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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 Pacifism : A Temperament in the Light of History

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Personal and Historical Framework

How would Gissing have been likely to react if some critic or literary journalist had published in his lifetime an article thus entitled? We know that he welcomed public comment on his work when the piece was well done, which rarely happened. Early on in his career he was grateful to his German friend Eduard Bertz for an extremely perceptive review article on his work which has to this day remained exemplary (Coustillas and Partridge, 1972, pp. 149-56). We are also aware that in October 1897 he read with approval a laudatory assessment of his aims and achievements by Frederick Dolman in the *National Review* (*Ibid.*, pp. 307-15), regretting nonetheless that no account was taken of his publications after *Eve’s Ransom*, and when two years later Arnold Bennett offered to readers of the *Academy* (*Ibid.*, pp. 361-65) an overview of his early novels he was once more pleased, observing that the appreciation was rather more intelligent work than the criticism he was usually gratified with in the press. However, he dared not hope that an entirely satisfactory discussion of his writings would appear until after he had left the literary scene for ever. Now, if his pacifism had been the subject of a respectful and respectable essay in, let us assume, late 1899, just after the outbreak of the Boer War and the publication of his courageously ideological novel, *The Crown of Life*, his response would have deserved a very close analysis as he could have judged whether the writer’s opinions chimed in with his own in those days of aggressive jingoism. An image of his own pacifism would have held much potential appeal to him. At this point of his career, it would have come appositely, all the more as he considered himself to be a man with a very peaceful temperament. Testimonies concerning this fundamental aspect of his personality are not lacking but none of them probably rings a more just and

touching note than that offered by his younger sister in one of her reminiscential articles, modestly entitled “George Gissing: A Character Sketch”: “There was a principle deeply embedded in his nature which caused him to prefer that he himself should suffer rather than bring suffering upon others.”¹

Any discussion of his pacifism must of necessity be placed within a historical framework. Born in 1857, he belonged to a generation of Englishmen who had no personal recollection of the Crimean War, the only major international conflict in which Britain was involved between the Napoleonic period and the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899. He is not known to have made any retrospective comment in writing on the hostilities which pitted Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and Piedmont against Russia, although it would be surprising if his father, Thomas Waller Gissing, a stalwart Liberal in politics and a pacifist, had not expressed in his eldest son’s presence his views on the Eastern Question and the fighting which put a provisional end to it.² By and large the forty-six years of Gissing’s life were years during which his country was at peace with the most part of the world, but expansionism, in those days a permanent threat in various parts of Europe, took the form of what some historians euphemistically call colonial skirmishes, clashes which, incidentally, were often by any standards something more than skirmishes. Histories of the period, when they offer reasonably detailed accounts of the frictions between nations or tribal powers, list crises which in the best of cases were solved diplomatically, and in the worst ended in massacres on one side if not on both. Examples that Gissing saw reported in the daily London press included the Ashanti war of 1873-74, the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, the Zulu war in 1879 and—better known to the general public who took such events in their stride in a country unconcerned with the problems that might stem from conscription—the Revolt of the Mahdi and the storming of Khartoum which entailed the violent death of General Gordon in 1885. The newspaper articles he read about what was then termed foreign intelligence would rarely rouse his fear or indignation; he knew that each day was sure to bring its lot of bad news since mankind was constantly at strife with itself. Of course he did not deny that the age in which he was born was an age of progress but he always drew mentally a sharp line between any advancement of a material nature that stemmed from that evolution which the nineteenth century taught itself to view as somehow “built in” and mental and ethical improvement of humanity at large. At the end of his life, if asked questions on the current march of the human species

he would have agreed that on the whole there were fewer evils, notably social ones, in 1900 than in 1800—for instance slavery had been abolished, exploitation of man by man was receding slightly, the distress of destitution was rather less common even if multiple forms of injustice and inequalities could still be observed in all departments of life. Similarly he might have admitted that the ills of bigotry and ignorance were a little less pronounced than in past ages. Of all this Gissing was aware but he simply could not ignore deeper realities which were not or were little affected by the contingencies of the hour, and he wrote about them in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* with a degree of conviction which has met with no contradiction. In the Summer VI section of this currently neglected, yet powerfully significant, book of his studded with pithy maxims on human comportment, he discusses what he called the universality of quarrelling in the index: “Man is not made for peaceful intercourse with his fellows; he is by nature self-assertive, commonly aggressive, always critical in a more or less hostile spirit of any characteristic which seems strange to him. That he is capable of profound affections merely modifies here and there his natural contentiousness, and subdues its expression. Even love, in the largest and purest sense of the word, is no safeguard against perilous irritation and sensibilities inborn.” With an obvious intent to deal with the subject at once peacefully and objectively Gissing—through his alter ego, with whom in the present case he is not at variance—practically suggests that “a peaceful individual” is a contradiction in terms. “High cultivation may help to self-command,” he concedes, “but it multiplies the chances of irritative contact. In mansion, as in hovel, the strain of life is perpetually felt—between the married, between parents and children, between relatives of every degree, between employers and employed. They debate, they dispute, they wrangle, they explode—then nerves are relieved, and they are ready to begin over again. Quit the home and quarrelling is less obvious, but it goes on all about one.”

From Childhood to the Turn of the Century

Whether right from childhood he was already vaguely conscious of those realities which he described so persuasively at the end of his life cannot be ascertained, and he himself, sometimes inclined to exaggerate because with him exaggeration was something of a mental game, may have been tendentious in the flimsy recollections of his childhood. But one thing need not be proved: his lodestar was his father, a peace-lover who held peace to be a precious human possession, as his mother did, though in the

manner of disciplinarians who naturally dispense with an ideal other than and above domestic quiet. If young Gissing saw manifestations of rowdiness in childhood, it was at school, not at home. Providentially for his future biographers, he kept a diary at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war and the few entries we have in his wobbly handwriting testify to his concern for the march of the Prussian troops approaching Paris.³ Years later, when of adult age, he recorded his horror on hearing his father tell him that the Franco-Prussian war had begun: “‘Well,’ he exclaimed, ‘they’re at it—killing each other,’” and probably on the same occasion, recorded in 1896, he thought it worth noting his father’s vehement condemnation of the British Expedition to Abyssinia in 1865. This was an opinion he echoed with childish self-confidence one day at school, only to be told off by his master, one Reverend Joseph Harrison, who had praised the conduct of the war, “saying it was the best managed on record.” With laudable courage the child had “uttered an exclamation of astonishment, amazed to hear such an opinion.” The view of history represented in Gissing’s 1897 novel *The Whirlpool* as an endless succession of woeful events, a view which he reiterated in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, may well have originated in some remark made by his father, a pessimist progressive. Let us remember Harvey Rolfe’s thought-laden meditations as evoked in Part III, chapter I of the former book: “He marvelled at the indifference with which men habitually live in a world where tragedy is every hour’s occurrence. [...] And that History which he loved to read—what was it but the lurid record of woes unutterable? How could he find pleasure in keeping his eyes fixed on century after century of ever-repeated torment—war, pestilence, tyranny; the stake, the dungeon; tortures of infinite device, cruelties inconceivable?” (*The Whirlpool*, 1897, p. 326).

Throughout his life Gissing was particularly attentive to threats of war between England and European countries. They are noted with fear in his correspondence and diary. The consequences of international hostilities on the book trade and on the writing profession are invariably commented upon when England’s risk of being involved becomes a fatally attractive subject for journalists, whom he viewed as puppets whose strings were actuated by newspaper proprietors and influential politicians. The foundation of the *Daily Mail* in the spring of 1896, a halfpenny newspaper which, so as to increase its sales, deliberately fanned jingoism with its all-too-predictable consequences in South Africa, was an obvious threat to peace, and Gissing did not welcome the forthcoming celebrations of the second Jubilee with its pomps and vanities any more than the first, which he pil-

loried retrospectively in his 1894 novel, *In the Year of Jubilee*. The glorification of the Empire was to him particularly detestable—and dangerous. When the *Minster*, an Anglican monthly to which he had contributed, at its editor's request, two short stories, "The Salt of the Earth" and "A Calamity at Tooting," in January and June 1895, asked him to participate in a symposium of opinions and aspirations on the immediate future of the British Empire, he impatiently waved the request away: "The only reply I could possibly make to your question would be—that literary men, pure and simple, best serve the interests of their country by doing their best at literature."⁴ Had he cared to give a blunter and more straightforward reply, it could not have been very different from that sent by Robert Blatchford: "... As for the Empire—I really do not care a rush for it. I am sick and weary of those unclean shams—our British morality, virtue, greatness. [...] Our Empire was built of blood, pillage, and chicanery—mixed with some cant about the word of God—I want none of it." Or he might at least have said, as Richard Le Gallienne did, that like Alfred de Musset in Heine's Epigram the Empire had a great career—behind it.

His condemnation of military expeditions was invariable and consistent with his fundamental humanism. From his cellar at 22 Colville Place he wrote angrily to his younger brother Algernon on 12 February 1878 that if his current novel was making poor progress the main reason lay in the "sickening political news": "To-night the papers tell us that the Russians are occupying Constantinople and a squadron has been sent to the Mediterranean. I used to be strongly pro-Russian, but really there seems to be such underhand work on that as well as the other side that one gets disgusted. It is sickening to hear all this twaddle [...] about 'British interests'; as if it was more to our interest to kill several thousands of Englishmen and involve half the population in ruin and beggary than to stop for a generation or two the progress of the Slavonic races which is ultimately inevitable!" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 73-74). A few months later he could not conceal his scepticism when he read Victor Hugo's idealistic prediction—one which proved to be sadly wide of the mark—that there would be no more wars in the twentieth century. The germs of the above-quoted passage on the universality of quarrelling could already be traced in his informal correspondence with his family over twenty years before his final volume of meditations on matters of life and death began to take shape. His impatience with any violation of liberty likely to prove the starting-point of revolt, individual or nation-wide, occasionally broke out. An example occurs in one of his mid-career novels, *Denzil Quarrier*, where the eponymous

hero uses a language, the substance of which, if we are prepared to overlook the character's unautobiographical temperament and situation, corresponds to a certain mood shared by Gissing: "On my way here this afternoon I passed the office of some journal or other in the Strand, where they're exhibiting a copy of their paper returned to them by a subscriber in Russia. Two columns are completely obliterated with the censor's lamp-black,—that's how it reaches the subscriber's hands. [...] I could have hurrah'd for war with Russia on that account alone. That contemptible idiot of a Czar, sitting there on his ant-hill throne, and bidding Time stand still." When he was almost driven out of his senses by some private or public action which defied common sense or grossly violated individual freedom, Gissing's state of mind was akin to Quarrier's. His respect for foreign nations when they refused to yield to diplomatic or military pressures from the British government was uncommon at the time. An anecdote in a letter to his Argentine-born friend W. H. Hudson written on 8 July 1900 nicely reflects a facet of his ideological credo which is worth bringing out of its obscurity: "You see that the barbarization of the world goes steadily on. Massacres apart [the bad news soon proved unfounded], I greatly sympathize with the Chinese. They have never wanted us; have always done their best to exclude us; and what earthly right had we to force ourselves into their country? Ah, but they have missed a great opportunity. Suppose they had been civilized enough simply to collect *all* foreigners in the country, and *ship them away*, without hurting any, but giving it to understand that every man Jack would be slaughtered if a hostile army entered the land! That would have been something to tell of in history" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. VIII, pp. 68-69).

Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Militarism

As the anecdote suggests, Gissing was by no means hostile to amicable relationships between nations whose civilizations and traditions were sharply differentiated. Such relations, he thought as an intellectually curious and culturally tolerant individual, were bound to be of great mutual profit,⁵ but experience had taught him, grounded as it was in his vast historical studies of classical times, that the notion of ideal and totally disinterested relationships among nations never materialized, and he knew that in some cases, like those of Kipling and Rider Haggard, literary appreciation could not be dissociated from political judgment. With regard to Kipling at least, he succeeded temporarily in keeping politics and art at a safe distance from each other. The evolution of the judgments he passed on

Kipling's early work is of supreme interest as it offers a barometric test of his pacifism. His first remark about Kipling was made on 13 February 1892 before he had read anything by his young colleague. To his sister-in-law, Algernon's wife, he wrote that "*the man of the day*" was Kipling. "I believe he has done wonderful things, and is likely to do more" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. V, pp. 8-9). Then on 20 May he encouraged his friend Bertz to read the *Barrack-Room Ballads*, which he styled "most remarkable work" after reading extracts (*Collected Letters*, Vol. V, pp. 36-38). To ballads couched in soldiers' slang he could not well object, as the language was brilliantly imitative and poetic. And as late as 2 October 1894, by which time he had doubtless read some more Kipling, though not, it would seem, the *Jungle Books*, he was still enthusiastic: "My admiration and liking for Kipling," he confirmed to Bertz, "has greatly increased. The volume of stories of which you speak [*Many Inventions*] contains admirable work. Especially good is 'The Disturber of Traffic'—a strong effort of imagination. Full of realism and poetry, combined, in 'Love o' Women.' He's a wonderful man" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. V, p. 241). Praise came again from his pen—in a letter to Henry Hick this time—for *The Seven Seas*, a collection of poems, "unmistakably the product of original genius" and without any equivalent in English literature previously (letter of 18 November 1896, *Collected Letters*, Vol. VI, p. 194). But as the wave of jingoism rose ever higher in the country, Gissing a little belatedly realised what Kipling stood for politically, and Kipling remained the only English writer of any standing that he had not met and was not to meet.

The Crown of Life, the novel whose inspirer was Gabrielle Fleury, was in a way a book whose philosophy was directed at Kipling and at his cult of violence. The following crucial passage occurs in a letter to her of 27 November 1898: "I feel that my view of life is wider, in this book, than before. In part, it will aim at showing the worst side of English 'Imperialism'—of that hateful English spirit which, by its greed and its arrogance, threatens such disturbance to the peace of the world,—the spirit represented in literature by Rudyard Kipling (a man who is doing, I fear, great harm)" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. VII, p. 236). His hostility to Kipling as propagandist of a brutal cause was expressed again when he reviewed the English literary situation for Bertz's benefit: "Kipling has gone off into boys' books, of a blustering kind. That fellow has done terrible harm" (letter of 17 January 1899, *Collected Letters*, Vol. VII, p. 270). Doubtless he saw the serious colonial friction which culminated in the Fashoda incident the previous year in the light of Kipling's imperialist posturing and he rejoiced on

hearing that the novelist Robert Buchanan had praised his own (Gissing's) anti-imperialist stance in an aptly entitled attack upon Kipling, "The Voice of the Hooligan."⁶ Few things became more hateful to him than the warlike spirit of the self-styled champion of the British Empire. *Stalky and Co.*, an open apology for brute savagery among schoolboys, made him indignant: "Such a book ought to be burnt by the hangman! It is the most vulgar and bestial production of our times" (letter to Bertz, 11 December 1899, *Collected Letters*, Vol. VII, p. 412). His article "Tyrtaeus," published in the *Review of the Week* on 4 November 1899, was a more direct expression of his unambiguous castigation of the bellicose literature recently published by Swinburne and other short-sighted warmongers named William Watson and Rudyard Kipling. In this remarkable piece, which the modern reader can hardly fail to find to his taste, Gissing made no effort to spare the average subject of Her Majesty. "Military music," he struck up, "has everlasting charm for the ear of the populace. In broadcloth or in shoddy, civilians keep rhythmic step as the blare goes by, half-moved to envy of the straight-backed fellows on their way to shoot or be shot at. Even upon ears less long the martial strain falls seductively; it touches the primal instinct, wakes the racial memory, and he who to the core of his self-conscious being execrates the thought of war is surprised to find himself footing tramp-tramp, nodding a cadence to brass and drum. The same with warlike verse." Whereupon noting that Swinburne's recent poem, "Tyrtaeus," with its warlike accents, dispenses with the sanction of the masses and Parliament, Gissing pooh-poohed the concept of Tyrtaeus as "something worse than anachronical," for indeed "the poet of our day who sounds that Tyrtaeian note sets himself consciously against the supreme ideal of civilisation. [...] Mr. Kipling himself, having more brains than ordinary men, must be credited with this knowledge. One cannot conceive that, in his quieter moments, Mr. Kipling would refuse sympathy with those who hope that men will some day no longer cut each other's throats and explode each other's heads off. If no wrong be done him by such argument, should not even the laureate of the Empire think twice before he blows that ringing clarion of his, and ask himself whether his laurels are more likely to be lasting for having been dipped in blood? Poetic genius is charged with peculiar responsibility, inasmuch as poetry speaks more directly than any other form of utterance, from heart to heart."

All popular forms of nationalism with their usual corollary, militarism, met with Gissing's angry censure. Pan-Germanism, of which he had seen the first effects in the days of the Franco-Prussian war, was in the forefront

of those movements which were a threat to peace in Europe. His feelings towards German demonstrations of nationalism remained somewhat blurred until his death on account of his friendly relationships with Bertz—dating back to the early days when he shared with him socialistic opinions, but it is obvious that during the whole of his adult life his thoughts never wandered beyond the Rhine without ominous apprehensions. His feelings for Bismarck were a match for those of any French citizen in whom the Prussian invasion of 1870-71 had roused a stern hatred. An anecdote related in a letter to his former patron Frederic Harrison of 11 February 1903 sums up his feelings in a way which speaks volumes: “There is a man here [in Saint-Jean-de-Luz] who boasts that he once saved Bismarck, before the War, from being washed away by a high tide on the shore at Biarritz. One could wish he had let the Atlantic have its way. Germany was once a delightful country, and a civilizing force—but Prussia had not then emerged from the sands” (*Collected Letters*, Vol. IX, pp. 58-59). Gissing visited Germany only once, on his return from Calabria to London in 1898, and he was so disgusted by the signs of rampant militarism he saw everywhere about him that he felt bound to leave the country earlier than he had planned. A Frenchman once called him a kill-joy with clear eyes, a perceptive definition; for if the phrase was applied to him in connection with what he thought of the future of mankind, rather than the present he experienced during the last year of his life, he was indeed a good prophet. The Great War, he felt, was at hand.

However, the horrors of remote ages, when—we are prone to imagine—man was a wolf to man, when violence was the only means of self-defence, do not seem to have unduly affected Gissing, seeing that the history of mankind is the history of wars and massacres, peace being in the eyes of historians a succession of non-events. Another anecdote illustrates this point: once, after visiting the Louvre, where he had seen a splendid copy by Rubens of horsemen fighting, a painting by Da Vinci, he paused to answer an obsessive question concerning his varying responses to artistic representations of violence: “Why is not this scene horrible to me, like, e.g. the war scenes of De Neuville? Is it not because the costumes are antique, and war can be accepted as an accompaniment of earlier civilization, but is revolting in connection with the present?” (*Diary*, 14 October 1888, pp. 51-52). Similarly his response to scenes of violence as he saw them in a fever-induced dream during his illness at Crotona in 1897 was as if they were anaesthetized by the passing of time (to say nothing of the fact that the scenes he saw in his dream were imaginary).

Conversely, his vision of the future of the country which, next to his native land, mattered most to him, that is Italy, was clouded by fears of violent developments on the national scale. There is in the last chapter of his travel book *By the Ionian Sea* a soul-stirring passage on the death of a young Italian patriot, Emilio Cuzzocrea, who fell in 1860 during the battle for the liberation of Reggio Calabria—an occasion for Gissing to express his hatred of Bourbon tyranny over a land to which he was so strongly attached culturally: “The very insignificance of this young life makes the fact more touching: one thinks of the unnumbered lives sacrificed upon this soil, age after age, to the wild-beast instinct of mankind.” But Gissing the pacifist, moved at the sight of a commemorative tablet which proclaimed a nation’s hatred of its oppressors, forthwith raised his voice in warning: “How can one greatly wish for the consolidation and prosperity of Italy, knowing that national vigour tends more and more to international fear and hatred? They who perished that Italy might be born again, dreamt of other things than old savagery clanging in new weapons. In our day there is but one Italian patriot; he who tills the soil, and sows, and reaps, ignorant or careless of all beyond his furrowed field.” Obsessed as we still are with the crimes of fascism, not to speak of Nazism, we cannot refrain from joining our praise to that of the historian John Pemble who, in *The Mediterranean Passion*, warmly bowed to Gissing’s prescience when he “foretold that the patriotic idealism of the Risorgimento would be betrayed and that Italy herself would become a bloodstained oppressor.”⁷

Quite logically for Gissing, anti-imperialism went hand in hand with pacifism. Like E. M. Forster, he detested the cult of bigness, an attitude which places his work and its philosophy in a category which historians of literature in the course of the twentieth century have learnt to define as poles apart from that of the practitioners of the novel of adventure represented in his lifetime and later by such ideologically connoted writers as Kipling and Rider Haggard. It would be difficult to trace in his works, early or late, any statement that could be called racialist because fundamentally any such thing would have been in his eyes beneath his dignity. Indeed the only reference that comes to mind, and even then in a satirical context, occurs in the “Io Saturnalia” chapter of *The Nether World*, set at the Crystal Palace on a bank holiday. There, in a carefully analytical picture of vulgar working-class amusements, he imagines what a detached visitor like himself would have been in a position to observe: “The philosophic mind would have noted with interest how ingeniously these games were made to appeal to the patriotism of the throng. Did you choose to ‘shy’ sticks in the

contest for cocoa-nuts, behold your object was a wooden model of the treacherous Afghan or the base African. If you took up the mallet to smite upon a spring and make proof of how far you could send a ball flying upwards, your blow descended upon the head of some other recent foeman. Try your fist at the indicator of muscularity, and with zeal you smote full in the stomach of a guy made to represent a Russian.” Nowhere, the narrator deplores, was the visitor invited to participate in a competition “appealing to the mere mind, or calculated to effeminate by encouraging a love of beauty” (p. 107). And Gissing, who was always sensible of the danger inherent in such practices as far as youths were concerned, condemned any form of rowdiness in young people.

