

The Gissing Journal

Volume XLVII, Number 4, October 2011

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

Teaching Gissing in the Twenty-First Century

with an introduction by Simon J. James

The following papers are the result of a panel on teaching Gissing that took place at the George Gissing conference earlier this year in York. A number of academics from different systems and different countries commented on their experiences of using texts by Gissing for teaching, which led to a discussion of experiences that both differed, and could be similar in some surprising places.

What emerged as especially striking was the large number of uses to which Gissing texts, even the same Gissing texts, could be put. Meanings produced by the texts are shaped differently each time, depending on whether the course is designated as introductory, as period- or genre-based, or thematically – such as the inclusion of *The Nether World* in a course on narratives of addiction, connecting Gissing’s work to discourses of social science, medicine, and the law, as well as to other literature.

In the case of period modules, Gissing proves to be an especially fascinating figure within nineteenth-century studies. Given the process of decanonisation that has taken place in the academy over the last twenty or thirty years which has seen the traditional “centre” challenged by figures and texts from the periphery, how central, and how marginal should Gissing’s work be considered? As the creations of a conservative moralist who both embodied and resisted Victorian values, who assailed the worst of the time in which he lived while lamenting the passing of the best, Gissing’s fictions require our students to reassess their own expectations of what they think a Victorian novel is. Gissing also appears as a different writer depending on the different writers with whom he is compared and contrasted: Dickens is the most commonly chosen point of comparison, perhaps unsurprisingly, followed by Hardy and Zola, but new and richer layers of meaning emerge in Gissing’s writing when it is studied alongside the work of de Quincey, Wordsworth, Anne Brontë, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, George Moore, Meredith, Wharton, Howells, Forster and even James’s and Woolf’s challenges to so-called “classic realism.”

The richness of Gissing's engagement with the lived, material existence of his lifetime is clearly a strength for more interdisciplinary syllabuses engaged with issues of cultural history or geography. Gissing's distinctiveness lies chiefly in his characters' extraordinary self-awareness of the imbalance in late Victorian constructions of class and gender, and their articulacy in expressing their sense of their own dissonant positions. Gissing's representations of consumer culture, especially fashion and advertising, also make him a rich resource in this area. In geography, as well as in literary studies, reading literature becomes a mode of thinking about space, as Gissing maps, pre-eminently, London, in space and time; not only his fiction but also the editing of his diary and letters make his writing an especially rich resource in this respect.

At the same time, an interesting discussion emerged on the relationship between a work's location in a historical and cultural "context" and the close formal examination of a work's aesthetic qualities. Do different writers in the same period share what is effectively the same context, and thus does the demarcation of context blur the differences between them? For all of Gissing's usefulness to cultural history, what makes his work truly unique is the quality of his writing in itself. The widely varying cultural and social expectations of students is very much a factor in communicating and assessing this aspect: one might teach different levels of students within the same institution or even the same class, from well-motivated young researchers precociously nearing doctoral quality, to students with less conventional educational backgrounds, to those who are less than fully proficient in English as a second, or even a first, language. Cultural difference (for instance in glossing the meaning of proper names such as 'Whitechapel' or the connotations of words such as 'Odd' in *The Odd Women*) is a factor here. So too is the size of the forms that nineteenth-century fiction can take, so Gissing's short stories or novelle may be a more appropriate point of entry than the novels. A number of us have particular favourite passages from individual texts, which exemplify Gissing's qualities and that we use as periscopes to elicit first-hand, on the day responses from students in class. In the final analysis, Gissing's work proves itself resilient, and we all reported very positive experiences of students' appreciation, indeed enjoyment, of the inimitable literary quality of Gissing's work. Even after a hundred years, Gissing can feel "new" to a generation of readers.

Looking to the future, the internet and electronic media's bringing of the knowledge archive to the classroom offers both risks and opportunities.

Cheap or even free electronic texts make Gissing's work more widely available, but in a format shorn of the introductory material and critical apparatus that help guide a student's informed response. In an age where editorial work seems increasingly directed towards the classroom rather than the needs of researchers, pleas were made for the availability of student editions of texts such as *Eve's Ransom*, *The Whirlpool* and even *Born in Exile*.

Finally, all of the participants appreciated the value of being able to appeal to, even enthrall, students with the story of Gissing's own life. While the perils of resorting to cheap psychobiography were noted, we recognized the value of using the life to connect the text with the context, and ways of using material such as the letters and the diary in the classroom. The history of Owens College and Gissing's lifelong craving for love might also provide a means of understanding for the author's particular views on sexual difference, and on parenthood, class and the domestic. We recognised that as students can be stirred by the stories of the texts themselves, so can they – and we – by the story of a life story of an educated man without money, which provoked a touching response from the floor by Lewis D. Moore, on his own memories of teaching students who are themselves raising themselves from poorer backgrounds through education.

'I've never read anything quite like this'

William Greenslade

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In a chance corridor conversation, a not particularly close colleague of that fine critic, the late John Goode, once took the opportunity to express surprise to me that John should choose to devote his valuable time to such a writer as George Gissing (Goode had just completed his 1979 book *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction*). Of course, by then the Gissing revival – spurred on by the 1971 National Book League exhibition curated by John Spiers and Pierre Coustillas, the appearance of the Harvester editions of the novels and Coustillas's own edition of the *Diary* (1978) – was well under way.

