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“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
Commonplace Book

Gissing’s Revision of *Thyrza*

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Gissing’s novel *Thyrza* exists in two versions, one of which is far better known than the other. The novel was originally published in three volumes by Smith, Elder in 1887.¹ It was reissued by the same firm in 1891 in a one-volume version prepared by the author.² Unlike that of *The Unclassed*, the revision of *Thyrza* has received little critical attention. Only one article, by C. J. Francis, has been devoted to the topic.³ Almost all critics have used the revised version, which has formed the basis of all subsequent reprints, except for the AMS Press edition of 1969.⁴ Full-length critical or biographical studies of Gissing by Tindall (1974), Poole (1975), Goode (1978), Halperin (1982), Sloan (1989) and James (2003) all refer solely to the second edition.⁵ Critics who use only the first edition are rare. They include John Carey, who in *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992) quotes one of the few phrases from the first edition that Gissing happened to re-write.⁶

To some extent the comparative neglect of the first version of *Thyrza* is understandable. Gissing revised the book in just three days, from 1 to 3 February, 1891. He scarcely had time for extensive re-casting: as Francis notes, the most significant changes comprise cuts rather than alterations. Nevertheless, although he revised the book rapidly, he worked with his customary thoroughness. He was, he told his sister Ellen, “revising it very carefully.”⁷ To Smith, Elder he wrote:

The excisions & corrections which I have made are so considerable that I should like to glance over a set of proofs when you put the book into the printers’ hands for a new edition.

It is my hope that I have improved the story by the removal of superfluities & of certain obvious weaknesses.⁸

A month later he wrote similarly to Eduard Bertz, “‘Thyrza’ I have corrected & greatly abbreviated; I hope the thing is improved.”⁹

A detailed comparison of the two versions of the novel confirms the carefulness with which Gissing revised. Although critical emphasis must fall on the excisions, especially the removal of the Emerson subplot, Gissing spoke also of corrections and improvements, and a number of these are manifested in changes to words and phrases.

Before analysing the alterations and excisions, a brief reminder of the book's principal characters might be useful. Thyrza Trent and her sister Lydia are work-girls in Lambeth. An older, thoughtful working man, Gilbert Grail, proposes to Thyrza and is accepted. Meanwhile, an idealistic factory-owner's son, Walter Egremont, offers free lectures to the artisans of Lambeth. Grail alone responds enthusiastically and Egremont offers to make him a librarian. This scheme and Grail's marriage to Thyrza are aborted when Egremont and Thyrza fall in love. Egremont goes abroad, and Thyrza into hiding. Helped by a friend of Egremont's, Mrs. Ormonde, Thyrza waits two years for Egremont's return, having secretly heard that after this period he intends to marry her. But, influenced by Mrs. Ormonde, who misjudges Thyrza's feelings, Egremont abandons Thyrza for Annabel Newthorpe, a cultured young woman who has earlier rejected him. Heart-broken, Thyrza dies after pledging herself to Grail. Lydia marries Grail's friend Luke Ackroyd.

If we start with what Gissing called corrections, it is clear that the term must not be taken narrowly. Overall, the first edition of *Thyrza* was more accurately printed than the second. Assuming the holograph manuscript to be authoritative,¹⁰ there are hardly any errors in the first edition that Gissing corrected for the second. One is Grail's mother's exclamation, "Why there *is* the name!" (p. 66), which was printed with a question mark in the first edition (I, 111); Gissing restored the exclamation mark he had used in the manuscript. More frequently, the second edition accidentally introduced textual errors. Some of these are obvious ("wreks" for "weeks", p. 166; "These fifteen months of practical business life in America has swept my brain", p. 424 – "have swept" in III, 179 and the manuscript). Some are very minor – for example, Thyrza's comment on Luke Ackroyd, "I don't *dislike* him" (p. 36), correctly printed from the manuscript in the first edition as "I don't *dislike* him" (I, 62). But some have the potential to be seriously misleading. Egremont's honourable reflection, "Should he by word or deed throw light upon Gilbert Grail's future, he felt that all the good of his own life would be at an end" (p. 246), is baffling until one consults the first edition, where the phrase (as in the manuscript) is "throw blight upon" (II, 142-143). Another demonstrably misleading word occurs

in Mrs. Ormonde's reflection on the shame she feels in Thyrza's presence: "Egremont's perishable love, her own prudential forecasts and schemings, were stamped poor, worldly, ignoble, in comparison with this sacred and extinguishable ardour" (p. 455). The word "extinguishable" seems strange, especially given the contrast with "perishable." One critic, John Sloan, has perceived this oddity as pointing to cynical manipulation: "'Extinguishable' here has a curious force, with its suggestion not of inevitability, but of calculation. It directs us not to the inadequacy of passivity and conventionality, but the active duplicity involved in keeping the existing social order intact."¹¹ The oddity disappears, however, when we discover that in the first edition (as in the manuscript) the word is "inextinguishable" (III, 236).

One area where the second edition highlights errors is the dating of the novel's action. In the first edition this is given as "six years ago" (I, 43). Realising that this phrase could prove misleading, Gissing changed it to "in the year '80" (p. 25). Unfortunately, this new precision rendered subsequent dates impossible. The "friendly lead" at which Thyrza sings is advertised as taking place on "Saturday evening, August 2" (p. 40). But August 2 was a Monday in 1880. Later we learn that "this Christmas fell on a Friday" (p. 115) – in fact it fell on a Saturday in 1880. The following year Egremont wants Grail "to begin at the library on May 7, that's a Monday" (p. 208) – actually a Saturday in 1881. As it happens, no dates for the novel's action are consistent with all these details. Few if any readers will have noticed the discrepancies and they might seem insignificant. They reveal, though, that Gissing's form of realism did not involve reference to calendars.¹²

If we interpret "corrections" more broadly to encompass improvements to imagery and phrasing, it is clear that Gissing seized the opportunity of making alterations of this kind. Some of the changes simply eliminate infelicities of expression. "The early morning at the straitened window of the parlour was cold and threatening" (II, 201) becomes "The glimmer of early morning at the parlour window was cold and threatening" (p. 279). "There is a freemasonry between the pure-blooded vulgar proletariat" (II, 129) becomes "between the members of the pure-blooded proletariat" (p. 238). In the original, Thyrza says something "with the *naïve* satisfaction which was one of her charming moods" (I, 104). In the re-write this becomes (less emphatically) "simple satisfaction" and (more precisely) "charming traits" (p. 61). An interesting alteration is the sentence describing how Lydia is made a "philosopher by love" when she ponders the significance of the formulaic phrases ("Dear Mr. Ackroyd," "Yours truly") in her letter to

Luke. In the original it reads: “she had acquired all at once the power of seeing through the outward of things, of perceiving what really lies below our poor conventional shams” (III, 14). Rewritten, this becomes “of seeing through the outward show of things, of perceiving what really lies below our conventional forms” (p. 353). The change to the last phrase makes the statement less emotive and (since the subject is epistolary convention) more accurate.

Some alterations suggest an author not merely tidying up phrasing but re-thinking what he wants to say. In the original, the first description of Thyrza’s face includes the sentence: “It was not a morbid physiognomy, yet it impressed one with a sense of vague trouble” (I, 59). This becomes: “It was a subtly morbid physiognomy, and impressed one,” etc (p. 35). Perhaps Gissing wished to emphasise sooner the ill-health that eventually kills Thyrza, or perhaps he meant to heighten the heroine’s attraction: it is after all asserted later (of Annabel’s beauty) that “to the modern mind nothing is complete that has not an element of morbidity” (p. 362). A similar re-conception seems evident in the change to Egremont’s original reflection on the unreceptivity of his audience: “he knew well that the loveliest lyric would appeal to a man like Bower no otherwise than a paragraph from the daily newspaper” (I, 148-49). Given that Egremont subsequently says that “The newspaper has supplanted the book” and that journalists get “a more respectful hearing than Shakespeare” (p. 93), this statement might have seemed ambiguous. At any rate Gissing rewrote it to read: “would appeal to a man like Bower no more than an unintelligible demonstration of science” (p. 87). The new version offers a cleaner comparison and removes the archaic “no otherwise.”

Perhaps the most fascinating subset of verbal “corrections” in the text of *Thyrza* comprises cases in which Gissing deliberately introduced “incorrect” constructions. As one might expect, they occur in dialogue. In the original, Thyrza says to Lydia, “I haven’t done anything wrong” (I, 81). In the revision this becomes, “I haven’t done nothing wrong” (p. 48). Since we’re told that when Thyrza meets Egremont she is “afraid of saying something that ‘wasn’t grammar’” (p. 176), and since she uses non-standard forms elsewhere, the change makes her speech more plausible. The same is true of Lydia, who declares in the first edition, “Why, there *are* no books to put on the shelves!” (II, 176), but in the second, “Why, there *is* no books” (p. 265); and of Thyrza’s friend Totty Nancarrow, whose “I don’t think as I shall ever care properly for anybody” (III, 85) becomes, “I don’t think as I shall ever care proper for anybody” (p. 391). In all these cases the manu-

script confirms that the orthodox versions of the first edition were what Gissing originally wrote. It seems virtually certain the changes were made to achieve consistency of idiom.¹³

Realistic speech was clearly a concern of Gissing's during the process of revision. This emerges not only through changes in grammar but additions of emphasis. For instance, in the foreman Bower's outburst about Egremont – "he has to thank *me* for everything! But for *me* he'd never have had a soul to hear his lectures" (p. 238) – the emphases are absent from the first edition (II, 130-31) and the manuscript, but extend a pattern of egotism evident in the rest of the speech. Comparable examples, such as Bessie Bunce's, "Well, I don't mind, if *you* don't" (p. 180; emphasis not in II, 24 or the manuscript), demonstrate Gissing's attentiveness to the rhythms of the spoken voice. In one instance he altered a phrase altogether, evidently with the intention of securing natural dialogue. In the first edition, after Grail declares that the working man's Bible is his Sunday newspaper, Egremont exclaims, "An arrow in the white!" (I, 158). Less stiltedly, he replies in the revision, "And what does he get out of it?" (p. 93).

Turning from alterations to excisions, it is clear that these account for the most noticeable differences between the two versions of the novel. They occur most extensively in the third volume, from which Gissing removed an entire subplot, but on a smaller scale are detectable throughout. Gissing spoke of "removal of superfluities," and it is probably true that most readers would find the revised version more economical, more tonally consistent and less diffuse. Yet there is also some loss of telling detail, emotional intensity, and personal revelation. What follows is an analysis of the cuts in order to reconstruct the author's priorities during the process of revision.

Clearly, certain cuts were made by Gissing to remove redundancy. In the revision, chapter VII ends with Egremont's question, "Could you spare me five minutes, Mr. Grail; I should like to speak to you" (p. 88). The question hangs in the air, inaugurating a fateful relationship. The chapter ending in the first version – "'Certainly, sir,' was the reply" (I, 150) – is banal. Elsewhere Gissing cut superfluous "business" – Annabel giving excuses for leaving (II, 35; cf. p. 185), Lydia checking a postmark (III, 11; cf. p. 351) – and some over-explicit allusions to money: how much Egremont must spend on the library (I, 178; cf. p. 104) or the fact that Mrs. Ormonde covered the expenses of Thyrza's trip to Eastbourne (II, 23; cf. p. 179). In most cases he was cutting what was sufficiently implied earlier – for example, that Thyrza had left Egremont abruptly because he had spoken

of Miss Newthorpe “in that particular way” (II, 95; cf. pp. 220 and 216-17). The analysis of the character of the old caretaker, Mrs. Butterfield (II, 77; cf. p. 210), disappeared for similar reasons.