There was a certain type of boys of school age that he depicted sparingly when an opportunity offered itself—the Stratton boys in his early novel, *Isabel Clarendon*, are the best example to be found in his works: they are the sons of a colonel currently with his regiment in Africa, and his wife visits the heroine of the novel while three of her four children are preparing for a military career. The narrator describes the Strattons with a verve fraught with hostility at their coarseness and brutal manners: “These four lads were offspring whereof no British matron could feel ashamed: perfect in physical development, striking straight from the shoulder, with skulls to resist a tomahawk, red-cheeked and hammer-fisted. In the nursery they had fought each other to the tapping of noses; at school they fought all and sundry up through every grade of pugilistic championship. From infancy they handled the fowling piece, and killed with the coolness of hereditary talent. Side by side they walked in quick step, as to the beating of a drum; eyes direct, as looking along a barrel; ears pricked for the millionth echo of an offensive remark” (Vol. I, p. 225). Their mother’s admiration for such young “ruffians” is boundless; of the two eldest, Gissing writes tongue in cheek: “Mrs. Stratton would rather have been their mother than have borne Shakespeare and Michael Angelo as twins” (Vol. II, p. 39).

Any reader of this passage who is familiar with the most painful details of Gissing’s schooling at Lindow Grove will easily trace his inspiration to its source—the drill that he was submitted to as a pupil after his father’s death, the drill to which he tactfully refrained from referring when his former headmaster, James Wood or rather, perhaps significantly, his wife, asked him to write his recollections of “The Old School.”⁸ To the end of his life Gissing remembered the violation of his pacifism by the rough-mannered, brassy-voiced sergeant. “Every word he spoke to me,” he wrote in the guise of Henry Ryecroft, “I felt as an insult. [...] If ever a man did

me harm, it was he; harm physical and moral [...] When, as often happened, the drill-sergeant rebuked me for some inefficiency as I stood in line, when he addressed me as ‘Number Seven!’ I burned with shame and rage. I was no longer a human being” (*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Spring XIX). To Gissing, whether in childhood or later in life, any form of military activity, in war-time or in peace-time as a preparation for all-too-probable bloodshed in collective slaughter, was a manifestation of human indignity, with which should be connected a number of his most memorable statements in his private papers and his fiction.

Humanism and Humanitarianism

Those on the death penalty (“I instinctively revolt against it”) which he entered in what future generations were to call his *Commonplace Book* offer his detailed reasoning on a problem which civilized nations have not failed to consider since the condemnation to death of a woman, Mrs. Maybrick, led him to write down at some length his opinion on 14 August 1889 (*Commonplace Book*, pp. 24-25)—a condemnation followed by numberless others, one of which, that of Mrs. Percy, is recorded in another *Commonplace Book* entry, dated 23 December 1890, and commented upon with a promise he made to himself to deal with the question in some book of his (*Ibid.*, p. 44). The circumstances are gloomily evoked in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Winter IV): “Hideous cries aroused me; sitting up in the dark, I heard men going along the street, roaring news of a hanging that had just taken place. ‘Execution of Mrs. —’ ‘Scene on the scaffold!’ It was a little after nine o’clock; the enterprising paper had promptly got out its gibbet edition.” Murder sanctioned by the death penalty with the daily press trying hard to make money out of it all—the conjunction of the three elements points to Gissing’s thoughts at their darkest. To an agnostic like him, who denied the possibility of a future existence, such a punishment as the death penalty was either irrational or monstrously arbitrary, unjustifiable to reason.⁹

The more one reads him, the more one is convinced that his pacifism is inseparable from his humanism, a quality which was sympathetically noticed even by casual acquaintances in the very last years of his tormented life. Few things disturbed him more than misinterpretations of his deepest convictions on matters of war and peace, the most (to him) revolting of these being H. G. Wells’s misreading of Harvey Rolfe’s words to his level-headed friend Basil Morton in *The Whirlpool*, in an article which presented Gissing as a new convert to the political doctrine of imperialism, a gross

twisting of Rolfe's sarcastic criticism of the view of life offered by Kipling in his *Barrack-Room Ballads*.¹⁰ "Here's the strong man made articulate. [...] It's the voice of the reaction. Millions of men, natural men, revolting against the softness and sweetness of civilisation; men all over the world; hardly knowing what they want and what they don't want; and here comes one who speaks for them—speaks with a vengeance. [...] The tongue of Whitechapel blaring lust of life in the track of English guns!—He knows it; the man is a great artist; he smiles at the voice of his genius" (*The Whirlpool*, p. 449). Reading Wells's long review article in which at least two of his own novels were misinterpreted was for Gissing a trying experience, all the more so as it was the work of a fellow writer whom, being also a friend of his, he could hardly suspect of misreading his latest novel to such a damaging extent. Gissing was startled by Wells's incompetence, as he was in December 1899 when he was told by Eduard Bertz that a German critic, Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, had repeated Wells's offensive mistake in *Ethische Kultur* for 9 December, a prelude to one more misreading by Israel Zangwill, which appeared after Gissing's death in both *To-Day* for 3 February 1904 and the American-based *Reader Magazine* for the following May.

Pity, which is one of the major vehicles of his humanity, found expression in his writings with increasing frequency in the latter part of his career. Shortly after he began to record in his *Commonplace Book* his thoughts on the most varied subjects as they occurred to him, we come across this typical entry: "A very frequent source of misery to me is the reflecting on all the frightful physical sufferings through which men have gone. The martyr at the stake, the torture chamber, the arena etc etc. These things haunt me in the night" (p. 22).¹¹ A little later, taken from the same source, comes the horrible story he transcribed from Book IV of *Anabasis* which he turned to dramatic account in Summer IX of Henry Ryecroft's meditations, where a man is slaughtered for having refused to give information which might have led the inquirers to discover his married daughter in the neighbourhood. Logically for an agnostic, he rejects all likely succour from religion and pours scorn on the ritual prayer: "Lord, have mercy upon us!" commenting wryly: "That alone is enough to disgust one with the church service. Praying mercy from a supposed all-wise being, the supposed maker and disposer of all!" (p. 48).¹² Nor was his pity restricted to human beings. His love of animals is attested by various passages in letters to members of his family as well as in Gabrielle Fleury's Recollections of him, in which his care for his little dog, Bijou, is reflected in several touching anecdotes.

Austin Harrison, who was Gissing's pupil for several years, wrote in 1906: "Killing animals, hunting sport of all kind he abominated."¹³

Like all pessimists Gissing was, as already noted, a good prophet, and he feared for the safety of his sons in the next few decades. He first expressed himself on the subject in his anti-jingo novel, *The Whirlpool*, published when his elder son Walter was only five years of age, and he did his best to warn him against undignified rejoicing at any military event that might encourage national pride: "I suppose you sometimes hear of the war which is going on. You must understand (as aunties no doubt will tell you), that *War* is a horrible thing, which ought to be left to savages—a thing to be ashamed of and not to glory in. It is wicked and dreadful for the people of one country to go and kill those of another. Never suppose that victories in war are things to be proud of. It is disgraceful to talk much about them. Some day people will be astonished that such things could be done. What we ought to be proud of is peace and kindness—not fighting and hatred" (letter of 29 December 1899, *Collected Letters*, Vol. VII, p. 419). (That this letter was sent to a little boy who was fated to fall under German bullets and shells on 1 July 1916 lends greater force to its pacific contents.¹⁴) Bracketed with this touching mixture of warning and advice should be the letter he addressed to his distinguished friend Clara Collet in reply to a cry of patriotic fervour she had proffered after the relief of Mafeking in May 1900. "My quarrel is not with *England*," he corrected her, "but with the people who are doing their best to change, and perhaps destroy, that English civilization which, on the whole, is the most promising the world has yet seen. [...] I do not pretend to have studied the merits of the case between Briton and Boer, but I am only too sure that a just and great cause has rarely declared itself in blind violence against all who venture to criticize it. [...] I have always dreaded Kipling and Co., but I hardly thought their sowing would so soon come to harvest" (letter of 23 May 1900, *Collected Letters*, Vol. VIII, pp. 50-51). To him, as to many anti-war Liberals in England, it was clear that England had disgraced itself. Posterity was not to give him the lie.

Pacifism is only one of his major themes, but it is an endearing one. An apostle of peace,¹⁵ Gissing was a novelist of ideas, "of generous, intelligent ideas," a later age may add, which can see him in proper perspective—a man who, unlike some shallow optimists, was not blind to the seamy side of life; who invited reflection when enthusiasm was potentially misleading and introduced useful hierarchies in human sentiments, placing his admiration of the martyr *below* the loathing inspired by his slayer; who warned us

with Herbert Spencer that “there is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts”¹⁶; who sadly reminded us that there is scarcely any invention that cannot be used in war for lethal purposes. He who had acted so rashly in his youthful days at Owens College was taught by the chastisements of experience to speak the language of reason and wisdom, of humanism, humanity and humaneness. All things duly considered, he had a largely unacknowledged privilege—nature had given him an exacting conscience.

[This article first appeared in Japanese translation in the book edited by Mitsuharu Matsuoka for the sesquicentennial anniversary of Gissing’s birth.]

¹Ellen Gissing, “George Gissing, A Character Sketch,” *National Review*, September 1927, pp. 417-24.

²Gissing’s younger son, Alfred Charles, wrote in an essay which remained unpublished at his death: “Gissing inherited this father’s peace-loving disposition in a high degree; he was indeed singularly devoid of those warlike instincts which are still so strong a legacy of past ages, and long before he could reason clearly on the subject he had fairly settled in his mind that war was only for savage peoples” (“George Gissing and War: An Unpublished Essay by A. C. Gissing,” ed. Pierre Coustillas and Xavier Pétremand, *Gissing Journal*, January 1992, pp. 1-16.

³This diary was included in *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, ed. Algernon and Ellen Gissing, London: Constable, 1927, pp. 4-7.

⁴*Minster*, January 1896, p. 67. Blatchford’s and Le Gallienne’s replies appear on pp. 62 and 58 respectively.

⁵Of Gissing’s opinion of what amicable and profitable relationships between nations at the individual level should be his letter of 3 October 1897 to E. L. Allhusen gives some idea: “A cultivated Englishman going to one of our Colonies goes with a very important mission. When we think of the struggle that doubtless lies ahead of the Anglo-Saxon race, must we not gravely hope that in Australia and elsewhere there are serious-spirited men working, however humbly and obscurely, to maintain a good feeling between mother country and Colonies?” *Collected Letters*, Vol. VI, p. 354.

⁶*Contemporary Review*, December 1899, pp. 774-89.

⁷John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, London: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 239.

⁸“The Old School” was first published in the *Dinglewood Magazine*, December 1897, pp. 2-4 and reprinted by the present writer in *George Gissing at Alderley Edge* (1969).

⁹Gissing must have been aware quite early in life that his father, a pacifist before him, had as a young man, after reading Wordsworth’s sonnets on death punishment, written a sonnet in strong condemnation of his otherwise favourite poet.

¹⁰H. G. Wells, “The Novels of Mr. George Gissing,” *Contemporary Review*, August 1897, pp. 192-201.