One Gissing novel had already achieved a unique visibility: the Penguin Classics *New Grub Street*, edited by Bernard Bergonzi, which appeared in 1968. My purchase of this (still intact) volume the following year, from a York bookshop, had been prompted less by academic recommendation than by the provocation, to a callow student of Pope, of its title. For Gissing had resisted academic notice right through my A-Level studies and my entire

undergraduate course at York University, 1969-72. As this conference at the same, now greatly expanded, university, testifies, Gissing's critical importance as a leading Victorian novelist is wholly assured and his presence within literature departments, these days, surely no longer prompts that earlier, bemused, condescension. My own experience of teaching Gissing – *Demos*, *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *Born in Exile*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *The Whirlpool* – to groups of students, from the early 1980s, suggests that there is something about that very hard-won, literary reputation that pointedly recommends itself to aspiring young readers, uncertain about the direction in which their own lives will take. Certainly, anecdotal evidence suggests that when students first encounter Gissing he is an unusually unknown quantity; indeed, his very lack of visibility may be the source of his fascination to new readers.

Part of that fascination derives from their discovery of the Owens College crisis in Gissing's life (at the suggestive age of 18) which led to the re-making of himself as an aspiring novelist and which set the terms for the writer's intensive investigation of the predicament of the 'unclassed' intellectual. With some writers the biographical facts can remain firmly beside the point, but the sad story of Gissing and Nell Harrison, book-ended by the facts of his rustication and necessary exile and the moving *Diary* entries of 1-2 March 1888 recording the dead Nell's abject condition in her Lambeth slum, offers a compelling and critically central point of access to the whole career and that fascinating intersection of late-Victorian class and gender politics which Gissing's predicament exemplified. Early access by students to selected quotations from the *Diary* or *Collected Letters*, offers relatively points of entry to the lineaments of the life of this writer who is by temperament both fastidious and passionate, inhibited by shame and class consciousness, yet driven, against the odds, to place his complicated life at the service of his writing and thinking with a single-mindedness, prompting in readers a kind of qualified admiration.

"I've never read anything quite like this": it is a familiar response in which questions of literary judgement ("how good *is* Gissing?") are implicated but whose answers are suspended, awaiting further analysis of what is going on in a Gissing text. So the next question might be "what is distinctive about Gissing's writing?" Try decoupling a passage from its context in an I.A.Richards-style experiment; with this one, from *The Nether World*, perhaps?

As he came home from work one Monday towards the end of April, Bob encountered Pennyloaf; she had a bundle in her hand and was walking hurriedly.

‘Hallo! That you?’ he exclaimed, catching her by the arm. ‘Where are you going?’

‘I can’t stop now. I’ve got some things to put away, an’ it’s nearly eight.’

‘Come round to the Passage to-night. Be there at ten.’

‘I can’t give no promise. There’s been such rows at ’ome. You know mother summonsed father this mornin’?’

‘Yes, I’ve heard. All right! Come if you can; I’ll be there.’

Pennyloaf hastened on. She was a meagre, hollow-eyed, bloodless girl of seventeen, yet her features had a certain charm – that dolorous kind of prettiness which is often enough seen in the London needle-slave. Her habitual look was one of meaningless surprise; whatever she gazed upon seemed a source of astonishment to her, and when she laughed, which was not very often, her eyes grew wider than ever. Her attire was miserable, but there were signs that she tried to keep it in order; the boots upon her feet were sewn and patched into shapelessness; her limp straw hat had just received a new binding. (Ch. VIII)

What is there about the mode of address of this passage, its rhetorical strategies, its ratio of diegesis to mimesis, its typological assumptions or use of realist signifiers? Having worked through such possible questions, student readers, in their response, might begin to smuggle-in references to facts dwelling outside the text, so as to capture the full sense of the passage – not just its discursive reach but its performative drive. In our analysis and, yes, evaluation of such a passage, the efficacy of the Richards mode recedes as we plausibly register just how saturated by the public languages of late nineteenth-century Britain such a passage can be. ‘Pennyloaf hastened on’. Here the novelist superbly brings the condition of poverty to life, orchestrated through a trade-off between movement and constraint, which brings to vivid life the perpetual, pillar-to post, pinball condition of her existence, so precisely demarcated in time and space.

Encountering Gissing at moments such as these is to be reminded that, thematically rich as his novels continually are to any student of late-Victorian society and culture, it is not simply the denotative, but the performative function of his writing that allows students to secure, shall we say, a kind of hesitant possession of his work, followed, perhaps, by a deeper, pleasurable *rapport*?

Gissing in the American Two-Year College

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The University of Wisconsin System consists of thirteen institutions. UW-Madison, the flagship campus, is situated in the state capital, and has a worldwide reputation. UW-Milwaukee, in the state’s largest conurbation, also has clout. There are ten “four-year” campuses scattered across the state,

which offer baccalaureate and Master's degrees. The thirteenth segment is the University of Wisconsin Colleges, itself subdivided into thirteen small campuses geographically dispersed across Wisconsin. The Colleges offer the first two years of the American four-year B.A. or B.Sc., and students can either take whatever general education courses they find convenient before moving on or, if they wish, formally satisfy requirements for a two-year "associate" degree. It is at one of the Colleges, UW-Fox Valley, that I teach. UWFox, a hundred miles or so north-east of Madison, is the second largest of the Colleges, with roughly seventeen hundred students.