Manifestly, many of the cuts were made to increase the power of the novel by decreasing its explicitness. Egremont’s musings on Grail’s wife-to-be (pp. 146-47) were followed, in the first edition, by the sentence, “The conclusion was that he felt really curious to know the future Mrs. Grail” (I, 255) – an over-obvious preparation for their meeting. A sustained example of the benefits gained by substituting implication for assertion occurs in the chapter “Movements,” in which the politician Dalmaine brings his wife to heel. In the version familiar to most modern readers, he speaks with sinister emphasis of being driven “to the most painful extremities” and concludes, “The alternative to obedience is – you know what” (p. 369). In the first edition these warnings relate to explicit references to his “legal advisers” and a threat to tell her parents of the “very grave nature of my evidence” (III, 42). In the re-write their ominous vagueness renders them more potent.

In most cases the removal of narrative redundancy or semantic over-emphasis intensifies the novel. In some cases, there is an accompanying loss of detail and a thinning of emotional effects. Occasionally the lost details are merely verbal curlicues that nevertheless seem worth retaining – such as Bessie Bunce’s comment (in a cancelled passage about the trip to Eastbourne) that the Downs is “a funny name, when they all go *up*” (II, 25; cf. p. 180). More worrying is the excision of many sections that flesh out the characters’ emotions or minutely explain their psychology.¹⁴ In the original, for example, Lydia’s fluctuating feelings for Ackroyd are far more fully explored. Readers of the revision who come across the statement, “Since Thyrsa’s engagement to Gilbert, there was no longer need of subtle self-deceptions” (p. 262) might not realise that the last phrase originally alluded to a page-long paragraph of emotional analysis. The cut matters, for the paragraph included the sentence, “It was a subtle temptation that led her on” (II, 171), which startlingly aligns down-to-earth Lydia with emotionally susceptible Thyrsa and Egremont (see for instance the accounts of their being tempted on pp. 338, 310). An aspect of Lydia has been lost.

Although her essential passions are preserved, Thyrsa too is emotionally trimmed. Originally there was greater emphasis on her turbulent feelings and pining discontent. The cuts start with the first description of her, where the phrase “her eyes were large and full of light” (p. 35) initially continued, “but their blue orbs regarded nothing near; imagination dwelt in them and seemed ever busy with things remote from the workroom and the dull

street” (I, 59). One cut passage tells us that “Her being was repressed and struggled darkly with the forces which constrained it” (I, 196; cf. p. 114); another speaks of her difficulty in telling Gilbert the truth (II, 94; cf. p. 220); a third enlarges on her desperation and the possibility that she might resort to flight (II, 100; cf. p. 223). In the chapter “Confession” her exclamation, “He’s gone, Lyddy! How am I to live without him?” (p. 276) was originally followed by a “passionate outburst”:

I love him! Oh, I do love him! Lyddy, I never knew what love was before. Gilbert once asked me if I loved him, and I said yes. I didn’t know what I was saying! I’ve never loved Gilbert, never, and I never can love him. I’ve given away all the love I have. It’ll kill me, Lyddy! (II, 195).

We might speculate as to why this was cut. It incorporates recapitulation; Thyrza’s feelings are clear enough anyway; and it could seem histrionic and clichéd. Yet together with other passionate declarations – Thyrza telling Lydia, for example, how she dreamt her lover visited her when she was “alone – quite alone” (II, 197; cf. p. 277) – it makes the heroine less staid and dignified than she appears in the revision.

The same is true of other characters, for in general the revision, eschewing melodrama, tones down emotional fervour. In the chapter “Goodbye,” for instance, after the sentence, “And he loved her with the love which comes to a man but once” (p. 252), the original expatiates on Egremont’s desire and the conflict of conscience it engenders. In an agonised mental address to Thyrza he imagines sweeping her off to Italy, then is tortured by thoughts of Grail and Lydia (II, 154). When, shortly afterwards, increasingly excited, he walks with Thyrza to Westminster Bridge, he reflects in the original that he “must act manlike”, but then asks himself, “Why did he not take her and clasp her about with his arms, and drink his fill of love from the sweet lips that so passioned for his?” (II, 163; cf. p. 258). Jettisoned perhaps as romantic fustian, the sentence is nevertheless notable as the only explicit indication of the sexual nature of Egremont’s passion, and of Thyrza’s similar desire.¹⁵

It is clear that in shortening the novel Gissing not only removed superfluous incidents but thinned out what he took to be unnecessary emphasis or inartistic assertion. His changes are consistent with the advice he had given to his brother Algernon in 1883 (but which, self-evidently, he had not always followed): “In fact, the secret of art in fiction is the *indirect*. Nothing must be told too plumply.”¹⁶ The results are traceable in key thematic areas, as well as in fictional techniques.

As already suggested, one theme affected was that of love and passion. Even in its revised version, the novel builds an argument that, in abandoning the single passion of his life, Egremont has missed his opportunity. Originally, this theme was sounded from the outset with reference to a wider range of characters. Revising the novel, Gissing removed passages which may have struck him as intrusive in their propaganda for passion. In the opening chapter, we read in the revised version that Annabel's father had been passionately attached to a wife who disappointed him: "The consequence was that the years of his prime were wasted, and the intellectual promise of his youth found no fulfilment" (p. 4). In the first edition, "wasted" is immediately qualified: "– nay, not so, for love is never waste" (I, 5-6). One can see why Gissing cut this parenthesis, and yet, since the novel suggests a parallel between the inefficacy of Newthorpe and Egremont (see especially, p. 477), it plainly prepares for the latter's realisation that his love for Thyrza was "of infinite significance" (p. 444). Similar cuts can be found elsewhere. In the chapter "Mists" Annabel wonders whether, in accepting Egremont, she might be relinquishing hope of a great passion. After the sentence, "Yet who was she, that life should bestow its highest blessing upon her?" (p. 161), the original continued: "What arrogance was this, that made conscience of the desire for happiness? And then – how could she tell? – was she capable of conceiving that passionate love which had exalted others to the heaven of heavens?" (I, 281). Ackroyd also believes in love, which he sees as "a matter of vastly more importance than all the political and social and religious questions in the world" (p. 371). Officially, but consistently, the first edition adds: "It is a view for which something may be said" (III, 51).

The commitment to passion more evident in the first edition was accompanied by an idealisation of women that Gissing likewise subdued. More than any other of his novels, *Thyrza* serenades the female sex, irrespective of social class. After a sentence reporting that Bunce "felt a little uncomfortable" (p. 370) for acting ungraciously to Mrs. Ormonde, the first edition continues, "Your stubborn insurgent, your man of hungry heart and mind, who curses with most violence all the world's smooth lies and hypocritical cruelties, will always be most amenable to the starry influence of a noble woman" (III, 48-49). Noting that Bunce cared for Totty Nancarrow, the original added this purple passage, which Gissing later discarded:

You must not smile when I pass abruptly from Mrs. Ormonde to Totty. I have wrought very imperfectly if you do not like Totty Nancarrow, if you do not feel that she is really a woman, and therefore not unworthy of our attention after whomsoever

other of her sex. Nay, it is true you must be the reader whom I have in mind, he who cares not where a woman live, or what form of language be on her lips, so that she look out of womanly eyes and have in her that something which is the potentiality of love. For you only; the others will go their way uncomprehending; and indeed I care not (III, 49; cf. p. 370).

Utilising direct address, commenting self-consciously on technique, employing creakily archaic language, this passage was ripe for removal. But what is most remarkable is its personal tone. The argument of critics such as Tindall – that much of *Thyrza* is a sublimation of Gissing’s former feelings about Nell Harrison – might help to explain its intensity.¹⁷ Nor are its tone and sentiments unique among the cancelled passages. Frequently, in the first edition the author acts as advocate for his female characters: “one likes Lydia Trent none the worse for being so human and so womanly” (I, 260-61; cf. p. 150). Or of Annabel: “She would not fail utterly; there was too much of nobleness in her character” (I, 278; cf. p. 160). Gissing sometimes made a present of *Thyrza* to women in whom he took an interest.¹⁸ Doubtless its tone about love and women was a factor in his choice.

The attempt in revision to reduce the novel’s temperature applied not only to love and passion but also to everyday affection. *Thyrza* is by common consent the kindest of Gissing’s novels; originally it was even warmer. Gissing deleted many passages which, while not enhancing plot or character, gave a sense of domestic friendship. The affectionate intimacy between Thyrza and Lydia was even stronger in the first edition, where they call each other “dearest” more frequently (e.g., I, 87; cf. p. 52). In one deleted passage, Lydia worries about spending money on their grandfather’s coat that might be needed for Thyrza’s illness (I, 168; cf. p. 99). In another, when they are reunited in Eastbourne, Thyrza pours out compassion for her sister (“Don’t, don’t cry any more, dearest love”) and also milk for her, with the comment, “Sweet? *Isn’t* it sweet? Real milk; I should like never to drink anything else” (III, 21; cf. p. 357) – a detail that epitomizes the comparative luxury that Thyrza has enjoyed. In the original, just before she reveals Grail’s proposal, Thyrza ascertains that her sister has a “secret” (I, 212-213; cf. p. 122). Her later statement, which Gissing retained – “You can’t keep secrets from me” (p. 125) – originally referred back to this moment.

Moving now to modes of writing in which excisions were made most often, the first is definitely dialogue. Many conversations were cut which added nothing to the narrative but communicated a feeling of intimate

inter-action. Typical of these is the “simple, cheerful chat” between Thyrsa, Lydia and their granddad as they eat mince pies at Christmas (I, 199-201; cf. p. 116). There are also tête-à-têtes between Grail and his mother (I, 210-11; cf. p. 122); Grail and Egremont (I, 254. cf. p. 146); and especially between Grail and Lydia, who after his engagement to Thyrsa (I, 261; cf. p. 150) and after Thyrsa’s disappearance (III, 3-4; cf. p. 347) have close, confiding conversations. Others who converse more are Lydia and Mary Bower (e.g., I, 218-19; cf. p. 126) and Annabel and Paula (I, 11; cf. p. 7). Originally, Paula’s letter to Annabel (pp. 140-41) included in its excited chatter a hint that Annabel should be among her bridesmaids (I, 244). Nothing came of the suggestion, which is perhaps why Gissing dropped it.

As well as thinning out dialogue, Gissing was evidently keen to tame areas of tonal or stylistic excess, including rhetoric and sarcasm. After the statement that Grail’s love for Thyrsa “was at times gently mingled with fear” (p. 228), the first edition adds: “The strongest love always is; from its birth-moment it is conscious of that jealous spectre with the deathly eyes which watch so ceaselessly” (II, 111). This kind of portentous generalisation, commoner in Gissing’s early fiction, was later scrupulously avoided. Another truncated rhetorical flourish is the reflection that follows Annabel’s “warm yearning” for Egremont (p. 302) when she thinks he has married Thyrsa: “It seemed too great a thing to lament for; as well lament inconsolably for some disaster conatal with her life” (II, 241). A similar moment in the first edition occurs at the end of excised dialogue between Thyrsa and Mrs. Grail, when they kiss: “The young fair face touching the old wrinkled one; a picture to break the heart with grief for all that are born” (II, 119; cf. p. 232). In all these cases, the sentiments expressed are wholly typical of Gissing. But – as he wrote to Algernon – “readers don’t like to be told things too plainly.”¹⁹

Less typical are the Biblical references that occur towards the end of the first edition and that Gissing may have felt were excessively rhetorical. In the original, the night before Thyrsa dies, she is persuaded by Lydia to say the Lord’s Prayer: “So Lyddy had joy again in her pure heart, hearing the words, which had come to be her solace, on the lips of her dear one restored to her” (III, 265; cf. p. 471). After her death, the sentences, “Had she not herself desired it? And what gift more blessed, of all that man may pray for?” (p. 473), were originally followed by a quotation (from *Psalms*, 127: 2): “‘He giveth His beloved sleep’” (III, 269). These cancelled passages may seem small, but coming as they do at the climax of the novel, and in the context of other developments – Ackroyd’s religious concession to

Lydia (p. 476), atheist Bunce marrying Catholic Totty – they make the first edition of *Thyrza* a relatively pious production.²⁰

The obverse of rhetorical fervour, sarcasm, equally attracted Gissing's blue pencil in his quest to chasten his style. A description of Bunce's favourite reading as "a collection of discourses by gentlemen of the anti-theistic persuasion" (I, 41) was re-phrased more neutrally as, "a collection of antitheistic discourses" (p. 24). The first edition also included a two-page analysis of Bunce's character, which Gissing may have cut because he felt its content was sufficiently suggested elsewhere. It contained, however, the cherishable sentence: "He was the kind of man whom a little judiciously directed persecution would have driven to the point of sacrificing his life for his unbelief" (III, 46-7; cf. p. 370). Gissing may have felt its tone was too sharp. Certainly, he strove to modify the mocking presentation of Dalmaine. The chapter "A Man with a Future"²¹ opens with a full-scale portrait of this character, the nearest the novel has to a villain. Originally, most of it was cast in the present tense, giving it a somewhat lurid hue – "He is interested in all that concerns the industrial population of Great Britain; he is making that subject his speciality [...] And the single working man for whom he veritably cares one jot is Mr. James Dalmaine", etc (I, 222). Revising, Gissing switched to the past tense, simultaneously eliminating a stylistic anomaly and softening the sarcastic tone (pp. 127-28).