¹¹Another relevant entry concerns children: “The misery of children in poor homes. They, indeed, feel the results of poverty. Their sufferings from idiot mothers; perpetual slapping, scolding, weeping. Contrast with lot of some wealthy children” (p. 53). A letter Gissing wrote to Mrs. Catherine Wells, the writer’s wife, on 3 October 1897, discusses the

question at the Italian national level: "Does one like Italy?" he asked, echoing a question from his correspondent. "The fact is, I always feel it a terrible country; its unspeakable beauty is inseparable from the darkest thoughts; go where you may, you see the traces of blood & tears. To be sure, this will apply to the whole world; but here one *remembers* so much more than in other countries. Age after age of strife and tyranny, of vast calamities, of unimaginable suffering in the palace & the hut. You feel something pitiless in the blue sky that has looked so tranquilly on all this. And the people—you see centuries of oppression in their faces, hear it in their voice. Yes, yes, one likes Italy; but in a very special sense of the word."

¹²Eventually Gissing's attitude was one of resignation. See *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Spring XX): "The mind which renounces, once and for ever, a futile hope, has its compensation in ever-growing calm."

¹³"George Gissing," *Nineteenth Century*, September 1906, pp. 453-63.

¹⁴With extraordinary prescience, Gissing had Harvey Rolfe say to Basil Morton in *The Whirlpool*: "We may reasonably hope, old man, to see our boys blown into small bits by the explosive that hasn't got its name yet" (p. 450). To Morley Roberts Gissing wrote on 10 February 1900: "I would greatly rather never see him [Walter] again than foresee his marching in ranks, butchering or to be butchered" (*Collected Letters*, Vol. 8, p. 11).

¹⁵In *The Crown of Life*, Piers Otway, a pacifist if any in the novel, says to his future wife Irene Derwent: "It seems to me that this is the world's only hope—peace made a religion" (p. 289).

¹⁶*George Gissing's Commonplace Book*, p. 26.

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**“She has brains, and doesn’t belong to the vulgar”:
Constructing the Fallen Woman in Gissing’s *The Odd Women***

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To present-day readers of Gissing’s novel *The Odd Women* (1893), Rhoda Nunn’s refusal to welcome fallen woman Bella Royston back into the training school for female clerks may seem harsh or at least puzzling. However, even Rhoda Nunn’s colleague, Mary Barfoot, feels that Bella, who fell into an illicit affair with a married man and was subsequently abandoned by him, can be reclaimed, re-admitted to the training school, and welcomed back into society. The differing opinions of Rhoda and Mary form one of the principal dialectics of Gissing’s novel not just once but twice as the narrative unfolds. The first spirited conversation between the two reformers about what to do with Bella occupies several pages and appears in the chapter entitled “A Camp of the Reserve.” Mary speaks from a perspective marked by compassion and a belief in her ability to help the fallen woman:

“But a mistake, however wretched, mustn’t condemn a woman for life. That’s the way of the world, and decidedly it mustn’t be ours. . . . Here is a poor woman whose self-respect has given way under grievous temptation. Circumstances have taught her that she made a wild mistake. The man gives her up, and bids her live as she can; she is reduced to beggary. Now, in that position a girl is tempted to sink still further. The letter of two lines and an enclosed cheque would as likely as not plunge her into depths from which she could never be rescued. It would assure her that there was no hope. On the other hand, we have it in our power to attempt that very education of which you speak. She has brains, and doesn’t belong to the vulgar.” (pp. 56-57)

Rhoda’s militant stance is evident throughout Gissing’s novel, and throughout her response to Mary. “You never proposed keeping a reformatory,” she tells her gentler counterpart:

“Your aim is to help chosen girls, who promise to be of some use in the world. This Miss Royston represents the profitless average—no, she is below the average. Are you so blind as to imagine that any good will ever come of such a person? If you wish to save her from the streets, do so by all means. But to put her among your chosen pupils is to threaten your whole undertaking. Let it once become known—and it *would* become known—that a girl of that character came here, and your usefulness is at an end. In a year’s time you will have to choose between giving up the school altogether and making it a refuge for outcasts. . . . [Y]ou must show yourself relentless to female imbecility. . . . The endeavour to give women a new soul is so difficult that we can’t be cumbered by side-tasks, such as fishing foolish people out of the mud they have walked into.” (pp. 57-58)

Gissing's disdain of "female imbecility" is, of course, one of the main themes of this novel, so Rhoda's statement against Bella has an authorial ring.¹ Looking more broadly at the passage as a reflection of Victorian culture, however, and at the figure of the fallen woman as a construct of that culture, we may note that Rhoda Nunn's unforgiving response to Bella *and her kind* was quite common during the Victorian period. As Amanda Anderson points out in *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*,

many commentators deny the possibility of *any* kind of sympathetic encounter, even of the most patronizing or nonreciprocal sort, arguing that fallenness entails exile, isolation, and radical attenuation of social ties. . . . [E]ven those who argue most strenuously for compassionate rescue do so precisely because they see how powerfully the prevalent discourse militates against it. (p. 40)

Gissing, then, incorporates the dialectic that drove the discussion of the fallen woman's prospects in the periodical press into the argument between Rhoda and Mary in *The Odd Women*. The upshot of their discussion is that Mary and Rhoda do not allow Bella to return to school. We find out later in the book that Mary has been helping Bella financially but that Bella, reduced to hopelessness, has committed suicide.

In 1885, Lady Mary Jeune (1845-1931)—London hostess, prolific essayist, and worker on behalf of women and poor children—published two articles in the *Fortnightly Review* under the titles "Helping the Fallen" and "Saving the Innocents." Emma Liggins has examined Gissing's earlier novel, *The Unclassed* (1884), in the context of these two important essays, noting that the fallen woman in that novel tells her story "in a way that solicits the sympathies of the reader and attacks preconceptions about working-class sexual deviance" (p. 43). Liggins argues that the "preconceptions" belong to Lady Jeune and others like her, but she does not address the fallen woman issue as it plays out in *The Odd Women*. In *The Unclassed*, she argues, "Gissing focuses on fallen women as victims of economic circumstances, who walk the streets either to supplement meagre wages from working in match factories, workrooms or in domestic service, or as a 'rest' from the hard labour such employment involved" (p. 44). Gissing's later novel, I will argue, handles the fallen woman in an altogether different way from the earlier book, even as it employs some of those same preconceptions offered to the discussion by Lady Jeune. Lady Jeune's 1885 essays, along with two shorter pieces that she published in 1891, are important to our understanding of the fallen woman discussion in *The Odd Women* because Gissing has Rhoda *speak* those same preconceptions, in

particular those concerning social class, and actually lets Rhoda's view prevail, though not, as we have seen, without a counter argument. *The Odd Women*, then, presents more than the single, authorial view of the fallen woman, her likely prospects, and the causes of fallenness as presented in *The Unclassed*, thus signaling a partial shift away from the earlier novel's sympathy and toward Gissing's fuller representation of the discussion of the fallen woman in the 1890s and his own expanding view of the fallen woman character. Sympathy for the fallen woman remains one of the main themes in *The Odd Women*, but that sympathy is placed against the severe and unwavering arguments of Rhoda Nunn.

In her articles, Lady Jeune discusses the nation's stepped-up relief work during the 1880s on behalf of England's less fortunate citizens.² In addition to describing effective "rescue work," Lady Jeune writes in some detail of the problems associated with helping women from certain classes, particularly the lower classes. For Lady Jeune, a woman's social class was the first thing to consider when setting out to do such work.³ As we shall see, social class considerations—including the kinds of behaviors that one may expect from certain classes—also underlie Gissing's treatment of the issue and determine the direction that the Bella Royston plot will take.⁴

Lady Jeune's comments, written from the perspective of one who spent years in rescue and amelioration, can help us understand Rhoda Nunn's severity with Bella Royston. "There are several points," she writes in "Helping the Fallen,"

which are most important in rescue work, and on these being adhered to or neglected the success or failure of the work must mainly depend. The first is the necessity of keeping the different classes of women apart—that is, having the work so divided that the more degraded women are never brought into contact with those who are less guilty. (pp. 674-75)

Speaking of the lowest of these women, she writes, "Many years' experience in the work has not tended to increase my belief that any great or lasting good can be done with the majority of such women" (p. 675). In the 1891 short essay entitled "Unfortunates: Reclaimables," Lady Jeune writes of the difficulty of determining which individuals can and cannot be helped, and she adds some useful terms to the discussion: "rescue-work in 'first falls' is more encouraging than is generally believed," she writes. "The difficulty is always to classify cases; and in institutions where there are great numbers it is always better to keep the less degraded from contact with the very vicious" (p. 563). There is, she notes in the same essay, "a class which must be regarded as beyond reach of help," while with the less

degraded, “when taken in hand timeously [sic] and judiciously and kindly, failure is the exception not the rule” (p. 562).

In the above passages we may begin to see the actual late nineteenth-century context for Rhoda’s wish to keep the fallen Bella away from the other students and her belief that Bella’s kind never come to any good. This context provides the second piece of what Ann L. Ardis calls the “intertextuality” of novels that examined the Victorian New Woman, novels like *The Odd Women*:

Insofar as they make frequent reference to extratextual circumstances, [these novels] resist a reader’s efforts to extricate the literary artifact from history, and thereby from politics. Because their authors choose *not* to view art as a sphere of cultural activity separate from the realm of politics and history, these narratives refuse to be discrete. . . . [T]hey choose not to be silent about the intertextual debate in which they participate. (p. 4)

In discussing the likely causes of Bella’s downfall—is it the result of a “mistake” or of “imbecility”?—and in presenting arguments both for and against her reclamation, *The Odd Women* participates in just this kind of intertextuality. The periodical press in the 1880s and 1890s provided a wealth of material on classification and reclamation from which novelists like Gissing could draw, and Lady Jeune was perhaps one of the better known social figures and essayists to enter the discussion that ran weekly or monthly through the nation’s press. Her other essay published in 1885, “Saving the Innocents”—note how her titles juxtaposed guilt and innocence and captured the dialectic that they served—distinguishes in greater detail the two types of women under examination:

I do not believe it possible to do much to rescue and restore to any position, in any kind of society, the lowest class of fallen women in this country. Many of them are too degraded to accept or wish for any help; and the difficulty of finding any work or profession for a woman who has led, while it lasted, a gay, reckless life, which, even with its darker side, had many things which made it exciting and varied, is almost insuperable. The dull routine of an ordinary woman’s life, reached by her as it must be through the reformatory and the washtub, would be intolerable, and there is nothing else. She is too degraded for an ordinary home and domestic service, and she is also unfit physically for want of training. Therefore I think we must leave her out of our calculations in any work that can be done practically to check the evil, finding what consolation we may in the recollection that there are many good Christian women working night after night on the streets of our large towns, and that under their loving, tender influence some of the poor sheep may come back to the fold. We then come to the class for which a great deal can be done—that of the woman who has just fallen and is thrown on the world, deserted by the man who has deceived her and left her with her child, in such a state of weakness and misery that she is easily reached by sympathy and kindness. This class of woman, drawn chiefly

from among domestic servants, dressmakers, barmaids, and needlewomen, is the largest, and the one with which most good can be done.⁵ (p. 346)

This important passage further illuminates the conflict between Rhoda and Mary by providing the contemporary terms, standards, and classifications that underlie their impassioned argument. That argument, placed within the sociological context provided by Lady Jeune, may be summarized as follows: In Mary's view, Bella, "poor woman," has made a "wild mistake" but is not "vulgar" and will most likely profit from the "education" that Mary proposes to offer her. She may therefore be viewed as a literary representative of Lady Jeune's "woman who ... is easily reached by sympathy and kindness." Rhoda, by contrast, argues that Bella is "below the average," exhibits "vice of character," and will come to no good (p. 59). Rhoda might argue that Bella represents Lady Jeune's "lowest class," the woman "too degraded" (the phrase is used twice) to rescue. To Mary, Bella would seem to resemble one of the "first falls" mentioned by Lady Jeune in 1891 ("Reclaimables," p. 563). Such women are overwhelmingly grateful for the help they are given:

Gratitude to those who have helped them and kept evil from them, and recollection of a period of motherhood even with all its troubles, rescue many a woman. And there are hundreds of prosperous, happy, respectable wives and mothers in Britain whose lives, could they be revealed, would testify in striking terms that such is the case. (p. 563)

Interestingly, Lady Jeune notes that this type of woman is typically "deceived" by a man. As part of her argument against taking Bella back as a student, Rhoda points out that "No deceit was practised" with Bella (p. 56).

