

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

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“The Coming Man” and “La Cité Moderne”

JANICE DELEDALLE-RHODES
University of Perpignan

A number of years ago I first read *Our Friend the Charlatan* in a reprint edition, and the idea occurred to me that it would be interesting to confront Gissing’s text with that of Izoulet’s *La Cité Moderne*.¹ When I finally obtained a copy of Pierre Coustillas’ edition (1976), I noted that he remarked that “the use Gissing made of *La Cité Moderne*” had not yet been studied (p. xiv). Thus encouraged, and as I learnt that this was still the case, I undertook this not inconsiderable task, but I have not been able to ascertain through what channels Gissing first heard of the book; furthermore, it is possible, and even probable, that there was some correspondence between Gissing and Izoulet, but this has not been traced. These two points alone may have their importance for the study of Gissing’s ideas and their evolution. It is to be hoped that at some future date this information may be forthcoming.

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I have referred in my title to “The Coming Man” because this was Gissing’s first choice

for the book which, as Coustillas points out, was finally called *Our Friend the Charlatan* only when “after many hesitations a title was hit upon which pleased both English and American publishers” (*ibid.*, p. xiii, my italics). The author himself, indeed, was so set upon his original choice, which he had already mentioned in a letter to Pinker of 2 October 1899,² that he again wrote to the latter on 12 August 1900, a few days before he finished the novel:

I have been feeling anxious about the title, which seems to me a good one. I think it has not already been used, but at any moment it might be. Would it be possible to paragraph the fact of my novel being in existence, & thus to establish claim to the title?³

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In effect, the expression “the coming man” is used on nine occasions in the novel (pp. 22 twice, 72, 85, 130, 165, 172, 181, 326), and “the coming woman” on two occasions (pp. 109, 326), whereas the word “charlatan” appears only three times (pp. 165 twice, 405).

The expression is a cliché. What could be the reasons for Gissing’s evident (and justified in the present writer’s view) preference for the use of it?

In the first place, given the dénouement of the story, Gissing’s intention was ironical. Thus the title is an integral part of the text which reinforces its character as a satire, whereas the final choice of the publishers would seem to present the book as a kind of burlesque, which it definitely is not, even if a certain grim humour sometimes emerges from its pages.

Secondly, the expression, although (or perhaps because) it is a cliché, is evocative. This will appear more clearly if one considers, for instance, the term which Gabrielle Fleury mentions in her letter to Mrs. H. G. Wells after a conversation with Izoulet himself in which the latter asked her if there was something in his *Cité Moderne* likely to be “useful for what we call an ‘arriviste’ such as Lashmar.”⁴ It is true that the translation of “the coming man” presents some difficulties. But at the time of this conversation the title had already been changed, and it would have been more obvious to refer in French to a “*charlatan*.” If Lashmar was referred to as an ‘arriviste’ it is clear that he was conceived as such by the speakers concerned, and this perhaps for the reason that linguistically the term comes nearer to Gissing’s original intention.

However, this is still not satisfactory on all counts. The use of “arriviste,” like that of “charlatan,” implies a criticism and a condemnation of the main character himself. “The Coming Man” is a quotation, a cliché used by the people who surround Lashmar and those of his ilk, and wish to participate in his possible future glory. The book is not only a character study but a social satire aimed at a whole class, a class characterised at once by its pretentiousness, its insincerity and its intellectual and social snobbery, a class which Gissing could not abide. It is not only the brilliant but shallow individual that Gissing is criticising, but the foolish judgment of society concerning that individual. It is for these two reasons that Gissing’s original title would have been more representative of the book’s content and intention. One simply cannot agree with a critic who esteemed that this novel was “uncertain of its objectives.”⁵

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The first mention of Izoulet’s work occurs on pp. 22-23 of *Our Friend the Charlatan*. Dyce Lashmar shows his father “a philosophical work by a French writer, bearing a recent date,”⁶ which he has been reading, and of which he summarises the main principles for his father’s benefit:

He calls his system Bio-sociology; a theory founded on the facts of biology – thoroughly scientific and convincing. Smashing socialism in the common sense – that is, social democracy; but establishing a true socialism in harmony with the aristocratic principle.

After this somewhat simplified general appreciation of the book, Lashmar goes on to explain “the central idea,” which is the principle of association:

No true sociology could be established before the facts of biology were known, as the one results from the other. In both, the ruling principle is that of association, with the evolution of a directing power. An animal is an association of cells. Every association implies division of labour. Now, progress in organic development means the slow constitution of an organ – the brain – which shall direct the body. So in society – an association of individuals, with slow constitution of a directing organ, called the Government. The problem of civilization is to establish government on scientific principles – to pick out the fit for rule – to distinguish between the Multitude and the Select, and at the same time to balance their working. It is nonsense to talk about Equality. Evolution is engaged in *cephalizing* the political aggregate as it did the aggregate of cells in the animal organism. It makes for the differentiation of the Chosen and of the Crowd – that is to say towards Inequality.

Lashmar’s personal appreciation of the book then follows:

The ideas are well marked out; first the bio-sociological theory, then the psychology and ethics which result from it

with the conclusion:

The book has given me a stronger impulse than anything I’ve read for years. It carries conviction with it. It clears one’s mind of all sorts of doubts and hesitations. I always kicked at the democratic idea; now I know that I was right.

How far does this brief assessment tally with the text of *La Cité Moderne*?

In the first place it can be affirmed that one finds most of the elements of this discourse (albeit somewhat in disorder) in Izoulet’s Preface (CM, v-ix) and in Book I (1-124), in which he sketches the broad outlines of his “biosocial hypothesis.” However there are some fundamental omissions. The complete title of the book is: *La Cité Moderne et la métaphysique de la*

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sociologie, and Gissing has called it “a philosophical work,” but Lashmar does not mention its underlying philosophical presuppositions, although Izoulet makes it quite clear in Chapter 1, Book I, “L’Association en général (simples et composés),” that his basic principles are philosophical and logical in origin (it must not be forgotten that the post created for Izoulet at the Collège de France was “une chaire de philosophie sociale”). In fact most of the first chapter of the book is devoted to the refutation of the monadology of Leibniz: “‘Rien n’est un, tout est plusieurs,’ disait Goethe, cité par MM. Félix Ravaisson et Henri Milne-Edwards. Rien de ce que

nos sens aperçoivent n'est simple: tout est composé" (CM, I). Thus begins the first chapter of *La Cité Moderne* and Izoulet proceeds to point out "Tout corps est composé de corpuscules, tout animal d'animalcules et toute masse (*moles*) de molécules," and that these elements are themselves composed, concluding that "L'in-dividu, l'in-sécable, l'a-tome, ce n'est donc là en somme qu'une pure hypothèse, une pure fiction" (CM, 1-2).

Thus Izoulet adopts at the outset Leibniz' hypothesis that if there are compound substances there must be simple ones. But examining further this hypothesis Izoulet stresses the fact that if each monad possesses specific qualities, they remain isolated and exert no influence on each other. Each monad is no more than a simple force, a latent energy. Thus for Leibniz, "the idea of 'composition' is intrinsically sterile." There may be "parallelism," a synchronic development but "never action properly speaking, never effectiveness" (CM, 4).

At this stage, although having adopted Leibniz' first hypothesis, Izoulet parts company with him in what concerns its implications. He agrees that the individual is the "end" but not that it is the "means," for an individual element cannot act by itself, but only in association. Izoulet's refutation of Leibniz can easily be expressed in the terminology of pragmatist philosophy, which indeed he sometimes uses. Thus "the 'simple' includes all 'virtuality'" (CM, 6), in other words all "possibles" (CM, 7). But if monads are sterile by themselves, "un pur 'néant,'" as he says (CM, 6), association is creative. It calls to being *systems*, in other words a network of relations. The "*polis*," for instance, is a system of individuals. It is in this sense that one must understand Lashmar's reference to "the political aggregate" (23), an expression borrowed from Izoulet ("l'agrégat politique") denoting a mere "juxtaposition" of individuals as opposed to an "organism" ("Des idées d'individu, d'agrégat, d'organisme," CM, 34-37).

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The principle of association is thus, at the outset, justified on philosophical grounds by Izoulet, but Lashmar does not refer to this, retaining only the biological parallel, which is obviously much easier to grasp. Izoulet will then proceed to illustrate this principle with reference to the scientific disciplines: in chemistry (CM, 10-12), in biology (CM, 13-54), in the sociology of the animal species (CM, 55-70), and finally in the sociology of the human species (CM, 71-83), in which Plato is generously quoted (CM, 73-75) as explaining the economic necessity of the division of labour, referred to by Lashmar (23) and, as Izoulet remarks, a notion present throughout history, but only fully developed by Adam Smith (CM, 36-38, 73). The First Book of *La Cité Moderne* closes on a brief summary of the "bio-social hypothesis" (CM, 84-124), which recognises that the *analogy* of society with an organism is not new, but that "tant que la biologie n'était pas fondée, l'hypothèse de la cité-organisme restait forcément précaire" (CM, 106), which recalls Lashmar's observation: "No true sociology could be established before the facts of biology were known" (22-23). Let it be noted in passing that Izoulet does not actually say this and that Lashmar's remark is, once more, something of a simplification. Izoulet says that the theory had long been an *analogy*, a hypothesis, which biology now appears to confirm. I say "appears," because on one hand, Izoulet, like the pragmatists, maintains that the world is not fixed but is in a state of "becoming": "Mental evolution is not closed. Creation has not taken place; it is taking place" (CM, 105); and on the other hand he criticises other bio-social theories, notably that of Spencer, for their strict "parallelism" (CM, 105-111), pointing out that in view of new developments in biology "things [...] appear to be far more complex" (CM, 110).

He finally comes to the question of the "Multitude and the Select," to borrow Lashmar's terms. Having already traced the history of the animal world from the lowest forms of cellular life, to the higher animals and finally to Man, and shown that animals have evolved by the degree of specialisation of the cells which has fitted them to carry out certain tasks, he concludes that as some animals are superior to others, so some men are superior to others; there

is in effect a “hierarchy,” a point eagerly seized upon by Lashmar. But this notion of hierarchy, Izoulet goes on, is “tempered” by five other principles:

1. Consubstantiality
2. Solidarity
3. Education

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4. Progress
5. Selection (CM, 115-16)

The differences between the “Elite” and the “Foule,” he then points out, are not innate: “Elite” and “Foule” are inseparable, there is “a rigorous interdependence” between them, they are “consubstantial.” But this situation is not stationary. All men are intelligent and can be influenced by ideas:

“Entre l’élite et la foule, il n’y a pas rupture abrupte, solution de continuité, mais au contraire plan incliné, transitions insensibles, dégradation lente et indéfinie” (CM, 120).

“Sa richesse mentale [celle de l’homme] va toujours croissant. Cette capitalisation n’a pas de limite assignable.”

“L’animal tourne dans un *cercle*. L’homme gravit la *spirale* infinie.”

“Or [...] l’élite exerçant sur la foule cette action profonde et constante qu’on appelle largement l’éducation, il suit que si l’élite toujours progresse, elle entraîne nécessairement la foule dans ce progrès éternel” (CM, 121).

Moreover, the so-called hierarchy is not a closed out but an open one: degraded individuals may fall back into the crowd, and from among the crowd gifted individuals may rise to the ranks of the élite. However, the principle of selection works in such a way that there is always a differentiation between the élite and the crowd: it is in this sense, says Izoulet, that it works towards inequality (CM, 121-123).

