29 --

Nice, while Gissing came to the country on a sort of personal pilgrimage, the culmination of a lifelong ambition, knowing exactly why he was there and what he wanted to do, and acutely conscious of following in the footsteps of men whom he considered much greater than himself. In contrast to Gissing’s openness and sincerity towards Italy both past and present, Dickens appears sadly shallow and uninspired.

In “The Sense of the Past in Gissing’s Work,” Francesco Badolato examines Gissing’s attitude to the past, describing in some detail Gissing’s lifelong devotion to the study of history and classical literature and notes, with numerous examples, how Gissing’s work is permeated with references to and allusions which evoke the past as a point of reference and reflection. Badolato makes the important point that Gissing’s attitude to the past and its values should not be regarded simply as the expression of a desire for utopian relief from the horrors of modern civilisation, but that it was more complex and mature. Gissing was sufficiently imaginative to realise that the history of mankind in all periods is little else than an unending chronicle of appalling violence and cruelty and that if anything changes, it is merely with regard to the means of inflicting such. Gissing’s interest in and passion for the past, as Badolato acutely observes, is mediated through the great thinkers and artists and the implication is that what is of value in any period of human history is that which remains to us in the way of literature and thought. It is in this perspective that we can understand more fully the implications of Gissing’s contrast between Reardon and Milvain and how Julian Casti’s love of the idea of Rome finds

expression in his attempt to write.

Those of us who admire and sympathise with Gissing and his work and who wince at the recollection of Henry James' comment on Gissing's casting of form and distribution to the winds, will find much consolation in Pierre Coustillas' article "New Grub Street between Past and Future." There has long been a need in Gissing studies for a reorientation of approaches which can too often end up being the search for the exponential character simplistically linked to what we know of the facts of Gissing's life at the service of a criticism which seeks to define Gissing rather than the work, or at worst the work as expression of the neuroses and sufferings of its author. Coustillas aims here, as he says, "at widening the scope of autobiography within the context of the novelist's work," thus implying that, if an approach to the autobiographical content of the work is to be adopted, it should be done from as informed a standpoint as possible

-- 30 --

and in a manner sufficiently flexible to give scope to the elucidation of its more subtle and often highly complex manifestations. Coustillas proceeds to comment on *New Grub Street* from just such an informed standpoint in order to illustrate the type of approach that he means. The result is a lesson in just how illuminating such an approach can be, revealing *New Grub Street* as a novel which, precisely because of the novelist's ability to weave into its fabric a host of autobiographical elements, as Coustillas notes, "cleverly disguised," is highly sophisticated as regards form and ever worthy of our deeper attention.

Maria Teresa Chialant, in "*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft: The Spaces of the Story*," offers thought-provoking comment on a work which has overcome the limitations of a criticism which confined it to the status of thinly-disguised autobiography. Thanks to the contributions of writers such as Lowell T. Frye and Andrew Hassam, who have sought to draw less narrowly defined meanings from what Gissing himself described as a "strange miscellany," it is now possible to read Ryecroft not simply as the expression of a Gissing alter ego, but in a manner that illuminates the ethos that governs his work. Chialant seeks to do this by looking at Ryecroft in terms, as she says, of the spaces in the text both physical and linguistic, in order to individuate a link between Gissing's choice here of a first person narrator, which we elsewhere find only in *By the Ionian Sea* (a work which is not presented as fictional by Gissing) and the informing motif of exile in his work in general. Employing terms of reference derived from Gerard Genette and Gaston Bachelard, among others, Chialant seeks to demonstrate how the book celebrates in its narrative structure and in its depiction of Ryecroft's country retreat, a safe port from the deleterious influences and pressures of modern life, from which to launch voyages of the imagination.

In "Gissing, Darwin and the Forming of Innocence in *Thyrza*," Professor Francesco Marroni argues that the novel depicts a world in which society reflects a condition of Darwinian determinism and in which the transgressive actions and aspirations of Thyrza can lead only to tragedy, thus confirming the immutability of social mores and the entrapment of the individual in given roles definable according to sex, class, education and, importantly, topographic location. Marroni sees Thyrza as representative of a type of Victorian female victim whose tragedy has three principal phases, Innocence, Transgression and Expiation (in this case, death). Thyrza, in the aforementioned Darwinian terms, calls her own destruction upon herself, confirming the thesis that she is destined to extinction because of qualities that differentiate her from other

-- 31 --

characters more adapted to and representative of their environment. This analysis of Thyrza's sin of romantic love is worth more attention than space permits here and could be usefully read in tandem with Constance Harsh's "George Gissing's *Thyrza*: Romantic Love and Ideological

Co-Conspiracy” (*Gissing Journal*, January 1994), since both articles examine perceptively Gissing’s use of this female protagonist, his “beautiful dream,” as an idealistic creation whose conflict with the world permits him to express his highly articulate critique of society, idealistic aspiration and romantic love.