They typically fall into one of two groups: traditional eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds who are trying to save money by continuing to live with their parents and commuting to the campus, and place-bound "non-traditional" students who want some further education to enable them to get a better job or progress in the one they have now. Nearly all are the first members of their families ever to study at an institution of tertiary education. The Colleges are effectively open-admissions institutions: we admit talented but impecunious eighteen-year-olds who are going to do well, or very well, here and elsewhere (a few years ago one student left us to go to Harvard) and we admit students who are "unprepared," as the dishonest euphemism has it, those who have failed to gain admittance to UW-Oshkosh or UW-Green Bay, the not particularly selective four-year campuses closest to us, who have wasted their time in high school and continue to waste it now. So there can be a very wide range of ability in any individual class.

I have been here now for twenty-one years and have settled into teaching, irregularly but in rough rotation, half a dozen or so courses. In two of these, "Introduction to Literary Studies" and "English Literature Since 1798," I can and do teach Gissing. The former, as its name implies, is foundational: it attempts to teach students the conventions of the three major genres, in part by close analysis of specific examples. For prose fiction I choose a volume of short stories with which to begin the semester on the assumption that indifferent, in two senses of that word, readers will find such things more manageable, less intimidating than plays or poems. But I usually spend the last few weeks on a novel, and sometimes it is one by George Gissing. Obviously the work has to be in print, which can be a problem with Gissing even today, and it has to be available as a relatively cheap paperback. Neither in "Introduction to Literary Studies" nor "English Literature Since 1798" are very many of my students English majors (they are fulfilling "general education" requirements) so I've avoided *New Grub*

Street and its account of the travails of the hopelessly literary. *The Nether World* (I use Stephen Gill's World's Classics edition) is dramatic in incident and deals with subjects, poverty and slum life, that are at least on my students' radar, as they say. *The Odd Women* (Elaine Showalter's Penguin Classics but perhaps it should be Arlene Young's Broadview) has been my second choice because of its modish nature as a proto-feminist work. Debbie Harrison's edition of *Demos* now adds another strong possibility.

Having decided on the novel, I divide the number of pages by the number of classes I am going to devote to it, necessarily employing a pocket calculator, and prepare a reading schedule. Before the first class I borrow a flat-bottomed trolley from Buildings and Grounds. I pile two or three dozen items from my collection of Gissingiana (which is not quite of Coustillasque dimensions: I have eighty-odd volumes) onto said trolley and wheel it into class. I tell the by now riveted, or at least faintly interested, class that Gissing is my favourite novelist. I plunge into an account of his life, the Manchester epoch obviously being a good attention-getter, and project photographs of the Maison Elguë, and the grave, and St. Jean de Luz, and St. Jean Pied de Port, all taken during my trip to the Basque country in 2009. (Colin Lovelace and I *got inside* the Maison Elguë!) I then pass round the volumes, prefacing each book or handful of books with a brief description, conceding that I do not have anything very rare (my only first edition is of *The Town Traveller* for which I paid, I think, £5 in 1974) but that I ferret around second-hand bookshops and regularly check eBay. In other words, I try to ensure that Gissing is not simply a name amongst many from a part of the world the students have only seen on television. What happens after that depends on the psycho-dynamics of the particular class.

I have mentioned "Intro. to Literary Studies" above. The other class in which I teach Gissing is the second half of the two-semester survey of English literature, when Gissing follows, sometimes immediately, Dickens. There the later writer profits from the comparison, students finding him less demanding in vocabulary and syntax and seeing clearly that *The Nether World* is shorter than *Little Dorrit*.

All the above, perhaps, implies no very profound student engagement with Dantesque references in *The Nether World* or Ruskinian influence on Edmund Widdowson in *The Odd Women*. But a start has been made, the ground has been broken. Many students get something out of reading Gissing, even if very few of them will ever subscribe to this journal. Some

have been known to produce good papers. After reading what is universally acknowledged as the best of Gissing's working-class novels one student told me that his ambition in life was to see Clerkenwell. I have not lived in vain.

Gissing for Geographers

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I teach Gissing not as part of the canon of English literature, but as a window onto the historical geography of “modern” London, and as a way of exemplifying how writers conceptualize, produce and deploy space and place. In my third-year course on “Cities and Modernity” students write course papers – on subjects of their own choice – in which they are required to use some “original” or “primary” material. This could be a nineteenth-century census, a trade directory, or a series of newspaper stories, all easily accessible online, but for students with a cultural-studies bias (e.g. also taking some of my colleagues' courses on “Landscape and Power” or “Gendered Geographies”), their source of choice may be a novel, a painting, or a film produced *during* the period of cultural modernity on which the course focuses: roughly 1840s-1930s. My counsel of perfection, reflecting my own research practice, would be to combine different kinds of qualitative and quantitative source, but this usually is not practicable in the context of a 2,500-word course paper. Typically, students interested in gender issues and investigating the changing role of women in late nineteenth-century cities will read *The Odd Women* or, if they prefer the seductions of New York, *The House of Mirth* or *Sister Carrie*, along with more “factual” accounts of women's work or women in public space; those interested in suburbs may be persuaded to read *In the Year of Jubilee* or *The Whirlpool*. Recent editions, such as the Broadview Press *Odd Women*, which contain appendices including reprints of investigative journalism and relevant political and cultural debates, are particularly helpful in encouraging students' reading. One attraction of Gissing for geography students is that he provides a variety of forms of writing – diary, letters, scrapbook – which can be played off against his novels.