As we have seen, the elements of Lashmar’s first exposition of Izoulet’s ideas may effectively be recognised in the text of *La Cité Moderne*. Some of the expressions he uses are literal or almost literal translations from the French, for instance “cephalizing the political aggregate” (“la céphalisation de l’animal politique”), “to distinguish between the Multitude and the Elite, and at the same time to balance their working” (“équilibrer justement l’Elite et la Foule dans la cité”). However, these ideas are sometimes distorted by being quoted out of context, and by the addition of Lashmar’s personal comments. For example Izoulet does not say that “the problem of civilization is to *establish* government on scientific principles – to *pick out* the fit for rule” (23, my italics); on the contrary, for Izoulet, selection is a natural process: in the past, he says, it is mostly the crowd which has been evicted by the élite; perhaps in the future it will be the crowd which evicts the élite. All these reactions are excessive, according to him (CM, viii), and can be corrected by education. Again, Izoulet does not mention “the Chosen,” a term

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having a distinctly religious and deterministic connotation which hardly corresponds to Izoulet’s conception of society as a living, evolving organism, characterised by what we would now call

“class mobility” in the broadest sense of the phrase.

To sum up, Lashmar’s comments are the result of an enthusiastic but somewhat hasty and superficial reading of the first part of the book. And this is precisely what might be expected, given the young man’s ambitions and his opinion of himself, and the fact that he has been reading the work only for “a few days” (22). He jumps to the conclusion that his anti-democratic ideas are “right” (23). In other words Lashmar finds in the book a confirmation of his own position, and this leads him to read it in a particular perspective. His reading will thus always be coloured by his personal prejudices. It must not be assumed that this is Gissing’s reading of the book; Lashmar’s creator read far more carefully and with greater perspicuity. But he stressed precisely the points which would appeal to this type of character, thus preserving literary verisimilitude and at the same time underlining certain potential dangers of Izoulet’s hypothesis, a subject to which I shall return later.

The next references to the bio-social hypothesis occur in a letter to Constance Bride and a conversation with Lord Dymchurch (41-46). The substance of the letter is destined to be conveyed in fact to Lady Ogram, a rich and aged widow who has “views” about social questions (17). Thinking that his own “attitude” might be “likely to recommend itself to Lady Ogram” (42), he presents Izoulet’s ideas in more expanded form to her secretary. He insists on one or two main points likely to find favour with the old lady: first, that if he is a “Socialist,” it is because he believes in the principle of association, but this does not mean that he is a “Social Democrat,” for he looks upon democracy “as an absurdity condemned by all the teachings of modern science” (41). This is an extrapolation: Izoulet does not say this. Referring to the division of labour Lashmar remarks that “there must be someone capable of directing it,” and that this can be achieved only by “a reform in education”: “The first duty of the State is to make citizens, and that can only be done by making children understand from the beginning what is meant by citizenship.” It is only when people understand the principle of “solidarity,” which implies reciprocal obligations, that “we shall see a true State and a really progressive civilization” (42).

Izoulet’s book “now lay on the table before him,” and he is on the point of alluding to it in his letter, but hesitates. He is rather embarrassed at once by the reflection that he has committed

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himself to a definite theory which might not, after all, coincide with Lady Ogram’s ideas, and also that “the views he had been summarizing were all taken straight from a book which he had just read” (43). Indeed this is more or less the case and here again the views mentioned are to be found in Izoulet’s Preface and Book I, and also further on in Book II, Chapter VII: “Genèse du sens social,” albeit with the afore-mentioned restrictions. Lashmar is once again expounding Izoulet in the light of his own vague Parliamentary aspirations: “Indeed, he was beginning to forget that he was not himself the originator of the bio-sociological theory of civilization” (43). This situation is doubly ironical: first, Lashmar has never thought of “simply earning his living by conscientious and useful work, satisfied with whatever distinction might come to him in the natural order of things” (40). On the contrary, “his unlaborious preeminence in a toiling world” and his “natural superiority to mankind at large” (40) were unquestioned in his mind. Now Izoulet stresses everywhere exactly the opposite: that superiority is not innate, but is attained at once by one’s own efforts and in collaboration with one’s fellow-citizens. Secondly, and on another level, Gissing appears to refer to one of Izoulet’s theories which obviously applies to his hero:

[...] quand les intellectuels mettent en *circulation* une idée, cette idée chemine à travers la cité, et traverse toutes les intelligences, en s’y déformant plus ou moins [...] Le trait de lumière *se fausse* dans l’eau. Le

trait de génie *se fausse* dans la foule. Mais l'eau pourtant a reçu la lumière, et la foule a reçu le génie. [...] *Le faux*, c'est du vrai, au fond, mais du vrai déformé ou dénaturé. L'erreur contient une âme de vérité (CM, 119-20).

This describes admirably both Lashmar's self-appropriation of ideas and his superficial interpretation of them, and one may wonder if Gissing is not having a little private joke here at the expense of his hero. The latter's next discussion of the subject is with Lord Dymchurch, at his club. Dymchurch, who is reading Spencer's *The Man versus the State*,⁷ is by his own confession an individualist, and all the less inclined towards great social schemes as one of his forbears had "practically completed the ruin of his house by an attempt to form a Utopia in Canada" (47), and the idea of the opposition of the individual and the State consequently appeals to him. The response of Lashmar: "I think it a mistake from beginning to end" (43), and "The title itself I take to be meaningless" (44) corresponds to the appreciation expressed by Izoulet: "Le pamphlet de Spencer, *L'Individu contre l'Etat*, est un contre sens, dont j'enrage depuis dix ans" (CM, 557). One cannot guess if Lashmar has read it, but the mention of its

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author gives him the opportunity of expounding briefly but glibly the views expressed by Izoulet on Spencer's part in the popularisation of the analogy of society with an organism. (It may be noted in passing that Izoulet had apparently not read Spencer either, as he quotes him only through Ribot's *Psychologie anglaise contemporaine*, 1870.) When Lashmar asks "How can there possibly be antagonism between the individual and the aggregate in which he is involved? What rights or interests can a man possibly have which are apart from the rights and interests of the body politic without which he could not exist?" (44), he is actually quoting Spencer as summarized by Ribot and quoted by Izoulet (CM, 107-10), of which a typical passage reads as follows: "A l'origine la *dépendance* mutuelle des parties existe à peine, mais elle devient finalement si grande que l'activité et la vie de chaque partie ne sont possibles que par l'activité et la vie des autres" (CM, 107). But in actual fact, Spencer sees important differences between the organism and the State which form the basis of Dymchurch's "objection":

"The organic body is a thing finished and perfect. Granted that evolution goes on in the same way to form the body politic, the process, evidently, is far from complete [...] Won't the result depend on the nature and tendency of each being that goes to make up the whole? (45)

to which Spencer replies in the affirmative, because

l'organisme social ne forme pas une masse continue, comme le fait le corps vivant. [...] dans le corps animal il n'y a qu'un *tissu doué de sentiment* (tissu nerveux), et que, dans la société, tous les membres en sont doués (Spencer, quoted by Ribot, CM, 108).

Spencer's position can more clearly be summarized as follows:

There is, however, one great and significant distinction between society and the organism; while in the latter consciousness (where it exists) is united with the central organ, in comparison with which the other organs and units are only of subordinate significance; in a society, on the contrary, the units possess consciousness, while the central organisation as such has no special

consciousness. In the organism the parts exist for the sake of the whole, while in society the society exists for the sake of the parts. Spencer thinks that this difference between a society and an organism is no less important than the similarities they present (cf. *Principles of Sociology*, §322 and *Principles of Ethics*, ii, §§102, 117) (Höffding, 1955, II, pp. 478-79).⁸

However, Izoulet denies the importance of these differences, which he minimises and

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declares to be only confirmations of his own position (CM, 108-09). The individual, Izoulet will assert later, is essentially social, quoting Aristotle: "Man is a political animal" (CM, 194), and developing the idea that, in Lashmar's words, "but for the existing degree of human association, he [the thorough individualist] simply wouldn't be here at all" (46). The philosopher would be no more than a "naked anthropoid" (another of Izoulet's favourite terms). Izoulet will later enlarge on this idea in Book II, Chapter XIII, "Socialisation de l'idée du moi" (CM, 345-55), in which he rejects what he calls a "nominalistic" notion of the State in favour of a "realistic" conception in which all these apparently separate individuals are, in reality, bound together, implicated in one another's existence, and interdependent, in other words the position defended by Lashmar in answer to Dymchurch's objection. What strikes the reader here is not only Gissing's careful reading of Izoulet, but his knowledge of Spencer's thought,⁹ which enables him to articulate clearly the fundamental difference between them which Izoulet, as previously noted, has attempted, not only to minimise, but to turn to his own advantage.

Now Lord Dymchurch is a counterpart of Lashmar in some measure, as he does not work for his living, but unlike Lashmar, he has a conscience and sees "himself as one of the most useless of mortals" and "would gladly be convinced against individualism" (46), thinking "he should have been justifying his existence and his position by some useful effort" (47), for "there must be duties for him to discharge, if only he could discover them" (48). Doing his best "to obtain an insight into the pressing questions of the time" (48), he hopefully pursues the discussion with Lashmar, and even brings forth an argument in defence of the latter's theories, quoting Marcus Aurelius: "What is not good for the beehive cannot be good for the bee" (49).¹⁰

Here again, Gissing presents an ironical situation: if Lashmar has adopted Izoulet's ideas it is because on one hand his superficial appreciation of them reinforces his own opinion of his natural superiority, and on the other hand because they may enable him to become an important public figure. These ideas appeal to Dymchurch, because on the contrary, on one hand they may enable him to become a useful member of society, and on the other hand they appear to have an "anti-democratic" (49) aspect which somewhat justifies the "hereditary taint" (48) of which he feels guilty.

The next step in Lashmar's intellectual and social itinerary concerns the putting into practice of all these ideas. Inadvertently expressing his disgust at the sight of Lady Ogram's "hideous paper-mill" (57), he finds himself in a most embarrassing situation: not only is his

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future patroness greatly offended, but, as he is quick to realise, by building the mill and giving work to a declining agricultural district, she has put into practice ideas which he has just been defending from a theoretical point of view. His sense of opportunity rising at once to the occasion, he takes advantage of the situation to proclaim his entire agreement with the principle: "from the scientific point of view" Lady Ogram's initiative is a perfect justification of his theories: "Our civilization is concerned, before all things, with the organization of a directing power; the supreme problem of science, and at the same time the most urgent practical question

of the day, is how to secure initiative to those who are born for rule. [...] Here was a community falling into wreck, cut loose from the orderly system of things [...] It was a picture in little of the multitude given over to itself. Into the midst of this chaos, Lady Ogram brings a directing mind, a beneficent spirit of initiative, and the means, the power of re-establishing order." This is, he concludes "a striking example of the principle of association, of solidarity – of perfect balance between the naturally superior and the naturally subordinate" (61).

To Mrs. Gallantry's suggestion that the creation of an institute for domestic service would have served the purpose just as well, he replies that the paper-mill "establishes a social group corresponding exactly to the ideal organism which evolution will some day produce – on the one hand ordinary human beings understanding their obligations and receiving their due; on the other, a superior mind, reciprocally fulfilling its duties, and reaping the nobler advantage which consists in a sense of worthy achievement" (62).

This piece of "improvisation," as Constance calls it (65), is a curious mixture of correct and incorrect interpretation of Izoulet's theories: while it is conceivable that the paper-mill will be more effective than an institution for domestic service in that it creates a coherent and productive community, it would be erroneous to attribute to Izoulet the idea that some people are "born to rule," that some beings are "naturally" superior to others. In "Genèse du sens social" (CM, 194-221) he insists again particularly on the open-endedness of the social hierarchy, and explains notably "comment l'ouvrier devient patron; ou le soldat, officier"; it is by virtue of the individual's reason, his reflection, his initiative and his understanding of the community of which he is a part (CM, 205-06).