Bouwe Postmus’ intriguing article, “*Quo Vadis? Henryk Sienkiewicz and George Gissing in America*,” looks at similarities between Gissing’s American experience and that of the Polish Nobel Prize winner, who, for albeit different reasons from those of Gissing, went to America in 1876 some six months before Gissing himself set out. Postmus offers a comparative analysis of Gissing’s largely fictional accounts of America and Sienkiewicz’ feuilletons, concentrating principally on two highlights, the ocean crossing and experiences of Niagara. Particularly interesting here are the extracts reproduced from Sienkiewicz’ description of the falls which bears a striking similarity to Gissing’s in *Workers in the Dawn*, in terms of the metaphor of “the fierce whirlpool” (“awful vortex of foaming waters” in Sienkiewicz) and of the feelings of “horror and fascination” that both express at the sight of the falls.

Emanuela Ettore, in “‘The Salt of the Earth’ and the Itinerary of Self-denial,” contributes towards redressing the balance as far as critical inattention regarding Gissing’s short stories is concerned. She offers a fascinating and detailed reading of a story which on the surface could merely stimulate us to a wry appreciation of the irony inherent in Gissing’s description of Thomas Bird as being of “the salt of the earth.” This analysis, to which I cannot do justice here for reasons of space, demonstrates importantly that Gissing’s short stories are no less representative of his vision than the novels. As Ettore states, “What in effect emerges is a strong semiotic and structural continuity between the novels and the stories which sees these latter coinciding neither with the first phase of narrative production nor with the final phase of his literary career, but with the evolutionary process of his ‘profession’ as a writer.” (My translation.)

The issue of *Merope* also contains reviews by Francesco Marroni of *The Day of Silence and Other Stories*, ed. P. Coustillas (1993), and by Francesco Badolado of Volume Four of the *Collected Letters* (1993).

Michael Cronin, University of Catania.

-- 32 --

Gwyn Neale, *All the Days Were Glorious: George Gissing in North Wales*. Llanrwst, Gwynedd, Wales: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1994. 56 pp. ISBN 0-86381-286-4.

This is a booklet which is sure to find readers in a part of the population of the British Isles to whom Gissing’s name means little or nothing – that is, tourists who happen to be visiting Wales, fortunate creatures! – as well as among admirers of his work who are anxious to read anything that is published about his life and his books. The author, Gwyn Neale, is a newcomer to Gissing studies, who has now earned for himself the gratitude of all people anxious to sustain and promote the novelist’s reputation. Readers who discover Gissing through this booklet will be prompted to read his novels and to look for a fuller account of his life. The 56 pages will provide two hours of cultural entertainment, and the front cover will always be a joy to look upon. The publishers, too, should be congratulated. They have chosen an attractive title, borrowed from Gissing’s letter to his mother of 19 April 1873, and the pen and ink drawing of Porth Nefyn and Portinllaen, with Y Gwylwyr on the right, combines harmoniously with Gissing’s best portrait, the one by Russell & Sons that shows him looking left in mid-January 1895, at the time his eminence was at long last being acknowledged by publishers and editors alike.

Gwyn Neale has skilfully put in perspective all that is known about Gissing and Wales, concentrating, as may be imagined, first on the childhood trip so lavishly described in letters of

April 1873 to his mother and to Arthur Bowes, then on the memorable visit he made to North Wales twenty-three years later, when he called on James Wood at Colwyn Bay and went as far as Nefyn, and lastly on *The Whirlpool*, which may well be regarded as Gissing's homage to a country he respected and admired. Mr. Neale's familiarity with the sites visited and described in the letters and the novel – after being educated at King Edward VI School, Nuneaton, and Nottingham University, he taught English for many years in Llanrwst – has proved a valuable asset. The narrative is partly concerned with topographical reality in a way that could only be contemplated by a Welshman – a visitor, however thorough and enthusiastic, would have been sure to overlook something essential. The historical enquiry into the events mentioned by Gissing in his letters of 1873 is equally remarkable, and pleasantly reflected in the notes. Thus “the fearful railway accident at Abergele” which Gissing doubtless remembered having been discussed by his parents in the summer of 1868, has been nicely identified and set in context by