Another area of stylistic awkwardness that Gissing pruned was pedantry. Stilted syntax, fusty phraseology and recondite allusions were removed. Mannered exclamations such as "Alas!" (I, 72; cf. p. 43) or (one of Gissing's favourites) "Ye gods!" – twice attributed to Egremont (III, 172, 184; cf. pp. 420, 427) – were cut. So too was the use of Latin – "'*Macte virtute!*' murmured Mr. Newthorpe" (I, 26; cf. p. 15).²² And of Greek: "Eironeia" (III, 208), the original title of the chapter in which Egremont abandons *Thyrza*, was changed to "A Friendly Office" (p. 438), the new title employing irony rather than announcing it.

Manifestly, Gissing also wished to reduce the amount of personal statement in the novel, including both authorial declaration (often signalled by the first-person pronoun) and direct address to the reader (often signalled by the second-person pronoun). Some excised passages – such as that on Mrs. Ormonde and Totty, quoted above – combine both modes. Occasionally, such writing seems to have been stimulated by Gissing's protective attitude towards his female characters. After praise of Mrs. Ormonde's "firm, yet sweet, tones" (p. 77) the original continues: "if you had heard her

“speak the commonest words, herself unseen, you would have known her for what she was” (I, 130). Likewise a digression on the “indifference to small economies” of working-class women (p. 383) continues, in the first edition, “But I am talking of Totty, and it is my last thought to rail at her” (III, 72).²³ More extensively, the perils of personal identification in passages relating to Egremont seem to have provoked deletions. One of these commends him for the “extreme solicitude” with which he prepared his first lecture and his “quick sympathy” with his audience (I, 147; cf. p. 87). Another, describing his second lecture, increasingly draws attention to the author’s views and experiences:

The second lecture was on Newspapers. Perhaps one had better leave this particular piece of prophecy in the care of the past. A newspaper was just now our friend’s *bête noire*; to talk of the daily press made him little less angry than Christianity made poor Bunce. I won’t take it upon myself to say that he was wholly wrong; it is even possible that, delivered to an audience of journalists, this address might have performed a little blood-letting of a salutary kind. Yet, after all, these gentlemen have thick skins, and perhaps it would have been wiser in Egremont to have left them to the course of nature. I fear he did no good under the circumstances [...]

Well, it was all a mistake, that course of lectures. A year or two later Egremont could not recur to it in thought without a reddening of the cheek – a disagreeable experience which only those of us are free from who have never known generous instincts in youth. Is it not strange, by the way, that the most purely noble of a grown man’s recollections are precisely those which make him feel most shame? (II, 12-13; cf. p. 174).

Gissing shared Egremont’s hatred of newspapers (shortly after revising *Thyrza*, he wrote: “I cannot speak with moderation of these journalistic persons”),²⁴ and was ashamed of his youthful lecturing. Evidently he removed these paragraphs not because he repudiated their sentiments but because they were intrusively personal. In the first edition Egremont is closer to Gissing – for example, the passage in which he reflects on “the sphere which his birth gave him no claim to enter” (p. 213) is longer and more personal (II, 81-2). Likewise removed are sections relating to Gissing’s disenchantment with Positivism, a creed indirectly attributed to Bunce (“He talked of the *old* religion, implying that he had a new one of his own” – III, 47; cf. p. 370).²⁵ Deleted, such passages were indeed left “in the care of the past.”

Virtually all areas in which cuts were made can be found in the single most substantial excision, that of the Emerson subplot. This occurred in Volume III and could easily be removed because it was relatively self-contained and inessential to the main plot. Gissing cut Volume III, Ch. 5,

“A Minor Prophet” (III, 93-114), though retaining its opening pages for the next chapter, “The Heart and its Secret” (Ch. 33 in the revision). He also cut Volume III, Ch. 7, “Mark But My Fall!” (III, 129-46), the title of which was a quotation (used ironically) from Wolsey’s pathetic speech in Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* (Act 3, Sc. 2).

Clara Emerson is the woman whom Mrs. Ormonde arranges for Thyrsa to lodge with in London. In the revision she is a shadowy figure and her husband Harold even more so. To cover the extensive cuts he had made, Gissing added an explanatory paragraph – the only addition of more than one phrase in the whole of the revision:

Mr. Emerson was a young gentleman of leisurely habits and precarious income. Mrs. Ormonde suspected, and with reason, that he nurtured a feeble constitution at the expense of his wife’s labour; he was seldom at home, and the persons interested in Mrs. Emerson had a difficulty in making his nearer acquaintance (p. 326).

In the original, Harold is a pretentious poet who, having left his job, allows his doting wife to keep him. Unwisely, she asks Thyrsa to keep him company while she works. Harold produces “an alarming body of manuscript” (III, 106), which he insists on reading aloud. It is “strange and sad stuff, crude to the point of ghastliness, abounding in bathos, so impotently earnest that no burlesque ever written could surpass it in side-splitting effects” (III, 107). Though Thyrsa gets a headache, Harold is elated. Coming to see Thyrsa as his “living Muse” (III, 134), he pesters her with his conversation and later approaches as she sits at the piano: “Thyrsa felt a warm touch on her temple, and, as a thrill of dread and horror went through her, she recognised that he had touched her with his lips” (III, 140). She flees, and Harold retreats in dread. Emboldened, and wishing to help Clara, she makes him promise to resume his job. He does so, but also confesses to Clara, who initially finds it hard to forgive Thyrsa for proving so attractive to him.

As this summary might suggest, the Emerson episode is managed in a mode of exuberant satire alien to the rest of the book. It is rather as if parts of *Our Friend the Charlatan* had been spatchcocked into the text of *Thyrsa* – in fact the incongruity is greater, since Gissing had not yet perfected a tone of polished irony.²⁶ What is less obvious is that aspects of this episode complicate themes important in *Thyrsa*. Some aspects, too, reflect on the author, thus counting as personal material.

The mutual passion of Thyrsa and Egremont, uneducated work-girl and cultured intellectual, is represented as tragedy. In Harold’s infatuation with Thyrsa, it reappears as parody. Thyrsa first takes an interest in him when he speaks about the “corrupt basis” of society in a way that recalls “certain

words of Walter Egremont's" (III, 101, 102). Like Egremont, he is captivated by her appearance: "No mortal could deny Thyrza's surpassing beauty; to Harold she seemed endowed with corresponding gifts of spirit" (III, 134). Harold attributes understanding to her, for "looking at Thyrza, it was easily forgotten that she had no acquired knowledge: those downcast eyelids might have veiled the light of a mind which brooded on rich attainments" (III, 105). As with Egremont, Thyrza feels she has "no right whatever to judge a man so far above her in all respects" (III, 105). When his besotted wife declares, "I wonder how such a clever man ever came to care for me at all," Thyrza bends her head in thought (III, 114).

Despite appearances, Harold, like Egremont, has no intention of seducing Thyrza: "Innocent fellow, he had no dream of anything that could have caused his wife real uneasiness" (III, 135). Febrile with excitement, he gives way to "flabby ecstasies" (III, 135) and, like several other characters, succumbs to compulsive behaviour: "The poor fellow had fooled himself to such a pitch of extravagance, that a species of craze positively drove him to have a scene of this kind with Thyrza" (III, 141). Like Egremont, who admits to "a moment of temptation" (p. 310), he is "tempted out of his senses" (III, 141).

As often with satire, the treatment of this episode could point in different directions. One could read it as reinforcing by contrast the seriousness of Egremont and Thyrza's love. Alternatively, its robust scepticism – about infatuation, emotional projection and the possibility of transcending class – could be seen as deeply subversive.²⁷ Equally interesting is the way in which Harold, though clearly a fatuous dilettante, shares some of his author's attributes. Like Gissing, he believes that society is unjust. He speaks indignantly about men "being punished when they commit crimes that they can't help committing" (III, 101). Eloquent on the sufferings of "such a man as himself" having to undertake uncongenial work (III, 139), he produces a poem on social evils in which, "I review Society from the highest to the lowest, and judge each rank" (III, 104). His attitude to love casts speculative light on Gissing's affair with Nell Harrison. He has married a woman neither pretty nor clever but flatteringly deferential to him:

The man who can never inspire tender feeling in a woman of the higher order, but who is consumed by vanity, often has the happy instinct of attaching himself to some poor simple-minded creature who will deem it the greatest privilege to be allowed to worship him, and granted that he does possess human qualities, his affection will often grow by the flattery it feeds on (III, 111).

This sounds like unsparing self-criticism, and certainly when Harold regrets his folly, the confessional note is unmistakable: “Poor bard! Have not many learnt this difference between anticipation and after-thought? One need not even be a poet to go through the experience most completely” (III, 142). Streamlining his narrative by removing the subplot, Gissing also eliminated much potentially embarrassing content.

One other personal statement from this subplot is worth quoting, for its relevance to Gissing’s sense of readership rather than his amorous experience. Explaining that Clara found it hard to forgive Thyrsa, the narrator anticipates a gendered response:

The indignant male reader points to Thyrsa’s behaviour, explained in detail by Harold; the female reader (for whom I care more a thousand times) is not at all sure that she would not have acted as Clara did under the circumstances; she will not of course say so, but she thinks it (III, 198).

A clear statement of the female orientation of his fiction, the words in parenthesis are particularly pertinent to his feelings while writing *Thyrza*.²⁸

The danger of any study of textual revision is that discarded material can assume disproportionate importance. What the author did not wish to retain becomes, perhaps perversely, the focus of attention. Yet perceiving what Gissing preferred to delete carries its own fascination – partly, it is true, for biographical reasons. His statement to Bertz that he hoped he had improved *Thyrza* was followed by the sentence: “But indeed that old book remains very unsatisfactory to me.”²⁹ Examining excised personal statements, tracing the reduction of romantic fervour, one deduces why this might have been so. But the primary reason for studying the revisions is not so much biographical as artistic. Carefully comparing the two texts of the novel is rather like attending a fictional master-class, in which Gissing’s technical and stylistic choices are rendered explicit for the reader’s scrutiny. In almost all aspects of composition – description, dialogue, phrasing, pacing – the changes made the book subtler and sharper. But the first edition, messier and warmer, remains valuable for his original conception.

¹George Gissing, *Thyrza*, 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1887). Where both volume and page numbers are given in parentheses in the text, they are to this edition.

²George Gissing, *Thyrza*, ed. Jacob Korg (London: Smith, Elder, 1891; repr. Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1974). Where page numbers alone are given in parentheses in the text, they are to this edition.

³See C. J. Francis, “The Revision of ‘Thyrza,’” *Gissing Newsletter*, October 1971, pp. 7-9.

⁴A comprehensive primary bibliography of *Thyrza* (as of Gissing's other works) can be found in Pierre Coustillas, *George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography* (High Wycombe, Bucks: Rivendale Press, 2005), pp. 47-59.