The latter traits are definitely not characteristic of Lashmar's mental make-up, and it is logical that in the following chapter Gissing should ironically proceed to demonstrate the total

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unfittedness of the young man to undertake the project on which he has set his heart (or rather his mind) and his complete inability to play the role he intends to play in the socio-political community.

He begins to prepare himself by buying newspapers and reading the political news, although "as a rule, this kind of study had very little attraction for him." Thus, ill-informed on current politics, ignorant of the British Constitution and the details of party organisation, subjects which he thinks "unworthy of his scrutiny," preoccupied as he is with "world-embracing theories" and "philosophies of civilization", and endowed with little "practical ability," he is able only to speculate, and expound hypotheses. If at this he excels, he has nothing of the "scientific mind," although, as we have seen, he is always alluding to "scientific facts" and "scientific truth," for he has "neither patience to collect and observe facts, nor conscientiousness in reasoning upon them." These intellectual incapacities are aggravated by moral ones; he is motivated only by egotism and prejudice, and counts on his "speciousness" to achieve "the heights of statesmanship" (69). It is only the prospect of personal advancement which has led him to be interested in politics.

The visit to the mill inspires him with no interest: "the process of manufacture belonged to a world to which he had never given the slightest thought, which in truth repelled him" (70).

Lashmar's intellectual superficiality is again revealed in two long passages in which he draws on other ideas expressed by Izoulet. The first is in the conversation with Breakspere (80-83), in which by virtue of the scientific theory of hierarchy he voices his hopes of the constituency of Hollingford rather "than of one actively democratic," for "the fatal thing is for an electorate to be bent on choosing the man as near as possible like unto themselves." Progress, he insists, "does not mean guidance by one of the multitude, but by one of nature's elect," which Breakspere approves of as being "the aristocratic principle rightly understood." Lady Ogram, obviously flattered by this expression, urges Lashmar to go on and "talk away!", and this

encouragement brings to his mind more precise reminiscences:

Two great revolutions in knowledge have affected the modern world. First came the great astronomic discoveries, which subordinated our planet, assigned it its place in the universe, made it a little rolling globe amid innumerable others [...] Then the great work of the biologists, which put man into his rank among animals [...] Religion, philosophy, morals, politics, all are revolutionized by this accession of knowledge. It is no exaggeration to

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say that the telescope and the microscope have given man a new heart and soul. *But* [...] how many are as yet really aware of the change? The multitude takes no account of it (82).

This is a summary, in almost identical terms of a passage of *La Cité Moderne*, of which it is thus hardly necessary to give the translation. Izoulet writes:

Or un fait colossal [...] commande tous les temps modernes – à savoir la *révolution astronomique*. Et un fait colossal, analogue, commande toute l'époque contemporaine, – à savoir la *révolution biologique*. La révolution astronomique a classé la *terre*, en la faisant *rentrer dans le rang*, parmi la forêt des *astres*. La révolution biologique est en train de classer l'*homme*, en le faisant *rentrer dans le rang*, parmi la forêt des *vivants*.

Religion, philosophie, politique, morale, sont bouleversées de fond en comble par cette double révolution. Une nouvelle façon de *sentir*, à notre insu, s'empare de nous. Sans que nos coeurs s'en doutent, le télescope et le microscope ont déjà changé nos *coeurs*. Mais ces conséquences ne sont pour ainsi dire pas encore perçues même de l'élite, – *a fortiori* des foules.

Essayons de les esquisser. (CM, 13-14).

However, some of the implications of Izoulet's text have escaped Lashmar: first, this biological revolution is not yet complete: Izoulet does not use the past tense, he says "en train de classer l'homme," and asserts that *even* the élite have not yet perceived its consequences. For the author himself these are clear, and it is the object of his book to outline them, for as he will remark later, the work of the biologists has not seriously modified the opinions of the philosophers (CM, 64), a theme he will develop in "Genèse du sens scientifique" (Bk. II, ch. VIII, 222-51). It must be borne in mind that *La Cité Moderne* is a thesis, in other words a hypothesis to be defended, and that its aim is to convince others, by exploring clearly and exhaustively all the implications, in every domain, of the bio-social theory, or as Izoulet will call it later "a biological conception of history" (CM, 161). Lashmar has taken hold of this theory and expounds it as if it were indeed a science, but adapting it to his own purposes. At the end of this conversation he returns to the notion of hierarchy already referred to, remaining, by and large, close to Izoulet's text, of which he gives an almost literal rendering, unfortunately marred and distorted by his final reference to "our existing system of aristocracy"; "in not a few instances," he says, "technical aristocracy is justified by natural pre-eminence" (83), citing the example of Lord Dymchurch, whom he hopes to use, and flattering at the same time Lady Ogram, whom he is already using.

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Now Izoulet never alludes to aristocracy in Lashmar's sense of the term, although he does

use the expression “aristocratie de choix,” equating it to “l’ascension des capacités” in the “open” or “moving” hierarchy (CM, 121-22). And it may be noted in the same context that when Lashmar uses the terms “politics” or “political” he is not really using them in the same sense as Izoulet, for whom they have their etymological meaning of *polis*, denoting an organised society. Izoulet was not an aspiring Parliamentary candidate, but Lashmar was, and it is once again in line with Gissing’s ironical presentation of the character that he makes him understand the connotations of these two terms in the context of his personal ambitions.

The irony reappears again in the speech of Mr. Robb, the Hollingford Tory whose constituency Lashmar hopes to conquer for the Liberals at the coming election. He advances arguments – if they can be called such – which are not fundamentally opposed to Lashmar’s own feelings. Indeed, as Mr. Kerchever the lawyer had put it earlier, politics seems to be no more than “a recurring tussle between two parties, neither of which had it in its power to do much good or harm to the country” and in which brains never “went for much” (127). This remark prepares the reader for the ironical presentation of the rival candidates’ similar views, and it would appear to represent Gissing’s personal opinion. Thus the irony here is on a higher level and constitutes an appreciation of political situations in general.

The last significant use made of Izoulet’s book occurs in a conversation with Sir William Amys who, expressing his distrust of socialism and his fear for the individual, concludes, “It’s all very well to be a good citizen, but it’s more important, don’t you think, to be a man?” (178). To this Lashmar replies that he “can see absolutely no distinction between the terms Man and Citizen.” His eyes are “brightening” because he has found another opportunity to display his “borrowed argument and learning.” To his mind “Man only came into being when he ceased to be an animal by developing the idea of citizenship.” In his view

the source of all our troubles is found in that commonly accepted duality. It didn’t exist in the progressive ancient world. The dualism of Man and State began with the decline of Græco-Roman civilization, and was perpetuated by the teaching of Christianity. The philosophy of Epicurus and of Zeno – an utter detachment from the business of mankind – prepared the way for the spirit of the Gospels. So, at length, we get our notion of Church and State – a separation ruinous to religion and making impossible anything like

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perfection in politics; it has thoroughly rooted in people’s mind that fatal distinction between Man as a responsible soul and Man as a member of society. Our work is to restore the old monism (178-79).

Lashmar has here found an opportunity of exploiting another of Izoulet’s fundamental notions: his anti-dualism. Although this idea pervades the whole of *La Cité Moderne*, it is developed more precisely in two different parts of the book, first in Book II, “La psychologie bio-sociale” (CM, 125-371), in which the two opposing theses, materialism and spiritualism, are critically examined, and rejected because of the insolubility of the problems they raise as implying a mass of “contradictions” and “absurdities.” In the last two chapters of this part, Izoulet insists particularly on the essentially social nature of Man, and this will be further developed in Book III, entitled “La morale bio-sociale,” especially in Chapter IX, “Identité de la moralité et de la socialité.”

There are two commonly made distinctions, says Izoulet, the first is that between the physical and the moral, or between the animal and the man, the second between man and citizen, or between the moral and the political. If he accepts the first distinction, he rejects the second. “Pour moi, ‘moral’ et ‘humain’ sont exactement synonymes de ‘civique’ et de ‘politique’” (CM,

456). These passages provide the basis of Lashmar's conception of man as a social animal, and of his anti-dualism. The source of the remainder of his speech is to be found in two different places, first, in the second part of the chapter entitled "Origine du dédoublement de la 'moralité' et de la 'socialité'"; this passage must be quoted almost in its entirety:

Comment s'est produit ce dédoublement fantastique de l'*homme* et du *citoyen*? C'est l'histoire de la chute de la première civilisation de l'Europe, la civilisation gréco-romaine. C'est l'histoire du paganisme et du christianisme. Dès le IV^e siècle, à Athènes, la "cité" se fausse et un sourd malaise s'empare des citoyens. A mesure qu'on avance, la maladie se déclare: la décadence, la décomposition, la dissolution envahissent l'organisme social. A Rome, dans la Rome des empereurs, c'est pis encore: la décadence s'y aggrave d'un despotisme effrayant [...] Ainsi s'ébauche, au sein même du paganisme, cette fameuse dualité qui sera tout à l'heure la base même du christianisme. Le détachement politique des Epicure et des Zénon prépare les voies à Jesus. Le christianisme donne pour ainsi dire à ce dualisme l'oecuménicité: Dieu et César, l'âme et le corps, l'homme et le citoyen, le spirituel et le temporel, le sacerdoce et l'empire, le trône et l'autel, l'Eglise et l'Etat. Ce dualisme, sous vingt formules diverses, est le fond même de la philosophie et de la politique européennes, le fond de l'histoire européenne, depuis deux mille ans (CM, 457-458).

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This constitutes the basis of Lashmar's reply to Sir William Amys, pp. 178-179. Izoulet examines in the following paragraph the possibility of a return to the old "monism" referred to by Lashmar (179, l. 3) (CM, 458-61), an idea further elaborated in Book III, Chapter XIV, "Le faux dualisme de la matière et de l'esprit et l'unité de l'univers" (CM, 524-41), of which the conclusion corresponds to the final paragraph of Lashmar's exposition:

Very, very slowly, mankind is working towards it. A revolution greater than any of those commonly spoken of [...] which is the only hope of civilization, has been going on since the close of the thirteenth century. We are just beginning to be dimly conscious of it. Perhaps in another century it will form the principle of Liberalism (179).

which we may compare with Izoulet's paragraph entitled "Sens profond de l'évolution mentale des temps modernes: c'est le retour du dualisme au monisme et de la transcendance à l'immanence," which reads as follows:

[...] à mon sens, ce qu'on appelle l'*esprit moderne*, c'est tout simplement le lent et laborieux passage de la première conception à la seconde. L'Europe est en révolution, non pas depuis 1789, non pas même depuis la Réforme, mais depuis la fin du XIII^e siècle. Et cette vaste et profonde révolution, c'est le *retour* du *dualisme* au *monisme*, ou de la *transcendance* à l'*inunance*. [...] C'est-à-dire que par dessus la crise médiévale, la moderne humanité d'Occident renoue la tradition avec l'antiquité, et rallie la grande voie du genre humain (CM, 540-41).