Significantly, Bella's suicide makes Rhoda's prediction seem, at first glance, to be the truer one, but Gissing complicates such a neat interpretation of events by suggesting that Mary was also correct in her earlier prediction of how Bella might respond to a short letter and an enclosed check. In chapter 13, entitled "Discord of Leaders"—the two are still arguing, and Gissing has settled nothing about Bella—Gissing summarizes the inquest into Bella's suicide:

It was the report of an inquest. A girl named Bella Royston had poisoned herself. She was living alone, without occupation, and received visits only from one lady. This lady, her name Miss Barfoot, had been supplying her with money, and had just found her a situation in a house of business; but the girl appeared to have gone through troubles which had so disturbed her mind that she could not make the effort required of her. She left a few lines addressed to her benefactress, just saying that she chose death rather than the struggle to recover her position. (p. 126)

So ends the story of Bella Royston's career as the Victorian fallen woman. Gissing does not say in a direct way whose response to Bella is the more correct one. That is a moral question left for each reader to work out. Perhaps, had Rhoda thought Bella a "profitless average" woman and not demoted her to "below the average," Bella might have returned to school, as Mary Barfoot had proposed, and made something of herself. Rhoda's course, however, is the one followed, and the results of that course are final. In Lady Jeune's words, she is left "out of our calculations," whether Lady Jeune would herself have left her out or considered her a reclaimable "first fall." Rhoda's final comment to Everard Barfoot, one of the principal male characters of Gissing's novel, is colder still. When Everard remarks, "Then it is only natural that her miserable fate should sadden you," Rhoda replies, "It has no effect whatever upon me" (p. 127). Nor does she waver an inch from this statement when Everard offers the opportunity for her to acknowledge regret: when he asks, "Don't you feel ever so little regret that your severe logic prevailed?" she replies, "Not the slightest regret" (p. 130). These are her final words on Bella Royston's suicide. Her comments square with her earlier statement that the living Bella is "altogether beyond our sympathy" (p. 56). To Rhoda—though probably not to Lady Jeune—Bella is one of Lady Jeune's "irreconcilables."⁶

Throughout *The Odd Women*, Gissing interweaves the stories of the successful, professional women with aspirations—Mary Barfoot, Rhoda Nunn, their students, and the novel's other female social reformers—with stories of those women who are not, and who never will be, anything other than what they are. These latter are the "odd women," in particular the Madden sisters, who are brought up to uselessness, live purely reactive lives the aim of which is survival pure and simple, and consequently wither as adults; and the fallen women like Bella Royston, Miss Eade, and Amy Drake. Their inclusion represents one important element of Gissing's realism in a novel that has been praised for the realistic way in which it addresses the Victorian Woman Question. Significantly, though, Gissing does not enter the argument concerning the fallen woman the way he does in *The Unclassed*, and in this fact we may see yet another, different kind of realism at work. Bella does not tell her own story, nor do we even see Bella as a front and center character. Rather, characters talk *about* Bella, in much the same way the periodicals of the day talked *about* fallen women, and one of those characters states the contemporary case against her reclamation.

With the new interest in helping the fallen woman that Lady Jeune identifies as a hallmark of the 1880s came the need to name her, to classify her

and to distinguish her from other types of women. Such activities formed a central part of the periodical discussion of the fallen woman and informed the actions taken on behalf of reform and later prevention. Thus in *The Odd Women* we eavesdrop as Rhoda and Mary construct the fallen woman, arguing that she is this but not that, not “vulgar,” not “deceived,” not “average,” not reclaimable. Their argument employs and reflects a number of the preconceptions, assumptions, and classifications that writers like Lady Jeune contributed to the discussion that took place in the periodical press during the 1880s and 1890s. Gissing’s novel benefited in significant ways by participating in this intertextuality. Rhoda’s severe commentary on the life of Bella Royston serves Gissing’s purpose of pointing out the limitations that reformers inherited, in one sense, from contemporary thinking on helping fallen women and odd women, but that some of them also placed, for practical purposes, upon their own willingness and ability to help. More importantly, perhaps, the Bella story provides Gissing with a ready dramatic stage on which to play out the differences between his two female reformers, Mary and Rhoda, who take turns voicing the divergent, prevailing ideologies of the day concerning fallen women and their prospects. Finally, Gissing points out the difficulties in achieving exactness when classifying fallen women, difficulties that Lady Jeune also recognized. “Unfortunates: Irreconcilables” begins with this idea: “In contrast with the encouraging side of rescue-work stands that portion of it to which the word ‘hopeless’ applies; and conviction regarding it is [as] difficult to reach as it is painful to accept” (p. 588). This is Lady Jeune’s first sentence, and its irony when considered next to Rhoda’s certainty about Bella is striking. Rhoda is unwaveringly, even fatally, certain, and her view prevails. Ultimately Rhoda’s reaction to the Bella affair reminds Mary Barfoot that the training school exists in order to help *odd* women, *fallen* women being something else altogether. One of the sad but true lessons taught by Gissing’s novel is that some women cannot be helped.

Thus Lady Jeune’s essays provide a helpful context for reading Rhoda’s severity and, finally, her refusal to help Bella or feel saddened by her death. Rhoda remarks early on in her dismissal of Bella, “There are people enough to act the good Samaritan” for the lost ones (p. 58). Her words remind one of Lady Jeune, who says in “Saving the Innocents” that with the help of “many good Christian women . . . *some* of the poor sheep *may* come back to the fold” (all emphasis added). As Gissing the realist might add, some may not.

¹For background on this theme see Schmidt.

²Lady Jeune also recalled the increase in efforts to help the fallen and the less fortunate during the decade of the 1880s in her *Memories of Fifty Years* (London, 1909). She writes: “At that time there were a certain number of people, forming a small but powerful set, who mainly occupied themselves with religious and evangelizing work. . . . their lives being largely devoted to helping the innumerable works of charity which were then increasing with an extraordinary rapidity. It seemed as if the conscience of the country had suddenly awakened to the knowledge of not only the poverty, but the moral condition and degradation of large classes in the great towns; and the people I have mentioned, by their money, their position, and influence, were able to give a new impetus to the work of social amelioration, which had hitherto been carried on exclusively by devoted workers, whose small means and humble position prevented them from giving more than their personal aid towards improving the condition of those who needed it so sorely.” (p. 227)

³Judith Walkowitz writes of the importance of class bias in prostitution reform in *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980): “The struggle for female power and autonomy was not without historical ironies. In their defense of prostitutes, feminist repealers [of the Contagious Diseases Acts] were still limited by their own class bias and by their continued adherence to a separate-sphere ideology that stressed women’s purity, moral supremacy, and domestic virtue. Thus they became indignant when confronted with an unrepentant prostitute who refused to be reformed or rescued” (p. 7). Later in the book she writes, “In marked contrast to most inter-class reform movements, the feminist [Contagious Diseases Acts] repeal effort tended to accentuate rather than obscure class differences” (p. 146). Paula Bartley, in *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914* (London: Routledge, 2000), also addresses hierarchies among prostitutes and cites Henry Mayhew’s categories: “kept mistresses; demi-mondaines; low lodging house women; sailors and soldiers’ women; park women; and thieves’ women” (p. 3). For an informed overview of class consciousness in *The Odd Women*, see Sanders. As we shall see, Rhoda’s primary objection to Bella Royston is based on social class issues.

⁴Interestingly, Gissing mentions social class as being important *within* the profession of prostitution in *The Unclassed*. Early in the novel the narrator comments, “In the profession Lotty had chosen there are, as in all professions, grades and differences” (p. 22). Lotty recognizes this fact, and the passage goes on to say that she does not therefore associate with the worst of her profession. And later in the novel, Mr. Woodstock, Lotty’s father, who is awakened to his social responsibilities towards his tenants by his granddaughter Ida, hits on a plan for how to renovate his houses and improve the neighborhood: “he would create room by getting rid of the worst tenants, all those, in fact, whose presence was pollution to the neighbourhood, and whom it was hopeless to think of reforming” (p. 278).

⁵Bartley provides a longer list of occupations from which London prostitutes supposedly came. She writes: “Those involved with the rescue and reform of prostitutes believed that dressmakers, seamstresses, milliners, bonnet makers, shop girls, agricultural labourers, barmaids, flower girls, shop girls, and above all domestic servants made up the majority of the prostitute population” (p. 3).

⁶Lady Jeune uses the term mainly in its deterministic sense: “Irreconcilables” are women in whom “evil is so deeply rooted . . . as to be ineradicable. . . . Three causes render the salvation of such an one more difficult than that of a woman newly fallen. First, the love of drink; second, the scarcity of work that is congenial and not wearisome; and third, the action of heredity” (p. 588). Clearly Bella’s character and experiences place her outside this paradigm.

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Bentley's *Emancipated* profit

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On 14 October 1892, A. H. Bullen wrote to George Gissing to tell him that he had just finished reading *The Emancipated* and wanted to re-issue it in a one-volume edition at 3s 6d, with a 6d royalty to Gissing.¹ The copyright was still held by Bentley and Gissing noted in his Diary that he wrote to Bentley to enquire about the book.² Bentley replied on 19 October that they had looked into their publication ledger and found that the expenses "amounted to £444 and the receipts ... to £392," thus claiming a £52 loss.

This they called “an accident of publishing” which they would never have mentioned until Gissing enquired about purchasing the copyright.³ On 10 November they wrote again, noting that they had spoken to Mr. Bentley, who was anxious that “no impediment” be placed in the way of the reprint and asked for a “nominal payment” of 20 guineas, far more than Gissing was able to pay.⁴ On 28 November, Bullen wrote to Gissing that he would purchase the copyright from Bentley, which he did, issuing the one-volume edition in 1893 at a price of 6s.⁵ The editors of the *Collected Letters* note in the introduction to volume five that if solicitors had examined Bentley’s accounts they would have discovered that he lost not £52 but only £23 16s 5d, with the loss almost recovered by Bullen’s payment. With the £21 payment,⁶ Bentley’s purported loss was reduced to only £1 16s 5d.