-- 33 --

an account printed in *The Times*. The “swell wedding” which young Gissing saw going on at Hawarden has similarly been identified as that of a gentleman from Liverpool with the daughter of a local worthy. *The Chester Chronicle* for 19 April 1873 confirms that the whole place was richly decorated on the occasion. Gissing was probably unaware that the ceremony was performed by Stephen Gladstone, the second son of the then Prime Minister, who was much looked up to by his father, Thomas Waller Gissing. The Cross Foxes, mentioned in his letter to Bowes as the inn where he stayed at Caerwys, comes to life again with an account of the innkeeper, his wife Margaret and their staff who could only speak Welsh. Mr. Neale, who has left no stone unturned, it would seem, has even succeeded in finding an old photograph of the Nefyn post-office with the postmaster, William Jones, standing on his doorstep, and identified the house in which Gissing imagined Harvey and Alma Rolfe living before they were caught again in the whirlpool of London life.

The pen and ink illustrations by Anne Lloyd Morris, two of which appear in blue and white on the covers as well as in the text, add to the attractiveness of the book. Most readers will see for the first time a portrait of James Wood, Headmaster of Lindow Grove and Dinglewood, and a photograph of his school at Colwyn Bay. The photo of Well Street, Nefyn, with the Nanhoron Arms, where Gissing stayed in 1896, is another pictorial document that was well worth reproducing.

Altogether, because it is so readable and informative, and so reasonably priced, this volume should reach the shelves of all readers of Gissing as well as of institutional libraries. It should be placed alongside similar studies on Gissing in Exeter by W. J. West and on Gissing in Wakefield by Clifford Brook.

Pierre Coustillas.

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#### Notes and News

The catalogue of the Gissing Exhibition organized by the Lilly Library at Indiana University is one of those publications of great bibliographical interest which Gissing collectors of the twenty-first century will try hard, and possibly fail, to procure, as copies of such material are invariably scarce on the secondhand market. Present-day scholars and admirers had better order a copy before the catalogue is out of print. Besides the detailed description of 86 groups of

-- 34 --

items, the catalogue contains excellent illustrations. The portrait of Gissing reproduced as frontispiece is one of the 1895 Elliott & Fry portraits which used to be a favourite with review editors in the early years of the century, but it is rarely seen nowadays. The other illustrations are: a copy of the first edition of *Workers in the Dawn*, a group of first editions which includes all the three-deckers and a selection of the other titles, sheets of the manuscripts of *Isabel Clarendon* and *By the Ionian Sea* with copies of the first editions, the title page of an advance copy of *Henry Ryecroft* (Constable, 1902), pages of the manuscript of "An Author at Grass" (the first version), a page from the scrapbook with six columns of surnames, a number of them crossed out, pages of the manuscript of and preparatory notes for *Veranilda*, and the title page of an advance copy of *Veranilda* (Constable, 1904). On the cover is the familiar drawing by William Rothenstein. The text is edited from the more extensive catalogue published by Bernard Quaritch Ltd in 1992. Some of the illustrations in the Quaritch catalogue have been used again (the colours in the Lilly catalogue are much closer to those of the actual books), but there are new ones.

*The Poetry of George Gissing*, edited by B. P. Postmus, which was announced by the Edwin Mellen Press last February in the *Times Literary Supplement*, is not yet available. A leaflet, recently received by Dr. Postmus, indicates that individuals can save 20 % on the list price (\$89.95/£49.95) by using their Mastercard or Visa number and ordering by phone: (716) 754-2788 (US/Canada) or (0570) 423-356 (United Kingdom). Orders may be addressed to the Press in the United States (P.O. Box 450, Lewiston, N.Y. 14092-0450), in Canada (P.O. Box 67, Queenston, Ontario L0S 1L0) or in the United Kingdom (Mellen House, Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales SA48 7DY). The volume consists of Gissing's collected poems, over fifty titles ranging from the childhood verse to the 1890s. The introduction and the notes, biographical and bibliographical, are the work of an expert.