Here the reader will have recognised not only the substance of Lashmar's conclusion, but also the passage quoted by Gissing in his letter to Eduard Bertz of 22 January 1900.¹¹

It is at this point that the systematic exposition of Izoulet's ideas comes to an end. Allusions will be made in the remainder of the novel to subjects already clearly set out in detail, in particular on pp. 214, 228-29, 262 ff., 376, 394, 397. These passages concern the two fundamental ideas underlying Izoulet's philosophy, namely: anti-dualism, and its corollary, the principle of association, and also the necessity of education. Other subjects dealt with by Izoulet such as questions of justice and aesthetics are not mentioned. However, strongly linked to the main theme of the book is the discussion on Nietzsche between Lashmar and Constance (235-36), in which the problems of individualism, the decline of religion, and natural selection

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are raised. In the course of this discussion we learn that "Nietzsche's individualism was, up to a certain point, in full harmony with the tone of [Lashmar's] mind" and that he "took the philosophy to heart, much more sincerely than he had taken to himself the humanitarian bio-sociology on which he sought to build his reputation" (235). If Izoulet does not mention Nietzsche in *La Cité Moderne*, he will do so later, especially in his attacks on Bergson's dualism and in *Le Panthéisme d'Occident* (1928), in which he expounds a new conception of God and Christianity. Izoulet was not an atheist, but he was violently critical of all the clerical infrastructure, and of what he calls "le principe de Mort [le dualisme] [...] erreur centrale de toute la fausse philosophie de l'Occident, et qui a été si furieusement foulé aux pieds par Nietzsche."¹² In spite of Gissing's fears and strictures concerning Nietzsche, expressed in his letters, it would appear that as for Lashmar, "his individualism was *up to a certain point*, in full harmony with the tone of his own mind" [my italics]. And in the reminiscences of Gabrielle Fleury, it is unexpected, but not really surprising, to find the following comparison: "It seems to me (C. W. writes) that one can find a few similarities between George and Nietzsche. To begin with, both were passionate *individualists*. And both had aristocratic tempers' [Then two lines heavily cancelled]."¹³ One can find reasons for appreciating aspects of Nietzsche which have nothing to do with the use to which his philosophy has often been put. His individualism and anticlericalism must have appealed to Gissing, just as his anti-clericalism and his anti-dualism must have appealed to Izoulet, who, however, with his conception of man as a social being, could hardly have appreciated his individualism, as appears in the discussion of Spencer referred to above. I mention this here because, as will be seen, there is a kind of parallelism in the subsequent fortunes of Nietzsche and Izoulet, and for the same reasons, of which Gissing seems to have had a presentiment.

With this exception, the latter half of the novel is devoted no longer to the discussion of ideas, but to the spread of these ideas, their influence on Lashmar's acquaintances (in particular on Lord Dymchurch), and first, the suspicions aroused in them, then the detective-work done by them in order to discover the source of Lashmar's theories.

It is the "humorist of Pont Street" whose eye is first attracted by a mention of bio-sociology in "a trans-Atlantic monthly" (244). Gissing insists on this origin, which has already been mentioned on p. 243 in the letter to Constance, and will be mentioned again on pp. 280 and 325.

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In the interests of verisimilitude, it was indeed necessary that Lashmar should hear of the book through some remote source: this, it appears to me, could not have been a journal read by literate Englishmen and easily obtainable at their clubs; otherwise Dymchurch or others could

have heard of it. But had it been a French journal or even a German one the verisimilitude would also have been preserved. Why then does Gissing insist on this American source?

My hypothesis is that there was such an article. In the first place Gissing does not usually invent facts: his art consists in rearranging them. As far as I know, the many books and articles mentioned in his novels are identifiable, albeit sometimes indirectly.

In the second place, given Izoulet's philosophical positions which are close to those of some pragmatists (American as well as French or English), his book may well have attracted some attention in America. Gissing was well-acquainted with the philosophical and scientific movements of the time, which tended towards the use of the experimental method as well in France as in America, and in England notably with Karl Pearson, whose *Grammar of Science* Gissing bought as soon as it came out in 1892¹⁴ and read, presumably with interest, as he notes, six months later that he was "reading Pearson's *Grammar of Science* again."¹⁵ Moreover, Gissing moved in a somewhat "pragmatist" circle¹⁶: H. G. Wells was later a declared pragmatist and considered as one by William James. His "Rediscovery of the Unique"¹⁷ and other articles, notably "The Discovery of the Future,"¹⁸ which Gissing read and discussed,¹⁹ are listed as pragmatic texts in E. Leroux's *Le Pragmatisme américain et anglais*.²⁰ Gissing's friend W. H. Hudson was greatly admired by William James,²¹ no doubt for his work on sensory perception. That Gissing adopted an independent position because he was well-acquainted with the philosophical context is apparent in his criticism of Wells in the letter of 19 February 1902 and in the letter to Clodd of 1 March 1902, in which he rejects "the astounding phrase of Berthelot – 'le monde n'a plus de mystère.'"²² In the absence of any indication to the contrary one can only conclude that given the context of intellectual exchange between France and America at that time, the American source was at least a very plausible one, and that Gissing's reasons for positing it were perfectly well-founded.

Two other questions closely linked to this first one remain to be answered, and here again one can only suggest hypotheses. First, how did Gissing himself come to read *La Cité Moderne*? and second, what were Gissing's personal reactions to the theories developed in Izoulet's book?

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Gissing mentions the book for the first and only time in the letter to Bertz of 22 January 1900, already quoted. The reference is to "'La Cité Moderne,' by Jean Izoulet (prof. de philosophie au Lycée Condorcet) – pub^d at Paris (Alcan) 1894."²³ This refers to the first edition. Izoulet (born in 1854) defended his thesis at the Sorbonne in 1895 and there was a second edition in that year. A third edition was issued in 1896, and a fourth in 1897. All four give Izoulet as teaching in the Lycée Condorcet, in Paris. He was elected to the Collège de France in 1897, a fifth edition was brought out in 1898, and a sixth in 1901, which duly gives him his new title. It therefore seems that Gissing read one of the first four editions, most likely the original one, since he gives this reference. Coustillas notes that in the MS, "the volume which Dyce has been reading" bore "the date of two or three years before," and that he had picked it up "second-hand a few days ago" (441).

Whatever may be the case his letter to Bertz seems to indicate not only that this was his first reading of the book, but that it was his first knowledge of Izoulet's existence, as he does not know that Izoulet has already been at the College de France for three years. He finds the book "very interesting & remarkable" and adds a brief but pertinent summary for his friend's benefit. Izoulet, he concludes, "evidently has a wide culture. He often quotes Goethe & English poets. The style is of geometrical clearness, yet there are passages which strike me as very fine. – A large book, nearly 700 pp." The passage he quotes is near the end; perhaps he had almost finished the book by the time he wrote his letter. This appreciation appears to be a spontaneous and personal one, not inspired by any review article. One is tempted to think that he had come across it by chance, perhaps at the Bibliothèque Nationale, or indeed at a secondhand

bookseller's, as the MS suggests. He may simply have bought it at Williams & Norgate's, or it may have been recommended to him by some friend, for instance Israel Zangwill. For Izoulet, in the new Introduction of *La Sainte Cité*, quotes the leading article in *L'Univers Israélite* of 28 January 1927, signed simply U. C., of which the title is "Zangwill and Izoulet," and is a comparative study of their two latest books. Izoulet himself admits that he is struck by the similarity of their ideas, giving the reader some information which may be useful if someone wishes to continue the search:

Je ne connaissais pas personnellement Zangwill, qui vient de mourir. Mais je connaissais un de ses amis et voisins de Londres, qui a beaucoup lu *La Cité Moderne*. Et j'ai de sérieuses raisons de croire que Zangwill aussi a dû lire, jadis, ma *Cité Moderne*. (*La Sainte Cité*, Ixxviii-Ixxxv).²⁴

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The reading of the book appears to have acted, at all events, as a powerful stimulus on Gissing: a month later he writes (again to Bertz) that he is now turning his thoughts again to "The Coming Man."²⁵ As Pierre Coustillas shows, there had been a good deal of hesitation surrounding the beginnings of the novel, which Gissing had first started to write on 29 September 1899. He set to work on a new version in May 1900, and completed the book on 29 August 1900. This is an extremely short period and it would appear that the author had for some time a general idea or scheme in mind concerning some form of plagiarism, and that what was lacking was the actual subject-matter. In other words, as he wrote to Pinker, he had not got his "material quite in hand."²⁶ As the previous MS has disappeared, it is impossible to know what material Gissing had in mind, but it seems probable that this material was suddenly supplied by the reading of *La Cité Moderne*, and that it was this that galvanized him into action.

Finally, what were Gissing's personal reactions to the ideas expressed by Izoulet? We have already seen that he found the book "interesting" and "remarkable," and that it acted as an intellectual stimulus on him. He appears to have read it with great care, and the skill with which he represents Lashmar's misinterpretations is one of the interests for the reader who has read *both* books.

Perhaps the most significant fact is that this is the only one of Gissing's novels to be preceded by a Prefatory Note, if one excepts the very different case of the preface to the 1895 edition of *The Unclassed*. What can be concluded from these few lines? Beginning this note somewhat ambiguously "*Suum cuique*," Gissing then expresses the hope that no reader will attribute to him "any satirical intention with regard to M. Izoulet's remarkable book." Of course, the satire is directed against Lashmar and his admirers, although English readers not familiar with *La Cité Moderne* (and they were the majority, which fact is essential to the plot) might have concluded that Lashmar's ideas were necessarily those of Izoulet. But every reference to Izoulet's book, Gissing goes on, "is, of course toned by the conditions of the story," i.e. placed in a satirical context.

This way of expressing oneself is deliberately noncommittal. It does indeed suggest that Gissing finds himself in a slightly defensive position. In the first place he has "pillaged" *La Cité Moderne* himself, and this has to be admitted, the author acknowledged and some praise bestowed, the epithet "remarkable" once again being deemed sufficiently neutral for the purpose. Why this reticence?

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I surmise that there were two reasons: on one hand, and in the first place, such a thorough-going individualist as Gissing could hardly be expected to adhere whole-heartedly to

Izoulet's principle of association and his conception of man as a social animal. On the other hand, and in the second place, Gissing was something of an elitist himself, in the best sense of the term inherited from a nineteenth-century current of ideas which abhorred mediocrity and would have liked to see society established on the basis of a "meritocracy," which is what Izoulet advocated. He realises, however, the use that could be made of these ideas in the wrong hands, and, in a way, *Our Friend the Charlatan* is an illustration of this possibility.

The future was to prove that Gissing's misgivings were well-founded. Izoulet was to insist everywhere in his future works that he did not oppose "democracy" but "demagoguery" and "mediocrity." Unfortunately his ideas were exploited much later, after his death in 1929, in a political context which was ambiguous, to say the least, as it is still the object of much controversy. The occasion referred to is the publication, in 1943, of a work entitled *Izoulet et son oeuvre*. Its author was Emile Bocquillon, a school-teacher and former student of Izoulet.²⁷ The book, despite its pronounced political bias, is not without its merits, giving a reasonably good all-round view of Izoulet's work, in particular of the complementary Latin thesis he wrote on Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

It is, moreover, one of the few sources of information on the subject. However, Izoulet's patriotic sentiments, not yet apparent in *La Cité Moderne*, in which the tendency is more towards a sort of universalism, are insisted upon in a particular perspective of the day, which may have contributed to the obscurity into which he fell.²⁸

But the only question that has concerned us here is that of Gissing's reactions to *La Cité Moderne*. The book had run into ten editions by 1911 and Izoulet wrote nothing more before 1920, when he produced a political pamphlet, thereafter writing several books on political and religious issues, in which he elaborated some wildly impractical schemes, among them the reunion of all the Churches under the leadership of Israel. His future career cannot apparently be deduced from the text of *La Cité Moderne*, which had attracted Gissing by the clarity and scientific logic of its exposition.

However, *La Cité Moderne* remained a book about which Gissing had mixed feelings. Like Nietzsche, Izoulet may be appreciated on certain grounds, but Gissing was far-sighted and intuitive enough to sense the presence of potential dangers. I think that it was with this in

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mind that he wrote his *caveat lector*. In this matter, as in others, Gissing proved to be something of a prophet.

[I am greatly indebted to M. Jean-Claude Pompougnac, the author of the entry on Izoulet in the *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle, Les oeuvres philosophiques*, Vol. 2, p. 2514, first, for his encouragements, and second, for the loan of a practically unobtainable book (see n. 26), which enabled me to relate *La Cité Moderne* not only to Izoulet's subsequent work, but to the general context of the sociological theory of his time.]