In 1890, the Society of Authors published *The Methods of Publishing*, a handbook for young authors that served as a guide to novices, as a manifesto of the Society, and as a portrait of the Society’s understanding of the business of publishing. In the preface to the second edition (1891), the author, S. Squire Sprigge, called it an effort to “let light upon dark places, upon the basis of knowledge from a source that has never previously existed.”⁷ Although the Society was certainly guilty of over-simplifying, and, by over-simplifying, distorting the true picture, they were right in that there were dark places in which authors’ accounts were buried, partly because of the complexity of publishing and its multiple accounts for purchases, sales, expenses, and varying contract types. Publishers’ accounts were challenged by Walter Besant and the Society of Authors for often leaving out the discounts that publishers usually received from their paper suppliers, printers, and binders. Reconstructing actual expenses and receipts would have been difficult then and is almost impossible today since few day books or supplier receipts have survived and, like nineteenth century authors, we must rely solely on the surviving publication ledgers and publishers’ statements of accounts to their authors.

The ledger that Bentley referred to in their letter is what Clarence E. Allen, in his 1897 guide to publishing accounting practices, called the “publication account” that summed up the costs and sales. All the more detailed account books, of which Allen counts at least twenty, included the Day Books, Stock Book, Paper and Printing Book, Journal, Invoice Book, and others.⁸ Few ledgers beyond the publication account ledger have survived the years, the other being too voluminous to retain, while the publication account ledger gave at least a summary account of profit and loss

for each title and could be used, as it was in this case, to establish a value for a copyright sale.

The British Library has various Bentley ledgers in addition to the publication account ledger. For Gissing and *The Emancipated*, the Bentley summary ledger provides details of payments that do not appear in the abbreviated entries in the publication account.⁹ The publication account ledger for *The Emancipated* shows payments on 21 December 1889 of £150 for the copyright, £46 12s 12d to Grosvenor for paper, £33 9d to Burn for binding, and £75 3s to Clowes for printing 1,000 copies.¹⁰ In the Summary Ledger, on page 80, there is an entry on 10 February that records a payment to Clowes of £71 7s 10d, with an associated credit of £3 15s 2d, or a total of £75 3s, the amount recorded in the publication ledger. The amount charged for paper may be part of the Grosvenor payment of 3 January 1890, for which Bentley paid £98 1s 4d, with a discount of £5 3s 2. The binding may be in the February 12th payment to James Burn & Co. for £168 14s 10d, with a discount of £32 11s 11d. Given the clear indication of the production charges listed at full rate in publication ledger and with discounts in the summary ledger, the publication ledger does not reflect the actual cost for publishing *The Emancipated*. Applying the five percent discounts to printing (£3 15s 2d), paper (£2 6s 7d) and binding (£1 13s), the total savings are £7 14s 8d. This reduces Bentley's loss from £23 16s 5d to £16 1s 9d. With the £21 payment from Bullen, Bentley actually made profit of £4 18s 3d. And this is assuming that there were no discounts for the £129 16s 4d in advertising charges entered against *The Emancipated*. If there were, Bentley would have realized another £6 9s 10d and perhaps more if he advertised *The Emancipated* in *Temple Bar*, his own publication, and charged full price for it.

Thus Bentley, the “Old Man of the Sea,” as Gissing called him, appears more like a crocodile, crying about his loss as he quietly took in a small profit. One can only speculate as to why the discounts did not appear in the publication ledger. It may have been that discounts were not always given, or because payments were made “on account,” making it impossible to debit each title directly with its exact cost. Walter Besant's *The Pen and the Book*, while covering much of the same ground as *The Methods of Publishing*, also warned authors about publishers charging full price despite receiving discounts on advertising of five percent or more and making other “secret profits.”¹¹ Besant was more outspoken and preferred to use and emphasize words like “THIEVING” when discussing such practices.¹² In the case of *The Emancipated*, Bentley was not stealing directly from

Gissing — the copyright payment was quite reasonable for the time and it was an outright purchase, not a half-profit or shared profits contract, but Bentley’s “generosity” in accepting a loss on the novel was simply a shameless scam that caused Bullen to pay perhaps more than he would have, when he might have split the actual £16 loss, rather than the claimed £52. Had Bullen done so, their own costs would have been less, possibly allowing them to spend more on advertising and selling more copies that would have increased Gissing’s royalty earnings. Although Fredric Warburg may have called publishing “An Occupation for Gentlemen” it appears that not all of its practitioners would adhere to that code when it might not suit their financial interests, defrauding not only their authors, but their fellow publishers as well.¹³

¹George Gissing, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, 9 vols., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997, vol. V, pp. 57-58.

²George Gissing, *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas, Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978, p. 287.

³*Letters*, Vol. V, p. 60.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 65-66; *Diary*, p. 289.

⁵*Letters*, Vol. V, p. 74.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁷S. Squire Sprigge, *The Methods of Publishing*, London: Society of Authors, 1891, p. v.

⁸Clarence E. Allen, *Publishers’ Accounts: Including a Consideration of Copyright and the Valuation of Literary Property*, London: Gee & Co, 1897, pp. 5-6, 21.

⁹Bentley Papers, Summary ledgers, British Library Add MS 46573, v. XIV, 1 Aug. 1887- 31 Nov. 1896.

¹⁰British Library Add. MS 6,600.

¹¹Walter Besant, *The Pen and the Book*, London: Thomas Burleigh, 1899, pp. 170, 172.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹³Fredric Warburg, *An Occupation for Gentlemen*, London: Hutchinson, 1959.

An Unknown Victorian Writer? Translating George Gissing into Spanish

Miguel Temprano Garcia

Although I have translated a number of works by Victorian writers such as Thomas Carlyle, Joseph Conrad, or William Henry Hudson,¹ I had never read any of George Gissing’s fiction when Alba Editorial, the Barcelona-

based publishers, suggested that I translate what they told me was his best novel. I readily accepted their proposal and now congratulate myself on this rapid decision, as translating *New Grub Street* has indeed proved a most interesting and rewarding experience.

One of Gissing's early critics, the journalist and critic Thomas Secombe, predicted in 1906 that the artist would "*sup late*"—that he would be recognised belatedly.² He has actually supped later in Spain than in most European countries since none of his novels was published in a Spanish translation until 2001, when Alejandro Palomas translated *The Odd Women* for Alba Editorial.³ Although it appears that the Barcelona publishers' intention had been to strike up with *New Grub Street*, somehow Gissing's microcosm of Victorian London's literary world was, on second thoughts, considered too much of a commercial venture and *The Odd Women* became the novelist's first title in Spanish instead. Admittedly, Gissing's work was not totally unknown to Spanish publishers before 2001, since at least one more firm had already evinced an interest in *New Grub Street*.⁴ However, Alba Editorial proved hesitant to produce *New Grub Street* for some six years after *Mujeres sin pareja* came out. And as if the curse that plagues Edwin Reardon in the novel continued today, only three, generally disappointing, reviews of the Spanish translation of *New Grub Street* have been published to date, first in a small newspaper from Asturias, more recently in *Aceprensa*, and the literary supplement of *El País*, one of Spain's major dailies.⁵ The first turns out to be such an odd mixture of vulgar and enthusiastic considerations on Gissing's fine story—its title could translate as "Tragic and a Pimp"—that one could think it had been written by Reardon's friend, Whelpdale himself. To complete the present survey of the reception of the novelist in Spain on a more cheerful note, one should nonetheless recall that interestingly, despite publishers' early misgivings, Gissing's position as a representative nineteenth-century writer now seems unassailable with the Alba Editorial team. *Cuentos de amor victorianos*, their 2004 anthology of Victorian love short stories (selected and translated by Marta Salís) duly contains one of Gissing's late stories, "The Scrupulous Father."⁶ If sales figures for *The Odd Women* are proving disappointing, *Cuentos de amor victorianos* is a commercial success, being reissued by Alba Editorial in February 2005, five months after its first publication. And it seems likely that Gissing's one short story in Spanish cannot now well fall into oblivion since it has been made available as an e-book and was recently reissued by another Catalan publishing firm in an attractive paperback version of Alba's sumptuous hardcover edition.⁷

A good explanation of why Gissing has waited so long to make his way to Spanish readers will not be easily forthcoming. Some Victorian authors have always been popular in Spain—one should bear in mind, for instance, that Charles Dickens was translated and published at an early stage, thus exerting considerable influence on major writers like Benito Pérez Galdós.⁸ Conversely, a number of Victorian masterpieces such as Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* were not translated until the late 1920s. Significantly enough, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* had to wait even longer—until the 1980s' official political shift. However, the case of Gissing is particularly surprising in a country with such a long tradition—one probably starting with Cervantes—of fiction on the miseries of writing and literary bohemia. One only has to think of Valle-Inclán or Rafael Cansinos Assens to understand that numerous parallelisms could be traced in Spanish literature with Gissing's themes, moods and environments.⁹ However, one essential difference, to be traced to the very origins of the above-mentioned tradition, arguably accounts for Spain's failure to recognise the link. Indeed, most Spanish works written in the period that interested itself in literary bohemia are, in some way or other, clearly tinged with the spirit of the picaresque—which is hardly to be found in Gissing's novel. Spanish bohemians are clever rascals, always playing tricks. Most of them invariably know that they are not genuine artists or writers: they are just crooks and charlatans using art as a pretence to scrape out a living. Gissing's bohemians are more dignified and devoted to their art (even if, ironically, they don't have any), and would on no account become thieves or swindlers to keep the wolf from the door.

Regarding the problems and complications encountered when translating *New Grub Street* into Spanish, it might be relevant to describe briefly strategies adopted in the present case. Many translators will study the text first and thoroughly consider such aspects as, for example, architectural descriptions, names of tools and implements, carriages and food, etc., before really setting to work. Although, admittedly, such preliminaries can prove useful and are even probably necessary in the case of some authors, that is not the way I go about it. As a matter of fact, translators seem to me to be doing something very similar to what readers do. In a sense a translator *is* a reader: he happens nonetheless to be a very particular and meticulous one, shouldering a huge responsibility since his reading somehow becomes permanently “fixed” and can influence generations of readers. For this reason my feeling is that, if I opened a book beforehand with a view to studying the language closely, the translation would inevitably

lose some of the “freshness” of the first naive reading. I therefore tend not to read the book through before I start on the translation work. If the reader is to be surprised by the text in any way, it seems crucial that so should be the translator. And one finds in Gissing’s novel many surprise effects that ought not to be spoilt. Such a policy seems even better adapted in the present case, when the translator is so intensely familiar with many of the elements mentioned in the novel—pressing deadlines, proofs and reviews are all too familiar territory to all translators—and when some of the trends Gissing depicts are relatively novel in twenty-first century Spain. We too *sup late* in this respect. Thus, it is only recently that free dailies with articles measured in centimetres as in the weekly founded by Whelpdale have started being distributed to commuters across the country. (As a matter of fact, Alba Editorial have chosen to base their marketing campaign upon the relevance of their new Gissing book to modern Spain.)