⁵See Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile: George Gissing* (London: Temple Smith, 1974); Adrian Poole, *Gissing in Context* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1975); John Goode, *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction* (London: Vision, 1978); John Halperin, *Gissing: A Life in Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); John Sloan, *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Simon J. James, *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (London: Anthem, 2003).

⁶See John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber, 1992), p. 96; *Thyrza* (1887), I, 149 and *Thyrza* (1891), p. 87.

⁷*The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, ed. Pierre Coustillas, Paul F. Mattheisen and Arthur C. Young, 9 vols (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997), IV, 268. Subsequently referred to as *Letters*.

⁸*Letters*, IV, 269.

⁹*Letters*, IV, 275.

¹⁰The holograph manuscript of *Thyrza* is held in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. I am grateful to this library and to Pierre and H el ene Coustillas, who very kindly checked a number of readings for me in their microfilm copy of the manuscript.

¹¹John Sloan, *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge*, p. 74.

¹²As Pierre Coustillas has confirmed to me, Gissing compiled time charts for his historical novel *Veranilda*, but not for his novels of modern life.

¹³Gissing's views on the use of "bad grammar" in dialogue were concisely expressed in a letter to the *National Observer* in 1894. Noting that "Reviewers frequently quote from an author's dialogue to support a charge of weakness in grammar," he concluded, "surely it is obvious that the dialogue of a novel should imitate as closely as possible the speech of life": *Letters*, V, 176.

¹⁴Gissing's altered attitude towards this aspect of fiction can be illustrated by two quotations from his letters to Algernon. In November 1883 he advised his brother to study George Eliot and avoid Scott, who "knows little if anything of that psychological analysis of character so necessary now-a-days." In July 1891 he wrote: "I am convinced that the less you think about analysis, the better & more acceptable work you will do. Let the reader analyse character & motive, if he be capable of it; do you simply present facts, events, dialogue, scenery": *Letters*, II, 180; IV, 310.

¹⁵Gissing may also have been stung by the opinion of the *Saturday Review* (11 June 1887) that his use of "passioned" was "not English": see *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge (London and Boston: Routledge, 1972), p. 106. Subsequently referred to as *Heritage*.

¹⁶*Letters*, II, 178-79.

¹⁷See Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile*, pp. 89-97.

¹⁸See *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), pp. 27, 144, 223, 353.

¹⁹*Letters*, II, 180.

²⁰A review of the first edition in the *Pall Mall Gazette* observed: "For the first time, too, the author displays a tendency towards the Christianizing of his characters, who until now

have invariably been of an advanced freethinking type [...] It would be premature to conclude that Mr. Gissing's own religious views have undergone considerable modification, but it will be interesting to observe the theological tone of his next novel": *Heritage*, p. 112. Gissing's novels did not, of course, become more Christian in tone.

²¹Interestingly, "A Man with a Future" was one of the titles that Gissing considered for his novel *Our Friend the Charlatan*, published in 1901 (I am grateful to Pierre Coustillas for pointing this out).

²²Mr. Newthorpe's quotation (addressed to Egremont) is from Virgil, *Aeneid*, IX, 641: *Macte nova virtute, puer sic iter ad astra* ("Blessings on your fresh courage, boy, so it is man rises to the stars"). Given the outcome of Egremont's ambitions, and the ending of the novel, where he goes "No higher" (p. 490), it is evident that Gissing had chosen the quotation for its proleptic irony.

²³Compare Gissing's statement to his sister Ellen when she commented on *Thyrza* in 1887: "I rejoiced that you made mention of Totty Nancarrow. She is a great favourite of mine": *Letters*, III, 109.

²⁴*Letters*, IV, 284. On Gissing's lifelong suspicion of journalism, see David Grylls, *The Paradox of Gissing* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 76-80.

²⁵See also II, 7-8 (cf. p. 171). For Gissing's disenchantment with Positivism, see his article "The Hope of Pessimism," in *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 75-97.

²⁶Two anonymous reviewers of the first edition objected to the Emerson subplot. In an article entitled "Recent Novels" in *The Times* of Saturday 21 May 1887 (p. 17) the reviewer wrote: "In the third volume, an entirely minor plot, with entirely fresh characters (we mean the Emersons) is opened up to the distraction of the reader" (I am grateful to Pierre Coustillas for alerting me to this review). In the *Guardian* of 3 August 1887 the criticisms were couched in similar terms: "But in the third volume we have an entirely new episode, and two new characters, Harold Emerson and his wife, are introduced, who are made much too prominent; in fact, the third volume, with the exception of one or two scenes of considerable power, is distinctly inferior to the other two": *Heritage*, p. 109.

²⁷Compare the opinion of Robert Selig, one of the few critics to have commented on this subplot, who observes in *George Gissing* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), "This farcical episode serves as a self-exploding device that mocks the novel's own principal love story" (p. 147).

²⁸It is perhaps worth noting that two contemporary reviewers assumed that *Thyrza*, despite its author's name, must have been written by a woman. In the *Whitehall Review* of 12 May 1887 the reviewer declared: "Before dealing with *Thyrza* at full length we would like to relieve ourselves publicly of the firm conviction that 'George Gissing' is of the feminine gender": *Heritage*, p. 104. In the *Glasgow Herald* of 24 May 1887 (p. 10) a similarly anonymous reviewer argued: "The feminine part of the book is so delicate, so subtly analytical, yet so tender, that the trace of a woman's hand in the character drawing here seems unquestionable": *Supplement to the Gissing Journal*, XL, 1 (January 2004), p. 9.

²⁹*Letters*, IV, 275.

Gissing's Literal Revenge and Jordan's Collected Silences in "The Prize Lodger"

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In recent times several Gissing scholars¹ have lamented "the general disinterest of critics in his short fiction."² A survey of articles and biographies about Gissing, which have appeared since 1950, reveals that the short stories do not have the same weighty place in his complete *œuvre* as, say, the short stories of Joseph Conrad or Thomas Hardy in their respective works. Emanuela Ettorre suggests "that many critics have considered his short stories to be the inferior product of an otherwise talented author"³ because the need of money drove him to write them. This combined with Gissing's own unfortunate dismissal of a few stories as mere potboilers largely accounts for their poor reputation, as critics have seized upon this to prove that they are unworthy of him. Yet Balzac wrote so-called pot-boilers too – in this case to pay off debts; many of these are nonetheless considered to be great novels. Robert L. Selig⁴ also suspects that the biographical approach of some critics, which treats Gissing's stories as disguised autobiography rather than as the works of imagination they actually are, has contributed to their literary devaluation.

Another reason for their almost complete neglect is their unavailability. The only English publications of the stories to appear since 1950, none of which remain in print, are *A Freak of Nature or Mr. Brogden, City Clerk*,⁵ Coustillas's *Essays and Fiction*⁶ and *My First Rehearsal and My Clerical Rival*,⁷ Selig's *Lost Stories from America*,⁸ and *The Day of Silence and Other Stories*.⁹ In all 36 stories have seen the light of day in this time, only sixteen of them in a mainstream edition. If we compare this with the number of mainstream editions of Conrad's, Kipling's, and Hardy's stories, which are currently in print, then we have to concede that this is a sad state of affairs. Furthermore, there has been just one full-length study of the stories, this appearing in German in 1973.¹⁰ Rather surprisingly Gissing's stories have had far more success in Japan, where there have been a staggering number of editions.¹¹

Gissing wrote 115 short stories,¹² the great majority of which are a delight to read. Of these 62 were written between April 1893 and June 1896. This intense preoccupation with the short story form accounts for a

tremendous improvement in the quality of his productions. There is maturity in the handling of the narrative, depth in his characterizations, and more skilful use of description. Moreover, he shows himself a master of irony and of satire. In these stories Gissing plunges us into a unique world in which he describes the daily conflicts of lower middle-class and working-class characters. It has often been said that these stories are generally undramatic, but that is their virtue and their gain. These stories are above all realistic and charming representations of a particular milieu and a particular type of character, be it of a clerk like Mr. Brogden, of a down-at-heel writer like Goldthorpe, or of a book collector like Christopherson.

As closer acquaintance with the stories will show, there is a whole new Gissing world to be discovered in them. Not only do they complement the novels, they also throw a new light on his complete works. Here and there we find a sunnier contrast to the darker novels and not a few delightful sketches of London and country life. To open his first volume of short stories, *Human Odds and Ends*,¹³ is to encounter a refreshing breeziness of style seldom found in the longer works of fiction. This volume contains 29 stories, originally published in magazines and journals between 1893 and 1896. Among them we find such pearls as “The Poet’s Portmanteau,” about a lost manuscript; “The Day of Silence,” about an afternoon boat trip which turns into a tragedy; and “In Honour Bound,” in which a poor scholar lends his charwoman ten pounds to enable her to open a chandler’s shop in exchange for ten weeks’ lodgings.

I shall now focus on another story from this collection, “The Prize Lodger.”¹⁴ I aim to show through the study of this story that Gissing was a conscientious, ambitious writer who was able to produce entertaining and competent, if not excellent, works of imaginative fiction even under the most trying of circumstances. Gissing wrote “The Prize Lodger” between 15 and 18 November 1895 at a time when his second wife, Edith, was heavily pregnant, and servant trouble and illness were affecting his domestic life. The story, one of six commissioned by Clement Shorter, first appeared in the *English Illustrated Magazine*¹⁵ in August 1896.

As in most of Gissing’s short stories, there is little plot in “The Prize Lodger.” The story is about a nomadic lodger, Archibald Jordan, who for many years has “flitted from house to house” (p. 142), “distressing the souls” (p. 142) of various landladies within the borough of Islington. When the arrangement proves no longer to his liking or “he felt that, in the eyes of a landlady, he was becoming a mere everyday person” (p. 139), he would

give notice and remove to different lodgings. Eventually he arrives at what he believes to be the ideal lodgings in Mrs. Elderfield's house, only to have a rude awakening.

One can imagine with what relish Gissing wrote this story. For it is both a bitter attack upon the evils of lodging houses and a vehicle of revenge for what he himself had to endure as a lodger. That said, "The Prize Lodger" is a piece of fiction. Even though he could at one time be called a nomadic lodger, Gissing's experience in lodging houses differs vastly from Jordan's. In contrast he suffered torments in the twelve or more lodging houses he dwelt in between returning from America in October 1877 and moving into 7.K. Cornwall Residences in December 1884. Furthermore, he neither wielded power over his landladies, nor did he marry one, and he only lived in one Islington lodging-house.¹⁶ Significantly, as late as 15 August 1891 Gissing records in his diary how the mental anguish due to "vile squabbles"¹⁷ with his Exeter landlord has given him "an idea for a vol. of short stories, to illustrate the wretchedness of life in lodgings."¹⁸ This volume was never written, but several stories which appeared in the early to mid-1890s take up this theme, including "The Prize Lodger."

The title sets the tone for the story. Referring to Jordan, the narrator explains, "To speak of lodgers as of cattle, he was a prize creature" (p. 136). From the start the narrator relates the story with a refreshing undercurrent of irony and satire. Of course Gissing was always a master of irony and satire as the "Io Saturnalia" chapter in *The Nether World*¹⁹ proves. But the story is in addition highly amusing. Yes indeed, and con-trary to the "doom and gloom" view of Gissing's works which has predominated up to very recently, "The Prize Lodger" makes one laugh out loud. That Gissing had a strong, native capacity for humour has in recent decades been highlighted in several new readings of works such as *The Town Traveller*,²⁰ "A Daughter of the Lodge,"²¹ and "Comrades in Arms."²²

Gissing's descriptive powers are seen at their best in his careful portrayal of the two principal characters. The main character, Jordan, is a middle-aged, fussy type, who esteems domestic comfort above wealth, and is conservative in his tastes. For twenty-five years he has been willing to pay over the odds in order to obtain the standard of living he desires:

"Twenty-five shillings a week, you say? I shall give you twenty-eight. *But—*' and with raised forefinger he went through the catalogue of his demands." (p. 136)

Most at home in a small world of local “bar-parlours” and “billiard-rooms” (p. 134) and “familiar thoroughfares” (p. 135), Jordan regards any sign of change “with a look of thoughtful criticism” (p. 135). More than anything, as the narrator explains in an amusing aside, he is a master of silent reproach.