¹References to *Our Friend the Charlatan* are to P. Coustillas' edition, Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1976. Page numbers are given in parentheses. References to J. B. Izoulet, *La Cité Moderne et la métaphysique de la sociologie* are to the original edition of 1894, Paris: Alcan, unless otherwise stated. Page numbers, preceded by CM, are given in parentheses.

²P. F. Mattheisen, A. C. Young and P. Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997 (hereafter referred to as "Letters"), Vol. VII, p. 383.

³*Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 76. Pinker replied that he had "mentioned the novel in the current 'Bookman,'" and Note 3 on this subject quotes a paragraph from the journal alluding to "the new novel," but not mentioning the title.

⁴*Letters*, Vol. VIII, p. 225. It is not clear whether it was Gabrielle Fleury or Izoulet who used the term.

⁵Julian Symons, in a review of David Grylls, *The Paradox of Gissing*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 July 1987, p. 803.

⁶Lashmar says he found the book “at Williams and Norgate’s.” The latter were the publishers of Herbert Spencer, and their correspondent in Paris was F. Alcan, who published the French translations. It is quite likely that *La Cité Moderne*, published by Alcan, was available at Williams & Norgate’s.

⁷Herbert Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, 1884. Gissing had read the book on 26 February 1896, *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: the Diary of George Gissing*, ed. P. Coustillas (hereafter referred to as “*Diary*”), p. 493. See also the interesting note on this subject, p. 562.

⁸Harald Höffding, *A History of Modern Philosophy*, translated from the German by B. E. Meyer, New York: Dover Publications, 1955.

⁹Gissing spoke at one point of Spencer as “perhaps our greatest living philosopher,” *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 142.

¹⁰Izoulet quotes the example of the bees, but without referring to Marcus Aurelius. He insists mainly on the example of the ants, quoting Darwin (CM, 60-63).

¹¹*Letters*, Vol. VIII, p. 6.

¹²J. B. Izoulet, *Le Panthéisme d’Occident*, 2 vols., Paris: Albin Michel, 1928, Vol. I, p. 305.

¹³*Letters*, Vol. IX, p. 312.

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¹⁴*Diary*, pp. 283-84.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 292.

¹⁶I use inverted commas, because, as has been generally recognised, “pragmatism” is a vague term embracing different tendencies. It was “in the air”: William James himself noted in his preface to *Pragmatism* (1907) that it was apparently a movement “which had rather suddenly precipitated itself out of the air.” E. Leroux describes it as being rather a general reaction against the preceding dominant tendencies (*Le Pragmatisme américain et anglais*, Paris: Alcan, 1923, pp. 13 ff.). It was perhaps Bergson who most satisfactorily summed up the situation: “a movement of ideas which has for some years been in evidence everywhere and which arises from causes which are general and profound. In every country, and with many thinkers, the need has been felt for a philosophy more generally empirical, closer to the immediately given, than the traditional philosophy, worked out, as the latter has been, by thinkers who were primarily mathematicians.” Letter from Bergson to Ribot, *Revue philosophique*, Vol. LX, August 1905, p. 225, quoted in English (translator unknown) in R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 vols., Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1935, Vol. II, p. 600.

¹⁷*Fortnightly Review*, July 1891.

¹⁸*Nature*, 6 February 1902.

¹⁹*Letters*, Vol. VIII, pp. 350-51.

²⁰Pp. 384, 385.

²¹James spoke of Hudson with “an almost reverential enthusiasm” as “a supernatural being” in a letter to an unnamed friend “through whom he had received Hudson’s photograph” (Perry, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 273).

It is also perhaps worth mentioning, in this Anglo-American context, that another of Gissing’s scientific acquaintances, Grant Allen, was on friendly terms with James, whose “Great Men, Great Thoughts and the Environment” (*Atlantic Monthly*, October 1880) he reviewed in

the same journal for January and March 1881 (Perry, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 381), and who made him “a pleasant visit” (letter from James to G. C. Robertson, editor of *Mind*, 16 September 1886, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 604).

²²*Letters*, Vol. VIII, p. 351. It is interesting to note that Izoulet was also to quote Berthelot on two occasions: in *Le Panthéisme d'Occident*, Vol. I, p. 200, he remarks “Selon Berthelot ‘il n’y a plus de mystère,’ et selon moi, il n’y a plus que du mystère [...] Rien n’égale le mystère de l’Inconnu, si ce n’est le Mystère du Connu!” And he later enlarges on this idea: “Enivré de Science, Marcelin Berthelot a dit un jour: *il n’y a plus de mystère!* Et j’entends très bien ce qu’il a voulu dire. Mais, de mon point de vue, je dois parler autrement. Je ne saurais même me contenter de dire: il y a encore du mystère! J’ose affirmer bien plus [...] Rien n’égale le *Mystère de l’Inconnu* si ce n’est le *Mystère du Connu!* Car l’explication scientifique n’atteint jamais *le fond des choses*. Et, selon une autre de mes formules, *la Science* n’est que la classification de nos ignorances” (*ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 257-58). The remainder of Gissing’s letter suggests that he would have agreed with this. Both Gissing and Izoulet appear here to be misquoting slightly the

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first sentence of Berthelot’s book, *Les Origines de l’alchimie*: “Le monde est aujourd’hui sans mystère” (Paris: Georges Steinheil, 1885, Preface, p. v).

²³*Letters*, Vol. VIII, p. 13.

²⁴*La Sainte Cité* appeared in 1930 (Paris: Albin Michel, 2 vols.), a year after Izoulet’s death. It is the final version of *La Cité Moderne*, and bears the title which Izoulet wished originally to give to his book. It is referred to in his two previous books as forthcoming, and as being the 10th edition of *La Cité Moderne*. However, the 10th edition is catalogued as having appeared in 1911. One can conclude only that the author, or his publisher, was not counting the original edition of 1894. The main body of the text of *La Sainte Cité* remains identical to the former versions, but it is preceded by a long “New Introduction” (pp. i-xciv) which contains previously unpublished material, some of it autobiographical, and the “Introduction primitive: Le suicide des Démocraties,” an expanded form of the Preface of 1894, which appeared in the second edition of 1895 (pp. xcv-cxix).

²⁵*Letters*, Vol. VIII, p. 15.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷Emile Bocquillon, *Izoulet et son oeuvre*, avec une “Préface: Izoulet vu par Maurice Barrès,” Paris: Baudinière, 1943.

²⁸This was certainly not the only reason: Izoulet had campaigned against Durkheim and Bergson, and was violently anti-Marxist, thus making himself a few enemies. Furthermore his style of writing, already sometimes emphatic in *La Cité Moderne*, becomes steadily more grandiloquent and prophetic. Capital letters, large and small, italics, question marks, exclamation marks, sometimes three in a row, abound, making his prose, in which one can find the expression of many interesting and original ideas, increasingly difficult, especially in his later works. This point alone, at a first reading, might appear to discredit him somewhat as a philosopher.

* * *

A Visit to Bee Bee

ANTHONY CURTIS
London

In 1959 when I was on a Harkness Fellowship in the United States on a quest for, among

other things, Gissing material, Royal Gettmann, whom I met at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, kindly said he would set up a meeting for me with Brian Ború Dunne. Although it was in the nineteenth century when Dunne knew Gissing, he (Dunne) was still alive, well, and (according to Gettmann who had interviewed him) garrulous, in Santa Fe, New

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Mexico. It was too good an opportunity to miss and anyway I had always wanted to go to New Mexico.

It was late June when I got there. I had not succeeded in contacting Dunne in advance and Santa Fe is not an easy place for a stranger to find his way around. I was looking for Garcia Street some way from the centre where Dunne lived at No. 501. I asked a blonde young woman in her twenties with a little girl in tow for assistance, mentioning Dunne by name. Oh yes, she knew "Bee Bee," she said, and pointed to a distant house. Then she said she'd take me there. She thought from my accent I must be English and she explained that she was Irish and was from Dublin. I asked her if she had ever heard of Gissing. She replied: "I don't get much time for reading now I am involved with babies." I told her nonetheless to try *New Grub Street*.

We soon reached Dunne's house ducking our way under the chain that was padlocked across the entrance. I rang the sleigh-bell nailed to the front-door, not quite knowing what to expect. There was no reply. She then gave it a much more vigorous and prolonged shaking. Still, no reply. I then wrote a note on the yellow copy-pad also nailed to the door. "I have come from London to talk to you about Gissing," and signed it.

Then Emma, my companion (by now we had introduced ourselves) said she thought at this hour – it was around noon – I might try looking for "Bee Bee" in La Posada, and gave me directions how to get there. The hotel was in the Plaza near the Cathedral (see *Death Comes to the Archbishop* by Willa Cather), and a venue for the artistic community of Santa Fe. And indeed when I did get there twenty minutes later (having declined the offer of a glass of wine back at Emma's house with a rain-check not in the event followed up) the bar was packed. Among the noisy crowd of T-shirts and Levi's, one presence stuck out like a sore thumb; it was that of an elderly gentleman whose beady eyes peered out from metal-framed glasses; the papery skin on his bony face was drawn tight like a living death-mask, though the man inside was full of gesticulating energy. He had on a faded linen jacket, a white silk shirt; around his neck was a pink silk scarf in the middle of which was a metal cross decorated with pink stones, the kind of costume jewellery I had seen plenty of since I had arrived the day before. His white trousers, frayed at the ends, were held in place by a pale brown leather belt, also of local native American manufacture. On his head was a straw boater with a broad pink band. He might have been an elderly member of some Thames rowing-club celebrating his team's triumph with a night out.

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"Ah yes," he said to me when I mentioned my name, "the famous writer from the London *Times*. [I was on leave from the TLS where I worked as a sub-editor.] Gettmann has written to me about you. Let's go through." He took me to a patio where we found a quiet table away from all the hurly-burly and he talked non-stop for an hour. My only problem was to direct the flow of his discourse back to Gissing from whom it frequently wanted to wander. It was quite true what Gettmann had said. Dunne did have fascinating first-hand memories of the novelist.

In October 1897 Gissing had fled from Surrey and his tempestuous wife Edith to Siena where he lived for some months writing his critical study of Dickens's novels. Dunne was also living in Siena then. He was only nineteen and he was trying to become a writer. They were both staying in the same *pensione*.

Dunne attached himself to Gissing, who accepted him as a disciple and in the spring, when the copy for the Dickens book had been dispatched to the publisher, they went to Rome where they lived in different lodgings but had their meals together. Other English writers, including H. G. Wells and his wife Catherine, began to arrive in Rome and for once in his life Gissing moved happily among his peers. There is a famous photograph showing him standing outside one of the ancient buildings along with E. W. (Willie) Hornung, Conan Doyle (Hornung's brother-in-law) and Wells; late Victorian men of letters, in hats and in dark jackets, white collars and neckties.

Gissing and Dunne took Wells to lunch at Fiorelli's, their customary eating-place, where they had omelettes and shared the bill – or maybe Wells paid; Dunne said he was not quite sure, but he remembered that Wells had just published *The War of the Worlds* and was “in the money.” Gissing told Wells that Dunne had literary ambitions and Wells said something encouraging to the novice. After lunch they went to Dunne's room on the 12th floor of the Via Gregoriana. As they climbed the five flights of stairs Gissing remarked that Gregorovius had once lived there. Then Wells paused to say: “Now here's a young man who wants to write. Here I am who have written a little,” then pointing to Gissing: “And there is someone who has mastered the art.” What a nice man Wells was! When they had reached the room and were seated, Dunne entertained the two novelists by playing the zither.

During their stay in Rome Dunne arranged for Gissing to have an audience with Pope Leo XIII. Gissing, unsympathetic to the papacy and all it stood for, was nonetheless a stickler for

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correct attire and hired a morning-suit for the occasion. Then Gissing went down with a fever and could not attend the audience. Dunne said that unlike many novelists Gissing was quite without envy of his more successful colleagues, even the best-selling Marion Crawford who lived in Italy.