Course papers are a way in which students apply what they have been exposed to in lectures, seminars and practical classes to topics and sources of their own choice. “Teaching Gissing” in more formal settings, such as a lecture, is more of a challenge. In the past, I have used some “purple passages” to exemplify key issues in urban historical geography – Far-

ringdon Road Buildings (model housing) and the Crystal Palace excursion (urban leisure, but also the “invasion” of middle-class space by the working class) from *The Nether World*; Jubilee night (gender and class appropriations of space) and the housing situations of the Lords, Barmbys, Peacheys, Tarrants and Morgans (status and segregation *within* middle-class suburbia) from *In The Year of Jubilee*; and, most recently, Maud Enderby’s and Osmond Waymark’s cross-London walks in the first (1884) edition of *The Unclassed* (in the more commonly available 1895 edition Maud catches a bus, which is a bit of a letdown!).

This example from *The Unclassed* brings me back to what I am most interested in as a geographer: how writers conceptualize and use space. There is an established literature on the relationship between Geography and Literature, but much of it has focused on writers’ representations of rural landscape (think Hardy’s Wessex or “Brontë country”) or, more recently, on modernist authors where the layout of the text and stylistic and rhythmic variations themselves constitute a kind of city made up of different textual neighbourhoods (Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer*). The challenge is to take this approach and apply it to more conventionally structured nineteenth-century literature. There is also a distinction in theory, but less clear in practice, between literary scholars employing geographical theory to assist their literary interpretation, and geography scholars applying geographical theory to literature to improve their understanding of a particular place or geographical issue. Most Geography students these days have no better sense of space and place than anybody else; they have opted for Geography, not because they love looking at maps or walking the streets, but because they have been imbued with a vague sense of environmental responsibility – they want to “save the planet,” but they do not have much sense of the spatial relations that are threaded through what they want to “save.” So I see my job as alerting them to how and why space and place matter: what difference they make to politics, economics, culture and society. We can invoke the language of the “production of space” and of “spatial practices.” At one level, the whole of a Gissing story is his “representation of space,” but, in the course of a story, different characters deploy different spatial practices at different scales: they perceive London, or their neighbourhood, or their dwelling as offering distinctive meanings, constraints and opportunities.

Returning again to *The Unclassed*, we can consider how and why space matters by comparing the geography of first and second editions: a novel in which almost everything takes place within the boundaries of Kennington –

Pimlico – Chelsea – Paddington – Islington – Holborn – Westminster, with only occasional *excursions* beyond this territory to distant outposts such as Limehouse (for Slimy’s death) and Fulham (for Woodstock’s country retreat) implies a very different world from one which *frequently* ventures out to the East End (for Woodstock’s rents), west to Fulham (for Ida’s model dwelling), and north to Tottenham (Woodstock’s choice of retreat in the second edition). Yet within those different spatial confines, there are homes and neighbourhoods which offer more localised geographies: the relationship between front and back room in Julian and Harriet’s lodgings in Chelsea; the homeliness of Ida’s top-floor flat (whether in Pimlico or Fulham); the micro-geography of Litany Lane (whether in Westminster or the East End). This is just one, very rich, example of how space matters in how we read a Gissing novel, in this case probably beyond what the author himself had imagined. Elsewhere, and particularly as he matured as a writer, and as he more self-consciously engaged in “research,” space mattered more deliberately: the locations in which people live and things happen are not chosen randomly or innocently. But once they have been chosen, they offer opportunities, they are subject to spatial constraints (how long does it take to get from Wimbledon to Edgware Road, or from Herne Hill to Bayswater?), and they have consequences, which Gissing rarely fails to exploit.

The starting point for much of this is to *make* a map, a very old-fashioned pursuit which it is hard to persuade students to undertake! Maps are not the endpoint for geographers’ engagements with literature, but the patterns they reveal – the clusters, routes, *and absences* – generate questions for further investigation. Recently, some geographers have begun to place more emphasis on short stories. Necessarily, short stories rarely include much topographical or incidental detail; they don’t lend themselves to mapping. Yet, it follows that the occasional hint of geography they reveal may then be even more significant, to have been worth retaining in the taut structure and tight word-limit of a short story. So I anticipate more teaching through a few carefully chosen short stories which I can more reasonably expect my non-literature-obsessed students to cope with. Meanwhile, there are plenty of Gissing novels still waiting to be mapped and taught through mapping. And I will continue to urge my students to think across disciplinary and methodological boundaries, to trawl the online Gissing (and other authors) concordance to count references to places and subjects, to visit *both* the London Metropolitan Archives *and* the British Library. Just imagine a Gissing census: *all* the characters whom Gissing

ever located in Chelsea or Camden or Clerkenwell – a potential moral or psychological as well as a social geography of Victorian London?

Research-Led Teaching?

Simon J. James

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I am very fortunate at Durham in that the combination of team-taught and research-led modules permits a degree of freedom in syllabus design. Since being appointed in 1999, I have been able to teach three different Gissing novels on three different modules. I have also supervised undergraduate and Masters level dissertations on Gissing at both Durham and Cambridge.