... it was his conviction that no man’s eye had a greater power of solemn and overwhelming rebuke, and this gift he took a pleasure in exercising, however trivial the occasion. (p. 135)

He also derives cruel satisfaction in giving notice:

It gave him the keenest pleasure of which he was capable when, on abruptly announcing his immediate departure, he perceived the landlady’s profound mortification. To make the blow heavier he had even resorted to artifice, seeming to express a most lively contentment during the very days when he had decided to leave and was asking himself where he should next abide. One of his delights was to return to a house which he had quitted years ago, to behold the excitement and bustle occasioned by his appearance, and play the good-natured autocrat over grovelling dependents. (pp. 139-40)

Doubtless this is a passage Gissing thoroughly enjoyed writing. It is wish-fulfilment on a grand scale, a vicarious form of literal revenge. Jordan the rigorous bachelor, the bane of landladies, and an eccentric *par excellence*, is one of Gissing’s most delightful creations, comparable with the likes of Biffen and Christopherson.

On moving into Mrs. Elderfield’s house, Jordan is pleasantly surprised by her “zeal and efficiency” (p. 139). A “neatly dressed” (p. 137) widow of thirty-three, she behaves with “studious civility” (p. 137), like himself is “plain” (p. 138), and has “resolute lips” (p. 138). Telling details like the last combined with her lack of “subservience” (p. 137) to Jordan, give ample hint as to the direction his fortunes will eventually take. After a few days in her house, in a wry comment on lodging-house conditions, the narrator has Jordan comparing Mrs. Elderfield’s home with those of former landladies:

... he knew for the first time in his life the comfort of absolutely clean rooms. The best of his landladies hitherto had not risen above that conception of cleanliness which is relative to London soot and fog. His palate, too, was receiving an education. Probably he had never eaten of a joint rightly cooked, or tasted a potato boiled as it should be; more often than not, the food set before him had undergone a process which left it masticable indeed, but void of savour and nourishment. (p. 139)

In another story from this collection, “The Tout of Yarmouth Bridge,” which also deals satirically with lodging-house life, a similar passage of

biting humour describes how the eponymous “tout” “assisted her aunt in keeping the house dirty, in pilfering the lodger’s groceries, and spoiling food given to be cooked.”²³ In Gissing’s fictional world, it would seem that landladies and their underlings are a subversive force, conspiring to exploit and harass their lodgers, just like the Thénardiens in Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*. Doubtless this was Gissing’s own experience. But Jordan finding himself better off at Mrs. Elderfield’s house declares “Here I shall stay” (p. 139).

It is not Jordan’s “habit to chat with landladies” (p. 141) except to dictate to them or silently reprimand them. However, he so warms to Mrs. Elderfield that he goes so far as to exchange “personal confidences” (p. 141) with her. As a result he learns to his dismay of her intention to move away from Islington. In another comical passage, we find Jordan, a city man through and through, considering the prospect of going with her and quite unable to see any appeal in the name of her intended destination:

It was open to him to accompany Mrs. Elderfield, but he shrank from the thought of living in so remote a district. Wood Green! The very name appalled him, for he had never been able to endure the country. (p. 142)

Nevertheless he takes a look at Wood Green and begins to talk to Mrs. Elderfield more intimately. Jordan, whose strongest trait was his cultivation of silence, makes the mistake of imparting “a complete knowledge” (p. 142) of his most private concerns to his landlady. Suddenly there is a change in him and he becomes vulnerable: he loses his “self-confident and superior tone” (p. 142) and “the foundations of habit crumble[d] beneath his feet” (p. 142).

Although “resident in Islington” (p. 137) Mrs. Elderfield, coming from the Midlands, is regarded as an outsider, “an alien!” (p. 143). Jordan’s former landladies by contrast belong to a fiercely tribal community. As soon as they learn that she is going to marry Jordan, they are infuriated. After all, their former “lodger” may have been seen as a “prize” catch, but not as a potential husband. As a result of Mrs. Elderfield breaking the rules of the game, they ask themselves, “What base arts had she practised?” (p. 143). And verily she has spun a spell on Jordan. For the last the reader had heard of him “he seemed to have lost his pleasure in the streets of Islington, and spent all his spare time by the fireside, perpetually musing” (p. 143). This doesn’t sound like someone intent upon marrying.

Marry her he does, although he keeps the time and place of the wedding a secret. And by now powerless to assert himself, Jordan is left running after his ex-landlady and “signing cheques” (p. 145), while she conducts all the business concerning the new house. To his “consternation” (p. 145), having previously “lived with such excessive economy” (p. 145), he finds himself occupying “a ten-roomed ‘villa,’ with appointments which seemed to him luxurious” (p. 145). Within the space of a month Jordan has become, as the narrator writes, “quite a different kind of man from his former self” (p. 144). No longer the complacent autocrat, he has lost his silent powers. Jordan’s and his wife’s roles have reversed completely and now Mrs. Jordan is the dominating force. At the start of “The Justice and the Vagabond” Mr. Rutland finds himself in a similar predicament for his strong-willed wife “ruled him in every detail of his life.”²⁴ Gissing accomplishes this plot reversal in “The Prize Lodger” with marvellous skill. Meanwhile we learn belatedly that Mrs. Jordan’s “first marriage had been a sad mistake; it had brought her down in the world. Now she felt restored to her natural position” (p. 145). Clearly she has used Jordan to hoist herself up the class ladder.

There soon follows a delicious scene in which Jordan’s wife rebukes him for returning home late from work and then rudely chastises him for “coming into the room with muddy boots!” (p. 147). In an amusing line Jordan replies “It was my hurry to speak to you” (p. 147). This phrase which literally ought to bespeak his passion for his wife, but is merely “murmured” (p. 147) dispassionately, speaks volumes about his present mood and reveals to what extent he has been dethroned. If before he was uncomfortably aware that “he had lost something” (p. 146) in marrying his landlady, Jordan now realises where he really stands in relation to his wife. From this point on, as the story moves towards its dénouement, their marriage becomes a battle of wills.

From day to day things go from bad to worse for Jordan. Much troubled by his wife’s behaviour he recalls how:

He himself, in the old days, had plagued his landladies by insisting upon method and routine, by his faddish attention to domestic minutiae; he now learnt what it was to be subjected to the same kind of despotism, exercised with much more exasperating persistence. (p. 147)

It seems to him as if he is paying the price for his own despotism. In an epoch in which men considered themselves superior to women in every

respect, Jordan's subjection to his wife is "galling" (p. 147). At length, when he is severely admonished for reading his newspaper at the breakfast table, things come to a head. It dawns upon him that he is faced with the terrible prospect of "downright slavery! He had married a woman so horribly like himself in several points that his only hope lay in overcoming her by sheer violence" (p. 149). This is a wonderful piece of self-revelation and irony. For Jordan, like the dog biting its own tail, is just as much a despot, just as much a stickler for details, and just as fastidious in his tastes, as his wife. All at once, feeling displaced and lost in Wood Green, he yearns for his native Islington: "The thought of Wood Green revolted him; live there as long as he might, he would never be at home" (p. 149). "Transplanted,"²⁵ a story written two months earlier, is completely devoted to the theme of displaced persons. In this story the tramp, Long Bill, experiences a similar longing for London after removing to a country house to work as a gardener.

Returning from "a lamentable day" (p. 149) at work, Jordan determines to have it out with Mrs. Jordan in a scene which vibrates with humour:

He thought of his wife (now waiting for him) with fear, and then with a reaction of rage. Let her wait! He – Archibald Jordan – before whom women had bowed and trembled for five-and-twenty years – was *he* to come and go at a wife's bidding? And at length the thought seemed so utterly preposterous that he sped northward as fast as possible, determined to right himself this very evening.

Mrs. Jordan sat alone. He marched into the room with muddy boots, flung his hat and overcoat into a chair, and poked the fire violently. His wife's eye was fixed on him, and she spoke first – in the quiet voice that he dreaded.

'What do you mean by carrying on like this, Archibald?'

'I shall carry on as I like in my own house – hear that?'

'I do hear it, and I'm very sorry to. It gives me a very bad opinion of you. You will *not* do as you like in your own house. Rage as you please. You will *not* do as you like in your own house.'

There was a contemptuous anger in her eye which the man could not face. He lost all control of himself, uttered coarse oaths, and stood quivering. (pp. 149-50)

This scene sparkles with all that is best in Gissing's short fiction. Jordan's internal deliberations are hilarious. Moreover, Gissing makes very effective use of the verbs "sped," "marched," "flung," and "poked" to convey Jordan's pent-up anger. And his war-like entrance "with muddy boots" is another telling detail which brilliantly demonstrates his mood of defiance. All at once their marital home has literally become a battlefield. Yet Jordan's main weapon, his silent reproof – he is after all a connoisseur of

silence – proves marvellously ineffectual up against Mrs. Jordan’s “quiet” (p. 151) restraint. In the end he loses “all control of himself” (p. 150) and is left “quivering” (p. 150) impotently. Ironically, in the man’s world they inhabit, his wife’s quiet authority has not only unmanned him, but also neutralized his manliness.

Lectured into submission “until night was at odds with morning” (p. 151), Jordan is to all appearances a “defeated” (p. 151) man. He seems unable to combat his wife’s tyranny. A lull descends upon the battlefield as he retreats into silence. In the meantime she, who spends the day ordering her troops about, so to speak, and devoting herself to domestic duties, rules absolutely in their marital home. When, after a few days, Jordan breaks his silence and again offers “combat” (p. 152), his ultimatum – “Look here ... either you or I are going to leave this house” (p. 152) – is yet again scornfully repulsed. As his wife makes clear, any “recourse to personal violence” (p. 152) on his part would only lead to a pyrrhic victory, in short, to “shame and ridicule” (p. 152). Even the last resort of outraged masculinity, the use of physical violence against the so-called weaker sex, is denied Jordan. So, unlike Long Bill in “Transplanted” who avenges himself on his hated benefactress by destroying her plants, Jordan is powerless against the enemy at home.

The end of the story is surprising and effective. Jordan, taking refuge in absolute silence for a few days, stays away from Wood Green to haunt his former abodes in Islington. When he returns home, he remains doggedly monosyllabic or silent, and even though his wife still reprimands him for “stepping on the paint when he went up and down stairs” (p. 153), she makes no comment upon his absence. On going to bed, he is kept awake, this time not by his wife’s “admonitions” (p. 152), but by the thought: “What! Was he, after all, to be allowed his liberty *out* of doors, provided he relinquished it within?” (p. 153). The battle of wills ends then in a kind of truce or silent agreement as Jordan regains his liberty outside the home.

We see then that it is possible, as Robert L. Selig²⁶ has previously shown, to approach Gissing’s stories purely as works of fiction. And there is plenty in these stories, as we have seen in “The Prize Lodger,” to hearten the Gissing admirer. The relentless realism of *The Nether World* is rarely discoverable in them. In these stories Gissing focuses on the everyday life, the quiet comings and goings of his characters. We, the readers, are made privileged spectators of domestic scenes or bohemian aspirations, of petty concerns or fluttering hearts, of the search for quiet contentment or, as in

“The Prize Lodger,” of the escape from human bondage. The world of Gissing’s stories is charming and entertaining. Scenes follow upon one another with the revealing detail and moral colourfulness of a Hogarth canvass. Taken as a whole they represent a human comedy in miniature and a sociological document of their time. For it is here in the short story, in his concentration upon character and milieu that Gissing’s achievement most closely compares with Balzac’s. In my view then, it is time that the short stories be made more widely available so as to enable new readings of them in relation to Gissing’s other works.