I said I thought that Dunne had been very fortunate to have known such a remarkable man. Dunne replied: “Gissing was only interested in the young if they were starving and knew Latin. He liked them emaciated. I passed that test.”

Gissing's own American peregrinations did not include a visit to New Mexico; his wanderings were all in the East and Chicago, unlike those of his college friend and fellow novelist Morley Roberts, who went from London to Texas to seek his fortune in 1884. He spent three years as a farm-hand and a navvy, working on the Pacific railroad, and various other lowly occupations in Iowa, California, British Columbia, before returning to London. He described his experiences in the now neglected travel book, *The Western Avernus*. The resource that a knowledge of Greek and Latin literature offered Gissing and Roberts is revealed in Roberts's unselfconscious account of his behaviour when, as he was tramping along the coast near Crescent City, a storm threatened:

I sat down under a tree by the roadside and lighted my pipe, and, to save myself from vain imaginings of possible things, I took my Virgil and again read part of the Sixth Book. And when I came to the middle I thought, “I am not yet out of Avernus, and who knows if I shall return to the lucid stars and lucid earth, for there is much to be passed through...”

Sentiments to be echoed, I am sure, by both Gissing and “Bee Bee.”

* * *

Gissing's "Spellbound" and "New Grub Street"

ROBERT L. SELIG
Purdue University Calumet

The critically ignored short story "Spellbound" (written by Gissing in 1896; published in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, October 1897, pp. 49-56) provides a comic variation on a theme first explored in a single paragraph of *New Grub Street* (1891). In "Spellbound" an out-of-work draper's salesman named Dunn wastes weeks of what should be job-hunting time in the trancelike reading of the printed material that he happens upon randomly in the

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newspapers and magazines of a London free library.¹ *New Grub Street's* parallel detail involves the despairing novelist Edwin Reardon, whose wife has just left him:

As it was a very cold day he lit a fire. Whilst it burnt up he sat reading a torn portion of a newspaper, and became quite interested in the report of a commercial meeting in the City, a thing he would never have glanced at under ordinary circumstances. The fragment fell at length from his hands; his head drooped; he sank into a troubled sleep. (*NGS*, vol. 2, ch. 17, p. 267)

Reardon's use of print here as a mindless soporific marks an intellectual surrender by a man of letters whose first love was classical literature and who liked to translate out loud for his wife from a Greek text of Homer (vol. 1, ch. 9, pp. 155, 158). His consumption of printed matter as just a mental drug foreshadows his decline from a once-promising novelist to "a harmless clerk, a decent wage-earner" who has given up all pretensions to a literary life (vol. 2, ch. 19, p. 293). Although print has served the Western world for over half a millenium as a medium for great literature, the printed word itself has no special aesthetic value: it can transmit Homer's magnificent Greek or a piece of business news in journalistic prose. Still, even those with just an elementary education can achieve some gratification simply by deciphering the driest printed words and allowing them to fill their minds. As a result, the demoralized Edwin Reardon can use a news account of a stockholders' meeting as a distraction from distraction, as print for print's sake.

Through the character of Dunn, "Spellbound" expands Reardon's pathetic little scene into extended farce. During weeks of library visits, Dunn neglects the task of searching job advertisements. He reads his aimless way instead through a hodgepodge of dailies, weeklies, and periodicals that happens to include the *Illustrated London News* – a sly self-mocking joke. Gissing himself had already published the serialized *Eve's Ransom* in the *Illustrated London News* (5 January to 30 March 1895) before he wrote "Spellbound" (11 to 13 March 1896). In an amusing juxtaposition of the imaginary and the real, the print-addict Dunn may conceivably gobble up Gissing's own serialized novella along with the rest of the *London News*.

In addition to mindless consumption of the *Illustrated London News*, the indiscriminate Dunn skims through "a religious weekly," a vegetarians' magazine, the *Westminster Review*, the *Graphic*, and the *Nineteenth Century*.² This diverse list of publications includes two highly specialized ones (the second faddish and quirky), an intellectually challenging but small-

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circulation review, two broadly popular weeklies that subordinate their articles to pictures yet also include fiction, and finally the most prestigious of all small-circulation Victorian magazines

of nonfiction.³ Absurdly enough, Dunn's perusal of this mishmash depends entirely on two chance factors:

Then, with sauntering step, he approached one of the publications which no one else cared to examine – the new number of a religious weekly – and over this he spent about a quarter of an hour. The retirement of a man from the paper next in the row seemed to give him a desired opportunity; he stepped into the vacant place, and read for another quarter of an hour. And so all through the morning, from paper to paper, as his turn came. (“Spellbound,” p. 258)

Not only does Dunn remain totally unselective about specific publications, but he never finishes any of them. He glances into each only until a fresh one becomes available. The length of time that he spends with a magazine or weekly depends exclusively on just how long it takes for a fellow library user to finish with the next: a reading time of roughly fifteen minutes, not enough even for the illustrated weeklies, especially one with Gissing's own novella. Then Dunn hurries on to some newly discarded bundle of print, which, in turn, fails to appease his endless craving.

Dunn will read anything in print – excepting, of course, useful job notices – yet he harbors a few amusing, if mildly expressed, preferences. He lacks any overriding interest in religious or vegetarian publications, and he scans his way through them only because nothing else comes to hand (“Spellbound,” p. 259). In effect the story mocks these journals as somewhat less-than-thrilling even for an all-but-unborable reader, yet it also makes fun of Dunn's passive foolishness in settling for such stuff. We might recall Gissing's own rejection of religion and his equally strong detestation of vegetarianism after his early London experiment of living just on lentils.⁴ On the other hand, Dunn so likes the picture weeklies that he hardly can wait for the day that they arrive, yet he cares more for their fresh print smell than for their articles or stories (“Spellbound,” p. 265) – an amusing case of ink for ink's sake.

Until the final page, the story describes all of the spellbound character's reading only by the publications that include it, as if any particular piece turns into mush within his brain. The only article read by Dunn, whose specific subject we finally learn – “hypnotism” – mockingly appears on the very last page. Not only the title of Gissing's own story but also the third-to-last

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sentence on this page underscores the comic trance that print has created in Dunn: “Week after week went by, and he sat reading; spellbound, hypnotised” (“Spellbound,” p. 270). Even though the equation *spellbound* = *hypnotised* makes the point all too obvious for readers of Gissing's story, Dunn scans the article without even a glimmer of how it relates to his own state of mind – still another indication of his trancelike incapacity to comprehend what he reads. In our day, as the twenty-first century approaches, Dunn's comic problem may possibly remind us of computer-addicted surfers of the Web, mesmerized by whatever appears on the screen, without even absorbing it.

Except for the transient hypnosis by print of an author with usually acute reading perceptions, *New Grub Street* emphasizes a quite different syndrome from the spellbound lack of discrimination. The novel deplors a fragmented public that knows just what it likes yet, in fact, likes nothing except printed goods expressly aimed at its own extremely limited tastes and abilities. As a result, we have “educated” but unstudious persons who enjoy the “specialism popularized” of “the solid periodicals” (vol. 3, ch. 26, p. 397), young girls who like “goody-good” serialized fiction (vol. 3, ch. 33, pp. 494-95), and the “quarter-educated” readers who cannot handle an article “more than two inches in length” (vol. 3, ch. 33, pp. 496-98). In a nice ironic twist, though, Gissing finds the “spellbound” Mr. Dunn both more and less

deplorable than *New Grub Street*'s print consumers who shun first-rate texts or lack the skill to read them.

Although latter-day, postmodernist critics tend to disagree, Gissing felt sure that some written works had far more merit than others. He accordingly believed in a literary canon including the outstanding figures of the past revered in *New Grub Street*: Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Dante, and Shakespeare (vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 155 and ch. 10, p. 172; vol. 3, ch. 27, p. 412; vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 43; vol. 3, ch. 25, p. 376). He would have laughed bitterly at our own academic pseudo-anthropology, which regards anything made at least partially with words as worth serious critical attention, including such matters as the treatment of democracy in the *Batman* comic books, the classical sources of the comic strip *Alley Oop*, and the radio and TV presentations of "The Lone Ranger as Treaty Discourse."⁵ Although Dunn represents for Gissing the *reductio ad absurdum* of a reading public that lacks any discrimination at all, still even this ignoramus shrinks from banishing value judgments about what he reads. In spite of Dunn's own lack of understanding of "the grave monthlies" that he mechanically scans ("Spellbound", p. 266), he feels righteous "indignation" when he sees a workingman sleeping in

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the reading room with his head "on the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*." Dunn feels compelled to shake the man awake and rebuke him for neglecting a magazine widely known for profundity and high seriousness ("Spellbound," p. 269). Dunn's action may make us smile at the infinitesimal difference between reading while the mind sleeps and literally sleeping on top of the page. Yet even for a fool like Dunn, it remains absolutely certain that some written works are more equal than others. The assumption underlying the farcical "Spellbound" remains an Arnoldian one of culture as the best that has been known and said, no matter how little the general reading public may actually be listening to it.

[The writing of this article was facilitated by a Research Award from Purdue University Calumet.]

¹The term *free* as opposed to public library referred to one donated by a wealthy benefactor rather than built through public funds and taxes. In England free libraries proliferated from 1886 on. Two major donors were the Scottish-American millionaire Andrew Carnegie and the retired British newspaper publisher J. Passmore Edwards. See R. C. K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 322. Cf. *New Grub Street*'s somewhat different description of a commercial enterprise with a one-penny entrance fee for looking at current newspapers, weeklies, and magazines and also, significantly, for using the lavatory – George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (London: Penguin, 1985), vol. 3, ch. 27, p. 413-14; hereafter referred to in the text as *NGS*.

²George Gissing, "Spellbound," in *A Victim of Circumstances and Other Stories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), pp. 258-59, 265, 269-70; hereafter referred to in the text as "Spellbound."

³Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 344, 363n, 359-60.

⁴Jacob Korg, *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), pp. 22-23.

⁵Tim Blackmore, "The Dark Knight of Democracy: Tocqueville and Miller Cast Some Light on the Subject," *Journal of American Culture*, 1991 Spring 14 (1), pp. 37-56; Daniel B. Levine, "Classica Americana Troglodytica: V. T. Hamlin's *Alley Oop*, April 1939-February 1940," *Classical and Modern Literature: A Quarterly*, 1994 Summer 14 (4), pp. 365-86; Allen Chadwick, "Hero with Two Faces: The Lone Ranger as Treaty Discourse," *American Literature*,

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The Spade House that Gissing Knew

SYDNEY LOTT
Eastbourne

During a cycling holiday in Kent in 1898, H. G. Wells became ill with a kidney infection and, on the advice of Dr. Henry Hick in New Romney, he considered moving from London to a more healthy environment. It was an odd coincidence that Henry Hick, a school friend of Gissing in Wakefield, should now be Medical Officer of Health for Romney Marsh. The quiet seaside resort of Sandgate, adjacent to Folkestone, was chosen, and Wells moved with his second wife, Jane, to Beach Cottage in September 1898 and then to Arnold House in the town the following year. Both houses are still standing.

Then, following a fruitless search for a larger property, he leased a piece of land from the Earl of Radnor in Radnor Cliff Crescent, halfway up the hill between Sandgate and the Folkestone Leas, beside the Sandgate Hill Lift, opened five years earlier in 1893. The funicular which fascinated H. G. and, eventually, his sons, no doubt added to the attraction of the site.¹ The chosen architect was the celebrated C. F. A. Voysey (1857-1941), who was influenced by William Morris and admired by John Betjeman. The builder from Folkestone was "Honest" William Dunk (as H. G. Wells called him). Voysey submitted four designs in his characteristic "Cotswold Cottage" domestic style with very broad eaves and first floor windows close under the eaves, their oblong lead panes proportioned to the window itself. The author and the architect did not see eye to eye during construction of the house. One such disagreement led to the rather unusual name. Voysey wanted to use his heart trademark throughout the house, including a heart shaped letterbox. This was too much for H. G. and they compromised with a spade design – hence the name, Spade House.