Gissing's greatest strength for teaching lies, I feel, in the richness of his engagement with Victorian material culture. Few other novelists demonstrate such range and detail in their mimesis of the day-to-day realities of late-Victorian lived experience. Formally, as well, the fierce integrity of Gissing's commitment to literary realism allows students to explore, indeed to challenge, their sense of what "Victorian Literature" might in fact be. Gissing wrote in the period that is sometimes called "Transition" literature, and while what students can write is limited by the rubric of the periodised module in which they are being examined, in class discussion we are additionally able to consider the ways in which Gissing's work might prefigure the concerns of twentieth-century literature and history.

In the Victorian Literature module (weekly lectures, supported by small-group teaching, assessed by unseen three-hour examination), I give one lecture on *The Nether World*. Candidates are also able to answer on other novels such as *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women* or *The Unclassed*. It is especially pleasing that the latter novel is now available as a paperback reprint – and in its longer, better version too – and I look forward to recommending this text more widely in answer to the question "if I should read another Gissing novel alongside *The Nether World*, which one should I choose?" Historically, my Department has set author-specific questions in the examination paper, but candidates are also encouraged to make "compare and contrast" connections with other writers, and this practice often shows Gissing's work in new lights. Answers often compare Gissing's representations of urban poverty with those of Dickens, especially *Oliver Twist*; the two writers' differing conceptions of sentiment and domesticity, of class and gender roles have also produced stimulating answers. Comparisons with Thomas Hardy have also provided a useful way

of triangulating Gissing's place within Victorian realism, particularly in considering literary realism's negotiation between the formation of identity by historical and economic circumstances on the one hand, and issues of selfhood, moral choice and free will on the other.

In my undergraduate Special Topic *Fin-de-Siècle Fiction* (fortnightly seminars, three groups of twenty students, assessed by two 3,000-word summative essays), *In the Year of Jubilee* is considered in the second half of the course alongside work by Wells, James, Kipling and New Woman writers. This 1880s and 1890s course examines Gissing's novel through historical and cultural issues of public space and private domesticity, commodity culture, mass literacy, nature/nurture, domesticity and gender. The number (ten) and length (two hours) of Special Topic seminars allows a range of different theoretical approaches to be addressed throughout the year – psychoanalysis, say, might lead a class discussion of *Dracula* or *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, post-structuralism Henry James's tales of literary life, or material culture George du Maurier's best-selling *Trilby*. The latter approach, obviously, is productive in terms of Gissing's representations of advertising, class and female education, but the thorny, even difficult nature of his aesthetic seems to be best addressed through good, old-fashioned close textual analysis. Take the following passage from *In the Year of Jubilee*, for instance:

'Heaven forbid! Some years, no doubt, before we shall have a home; but not before I can bring you in contact with the kind of people you ought to know. You shall have a decent house – socially possible – somewhere out west; and I, of course, shall still go on in lodgings.'

He waited for Nancy's reply, but she kept silence.

'You are still dissatisfied?'

She looked up, and commanded her features to the expression which makes whatever woman lovely – that of rational acquiescence. On the faces of most women such look is never seen.

'No, I am content. You are working hard, and I won't make it harder for you.'

'Speak always like that!' Tarrant's face was radiant. 'That's the kind of thing that binds man to woman, body and soul.'" (Part 6, Chapter III)

Interestingly, the class tends to read *In the Year of Jubilee* as starting out by dramatising the lives of a group of characters, with Nancy as eventually winning the right to be its heroine after demonstrating her courage in adversity. Even after the students have read and, one hopes, enjoyed, a novel of several hundred pages, it is striking how much the seminar's final judgement might depend on the interpretation of just three words: "commanded her features." How sincere is Nancy being? Is she, after all her trials, merely settling for Lionel, realising him to be second-rate, but

also that, as an independent-minded Victorian heroine, her options for narrative closure are very limited? Or does she, for all his flaws, really love him, her ending either conventionally romantic, or a eugenic surrender to the father of her child? Usefully for stimulating class discussion, such questions can never be resolved for certain. This novel also contains some of Gissing's narratorial opining at his most vituperative (as in the commentary on the fight between the French sisters), and the striking nature of this novel's ending in particular means that it ought to provoke a response of some kind from even the most reticent of undergraduates!

My students usually read this novel as judging Lionel Tarrant and finding him wanting, lacking his wife's superior qualities, whatever her own ultimate, unspoken judgement upon his conduct. Preoccupations of Gissing's such as mass culture, gender, public space and evolutionary theory are also prominent in student discussion of *The Whirlpool* in Literary Masculinity at the Fin-de-Siècle (MA module, 2 x groups of 8-10 students, fortnightly two-hour seminars, also two summative essays). This course mediates across issues of sexuality and masculine identity, to heredity and child-rearing, to imperialism and violence. In this case, the difficulty of aligning *The Whirlpool* clearly among such diverse writers as Wilde, Forster, Conrad, Stevenson or Conan Doyle is very much a part of its interest. The complexity of the text's dialogic responses to themes such as mass culture – morally repugnant but economically necessary for the hero – or imperialism – also deplorable but perhaps a better path to masculine self-expression for men such as Hugh Carnaby than marriage to the urban siren Sibyl – requires students to engage in detail with the modulating ironies and, in this novel in particular, the obliquities and ellipses of Gissing's later narrative mode. We always engage in class in a lengthy analysis of the novel's strikingly prescient final chapter: since the syllabus ranges from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* through Kipling to the literature of the First World War, this passage usefully encapsulates many themes of the course as a whole – and is also a painful reminder that the children of so many writers studied for it, Gissing included, fathered sons who would die in World War One.