¹See Emanuela Ettore, “‘The Salt of the Earth’ and the Ethics of Denial,” *Gissing Journal*, July 1995, p. 19; Robert L. Selig, “The Biographical-Critical Circle: ‘A Lodger in Maze Pond,’” *Gissing Journal*, January 2002, pp. 25-30; Pierre Coustillas, ed., *The Day of Silence and Other Stories* (London and Vermont: J. M. Dent, 1993), pp. xiv-xx.

²Ettore, p. 19.

³*Ibid.*

⁴See Robert L. Selig’s article, note 1.

⁵Pierre Coustillas, ed., *A Freak of Nature or Mr. Brogden, City Clerk* (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1990).

⁶Pierre Coustillas, ed., *Essays and Fiction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

⁷Pierre Coustillas, ed., *My First Rehearsal and My Clerical Rival* (London: Enitharmon Press, 1970).

⁸Robert L. Selig, ed., *George Gissing: Lost Stories from America* (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

⁹Pierre Coustillas, ed., *The Day of Silence and Other Stories* (London and Vermont: J. M. Dent, 1993).

¹⁰Ulrich Annen, *George Gissing und die Kurzgeschichte* (Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag, 1973).

¹¹See Pierre Coustillas, “The Romance of Japanese Editions: The ‘Selected Works of George Gissing’ in their Bibliographical Context,” *Gissing Newsletter*, July 1988, pp. 35-43.

¹²Several other stories including “At Eventide,” “How a Misfortune Made a Philosopher,” “A Minstrel of the Byways,” “A Merry Wooing,” and a children’s story are known to have been written. There may also be some lost stories from America.

¹³London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1898.

¹⁴*Human Odds and Ends* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911), pp. 133-154. Hereafter references given in the text are to this edition.

¹⁵Pp. 386-93.

¹⁶He lived at 5 Hanover Street, Islington, from early December 1879 until late February 1881.

¹⁷Pierre Coustillas, ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian London. The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 253.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 253-54.

¹⁹Smith & Elder, 1889. Rptd 1974 (Brighton: Harvester Press), pp. 104-13.

²⁰See Judith Brigley, “*The Town Traveller: a Comic Novel*,” *Gissing Newsletter*, July 1990, pp. 15-25.

²¹Robert L. Selig, “An Upstart Odd Woman: ‘A Daughter of the Lodge,’” *Gissing Journal*, April 2001, pp. 19-23.

²²Robert L. Selig, *George Gissing*, Revised Edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), pp. 98-100.

²³*Human Odds and Ends* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911), p. 210.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 244-50.

²⁶See note 4.

Arthur Bowes Again

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

The October number of the journal contained an article, “Three Lancashire Advocates of Gissing,” which although more explicit about Arthur Bowes, Gissing’s schoolfellow at Lindow Grove School, than any previous publication, failed to answer a few questions about his family and environment. Local research about Bowes had not been in vain since we were able to reproduce a photograph of Gissing’s friend, not as he was as a boy but in later days, when he was well-known as a civil engineer at Newton-in-Makerfield. Mr. Peter Sargeant, Community Library Officer (Heritage), Newton-le-Willows, supplied this photograph and promised to seek for additional information about the young Arthur and his relatives, in particular his mother, to whose death Gissing discreetly referred in his letter to his classmate of 4 December 1873. Mr. Sargeant’s investigations have been very fruitful and they should be regarded as a valuable supplement to the information collected in our October number, as well as a footnote to Gissing’s first letter to Bowes published in volume I of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*.

Arthur’s mother, Margaret, appears in the 1871 census for Salford as a woman of forty-five, born in Sunderland, County Durham. She was the wife of Isaac Bowes, aged forty-eight, manager of iron works, born at Nunnington, Yorkshire. They had four children—Henry, aged twenty-two, clerk of iron works; Edward B., seventeen, accountant’s clerk; Arthur, twelve; and Lilly B., a daughter of three. Together with them lived Ellen, an unmarried sister of Isaac Bowes, and an unmarried general servant of

twenty-one, Sarah Cranshaw, of Horwich, Lancashire. Their home was at 18 Broad Street, Pendleton, district of Salford.

Mr. Sargeant also visited Newton Cemetery and with some difficulty found the grave, probably a double grave, and he transcribed the inscriptions, the list of which, after the first two, he arranged in chronological order of death:

In Loving Memory of Stanley Brigham Bowes, born 4th September 1884, died 7th December 1904

Cecil Brigham Bowes, born 22nd March 1900, died 30th June 1900

Also of Jennie, beloved wife of Arthur Bowes, born 23rd January 1858, died 17th November 1912

James B. Bowes at Ypres 5th May 1915, aged 24 years

Isabella Brigham [an aunt of Arthur?], born 7th January 1834, died 21st June 1920

Arthur Bowes, born 22nd February 1858, died 21 March 1925 [he was consequently three months younger than Gissing]

Ernest Brigham Bowes, born 28 July 1894, died 3rd Nov. 1958 [probably a son of Arthur]

Mildred Lois Bowes, born 9th Sept. 1898, died 7th [?] Dec. 1968 [perhaps an unmarried daughter of Arthur]

Dorothy B. Bowes, died Oct. 14th 1968 aged 75 years

Book Reviews

Peter Morton, "*The Busiest Man in England*": *Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875-1900*, New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

The publication of this book has been eagerly awaited for some time for general reasons as well as special ones that no reader of this journal would be at a loss to name. With the exception of Edward Clodd's memoir of his friend, no book-size study of Grant Allen (1848-1899) has ever been published, and there must have been many historians of literature and critics since his death who would have welcomed a detailed study of his life and works if only to offer replies to questions about *The Woman Who Did* and a selection of his main novels. At long last the patience of those people has

been rewarded, and the task has been done so brilliantly that there seems no room left for any volume that might attempt to improve upon the present one by Peter Morton. He finds himself in a singular position. Leaving aside the hastily written memoir by Clodd which appeared in 1900 under the imprint of Grant Richards, a nephew of Grant Allen's, we can say that Dr. Morton has only one predecessor who, notwithstanding the long list of bibliographical and biographical sources of his book, turns out to be himself. In 2001 he published in Volume 44, number 4, of *English Literature in Transition* a long article which was a good deal more than a promise, and in 2002 the booklet entirely devoted to Allen, which bore no. 31 in the University of Queensland series of Victorian Fiction Research Guides, was one more sizeable step on the way to a reasonably full knowledge of Allen and his numerous works.

He had many friends and correspondents, a list of whom could be compiled by any scholar prepared to establish contacts with all the institutions named on pp. 228-29, and it is clear that Gissing was not in the front row of them. The two writers, as is well known, met at one of Edward Clodd's Whitsuntide parties in 1895; and the main aspects of Gissing's impressions of Grant Allen are duly quoted and commented upon by Peter Morton. The major sources are *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (Vols II and IV to IX) and his diary as well as an interesting, non-factual passage in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Autumn IX) in which Allen is referred to rather cryptically by his initials. "Am I a hidebound materialist?" Ryecroft, that is Gissing in the present case, asks himself. "If I know myself, hardly that. Once, in conversation with G. A., I referred to his position as that of the agnostic. He corrected me. 'The agnostic grants that there *may* be something beyond the sphere of man's knowledge; I can make no such admission. For me, what is called the unknowable is simply the non-existent. We see what is, and we see all.'" On the face of it Gissing and Allen disagreed on the question of agnosticism, but fundamentally they agreed to the extent of rejecting all allegedly spiritual beliefs. Long lists of quotations in each novelist's works and correspondence could illustrate this aspect of their respective personalities. A few striking examples are supplied by the present book: "Like several Victorian atheists, Grant Allen acquired knowledge of the Bible that would have shamed many a divine, and its rhythms and allusions are evident everywhere in his writings. On the other hand, he said once that he had no problem giving his villains an occupation, because he made them all clergymen. The converse is certainly

true. He made most of the clerics in his fiction hypocrites, trimmers, time-servers, fanatics, arsonists, or murderous psychopaths. Presumably that emphasis came from the paternal views rather than the paternal practice.” The writer’s father had seen Anglicanism from the inside and he had early on found that after all he had no use for it. He had some theological dispute with his bishop and developed a scathing view of the clergy which was transmitted to his son.

The number of opinions he shared with Gissing on a variety of subjects is impressive, but the two men did not belong to the same side of Grub Street, and Grant Allen – this is an engaging side of his personality – had no illusions about the artistic value of the wares he placed so easily with publishers and editors. He could be astonishingly sarcastic about his own works. He had affinities with Jasper Milvain and did not miss opportunities to declare his belief that literature had become a trade. In the literary jungle among which he made his way, he studied the new developments. He saw his readers as consumers and viewed their tastes as dictates he had to obey if his (second) wife and son were to be made – like him – comfortable. Not for him the idea that the professional writer must educate his readers. His affinities with Anthony Trollope were obvious enough, as were to be those of Arnold Bennett – the less earnest side of Bennett. He certainly agreed with Gissing that writing for the crowd is not as easy as it seems. The idea was in the air at the time. It was uppermost in the minds of serious artists like Gissing and Conrad who cultivated what Peter McDonald called “principled aloofness” and of rather dubious literary gentlemen working with an assortment of glib pens, notably Andrew Lang, whose capacity to produce marketable copy was comparable to Allen’s, though with Lang’s pretentiousness left out.

There are places in this remarkable book by Peter Morton where some of Gissing’s posthumously recorded words are eerily repeated by Grant Allen. On one hand we have an anecdote originally related by Gissing’s pupil Austin Harrison, who remembered his tutor’s boisterous reply to his innocent boyish confession that he would like to become a novelist: “It’s the trade of the damned, far better be a crossing-sweeper.” On the other we have a clever cartoon first published in the *Idler* on 2 September 1892 echoing Allen’s assertion that it would be more profitable to buy a good broom and “annex a vacant crossing” than to take up a career in “literature.” The cartoon, by George Hutchinson and Miss Fuller, shows a stiff-backed, weak-kneed, ageing Grant Allen equipped with the regulation

broom begging from a prosperous-looking man in a bowler hat who might well be Kipling.

A good many of Allen's dislikes would figure prominently in an inventory of Gissing's *bêtes noires*. Let doubters if there are any turn to the 1894 collection of essays entitled *Post-Prandial Philosophy*; they will come across a number of sharply phrased, not infrequently devastating statements on such subjects as militarism, vivisection, imperialism and colonialism, the Established Church, the House of Lords, sexual double standards and the environmental degradation of cities that would have won Gissing's sympathy if he had read the volume which, interestingly, was published in the same year as *In the Year of Jubilee*, a spirited arraignment of many political and cultural developments. That Gissing sent Allen a copy of the one-volume edition of this particular novel in August 1895, only a few weeks after their encounter at Clodd's seaside home, was singularly appropriate, but unfortunately the recipient's response was not recorded. A copy of *The Odd Women*, which commentators of a later age on New Woman fiction often mentioned in conjunction with *The Woman Who Did*, would have been just as suitable, but hardly likely to have triggered any more memorable reaction than *In the Year of Jubilee*, its successor. Indeed, Allen was not artistically interested in the practice of fiction, either by himself or, with the exceptions of Meredith and Hardy, by his major contemporaries. "My line," he told the journalist Raymond Blathwayt in 1893, "is to write what I think the public wish to buy, and not what I wish to say, or what I really think or feel; and to please the public, for a man of my temperament and opinion, is not so easy as an outsider might be inclined to think."