Wells was amused by another version of the origin of the name. The men operating the Cliff Lift beside his garden confused his name with another Wells – "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo." They told their passengers that it was on the Ace of Spades that the trick was done. In his *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells tells us that he pulled the roller in his garden, within sight of the promenaders on the Leas, unaware at first of his sporting fame. But soon he went about Sandgate and Folkestone like a Wagnerian hero with a musical motif of his own whenever there was an errand boy whistling the familiar tune within earshot.

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Spade House as it is now (Courtesy of Mrs. Pat Cook and the Sandgate Society)

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Building work was completed in the autumn of 1900 at a cost of £1,760. Jane and H. G. moved in on 8 December 1900 – only six months before the arrival of the Gissing. An almost four weeks' stay for George but only four days for Gabrielle. Gissing's rather dramatic first meeting with Wells at the Omar Khayyám Club dinner in Frascati's restaurant on 20 November 1896 prompted Wells to send the "most amusing, the most enspiriting, & the most alluring invitation" to visit his home in Worcester Park which was "right gladly" accepted.² This triggered a succession of meetings and visits during the next four years – Budleigh Salterton, Rome, Dorking and Paris in addition to the first two houses occupied by Wells in Sandgate. Gissing greatly admired Wells – "He is even better than his books – a man I like whole-heartedly; & I think that, with the possible exception of W. H. Hudson, I could say this of no one else. In Wells there is more genuine goodness than in any man I have ever intimately known."³ Wells was more guarded in his comments on Gissing.

There can be little doubt that the most significant visit made by Gissing to Wells was to the newly built Spade House during May and June 1901. No less than 22 pages in the *Collected Letters*, Vol. 8, cover the period. Gabrielle's return to France after only four days was followed by lengthy and somewhat acrimonious letters which have been examined in depth elsewhere. An examination which at times tends to overshadow a few of the less stressful aspects of the visit to this pleasant house. There was the novelty and comfort of the newly built home itself but, above all, the kindness and charm of H. G.'s second wife, Jane. All who came into contact with her regarded her as a splendid housekeeper and hostess who made sure everyone was happy with their stay at the house. She was said to be admired by everyone who ever met her; from the local delivery boy to the greatest writers of the day. The single exception perhaps appears to have been Gabrielle. Jane's meals certainly put new life into the visitor fresh from the Spartan régime of Mme Fleury. It was hardly diplomatic of George to write to Gabrielle on 6 June telling her that the kindness shown to him was incredible, with cream every day from Devonshire and coffee specially made for him according to the directions given by Hick. No wonder Gabrielle viewed the Wellses with suspicion.⁴

A highlight of the visit was the overnight stay with Wells at Lamb House, the solid and reassuring home of Henry James in nearby Rye.⁵ Also a long talk he had with Joseph Conrad

when he came to see him in Spade House. Sandgate's sea air and the benefit of relaxing in H. G.'s garden with its splendid sea views all helped. The magazine *Literature*, which had

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published "The Coming of the Preacher" in January 1900, asked Gissing to sit for a London photographer. The photograph was to appear with an essay about him in the July issue. Such publicity was certainly welcome when two of his books were about to be launched. Hal Way, a former pupil of Wells, came to Sandgate and took the photograph at a desk arranged by Jane in Wells's study.

Even on a minor note it seems likely that H. G.'s enthusiasm for the magnificent Cliff Lifts must have rubbed off on Gissing. In fact, the writer of this article must confess that he regards a visit to the Folkestone area as incomplete without a ride on the surviving East Cliff Lift. The passenger listens to water gushing into the tank under the floor and experiences a curious thrill as the lift journeys up and down solely on water power and gravity like a well-worn clock, as it has done throughout our turbulent century since Wells and Gissing journeyed this way.

Gissing's health, although improved, sadly made it advisable for him to follow Dr. Hick's suggestion that he should enter the East Anglian Sanatorium at Nayland during the third week in June. He spent more than a month there where he continued to put on weight. His letter to Ellen from the Sanatorium sums up the Spade House visit. "The Wells's have been incredibly kind. I was fed & pampered, for three weeks & more, beyond imagination."⁶ He returned to France with at least a few not entirely unhappy memories to look back on during the remaining two years of his life before Wells, in response to a telegram from Gabrielle, and in spite of a severe cold, set out from Spade House on Christmas Eve, 1903, to witness the sad event at Ispoure, near St. Jean-Pied-de-Port.

Wells continued to live in Spade House until 1909. It was then sold and renamed Bay House to confuse any curious sightseers.

Various owners changed the name back and forth from Spade to Bay until in the 1950s it became a vegetarian restaurant, hotel and faith healing centre. An effort was made to revive the association with Wells in 1966, the centenary of his birth. A Sandgate shop even sold spade-shaped chocolate shortcakes. However, the hotel was on average taking only six guests per week and in the early 1980s it was put up for sale at £200,000. It is currently a Nursing Home and it is reported that the present owners are seeking permission from the relevant authorities to set up a small H. G. Wells Museum there as a tribute to its eminent first occupant and his distinguished guests.

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¹The Sandgate Hill Lift was closed in 1918 but the earlier Leas Lift, a short distance to the east along the grassy top of the Folkestone Leas, still fills and empties its counterbalancing tanks of water throughout the summer months, 114 years after it was opened in 1885. The Lift, mentioned in Kipps, is the oldest water balance Lift in Southern England and a fitting monument to Victorian engineering. An information leaflet about Folkestone's Cliff Lifts can be obtained from Environmental Services, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY.

²Letter of 27 November 1896 from Gissing to Wells, *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, Vol. 6, p. 199.

³Letter of 30 May 1897 from Gissing to Clara Collet, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 6, p. 296.

⁴Letter of 6 June 1901 to Gabrielle. *Collected Letters*, Vol. 8, p. 176.

⁵See "The Lamb House that Gissing Saw," *Gissing Journal*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, April

1998, pp. 24-28.

⁶Letter of 25 June 1901, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 8, p. 203.

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Drs. into Dr.

Thursday, 25 March 1999 was a great day for Bouwe Postmus of the University of Amsterdam, editor of three books and author of many articles and reviews of Gissing interest, a fair portion of which appeared in this journal. On that day, at 3 p.m., in the Auditorium of the University (the Old Lutheran Church), he submitted to the Faculty of Arts his thesis for the degree of Ph.D. Astutely entitled *An Exile's Cunning: Some Private Papers of George Gissing*, it consisted of an edition of the American notebook, the Huntington Memorandum book and the collected verse, previously published separately, now slightly revised and presented in a new garb – an attractive clothbound volume with a preface. The public defence of the thesis, which had been preceded months earlier by the handing over to the academic authorities of reports by a *promotor* and two *co-promotors*, was conducted according to strict traditional regulations, the like of which the present writer has come across in no other country with whose academic life he is familiar.

Assisted by a mace-bearer, who leads the *promotors* and examiners into and out of the auditorium, the dean sees to it that the whole ceremony is completed within the statutory hour. But the ceremony actually begins out of his presence with a ten-minute tête-à-tête between the *promovendus* or candidate and the audience, who are informed by the doctor-to-be, in the native

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language, of the nature and aim of his thesis. Next the mace-bearer, the dean, *promotors* and Committee members solemnly enter the auditorium in gown and biretta, and the dean asks the five members, who had in due course declared the *promovendus'* work worthy of the doctoral degree, to express their criticisms. After each member has stated his objections, in Dutch or in English, and the candidate has replied, the dean and eight examiners forming a cortège again, step out of the auditorium and retire to the room where they had first gathered while the *promovendus* addressed the audience. Signing the diploma, an impressive document with a red seal, only takes a few minutes, after which the cortège returns to the auditorium and the *promotors* praise the candidate's work. A special feature of the ceremony was the presence on the rostrum, on each side of the *promovendus*, of his son and elder daughter.

The Committee was composed of members of the University of Amsterdam and other Dutch universities – among them Professor Dominic Baker-Smith, who recently retired to the land of Gissing's paternal ancestors, Mr. Cedric Barfoot and Mrs. Marijke Rudnik-Smalbraak, while the *promotors* were Professors Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, Chair of English Literature, Pierre Coustillas and Peter Verdonk. In a large neighbouring bookshop, in which Bouwe Postmus's younger daughter was spending a few weeks away from school acquiring experience, Gissing's *Collected Letters* and a copy of his diary were displayed, all of them in mint condition, with a note of congratulations to the new doctor stuck in the window.

The academic ceremony, which was attended by some two hundred people, was followed by a party within the University, then by a dinner and later on by another party in Wormerveer, where Doctor, no longer *Doctorandus*, Postmus lives. Dinner and evening party were punctuated by speeches, in Dutch or English, praising the doctor's achievements, a song in his honour written in Dutch and set to a tune by the Beatles, and a sketch in English about Gissing and Postmus. Indeed Gissing's name was heard many times throughout the evening.

To outsiders the most tangible recollection of this memorable day will remain the new

edition of the three volumes formerly published by the Edwin Mellen Press. Under that imprint they sold at prices which may have put off some potential private purchasers. The Dutch price of 75 guilders, that is about £25, is an uncommonly attractive one. The references will be found under "Recent Publications." – P. C.

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Notes and News

Short of being able to announce new well-edited editions of Gissing's novels in hardback or paperback, of the working-class novels for instance, which have been sadly neglected by publishers since the Harvester Press (old style) went the way of all firms, one must be content to announce the forthcoming availability from Chadwyck-Healey of *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, a database of 250 nineteenth-century novels on CD-ROM as well as on the World Wide Web. Private buyers will be very few, but some of the biggest libraries may conceivably let themselves be tempted, not by the prospect of acquiring one more "copy" of *David Copperfield* or *Vanity Fair*, but some elusive forgotten fiction which is rarely if ever seen on the secondhand market. Gissing has not been forgotten, but one may perhaps ask whether choosing *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women* and *The Whirlpool*, novels which are currently obtainable from one or several publishers, is what the reader needs. The standard price is £9,000 or £7,500 for orders received before 31 May 1999.

To the new editions or impressions listed under "Recent Publications" should be added a booklet entitled *Rejection* which John Michell and Richard Adams sent their friends as Christmas Greetings. It reproduces excerpts from chapter 16 of *New Grub Street*. When did the custom of sending one's friends such literary greetings originate, as regards Gissing, one wonders? Between the wars, it would seem, when many American collectors were attracted by his books, when *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* was a good seller, and a publisher like Mosher brought out selections from it. The novelist's relatives were then selling all the literary relics still in their hands and the collectors' appetite, when no autograph material offered, was temporarily appeased by some short selection from a favourite book, generally *Henry Ryecroft*, but at least once a few paragraphs from *By the Ionian Sea* or a poem like "Hope in Vain."

The Year's Work in English Studies, the latest volume of which (no. 76, issued last year), covers 1995, continues to give substantial analyses of work in the field of Gissing studies every twelvemonth. "Unlike Meredith or Reade studies," writes one of the editors, "Gissing studies flower. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, Volume 6 and Volume 7, offers scholars a vital research tool for understanding the final decade of Gissing's life. Using a diversity of sources,

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including newspapers, the author's memoirs, biographies and sales catalogues, the editors provide a valuable context for understanding this significant moment in the aesthetic shift between the Victorian age and the advent of modernism. Fully annotated, this important edition of Gissing's work [*sic*] should serve for years to come as a central resource to Gissing scholars and students of late Victorian literature." Whereupon the reviewer praises the present journal, "which continues to provide students of the novelist with scholarship of the highest calibre."