Arguably, some of the most important difficulties that Victorian novels offer to translators have to do with style, with the semantic variations that words may have undergone, and with the cultural differences that separate us from them, both in time and space. In the case of *New Grub Street* I bumped against some of these problems, beginning with what is probably a translator’s worst nightmare—when one cannot even find a good translation for the title. Hardly anyone in Spain would know where Grub Street used to be or what was meant by the name. It was therefore tempting to use an alternative periphrasis such as “The New Parnassus” or “The New Bohemians,” but somehow these titles did not work very well because the reference to eighteenth-century English writers would be totally lost in translation, the Spanish bohemian tradition in the same period being so very scarce. So I finally opted for the most conservative solution and translated the original title literally, although an explanatory footnote had to be provided as early as Chapter I.

It is rightly said that translating is really a question of making decisions: after deciding that the title would be translated literally, the next step was to consider what to do about the names of the numerous magazines and books to be found in the novel. Would it be better to leave them as they were? Like the title, some of these names serve Gissing’s parody of the English literary world; their satirical charge will probably immediately make sense to the English reader, familiar with the real magazines thus ridiculed. The Spanish reader is at an obvious disadvantage here again but would naturally resent having to labour over a string of individual footnotes to the numerous names in a foreign language. So a happy medium, it is hoped, has been

found: all the names of the fictitious magazines have been translated, the real ones being preserved in English. It has been assumed that the average Spanish reader will be aware of such a popular magazine as the *Spectator* but will feel more comfortable if, instead of finding a magazine named *The English Girl* (with a corresponding footnote), he comes across *La Muchacha Inglesa*, which sounds very similar to many real Spanish magazines of the same period.¹⁰ That is why we find such names as *La Cuneta*, *El Estudio*, *La Corriente*, *Para Todos Los Gustos* or *La Balanza* in the present edition of *La Nueva Grub Street*. For the same reason, the only fictitious name without its Spanish equivalent here is *The West End* because it is self-explanatory and does not translate well into Spanish.

It is our hope that this method both catches the parodic flavour of Gissing's novel and facilitates the reading. The naming of foreign magazines perfectly illustrates one of the key effects to be achieved in translation. The translator's mission is by definition a very humble one; he must re-create the artist's original work in a way while renouncing all kinds of protagonism or any pretension to authorship. His presence must on no account be felt. He will always be there, hidden behind the pages, but it is crucial that he should remain hidden *all* the time. Somehow, the same "suspension of disbelief" is required for a translation as for the theatre or the cinema. The less the translator's presence is seen or even felt, the better. That doesn't mean, of course, refraining from using a whole array of devices in order to capture the essence of the original page. The whole business consists, as Paul Valéry once said, in achieving similar effects with different means.

Accordingly, the present translation strives (successfully, it is hoped) to avoid a pitfall that seems to be quite seductive to some Spanish translators—that is to make the text sound *too* Spanish. I very firmly believe that translations should have a subtle "aroma" of the original language in which the texts were written. Moreover, it makes no sense trying to eradicate all cultural and linguistic differences between the two languages involved by altering the text too much: that would be fighting a losing battle only to achieve, in most cases, ridiculous effects. I have therefore allowed myself, for instance, to translate Mrs. Yule's sociolect as if she were an uneducated Spanish woman of the late nineteenth century, but have merely imitated the language of her illiterate relatives.

It is curious to note, eventually, that the increasing attention accorded by Spanish publishers and readers to literary bohemianism abroad, is branching out into more directions than the recent adoption of one representative

foreign work, Gissing's masterpiece. For the year 2007 *Nueva Grub Street* was timed by Alba Editorial to coincide with the translation of Henry Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème*—a most happy thought, Gissing scholars will feel.¹¹

¹W. H. Hudson, *Allá lejos y tiempo atrás*, Barcelona: El Acantilado, 85 Biografía, 2003, trans. of *Far Away and Long Ago*; W. H. Hudson, *La tierra purpúrea*, Barcelona: Narrativa del Acantilado, 81 Novela, 2005, trans. of *The Purple Land*; Joseph Conrad, *El corazón de las tinieblas*, Madrid: EDAF Editorial, 2005, trans. of *Heart of Darkness*; Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor resartus*, Barcelona: Alba Editorial, 2007, trans. of *Sartor Resartus*.

²Thomas Seccombe, introduction, "The Work of George Gissing. An Introductory Survey to *The House of Cobwebs*," *The House of Cobwebs*, London: Constable, 1906, p. liv.

³George Gissing, *Mujeres sin Pareja*, trans. Alejandro Palomas, Barcelona: Alba Editorial, 2001, trans. of *The Odd Women*.

⁴The publishers are Lumen, of Random House Publishing Group. They occasionally buy rights for paperback editions from publishers specialising in hardbacks like Alba Editorial.

⁵See Diego Medrano, "Trágico y putero," *La voz de Avilés*, 8 January 2008, Section "Opinión," Column "Martes sin pájaros"; Pedro Antonio Urbina, "La nueva Grub Street," *Acepremsa*, 5 February 2008; José Luis de Juan, "Bohemios de libro," *El País*, 15 March 2008, Literary Supplement *Babelia*, p. 14.

⁶Marta Salís, ed. and trans., *Cuentos de amor victorianos*, Barcelona: Alba Editorial, 2004, pp. 227-44.

⁷Marta Salís, ed. and trans., *Cuentos de amor victorianos*, Barcelona: Random House Mondadori; Delbolsillo, 2006, pp. 227-44.

⁸Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920) is Spain's greatest realist novelist. Balzac-like, he has created unforgettable characters resurfacing in several of his novels, some of which have been brilliantly adapted by film director Luis Buñuel. In his well-documented *Episodios nacionales* (46 volumes) and *Novelas españolas contemporáneas* the anti-clerical, republican artist savaged middle-class values and exposed his contemporaries' snobbishness. He was elected to the Real Academia Española (Royal Spanish Academy) in 1897.

⁹Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) was a talented novelist, dramatist and poet. After publishing in the early years of the twentieth century his beautiful *Sonatas*, a series of refined novellas heavily influenced by the French Symbolist movement, he moved on to a "horrible, nauseating" manner intended to express his rejection of corrupt Spain and convey his sense of life's absurdity. In his 1920 play *Luces de Bohemia* (*Lights of Bohemia*) Valle-Inclán famously chooses for his main character a blind, poverty-stricken, second-rate writer roaming the streets of Madrid on what turns out to be his last night.

Rafael Cansinos Assens (1882-1964) was a poet, essayist, literary critic and translator whom Jorge Luis Borges acknowledged as one of his masters in the 1967 lecture he gave at Harvard. *Bohemia* (first published posthumously in 2002) is a largely autobiographical novel about Spanish literary circles, set in early twentieth-century Madrid.

¹⁰See for instance *El té de las damas*, *La Mariposa* or *Álbum de señoritas*.

¹¹Henry Murger, *Escenas de la vida bohemia*, trans. María Teresa Gallego Urrutia, Barcelona: Alba Editorial, 2007, trans. of *Scènes de la vie de bohème*.

Book Review

Miguel Temprano García, editor and translator, *La nueva Grub Street*, Barcelona: Alba Editorial, 2007.

Of all Gissing's works that have been translated, *New Grub Street* comes first in point of number. To the best of our knowledge, Spanish is the twelfth foreign language in which the novel can be read. The record to date is as follows: Russian (1891), German (1891-92), French (1901-02), Japanese (1969), Romanian (1978), Swedish (1982), Chinese (1986), Greek (1986), Iranian (1989), Korean (1995), Italian (2005), Spanish (2007). If some of these translations first appeared in serial form in newspapers or periodicals, all of them were reprinted in volume form. Also if a few of them went into a second edition, either in the original text or in a revised form (this being the case of the German translation), there were sometimes different translations, simultaneously or successively into the same language, such as Chinese or French.

As the translator of the present Spanish book would readily agree with a smile visible on the internet, there is no complexity of this kind about the history of *New Grub Street* in his own language, for it is only in the last few years that Gissing has been discovered south of the Pyrenees. The English title may have intrigued or put off potential translators, not because the concept of Grub Street is obscure to anyone willing to look for it in reference books or through Google, but because the notion of Grub Street is forbiddingly English. A study of the extremely varied solutions chosen by the successive translators would testify to the ingenuity or lack of imagination of Gissing's interpreters on an international scale. The Russians, as early as 1891, were the first to deal with the problem and their choice—the equivalent of "Martyrs of the Pen"—was by no means the worst of the fifteen or so that have been traced in books and newspapers.

Miguel Temprano García, it would seem, has hesitated and stopped halfway to a repetition of the Italian title, which merely repeats the English one. Perhaps Fazi Editore, the Roman publishers, considered that the original title would pique the curiosity of potential buyers. *La nueva Grub Street* somehow improves on this as it preserves in Spanish the essential notion of novelty and remains cleverly intriguing in that a Spaniard almost totally innocent of English is bound to know the meaning of the word "street" as he would that of Strasse or Rue or Via, and at worst will understand that a

street called Grub Street has been rebuilt for some reason to be discovered in the narrative.

Another problem with which the translator is confronted is the rendering of the titles of fictitious periodicals and those of Reardon's works, notably *On Neutral Ground*. Thus *The Current* is translated as *La Corriente*, *All Sorts* as *Para Todos los Gustos* and *The Study* as *El Estudio*. And what about English currency years before the much needed decimalization of the pound? And measures and distances? "A burly fellow over six feet high" becomes "un tipo fornido de un metro ochenta." Cases of apparent plain sailing in passages where syntax plays no part may contain unpredictable obstacles when an oddity in one of the two languages concerned may literally correspond to a phrasing which is above criticism. A third party may well pause and ponder in chapter VII when Alfred Yule denounces examples of pedantry and modern vulgarity he has come across in a book he has in hand: *obstruent – reliable – particularization – fabulosity – different to – averse to*. One feels some malaise in the translator's efforts to find equivalents in his native Spanish. Indeed for the six words or phrases he offers us only four equivalents: *obstructivo – fiable – particularización and tener aversión*. The modern reader's embarrassment increases when he consults, among other reference works, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* in which under "averse" he finds *fml or humor* that both *averse to* and *averse from* exist but that some people think *averse from* is non-standard. As for *different to* the same dictionary is content to say that some British speakers do use this form, nonetheless adding that teachers and examiners do not like it any more than *different than*, which has now forced its way into the *TLS*! The simple truth is that hesitation about the correct use of some prepositions is far less common in languages of Latin origin than it is in English.

The necessity to adapt the English characters' mode of address to idiomatic foreign use is a basic element of translations of dialogues, and some decisions may be difficult to make in theory, but not in practice in a novel like *New Grub Street*. In Spanish, Italian and French two places are worth observing in the development of the action—the love scenes between Jasper and Marian in chapter XXIV, then between Jasper and Amy in the concluding chapter—but they contain no surprise. Miguel Temprano García deftly clears this hurdle and as expected *Usted* becomes *tu*.