I am now struck, in teaching this novel, to what extent its critical history is the history of interpreting the layers and the foundation of narrative irony in the depiction of its marriages. I have written more research myself on *The Whirlpool* than on any other Gissing novel, but as a result of interpreting this text with such motivated and perceptive scholars, I have changed my mind from readings in my own published work (on, for

instance, the representation of the Mortons). Our students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with a range of different critical approaches towards the texts they study, but not to follow the interpretations of others too slavishly. I remember, with some awkwardness, the first time I had to mark down a student for over-dependence on a single critical source – which was my own work. This is not, of course, what “research-led teaching” is supposed to mean...

In other courses at Durham, I am required to teach students research methods, including editing theory and the importance of selecting good editions of primary texts. Fortunately, the OUP edition of *The Nether World* has never been out of print since I began teaching here, but for the other two texts, students have to rely on poorly proof-read, print-on-demand editions without an introduction or notes. It is to be hoped that publishers such as Broadview, ELS and, in particular, Victorian Secrets, might extend their good work in making more Gissing novels, such as *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Whirlpool*, available to a student, and wider, audience in an appropriate format.

***In the Year of Jubilee* and *Eve’s Ransom*:
alternative trajectories from a common impulse**

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Although *In the Year of Jubilee* and *Eve’s Ransom* on the face of it tell very different stories, there is a strong similarity between the initial mating impulses of the two young male heroes, Tarrant and Hilliard; and further, these in many ways different young men exhibit a marked similarity in their behaviour towards the young women who have had the misfortune to become the objects of their urgent desires. This makes it intriguing to compare the outcomes Gissing contrives for their “matrimonial” misadventures, each in its way a solution to a problem he conceives as endemic in the relations between the sexes. In the one case the matrimonial trap and a solution are explicitly explored; in the other it is implied only retrospectively in an authorial observation that comes as a surprise at the very end of the novel.

Both young men fixate on (“fall in love with” is not quite appropriate to the nature of their attachment) a young woman without knowing her well,

and take steps to marry her. In the case of Tarrant, the woman, Nancy, is somewhat below him in class and education. She has truly fallen in love with him, but aware of this disparity, behaves distantly towards him. His response is to lay sudden siege to her, luring her into an idyllic rural spot, where her love succumbs to his passion. He then does the honorable thing and marries her, but the marriage is kept secret for spurious reasons that later become impelling. Tarrant soon realizes that he does not want to be bound down by marriage, and regains his freedom initially by travel to America on the grounds of finding means to support his wife, but behind this pretence of responsibility his behaviour is in fact harsh, and he makes no communication with her for two years, so avoiding knowledge of the further obligation created by the birth of his child.

Nancy is intelligent and personable, though not quite as cultivated as Tarrant's male friends, and although he respects her, he is clearly in love with a bachelor existence rather than his wife. These facts combine to form his resolution against domesticity, though this is never explicitly stated, nor is the reader convinced that it would have been otherwise with a wife his intellectual equal. Tarrant is utterly ruthless in imposing the conditions he prefers on his wife. She must live in social isolation with her child and a woman companion, while he enjoys a full social life, his sexual needs catered for, and with not even the slight bondage of regular visits to her that she can rely on and anticipate. Still in love with him and tied down by the child, she submits with good grace—but it is clear that Tarrant has got it all his own way.

Tarrant's argument, that not one in a thousand marriages is happy, that constant domesticity destroys love and even friendship, and that he is doing the right thing in imposing this arrangement, is clearly entirely self-serving. Equally clearly, this was not Gissing's own convinced belief, for others of his novels depict very happy marriages with constant exposure to each other of the spouses—notably the Spences in *The Emancipated*. Rather, as it crops up regularly in his novels, it is the excuse of young men who are resisting marriage at a particular stage in their lives, and by its means Tarrant, temperamentally a non-domestic man, spares himself the consequences of his early folly in succumbing to his sex drive.

For Hilliard, in *Eve's Ransom*, the trajectory of an equally unpremeditated infatuation is quite different, not because of his own greater care but because it is not reciprocated. Hilliard becomes obsessed with a girl in a photograph whose features promise a refinement, contemplativeness and melancholy he has never encountered in a woman in real life but which his

spirit apparently craves. This drives him to search for, and when successful transfer his infatuation to, the young woman herself. If his emotion is love, it is the sort of love that “seeketh only self to please, to bind another to its delight.” Hilliard shows no consideration for Eve’s feelings and needs, and seems quite blind to the fact, obvious to the reader, that she in no way returns his interest, or even finds him a desirable companion, though it may be that for him her gentleness and gentility disguise the absoluteness of her detachment.