No statement could differentiate Allen more radically from Gissing, yet apropos of an oddly named character, Woodbine Weatherley in *The Duchess of Powysland* (1892), the narrator passes a conservative remark which prompts Dr. Morton to bring the two writers very close to each other: "George Gissing offered a similar and, if anything, even less sympathetic study of the force-fed woman student [Jessica Morgan] in his *In the Year of Jubilee*, a student whose last infirmity, after her mental collapse, is joining the Salvation Army." But Gissing could not have concurred with Allen about the teaching, intensive in the case of boys, of Latin and Greek in schools which iconoclastic Allen forcefully called in *Post-Prandial Philosophy* "places for imparting a sham and imperfect knowledge about two extinct languages." Allen was no friend of John Bull and he

did not wish female education to develop into an industry aiming at producing generations of Jane Bulls! A specimen of that kind of individual is Ida Mansel in *Dumaresq's Daughter*, “an icily rational young matron who voices ferocious sentiments like ‘war’s an outlet for our surplus population. It replaces the plagues of the Middle Ages.’” Nor was Allen a friend of Mrs. Grundy. He had an acute consciousness of the problem of censorship as Gissing lived it in the 1880s in his depressing relationships with George Bentley, and he almost certainly followed the campaign waged by George Moore in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1884, then in his pamphlet *Literature at Nurse*, contributing himself a significant article on “Fiction and Mrs. Grundy” to the *Novel Review* in July 1892. (Why does Dr. Morton ignore the Harvester edition of the pamphlet in which the correspondence generated by the *Pall Mall Gazette* article was reprinted with copious comment?) Allen had no patience with the ethical dictatorship of the circulating libraries and their henchmen in the publishing world, agencies which had reduced “the human figure in the novel from the full-blooded presentations offered by Fielding and Smollett in the novels of the previous century to the ‘pulseless, non-vertebrate jellyfish sort of thing which, securely packed in tin-covered boxes, is sent forth from the London depot and scattered through the drawing-rooms of the United Kingdom’ in his own time.” Allen liked to bait editors when he submitted some story to their attention. Peter Morton quotes from a delightfully sarcastic letter from Allen to Clement Shorter who at one time, in the mid-1890s, edited no fewer than five periodicals simultaneously: “Herewith I enclose two out of five short stories as per your esteemed order. These stories are warranted to be free from any opinions whatsoever – political, religious, social, philosophical or literary. They would not raise a blush on the cheek of a babe unborn or shock the susceptibilities of a Cardinal Archbishop.” However, more frequently than he would have cared to admit, he chose to bow the knee to Mrs. Grundy for the simple reason that fighting that invisible yet ever watchful person was a time-consuming as well as a costly business.

Save for an unfortunate first marriage with a consumptive girl, Caroline Anne Bootheway, whom research has shown to be a streetwalker of the quiet type, Allen’s private life was unadventurous. His was a very pleasant personality. His friends and obituarists agreed that there was a great charm in him which derived from the sweetness of his character. William Sharp is reported to have told a friend how much he felt the loss, what a brilliant writer and an eager student he was. Before he met him at Aldeburgh,

Gissing had expected to dislike him because the few of Allen's novels he had read had struck him as sheer rubbish, but he had liked the man and been impressed by his culture, his modesty, his extraordinary capacity for work. Obviously the busiest man in the world, as Allen used to call himself, was an unpretentious, gentle personality and a genial conversationist. He wrote for his contemporaries exclusively and would not have dreamt that a scholar might write such a first-class, thoroughly researched and eminently readable book about him as the present one, with its excellent illustrations, a hundred years after his death. Edward Clodd concluded his *Memoir* with an enumeration which gives one an accurate idea of Allen's many talents and extremely varied achievements. "Naturalist, anthropologist, physicist, historian, poet, novelist, essayist, critic – what place is to be assigned to this versatile, well-equipped worker?" Doubtless, as Peter Morton with supreme honesty admits, Allen was not a first-rate novelist, he wrote no masterpiece, but he was a cultural force in his day and left an ambiguous novel, *The Woman Who Did*, which was and remains a period piece. Any historian or critic who has been puzzled by this loosely constructed narrative, which reads in part at least like an anti-feminist story by an intelligent feminist, must ponder Peter Morton's volume. If Allen's motivation is to be understood at all, pp. 162-63 must be read very attentively. It is commonly assumed by people who have heard of the book but have no real knowledge of its contents that it is a tract in favour of free love. In her book *Varieties of Unbelief* (1977) Susan Budd, a historian, misrepresented Allen's novel to the extent of writing of the heroine as being a woman who "abandoned marriage and satisfied her sexual needs as she wished to so as to prevent racial degeneration which was following on personal frustration and genetic mismating." Peter Morton easily dispels such extraordinary misrepresentations. His splendidly documented, stimulating, often witty investigation should be read by historians of feminism and literary critics. His familiarity with the cultural climate of the last quarter of the nineteenth century proves a valuable asset. Throughout his book we feel, not only that he knows his subject in depth, but that he can be trusted unreservedly. His bibliography (pp. 225-43) covers novels and novellas, short story collections, poetry, scientific works, essays, belles lettres, criticism, biography, history, travel guides, translations and editions. Among all the institutions listed as holding Grant Allen material, is included a private collection containing the manuscript of *The Woman Who Did* and the readers' reports on the book obtained by John Lane.

The Busiest Man in England is not likely to be superseded in the foreseeable future. It is by any standards a distinguished contribution to late Victorian cultural studies.— Pierre Coustillas

Martin A. Danahay, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art and Masculinity*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

In the rambling and obtrusively chatty acknowledgments on p. x of his book, Martin A. Danahay tells us that he is grateful to the general editors of the series in which the book appears for publishing it alongside Andrew Dowling's monograph *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature*. To a Gissing scholar who has chanced upon Dowling's book this reads like a proof of Danahay's failure to realize Dowling's serious limitations as a Gissing scholar or like an unconscious joke at his expense. So one starts to read chapter 7 of the present book, ambiguously entitled "Gissing and the Demise of the Man at Work," with some apprehension, and this apprehension is rather increased than dispelled when, leafing through the book one accidentally finds in the chapter on Arthur Munby that the French critic Françoise Barret-Ducrocq's first name is misspelt and that she becomes Francois Barret-Durocq in the index. Some more checking reveals the serious deficiency of proofreading throughout. For instance Rossetti is deprived of his name on the backflap, when he is referred to as Dante Gabriel, though he becomes Date [*sic*] Gabriel Rossetti in the index. Jean-Pierre Michaux's first name appears as Jean-Paul in the bibliography while John Kucich's surname is given as Kucuch in the index.

This book is also a curiosity in that it was inspired by what its author calls "models," that is works published by scholars with whom he is acquainted and whom he off and on praises with an embarrassing lack of discretion ("Adams' incisive opening pages in *Dandies and Desert Saints*, which I wish I'd written myself, sketch much of the terrain that this book also covers"). The beneficiaries of these homages are James Eli Adams, Joseph Kestner, Herbert Sussman and Trev Lynn Broughton, and the last named pays her debt in the blurb printed on the dust jacket, where we read that "Shuttling nimbly from Mill to Marx, from text to images, and from *Bleak House* to *New Grub Street*, Martin Danahay weaves a vivid and detailed account of the cultural expression, and psychological cost, of the Victorian conviction that productive work was 'the basis of all definitions

of human value.” Readers who thought that Andrew Lang’s excesses had dealt a death blow to the noble art of log-rolling should revise their judgment. Besides the adverb “nimble” is hardly justified. The author’s explanations about his method are both cumbersome and clumsy. Indeed, such digressions threaten to be raised to the rank of a narrative principle.

The present study is also derivative. The author, besides the literary works he either pompously or pedestrianly discusses, has read a large number of recent critical works with titles featuring words ending in –ity and –ities which have flourished since the late twentieth-century discovery of masculinity after feminism had been squeezed almost dry. He hops from one critic to another, making a copious use of such phrases as “For So-and-So”, “As So-and-So has noted,” “So-and-So’s analysis helps to...,” “As So-and-So emphasizes.” Danahay is far too preoccupied by “theory” and not enough with the texts he tries to analyze. He has next to no use for the thoughts of the writers whom he stifles with abstract considerations; for to him literature is an abstract world in which grammatical correction does not always receive the attention it deserves. The following obscurities are taken from the chapter on *New Grub Street*: “For both Milvain and Reardon their identities as men are defined by their work” and in the same paragraph: “Milvain wonders if Reardon does not suffer from ‘overwork’ but rather than too much work is Reardon’s problem is [*sic*] the inability to do any work at all. It is not his ambition to become a ‘literary man,’ with its suggestion that the ‘literary’ is a female term that is the problem here, but rather his definition of the ‘literary’ which is out of step with the new modified definitions of literary production.”

The main writers discussed in the book besides Gissing are Carlyle, Dickens, Thomas Hood, William Morris, Samuel Smiles and Stevenson. Specialists of these authors will perhaps comment on Martin Danahay’s pages devoted to them. In the present journal it seems reasonable to focus critical attention on the last chapter. Sad to say the author does not show the least empathy with Gissing, indeed he is not interested in the man and never offers evidence that he is familiar with his experiences and his philosophy of life. In fact when he writes that “Like Ruskin, Gissing represents manual labor as noble and writing as an ignoble enterprise,” one wonders whether he has ever read anything reliable about the novelist and anything by him besides *New Grub Street*. His interpretation of this novel is devoid of any life, of any worth. The cultural framework in which he places the narrative is a rudimentary, wooden assemblage. Even his knowl-

edge and understanding of Gissing's masterpiece are faulty. We jib at the inaccurate statement that "Milvain has the initial capital to dress as a gentleman"(p. 150). On the preceding page Danahay fails to understand Gissing's irony in an indented quotation and his remarks on the feminization of the literary profession cannot be brought forward as a factor in Reardon's professional failure, which is due neither to Marian Yule's work nor to the Milvain sisters' budding literary activities.

To sum up, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture* is a volume which is likely to satisfy few readers. It is a trendy production with regard to both matter and manner, including the use of certain quotation marks and of verbs like "to construct oneself"; it is also seriously marred by numerous inaccuracies. Oddly enough – but one readily believes him – Martin Danahay confesses that writing this study was a nightmare (p. xi), and one is bound to agree with him when he writes on p. 11: "I must confess that I am myself a victim of many of the ideologies of work that I analyse in the book." Certainly he is, but didn't Molière write: "You asked for it, Georges Dandin?"

Notes and News

Miscellaneous news has been abundant in the last three months and may remain so for some time, considering that the number of new books entirely or partly devoted to Gissing and his works should normally trigger comments in the form of articles and reviews. One would like to announce new editions, with introductions and notes, first of the main works that are currently available, then of such titles as, say, *The Unclassed*, *The Crown of Life*, *Our Friend the Charlatan* and *Will Warburton*, but even though technological developments have reduced printers' bills, no such projects are heard of. The main problem, for publishers, is that of distribution, and so long as a book is nowhere to be seen on a shelf, a table or a screen, its chances of being purchased are poor.

Unexpected items likely to appeal to Gissing collectors continue to appear off and on in booksellers' catalogues and on the internet. Recent examples are *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family* (Constable, 1927), signed by Algernon Gissing; a copy of *The Private Pa-*

pers of Henry Ryecroft (Constable, 1914) in green suede leather; a collection of *English Short Stories* edited by David Hughes for the Folio Society in 1997 containing "The Foolish Virgin," a story originally published in *The Yellow Book*; a hitherto unrecorded binding variant of the Constable edition of the *Ryecroft Papers* issued in August 1910; and a German collection of short stories containing "The Justice and the Vagabond." But no autograph material is known to have been for sale and recently acquired by any institutional library, and one can only express again the hope that those letters to relatives that Alfred Gissing sold in the 1930s after his uncle and aunt had published passages in their selection of letters to the family will some day become publicly available.