A comparison between the notes of the Penguin edition (which, let us repeat, is now critically obsolete) and those to the present translation leads the reviewer to wonder whether the translator-editor has consulted other

English editions than the first three-volume one issued by Smith, Elder in 1891. He has compiled 46 footnotes as against the 48 which Bernard Bergonzi appended to the Penguin edition in 1968. But the points worthy of clarification are only rarely the same. A systematic comparison begins with a surprise: Jack Ketch, the executioner, discreetly ignored by Bergonzi, is erased from the Spanish text and replaced by his horrible *métier*, “verdugo.” And a full list of omissions would include Gissing’s adaptation of the biblical phrase, “the valley of the shadow of death,” as well as the double allusion to Coleridge and his benefactor, the medical practitioner James Gillman. The general impression one gets in reading the 46 footnotes is that while they will greatly help Spanish readers, some particularly exacting members of the trans-Pyrenean intelligentsia will remain unenlightened in a few cases. Conversely Miguel Temprano García has cleverly elucidated various allusions which Bergonzi, a pioneer as annotator of Gissing’s works, failed to trace to their sources.

It is very much to be hoped that the book, which its author would have rejoiced to see available in a language that he bravely learnt in the last two years of his life, will have a satisfactory sale in Spanish-speaking countries and find elsewhere a few more readers, foreigners in quest of linguistic curiosities. As in the case of *The Odd Women*, the publishers have done Gissing proud. The volume is splendidly produced with a pictorial jacket and a cover suggesting the subject of the book; it is attractively printed on choice paper, and a reader with a faded knowledge of Spanish as the present reviewer happens to be feels an irresistible desire to reread in Spanish a novel on which he lectured more than once and which he translated into French.

As a specimen of Miguel Temprano García’s fluent translation, we offer the first few lines of the story:

Justo cuando los Milvain se sentaban a desayunar, el reloj de la iglesia parroquial de Wattleborough daba las ocho; estaba casi a tres kilómetros, pero las campanadas llegaron nítidas con el viente de poniente de aquella mañana otoñal. Jasper las escuchó antes de cascar un huevo pasado por agua y observó con animación :

–En este preciso instante están ahorcando a un hombre en Londres.

–No es imprescindible que nos lo cuentes –dijo con frialdad su hermana Maud.

–¡Y mucho menos en ese tono ! –protestó su hermana Dora.

–¿De quién se trata ? –preguntó la señora Milvain, mirando a su hijo con la frente afligida.

—No lo sé. Ayer vi en el periódico que esta mañana iban a colgar a alguien en Newgate. Me produce cierta satisfacción pensar que no se trata de mí.

—He aquí tu modo egoísta de ver las cosas —dijo Maud.

—Bueno —replicó Jasper—, ya que el hecho me había venido a la memoria, ¿qué otra cosa podía hacer con él ? Podría haber denigrado la brutalidad de una época que permite cosas semejantes, o podría haberme entristecido la miseria del pobre tipo. Pero esas emociones habrían sido tan poco provechosas para mí como para los demás. Resulta que lo vi como un consuelo. Las cosas me van mal, pero no tan mal como a él.

If ever Alba Editorial, a Barcelona firm, were tempted to publish a third Gissing novel in translation, we venture to suggest that *The Whirlpool* would be a good choice. Let us remember the memorable words of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa about Gissing, whom he praised unreservedly: “He wrote much, but I have not read everything he wrote, and I plead guilty.”— Pierre Coustillas

Notes and News

A report on the Third International George Gissing Conference held in late March at the University of Lille, where the editor of the *Journal* taught from 1968 to 1995, will be published in our July number.

Research in the press of the nineteenth century, an activity which so few academics find congenial, proved most rewarding again recently when Dr. Frederick Nesta, of New York and Hong Kong, exhumed from obscure American newspapers dating back to Gissing’s lifetime a number of totally unexpected items. When Gissing agreed in early 1889 to write for Tillotson’s Syndicate, the Bolton firm, a narrative which, after some reflection, he entitled “Christmas on the Capitol,” he knew that it would be widely diffused in English provincial newspapers, perhaps in a hundred of them, and not only in the *Bolton Evening News*. Of course recovering all the bibliographical details of this diffusion is impossible; yet earnest efforts in the British Newspaper Library in North London have not been altogether in vain. “Christmas on the Capitol” is now known to have appeared in three other newspapers published in the north of England and Bristol. The only volume known to us on the firm, Frank Singleton’s *Tillotson’s 1850-1950*, a limited edition of which was issued at mid-twentieth century, throws little light on the many newspapers syndicated by John Tillotson and none of the

three titles in which Gissing's Roman story has been found besides the parent paper is mentioned in the nicely produced centenary volume. In the light of all this it seemed most unlikely that the syndicated narrative should have been diffused outside Britain. But it was! In the *Milwaukee Sentinel* shortly before publication in England at the end of the year, as was "Our Learned Fellow Townsman" in 1896 in a New Orleans newspaper—this after C. K. Shorter had acquired from Gissing the world rights of the short stories he was publishing in the three reviews he edited. One is bound to speculate that the fees Shorter paid Gissing for some of his stories were somehow refunded by those American editors who were prepared to publish them in their newspapers. Gissing could not be blamed for failing to make money out of his work: the difficulties for a writer to sell his short fiction himself to American and Colonial newspapers were enormous if not insuperable. The party to be blamed was Shorter, who thought it infra dig to inform Gissing that he had sold the rights to American colleagues who sometimes published the stories, as in the present case, weeks before they appeared in England.

The *Milwaukee Sentinel* would be worth examining closely at some crucial moments in Gissing's career as Fred Nesta has discovered in its number for 22 September 1899 an article on the manuscript of *The Crown of Life*, which was on its way to America in the hold of the ill-fated liner Paris. Gissing had quickly learnt that his manuscript had been "in imminent peril of being lost to the world," but no article on the subject in the English press, except *Tit-Bits*, the source of the American paper, had so far been found. Ellen Gissing remembered having seen one or two mentions in newspapers, none of which had been read by her brother. The writer in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* offered a list of manuscripts by English writers which had been lost under strange circumstances and in some cases recovered.

Fabienne Gaspari, of the University of Provence, read a paper on "'This is Hell – Hell – Hell': les éléments dans *The Nether World* de Gissing" at a conference on "Représentations victorienne et édouardiennes des quatre éléments" (Université de Provence, 18-19 January 2008).

The American publishers Gale/Cengage Learning (formerly Thomson Learning) are planning to reprint in their bibliographical database three articles originally published in the *Gissing Journal*: Emanuela Ettore, "'The Salt of the Earth' and the Ethics of Self-Denial," July 1995, pp. 19-31; Barbara Rawlinson, "From 'Phoebe's Fortune' to 'Phoebe' by courtesy of George Bentley, *Temple Bar's* Hatchet Man," October 2003, pp. 15-33;

Markus Neacey, “Gissing’s Literal Revenge and Jordan’s Collected Silences in ‘The Prize Lodger.’”

Akemi Yoshida of Kitasato University, Japan, is to read a paper entitled “Female Drinking in George Moore’s *A Mummer’s Wife* (1884) and George Gissing’s *Workers in the Dawn* (1880),” at the George Moore Conference to be held in Hull on 5-6 September 2008.

With considerable delay we have found on the internet the text of a paper entitled “‘The Dung-Heap and the Flower’: Gissing’s *Nether World*,” by Nigel Messenger. This nine-page paper was read at a symposium which took place at the Maison Française d’Oxford on 4-5 July 2003, the subject of which was Social Deviance in England and France (c. 1830-1900). The organizers were Anne-Marie Kilday and Nathalie Vanfasse.

Last but not least the John Rylands University Library in Deansgate, Manchester organized in January an exhibition, entitled “George Gissing Returns from Exile,” of its abundant Gissing material, which largely consists of the C. C. Kohler Collection acquired in 2005. The exhibition will close on 19 May. A detailed description of the items on show can be seen at <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/exhibitions/web/georgegissing/>

The site is abundantly illustrated, but we must warn visitors that its usefulness could be greatly improved if a large number of factual and typographical errors were corrected. A lecture on “George Gissing and the Victorian City” was given at the Library by Emma Liggins on 20 February.

Recent Publications

Volumes

Paul Delany: *George Gissing: A Life*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008. ISBN-13 978 0 297 85212 4. £25. Brown imitation cloth gilt. Pictorial dustjacket on the front of which a well known 1895 photograph of Gissing is reproduced.

George Gissing, *The Prize Lodger*, London: Privately published by John Michell and Richard Adams, 2007. 24-page booklet with an introduction by John Michell.

Articles, reviews, etc.

- Ferdinand Mount, *Mind the Gap: the New Class Divide in Britain*, London: Short Books, 2004. Gissing appears on pp. 143-44 and pp. 150-51 with long quotations from *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Nether World*. One of the two 1893 portraits taken by Alfred Ellis is reproduced on p. 160.
- Wulfhard Stahl, "Besprechungen," *Anglia*, Heft 3 (2007), pp. 522-35. An omnibus review article of eleven books of Gissing interest.
- Christine DeVine, "Reviews," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 49, no. 4, Summer 2007, pp. 699-701. Review of *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Class 1870-1900*, of *George Gissing: Voices of the Unclassed*, of *George Gissing, the Working Woman and Urban Culture* and of *New Woman and Colonial Adventure Fiction: Gender, Genre and the Empire*, a book by LeeAnne M. Richardson.
- Paul Routledge, "Needy Authors, Literary Hacks," *Slightly Foxed*, Winter 2007, pp. 64-68. On the 150th anniversary of Gissing's birth.
- D. J. Taylor, "Bitter, frail, self-destructive: D. J. Taylor is drawn to Paul Delany's biography of George Gissing," *Guardian* (Review), 16 February 2008, p. 7, with portrait of Gissing sitting at H. G. Wells's desk.— Other reviews of the book have appeared to date: Paul Johnson, "On New Grub Street," *Literary Review*, February 2008, pp. 15-17, with portrait of Gissing in 1895.— Ferdinand Mount, "The Downfall of a Pessimist," *Spectator*, 8 March 2008, pp. 38 and 40.— Sarah Wise, "George Gissing and the urban outcasts," *Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 2008, p. unknown, with portrait of Gissing sitting at Wells's desk.— David Grylls, "Reckless Abandon," *Sunday Times* (Culture Section), 9 March 2008, p. 52.— Michael Bywater, "The Enemies of Promise," *New Statesman*, 13 March 2008, p. unknown.— The *Daily Telegraph* published a second review (by Claire Harman), "George Gissing's Grubby Life," 15 March 2008, p. unknown, with portrait of Gissing sitting at Wells's desk.— Valentine Cunningham, "The Glory of the Gutter," *Independent*, 21 March 2008, p. unknown.
- J. C., "Recycling Policy," *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 February 2008, p. 36. Markus Neacey's article on Gissing's Dorking housekeeper published in the January *Gissing Journal* is selected for special praise.