When Eve evades him he spies on her and tracks her down: he is a stalker in today’s terminology. By lending her money to rescue the married man she probably does love, Hilliard obtains a hold over her, her gratitude, which he does not hesitate to exploit. He delivers her an ultimatum that forces her to accompany him on a trip to Paris, pretending it is a gift because she once expressed a wish to travel. Just as Tarrant gives no weight to Nancy’s wishes, Hilliard gives none to Eve’s, ignoring her resistance and evasions. The eventual expression of her preference for his friend Narramore arouses only anger in him, never sympathy. He would clearly have forced her away from Narramore and bound her to himself if he could. After accompanying Hilliard in his obsession for the full course of the novel, the final sentence comes as almost as great a shock as the famous sentence in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* announcing George’s death on the battlefield, which changes everything for Amelia. In this case the surprise is not an unanticipated *event*, but a revelatory authorial comment that re-stages the whole story: “And Maurice Hilliard, a free man in his own conceit, sang to himself a song of the joy of life.” If we make the comparison with *In the Year of Jubilee*, this comment becomes entirely understandable. Gissing tells us that for Hilliard to marry then was too soon. Although through no foresight of his own, Hilliard has escaped the entrapment of too early domesticity.

Only at this juncture does the secondary theme of *Eve’s Ransom*, reveal its significance. It is a recurring one in Gissing’s novels but in this case so overshadowed as to be almost entirely obscured until this final sentence draws it to our attention: namely, the importance for an unclassed young man of finding a job, a work, that puts him securely into a place in the world where he is happy to be.

Additional Antipodean Algernon Gissing Titles

In 1990, when Cyril Wyatt and Pierre Coustillas wrote their article “Algernon Gissing Down Under,”¹ bibliographers still relied chiefly on handwork when it came to compiling a bibliography. Their skill was largely exercised in libraries and involved long hours of handling books, magazines and newspapers, in the never-ending search for items whose existence was often at best suspected and sometimes not even that. To the efforts of Wyatt and Coustillas we owe the list of eleven short stories by Algernon Gissing, published in Australia and New Zealand. One of their striking conclusions was that “Australian and New Zealand editors, as opposed to publishers, accepted Algernon’s short stories more readily than they did George’s.”²

Today, the bibliographer’s job has changed beyond recognition and been made a lot easier thanks to the arrival of the age of digitization. The National Libraries of Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore have set up sites, respectively called *Trove Australia*,³ *Papers Past*,⁴ and *NewspaperSG*,⁵ offering a mouth-watering wealth of data, conveniently accessible from the comfort of one’s own study.

The smallest of these, *NewspaperSG*, makes available the content of 17 Singaporean English language newspapers from 1813 to 2006. The *Papers Past* site is more extensive in its ambitions, concentrating on the digitization of newspapers and periodicals published between 1839 and 1945. It covers 61 titles from throughout New Zealand. Most ambitiously, the Trove website, opened in the spring of 2010, provides access to more than 90 million items about Australians and Australia, sourced from more than 1000 libraries and cultural institutions across the country. It is split into eight searchable categories:

- Books, journals, magazines, articles
- Pictures and photos
- Australian newspapers (1803 – 1954)
- Diaries, letters, archives
- Maps
- Music, sound and video
- Archived websites (1996 – now)
- About people and organisations

A trawl of these two extraordinary sites by the present writer in search of more Algernon Gissing short stories has been most rewarding, yielding

another 21 papers willing to make room in their columns for his stories. Of the eleven titles found by Wyatt and Coustillas, 9 were published in New Zealand and the remaining two in Australia. Of the additional 21 stories I found, twelve were published in Australia, and seven in New Zealand, and two in Singapore (British Malaya). If any further proof were needed of Algernon's appeal to his antipodean readers, this is it.

¹C. M. Wyatt and Pierre Coustillas, "Algernon Gissing Down Under," *Gissing Newsletter*, April 1990, pp. 21-33.

²*Ibid.*, p. 21.

³<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

⁴<http://paperspast.natlib.nz/>

⁵<http://newspapers.nl.sg>

List of Short Stories by Algernon Gissing in New Zealand and Australia

Compiled by C. M. Wyatt and Pierre Coustillas (1990)

1. "An Idea of the Rector[’s]," *Adelaide Observer*, 7 May 1898, p. 35. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 64-76.
2. "Bridget's Dream," *Tasmanian Mail*, 24 December 1898, p. 5 and 31 December 1898, p. 5. [Australia]
Uncollected.
3. "The Minister's Bureau," *Canterbury Times*, 3 May 1899, pp. 52-53. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 182-99.
4. "The House o' the Dead," *Canterbury Times*, 20 December 1899, p. 44. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 90-106.
5. "The Parson's Text," *Canterbury Times*, 29 August 1900, pp. 62-63. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 280-96.
6. "The Man from the North," *Canterbury Times*, 31 October 1900, pp. 61-62. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 49-63.
7. "Aa'd Nick," *Canterbury Times*, 18 September 1901, pp. 71-72. [New Zealand]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 239-62.
8. "One of the Flock," *New Zealand Mail*, 10 December 1902, pp. 9-10. [New Zealand]
Uncollected.

9. "Chimes at Midnight," *Canterbury Times*, 28 September 1904, pp. 69-71. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 233-50.
10. "The Girl at the Ferry," *New Zealand Mail*, 9 November 1904, pp. 9-10. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 135-51.
11. "Cobbing's Conscience," *Otago Witness*, 1 January 1913, pp. 81-82. [New Zealand]
Uncollected.