*The Yellow Book: A Centenary Exhibition*, by Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner (Cambridge, Mass.: The Houghton Library) is a good deal more than a checklist of the 96 items that were displayed at Harvard from 1 March to 8 April 1994. The checklist alone, with its autograph MSS, notebooks, unpublished letters, presentation copies of scarce books, pen and ink drawings, watercolours and old photographs, is long enough to keep the scholar or collector busy for a long while, but the main portion of the catalogue will repay even closer study, as it is

-- 35 --

a detailed history of the *Yellow Book*, that remarkable periodical that has come to be viewed as a major symbol of the 1890s. Margaret Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner are specialists in this field, and their thoroughly researched, well-written and carefully printed essay, forty pages long, will disappoint no one. It nicely complements Katherine Lyon Mix's *A Study in Yellow: The Yellow Book and its Contributors* (1960), an important though not invariably reliable volume. What the two authors are concerned with is essentially the history of the *Yellow Book* as lived on and observed from the premises of the Bodley Head, Vigo Street. Its contributors are saluted in passing, and Gissing gets his share of the praise: "One of the biggest 'lions' to grace the *Yellow Book* was George Gissing, who returned to the concerns of his novel *The Odd Women* (1893) for a short story about downward social mobility, seen though the plight of a middle-class woman who proves unable to marry and cannot support herself except through menial work. The *Yellow Book* gave Gissing's 'The Foolish Virgin' the opening spot in the contents of Vol. VIII." The Gissing items on show – the ALS to Ella Hepworth Dixon of 4 February 1895 and Rothenstein's lithograph of Gissing, both from the Lasner Collection – are aptly introduced here. (Gissing's letters to John Lane about the story will soon be published in Volume 6 of the *Collected Letters*.) Among the illustrations are a portrait of Henry Harland by Aubrey Beardsley, a

photograph of Ella D'Arcy, a dummy copy of the cover of Volume V of the *Yellow Book* and a facsimile of a letter from Harland to F. Holland Day, of Copeland & Day.

*The Odd Women*, now available in the Penguin Classics, will replace the New American Library edition in America. It will have to compete with both the Norton and the Virago editions.

The publication of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing* goes on steadily. Volume 6 has been announced by Ohio University Press for next December in its Fall Catalogue. Volume 7 is to go to the printers in a month or two.

The new revised edition of Professor Robert L. Selig's *George Gissing* in the Twayne series on English authors has now reached the production stage. It will be published next year.

Dr. Bonnie Zare, the author of the article on *The Odd Women* we publish in this number, is

-- 36 --

a former student of Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, where she was awarded a PhD in English earlier this year. Her dissertation, entitled "Toward the Survival of Romance: Feminist Readers and Romantic Heroines," is a study of *Jane Eyre*, *Adam Bede*, *The Odd Women*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Daisy Miller* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

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#### Recent Publications

##### Volume

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, London, New York, Ringwood (Australia), Toronto and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1993 [actually 1994]. Pictorial paperback. xxvi + 388 + 2 pp. of advertisements. ISBN 0-14-043379-1.

##### Articles, reviews, etc.

Timothy Hands, *A Hardy Chronology*, London: Macmillan, 1992. Gissing appears on four occasions, all well-known to biographers.

Eva Figs, "On the Shelf: Eva Figs considers the modern parallels of George Gissing's *New Grub Street*," *Sunday Times* (Books Section), 17 July 1994, p. 9.

Anon., "Books Received," *Victorian Newsletter*, No. 86, Fall 1994, p. 34. Notice of Volume 4 of the *Collected Letters*.

Arthur Freeman, *George Gissing (1857-1903): An Exhibition of Books, Manuscripts and Letters from the Pforzheimer Collection in the Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana: The Lilly Library, Indiana University, 1994*. A fifty-four-page catalogue with excellent illustrations. ISBN 1-879598-14-0.

Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner, *The Yellow Book: A Centenary Exhibition*,

Cambridge: The Houghton Library, 1994. A sixty-four page catalogue, with eleven black and white illustrations. ISBN 0-914630- 13-X.

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### Subscriptions

*The Gissing Journal* is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October. Subscriptions are normally on a two-year basis and begin with the January number.

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### Information for Contributors

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

This journal is indexed in the *MLA Annual Bibliography*, in the Summer number of *Victorian Studies* and *The Year's Work in English Studies*.

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