Gissing's best known work, as in the time of Frank Swinnerton, Hugh Walpole and George

Orwell, occasionally inspires latter-day novelists. *English Studies* for November 1998, in a survey of "Current Literature 1996" by J. M. Blom and L. R. Leavis, offers an example, Amanda Craig's *A Vicious Circle*, which is an imitation of *New Grub Street* in its literary life portion. Can any of our readers confirm this? Meanwhile historians of Wakefield continue to publish books of some interest to students of Gissing. Three of these books, issued in 1998, contain hundreds of illustrations, many of which show buildings and scenes (Stoneleigh Terrace, Westgate, Kirkgate Station, Sandal Castle, Mechanics' Institute, Cattle Market, etc.) connected in some way or other with Gissing and his relatives: *Wakefield in Old Photographs*, compiled by Christine Johnston (Hoo, near Rochester, Kent: Universal Books; first published by Alan Sutton, 1993), *Wakefield*, compiled by John Goodchild (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, Ltd), and *Aspects of Wakefield: Discovering Local History*, edited by Kate Taylor (Barnsley: Wharnclyffe Publishing).

Gissing's name appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* on four successive weeks recently. First on 29 January, when Deborah McVea and Jeremy Treglown, in their article on the TLS Centenary Archive, mentioned Gissing in a list of authors whose contributions to that journal had been overlooked. Secondly on 5 February when a subscriber reminded the editor that Gissing's two contributions to the *TLS* were reprinted as long ago as 1969. Thirdly on 12 February with a letter to the *TLS* in which the authors of the article acknowledged their mistake and repeated their (justified) claim that the forthcoming publication of an index to the *TLS* contributors would offer unexpected revelations. Lastly on 19 February in a review by Elizabeth Lowry of Harry Ricketts's biography of Kipling, *The Unforgiving Minute*, in which Gissing's opinion of *Stalky & Co.* was recalled.

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To all appearances *By the Ionian Sea* has been much better known to cultured Calabrian readers in the last few decades than was imagined even by Francesco Badolato, who has missed few opportunities of commenting on Gissing's life and work in Italian newspapers and journals since the mid-1960s. A pleasant discovery was made recently in a book now twelve years old, *Cara Catanzaro*, edited by Beppe Mazzocca and Antonio Panzarella (Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubbettino Editore, 1987, rptd 1991), in which a forgotten article on Gissing in Catanzaro is partly reprinted with some comment. On pp. 353-54, in a piece entitled "Nel mare Jonio," Nicola Siciliani De Cumis drew our notice to an article dated 29 October 1900 in a Catanzaro weekly paper, *La Giostra*, which reviewed the chapter on that town in *By the Ionian Sea* as it had run a few weeks before in the *Fortnightly Review*. It was hitherto believed that Gissing's travel narrative had been revealed to the Italians in 1957, when Margherita Guidacci's translation was published by Cappelli, and that, with the exception of *Thyrza* (1939) and *Born in Exile* (1955), his work had remained unknown in a country which had meant so much to him. While rejoicing that for once a foreigner, oddly yet understandably called a journalist, wrote pleasantly about Catanzaro, the anonymous author of the article (probably the editor of *La Giostra*) expressed his doubt that "il Signor Gissing" could really have understood the dialect that people, mostly tramps, spoke in the cafés. If there were philosophers in Catanzaro, *La Giostra* sarcastically observed, they were not to be found in such places. Altogether a self-conscious article which largely fails to convince us, as it is established that Gissing understood Italian quite well and met other people than vagabonds in the local cafés. *Cara Catanzaro*, a splendidly illustrated quarto volume, contains photographs of the Albergo Centrale c. 1905 and of the inside of the Farmacia Leone in 1897, the year when Gissing visited it in Cricelli's company. The griffin outside the shop, mentioned in *By the Ionian Sea*, can be seen on a later photograph (1915). Gissing's visit to Calabria was in turn commemorated by Saverio Strati in *La Calabria* (Catanzaro: Galleria Mancuso, 1996), in which excellent photographs of

Cosenza, Crotona, Catanzaro, Squillace and Reggio will be found. Much pleasure will also be drawn from the consultation of the October-December 1998 number of *Calabria Sconosciuta*, which contains an article on the brigand Musolino, about whom Gissing corresponded with Ouida.

Dr. William Greenslade informs us that a one-day centenary Conference on "Grant Allen and Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle" will be held on Saturday, 13 November 1999,

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St. Matthias Campus, University of the West of England, Bristol in collaboration with Bath Spa University College. The leaflet we received reads in part: "Grant Allen (1848-1899) was described by a contemporary as 'the most versatile, beyond comparison, of any man of our age.' The centenary of his death offers an opportunity to hold the first international conference on Grant Allen, anthropologist, Darwinist, essayist, novelist, writer of short fiction and one of the most cited but under-investigated men of letters of the late nineteenth-century. Best known as the author of the succès de scandale *The Woman Who Did*, Allen's wider critical significance has yet to receive sustained attention. The aim of this conference is to examine Allen's achievement, as a writer, and as a catalyst, in the light of current interdisciplinary work on the cultural politics of the fin de siècle. For further details, please contact: Dr. William Greenslade (William.Greenslade@uwe.ac.uk), Faculty of Humanities, UWE, St. Matthias Campus, Oldbury Court Road, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2JP. UWE: fax 0117 9750402, tel 0117 9656261 x4529.

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Recent Publications

Volumes

Bouwe Postmus, *An Exile's Cunning: Some Private Papers of George Gissing*, Wormerveer, The Netherlands: Stichting Uitgeverij Noord-Holland, 1999. Dark red cloth with gilt titling. vii + 372 pages. Dutch guilders 75. ISBN 90-71123-48-0. The volume contains Bouwe Postmus's editions of Gissing's American notebook and Memorandum Book as well as his collected verse, with a preface not to be found in the previous editions of the three works.

Paul. F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *With Gissing in Italy: The Memoirs of Brian Ború Dunne*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1999. Blue cloth with gilt titling. ix + 207 pp. \$36.95. Pictorial dust jacket. ISBN 0-8214-1258-2. The book contains the various versions of Dunne's recollections of Gissing and four appendices, as well as 18 illustrations.

George Gissing, *Die überzähligen Frauen*, Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag Taschenbuch (Insel 2501), 1999. Light blue pictorial paperback, with a reproduction of

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Piero Marussig's painting "Donne al caffè" (1924) on the front cover. 416 pp + 11 pp. advts. DM 24.80. ISBN 3-456-34201-X. This is Karina Of's German translation of *The Odd Women*, first published in 1997, with an eight-page Aferword by Wulfhard Stahl.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Penguin Classics [1998 or 1999]. Tenth impression. Same pictorial cover as for previous impressions since 1985. Some minor changes have been made in the nonliterary information on the cover and on p. [559], but the book remains what it has been for years and is still selling at £6.99.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. This is a new, slightly revised edition in the Oxford World's Classics in a larger format and with a new cover, though the illustration, a detail from "A Young Man: Robin John," by Augustus John, has been retained. The book is an Open University Set Book and is also selling at £6.99. It is described on the copyright page as the first impression in this new series.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Patricia Comitini, "A Feminist Fantasy: Conflicting Ideologies in *The Odd Women*," *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 27, no. 4, Winter 1995, pp. 529-43.

Solveig C. Robinson, "RSVP Bibliography," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 31, no. 3, Fall 1998. Lists articles on Gissing and his brother previously mentioned in this journal.

Francesco Badolato: "Viaggiatori dell'Ottocento: Gissing e Sculco," *Il Crotonese*, 11-14 December 1998, p. 12. With photographs of Gissing and his doctor.

Bouwe Postmus, "Two Day Trips for a Retired Professor of English or With Gissing in Suffolk," in *A Fusion of Horizons: In dialogue with Dominic Baker-Smith*, ed. E. M. Knottenbelt and Marijke Rudnik-Smalbraak, Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1998. A limited edition of 200 copies. The book was presented to Dominic Baker-Smith, Professor of English at the University of Amsterdam, on his retirement.

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Anthony Rota, *Apart from the Text*, Pinner, Middlesex: Private Libraries Association; New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1998. In the chapter on the "three-decker" (pp. 161-82) Gissing and his attitude towards that form of publication are mentioned on p. 171. Other chapters are devoted to the book trade, printing, paper, design, book bindings, dustjackets, illustrations, part-issues and serials, series publishing and the yellowback.

Liz Geldhill, "Express spotlight on George Gissing: World acclaim for city author," *The Express* (Wakefield), 1 January 1999, p. 12. With illustrations.

Wolfgang Krischke, "Ein Fall für Emma. O zu A: Warum Frauen anders sprechen als Männer," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Geisteswissenschaften Supplement), 6 January 1999, p. N6. The article begins with remarks about Mrs. Yule's speech in *New Grub Street* – in spite of her efforts, she could not deny her background.

D. J. Taylor, "Never ending stories," *The Guardian*, 2 February 1999, p. 5-6. On long-winded Victorian and modern novels, with allusions to *New Grub Street*, which the writer edited for Everyman paperbacks. This article also appeared in the Canberra *Sunday Times*, 7 February, Features Section, p. 18, under the title "Books: Giants of our literary canon."

Francesco Badolato, "Nuova ed abbondante luce su George Gissing: Completata finalmente la

raccolta delle lettere,” *Il Corriere di Roma*, 28 February 1999, p. 15. A celebration of the completion of the *Collected Letters*. The same author reviewed the French translation of *By the Ionian Sea* in *Pick Wick* (Milan, the journal of the Circolo Pickwick), January-March 1999, p. 2.

Anthony Quinn, “George Gissing (1857-1903),” in *Waterstone’s Guide to London Writing*, ed. Nick Rennison (Brentford, Middlesex, 1999), pp. 77-79. A good entry in a useful guidebook, with a list of all the Waterstone bookshops in the United Kingdom. Mr. Quinn’s and Michael Moorcock’s entries (pp. 77-104) cover the Victorian and Edwardian city. This 200-page volume sells at £3.99.

Arjen Fortuin, “Ik wil de scheppende kunstenaar zo dicht mogelijk op de huid zitten’: Bouwe Postmus’ ouderwetse proefschrift over George Gissing,” *Folia* (the weekly journal of the

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University of Amsterdam), 26 March 1999, pp. 1 and 7. Article on Bouwe Postmus and his Ph.D. thesis. With photographs of the candidate.

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Sonnet

[We print as a tailpiece a poem by Thomas Waller Gissing, entitled “Sonnet: Written after reading Wordsworth’s Sonnets on Death Punishments,” taken from his volume of *Miscellaneous Poems* (Framlingham: Printed by W. D. Freeman, Bookseller, Double Street, 1851). Readers will recollect that the poet’s son, George, expressed himself unambiguously on the subject of capital punishment in his *Commonplace Book* (p. 24-25). He instinctively revolted against it.]

Can it be true, – I cried, as mute I stood –
Can it be true, that He the noblest Bard
Of Nature, can thus with utter disregard
Of human life, the law of “blood for blood,”

Thus loudly preach. Can He, the kind and good,
Who’d scorn to harm the meanest creeping thing, –
Who’d e’en set free the blithe lark’s caged wing, –
Can He thus for the gallows cater food?

Out, out upon the thought, I’ll ne’er believe
It, ’twas in a frenzy writ, but the mind
Once calm again, His noble soul would grieve,

That passion thus had made His reason blind.
He who, in youth, with mercy filled each page,
Will surely scorn such thoughts in grey-haired age.

February, 1850.

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Information for Contributors

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

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