"Morley Roberts in the Western Avernus" by Jeremy Mouat is an article which escaped our notice when it was published in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (Winter 2001/2002), pp. 26-36. It is a thoroughly researched piece of work with a map and illustrations among which is a rarely seen portrait of Roberts as he was in the 1880s at the time he wrote to Gissing those letters which can now be read in Vols. II and III of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*. Professor Mouat, a historian, has read much about Roberts's literary career and travels in America. He draws our attention to *On the Old Trail: British Columbia after Forty Years* (1927), which is a sequel to *The Western Avernus*. He also echoes little known details about the correspondence between Roberts and Conrad and gives some concrete evidence that Roberts was a racist, a fact which Gissing could have confirmed without difficulty. Jeremy Mouat's sources are varied, and it is evident that he has consulted the material in the Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania with great profit. His view of Roberts and of his first and best book strikes us as both extremely fair and reasonable: "Roberts never doubted that *The Western Avernus* recorded a profound experience, one that went to the heart of a central problem of his age. He saw this problem in stark terms, a contrast between false or unnatural urban civilization and 'real' experience. But however genuine or unique the experiences that he recorded in *The Western Avernus*, his comments had little to do with the places through which he traveled or the people whom he encountered there. Rather it was the writer himself who gave the narrative its special quality, reflecting the cultural baggage that he carried with him. The hell that he described, his western Avernus, was for

many others a land of abundance, a place of opportunity, or, simply and fundamentally, home.”

The announcement in our October number of the third annual Arnold Bennett Conference which is scheduled to take place at the Staffordshire University on 10 June 2006 was followed by the arrival of a new edition of *Leonora*, a little known yet excellent novel which Bennett first published in late 1903, a few weeks before Gissing’s death. John Shapcott, the Chairman of the Arnold Bennett Society, has contributed a 16-page introduction and a bibliography. The publishers are Churney Valley Books, 1 King Street, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 5NW. The publication of this nicely produced edition selling at £8.95 gives us an opportunity to add some details to the tentative recapitulation of Bennett’s writings on Gissing which we published in the Supplement to our January 2004 number.

Bennett, it would seem, read at least eleven of Gissing’s works. Evidence of this is supplied by an article he published in the *Academy* on 16 December 1899 and by reviews, signed or unsigned, which appeared in the daily or weekly press from 1895 to 1901. An entry in his journal written a few weeks after Gissing’s death and concerned with its circumstances as related by H. G. Wells is so grotesquely unfriendly to Gabrielle Fleury that it must be discounted as sheer slander. Of course Bennett merely transcribed the substance of what he heard.

His article in the *Academy* shows that by the time he wrote it he had read at least *Demos*, *The Nether World*, and *The Unclassed* and, of necessity in the very recent past, *The Crown of Life*. The reviews of individual novels which have been identified, partly thanks to Anita Miller’s bibliography, concern:

In the Year of Jubilee, *Westminster Gazette*, 18 January 1895, p. 3. Unsigned.

Eve’s Ransom, *Woman*, 1 May 1895, p. 7. Signed Barbara.

Sleeping Fires, *Woman*, 5 February 1896, p. 7. Signed Barbara.

The Whirlpool, *Woman*, 21 April 1897, pp. 8-9. Signed Barbara.

The Town Traveller, *Hearth and Home*, 29 September 1898, p. 749. Signed Sarah Volatile.

Our Friend the Charlatan, *Academy*, 22 June 1901, pp. 535-36. Unsigned.

Our Friend the Charlatan, *Hearth and Home*, 4 July 1901, p. 374. Signed E. A. Bennett.

By the Ionian Sea, Academy, 22 June 1901, pp. 535-36. Unsigned.

By the Ionian Sea, Hearth and Home, 4 July 1901, p. 374. Signed E. A. Bennett.

Besides our attention has also been drawn to another three reviews, signed "Charbon," of *Veranilda*, *Will Warburton* and *The House of Cobwebs* which appeared in *Hearth and Home*. They may have been written by Bennett, but this tentative ascription is entirely conjectural.

The Gissing Catalogue issued by the Idle Booksellers last October is sure to remain a work of reference for years. It is a feat to have collected so many editions and impressions of practically all titles. One of the most impressive series of entries is that which ranges from no. 307 to 356, and which testifies to the popularity of the *Ryecroft Papers* until World War II. Another is the number of copies available of some minor works like *Brownie*. The scarcest recent edition is probably that of *By the Ionian Sea*, handset by Alan Anderson at the Tragara Press, apropos of which it is appropriate to note that a bibliography of the press by Steven Halliwell has been published since Ros Stinton and Michael Compton sent out their catalogue. It is an illustrated volume of some 200 pages with a valuable introduction on Alan Anderson and his press by David Burnett. Facing p. 111 is a photograph of Alan Anderson at work. The edition is limited to 400 numbered copies, nos. 1 to 50 being enclosed in a slipcase with a leaflet poem. This is the latest publication of the Rivendale Press and it is issued in dark green cloth with gilt titling and decoration.

The special Gissing number of the Pescara-based *Rivista di Studi Vittoriani* (Anno IX, Gennaio 2004, Fascicolo 17) can be ordered from Edizioni Tracce, Via Eugenia Ravasco 54, 65123 Pescara, Italy. Foreign orders: Europe: Euros 18; Elsewhere US\$28. Bank cheques made payable to "Edizioni Tracce s.r.l. – Pescara" are acceptable. The 134-page volume, entitled *George Gissing: New Explorations into his Fiction*, is edited by Pierre Coustillas and Emanuela Ettorre. It contains an introduction and seven articles in English by David Grylls, Francesco Marroni, Maria Teresa Chialant, Arlene Young, Bouwe Postmus and the editors. The articles deal with aspects of *Human Odds and Ends*, *The Unclassed*, *The Nether World*, *Born in Exile*, *Eve's Ransom*, *Will Warburton* and "The Scrupulous Father."

Among forthcoming publications are reviews by John Spiers of *George Gissing: the Definitive Bibliography*, first in *English Literature in Transition*, then, together with a review of *Voices of the Unclassed*, in the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*. John Spiers was also one of the organizers of “Reaching the Margins,” an exhibition held at the Senate House Library, University of London, from 24 October to 18 November 2005. The catalogue contains a description of British Colonial editions, 1843-1972 and short texts on the Colonial Libraries published by such publishers as John Murray, Macmillan, Petherick, Sampson Low, Bell, Fisher Unwin and Cassell among others.

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, London: Penguin Books [2005], £11.99.

The critical apparatus by Bernard Bergonzi has been unchanged since 1968. Only the covers have been slightly altered in this new impression. The titling is at the bottom of the front cover below a white decorative band which features the name of the series. The book is printed on very thick paper by Antony Rowe Ltd. The number of the impression, 25th, is wrong.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, London: Penguin Books [2005], £8.99.

The critical apparatus by Elaine Showalter is unchanged and three misprints in the bibliography are left uncorrected. Although the publishers announced a new edition in new covers, the old ones have again been used. The book is mistakenly said on the copyright page to be a copy of the 13th impression in the Penguin Classics.

John Spiers (ed.), *Gissing and the City: Cultural Crisis and the Making of Books in Late Victorian England*, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Pp. xiv + 225. Introduction and 17 chapters. £50.00. Green pictorial hard covers. See Special Offer on p. 18.

Francesco Badolato, *George Gissing romanziere del tardo periodo vittoriano*, Premessa di Pierre Coustillas, Postfazione di Andrea Sciffo, Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005. Pp. 300. €16.00. Brown pictorial card covers. A collection of articles on Gissing's life and works, mainly in Italian, published in the last few decades.

Articles, reviews, etc.

David Hughes (ed.), *English Short Stories*, London: The Folio Society, 1997. Illustrated by Rod Waters. Contains "The Foolish Virgin," originally published in *The Yellow Book*. A stylishly produced volume with attractive illustrations. No less than half a dozen factual mistakes occur in the 17-line introductory paragraph about Gissing's short story.

Jeremy Mouat, "Morley Roberts in the Western Avernus," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly: A Scholarly Journal of Northwest History*, Winter 2001/2002, pp. 26-36. An important article attractively illustrated.

Peter Morton, "*The Busiest Man in England*": *Grant Allen and the Writing Trade*, New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. A detailed study of the well-known Victorian writer. With an extensive bibliography and hitherto unknown illustrations. See the review on pp. 29-35.

Steven Halliwell, *Fifty Years of Hand-Printing: A Bibliography of the Tragara Press*, High Wycombe: Rivendale Press, 2005. A full-length inventory of the many tasteful publications, including those of Gissing interest.

Martin A. Danahay, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art and Masculinity*, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2005. Chapter 7 is entitled "Gissing and the Demise of the Man at Work." See the review on pp. 35-37.

Stephen Jones and Kim Newman (eds.), *Horror: Another 100 Best Books*, New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005. Chapter 5, pp. 24-28, is an essay on *New Grub Street* by K. W. Jeter. The word "horror," if correctly used, cannot be applied to *New Grub Street*.

Anon., "Wakefield Nostalgia: Setting for a classic novel," *Wakefield Express* (Leisure and Sport section), 14 October 2005, p. 8. About *A Life's Morning* with photographs of Stoneleigh Terrace as it was in Gissing's time and as it is now.

Jonathan Keates, "Mole in the Fog," *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 October 2005, p. 32. A review of *The Tower of London*, by Natsume Soseki, translated by Damian Flanagan. Keates, who has proclaimed his admiration for Gissing several times since 1991, is aware of Soseki's affinities with Gissing, but it is fairly obvious that Japanese scholars who are familiar with the works of the two writers could be more eloquent than Keates on the subject.

[Joan Winterkorn], "News and Comment," *Book Collector*, Autumn 2005, pp. 439-40. On the sale to the Rylands Library, Manchester, of C. C. Kohler's collection of Gissing books and manuscripts.

Toby Lichtig, "Learned Journals: Cultural Studies," *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 November 2005, p. 27. Review of *The Believer*, a San Francisco periodical, which begins with a long quotation from Jasper Milvain and coins the epithet "Milvanian."

Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900: Beauty for the People*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Chapter 6 is entitled "George Gissing's Hopes and Fears for a Popular British Aestheticism." We plan to review this book in our next number.

Tailpiece

Morley Roberts remembers Gissing in *On the Old Trail* (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1927)

It was Mark Twain who first outraged the formula on which books of travel are usually manufactured. It was he who asserted the inalienable right of the traveller to be as humorous as possible even when Nature does

her best to reduce him to seriousness. [...] I feel that I have now the right to be humorous if I can. George Gissing once complained to me with great bitterness that it was almost impossible to put into a novel any other illegal relations between the sexes but a bigamy. Happily those days are over. We can be as indecent as we please, and some of us do please and revel in specious lubricity. Gissing's struggles to do without bigamy and Mark Twain's honest laughter, even his asinine assumption that he knew anything about art, have served to free us from the chains of convention. This excursus up a side valley may serve as my one and only apologia for inventing dreams and even telling lies among the Rocky Mountains and by the hot springs of Banff. (pp. 40-41)

After this little side journey into country I had not seen before, my plan was to go down the Kicking Horse and look at the places where I had worked in the old days of 1884, a new and curious kind of Sentimental Journey, which would not have appealed to a sophisticated Sterne, or so one would imagine. All my long life among London's crowd eager for distinction and success, that most fail so lamentably to achieve, had not destroyed the native vagabond in me. It was good to recall the hard old days of a different order. One may have starvation and adventure both in London, and I had had both, but in the early struggles of men of letters there is so much of sordid misery that the memory of it often rankles and hurts. Think of what George Gissing went through. Yes, and of Hudson, though he never spoke of it, and many others. Better far to wander over the world with all one owns under one's hat and an empty pocket than to grind out literature in a slum off Tottenham Court Road, or to hole up like a bear in one room in Chelsea as I did, or to starve as Hudson and his poor old wife did in Ravenscourt Park. Often and often when working at books I have taken down an atlas and made out new journeys, meaning to start on the morrow, and the damnable itch for doing books came back again with the morning light. Here on the new Kicking Horse road I lived again for a while as a free man, and something came back from the past, when I was as strong as a bull and could work day in, day out, ten hours with the pick and shovel and bar, and only sometimes hankered after those things the foolish overgrown brain of man desires, books and writing and art and the passions and pains of cities. (pp. 131-32)