Additions by Bouwe Postmus (2011)

12. "An Idea of the Rector's," *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 22 October 1898, p. 6. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 64-76.
13. "The Minister's Bureau," *Western Mail*, 28 April 1899, p. 63, and 5 May 1899, p. 67. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 182-99.
14. "The Parson's Text," *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, 22 September 1900, p. 526. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 280-96.
15. "The Parson's Text," *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1900, p. 3. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 280-96.
16. "Aa'd Nick," *Star* (Christchurch), 25 September 1901, p. 4. [New Zealand]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 239-62.
17. "Peter's Legacy," *Auckland Star*, 22 July 1903, p. 3. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 107-19.
18. "Chimes at Midnight," *Star* (Christchurch), 10 October 1904, p. 4. [New Zealand]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 233-50.
19. "Barbara's Dower," *The Queenslander*, 21 October 1905, p. 43. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 251-64.
20. "Barbara's Dower," *Queenslander*, 8 May 1909, p. 44. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 251-64.
21. "An Interval of Business," *Western Mail*, 25 June 1910, p. 49. [Australia]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 288-312.

22. "Foggin's Heir," *Evening Post* (Wellington), 30 July 1910, p. 10.
[New Zealand]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 263-287.
23. "An Interval of Business," *Queenslander*, 1 October 1910, pp. 43-44.
[Australia]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 288-312.
24. "Between the Leaves of a Book," *Queenslander*, 23 March 1912,
p. 44. [Australia]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 143-66.
25. "The Girl at the Ferry," *Queenslander*, 14 March 1914, pp. 43-44.
[Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 135-51.
26. "The Additional Typist," *Rodney and Otamatea Times, Waitemata
and Kaipara Gazette*, 11 November 1914, p. 6. [New Zealand]
Collected in *Love in the Byways*, pp. 167-93.
27. "The Second Door," *Queenslander*, 10 April 1915, p. 43. [Australia]
Uncollected.
28. "The Man from the North," *Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record*,
19 January 1917, p. 5. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 49-63.
29. "The Man from the North," *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 January 1917,
p. 5. [Australia]
Collected in *The Master of Pinsmead*, pp. 49-63.
30. "The Rusty Key," *Malayan Saturday Post Illustrated*, 3 November
1928, pp. 10, 30-32. [British Malaya]
Uncollected.
31. "Merrill's Savings," *Malayan Saturday Post Illustrated*, 6 April 1929,
pp. 18, 23, 30, 39. [British Malaya]
Uncollected.
32. "Merrill's Savings," *Canberra Times*, 25 December 1935, p. 4; 27 De-
cember 1935, p. 4; 28 December 1935, p. 4. [Australia]
Uncollected.

Perhaps the single most surprising discovery was that Algernon Gissing found an Australian editor prepared to publish his last story only 13 months before his death on February 5, 1937. We print it here as a belated recognition of Algernon's success in the antipodean world.

"Merrill's Savings"

Herbert Merrill crept home like a criminal, with his heavy bag in one hand and an umbrella in the other. In reality he was a most exemplary character. But he was oppressed with shame. This thing was unworthy of him. The temptation had been wholly irresistible and he had succumbed. His heart was as heavy as the bag he so stealthily carried. Yet whom was he wronging? Were they not his own? Was not every penny of it his own lawful savings, gathered from his own honest daily toil in the bookseller's and stationer's shop wherein he served as assistant? But to make the action worse, out of shame he had lied to the cashier at the bank. This was the sting. It seemed little less than forgery. Yet again, what else could he have done? How otherwise explain the whole action? Could he candidly have confessed his depraved miserly curiosity to revel for a night in the tangible vision of his whole worldly savings? Impossible! Yet he had lied, and this became the heaviest aspect of the matter as he drew near home.

The young man had been well brought up. From boyhood he had had a savings' bank book, and penny after penny had been duly entered. Once safely paid over the counter no power on earth could induce the boy to draw the sum out again. He had been taught to consider such an act as little short of a crime. If he did foolishly wish to squander any insignificant fraction of his money it must be deducted from the coins when actually in hand. Money in the bank was money done with.

Still, he had never seen his wealth, and scarcely realised that he possessed it. This uneasy fact haunted him with ever increasing persistency. Latterly it had become intolerable. He was now twenty-four. Appetite failed him and he grew pale. At length one night in June he brought home his bank book and it showed three hundred and six pounds to his credit. That was the last straw.

Over three hundred pounds! He might speak to Julia—he might marry! But first he must handle and gaze on his substance. He could not believe in it otherwise. He must drink deeply of the conscious visible joy of possession. Hence the heavy bag, the stealthy movements, the locked door of his chamber when everybody else was in bed. He had drawn out the whole of his wealth in sovereigns.

Here at last they were. He had earned and saved them faithfully, and now his smothered affections need no longer haunt him with a sense of something not quite proper and honourable.

The next day was Sunday. As he shaved himself he saw that he did not look his best. A slight cut did not improve appearances. But Merrill was resolved. That day should reveal to him Julia's mind; and the next—why, every pound could be paid in again, and the thing be as if it had never cast its cloud over his existence.

He, of course, went to his Sunday School class. Everybody told him how ill he looked. But the only eyes for whose anxious gaze he was longing never encountered his at all. Julia was not there.

Merrill got through his duties somehow, overwhelmed again with the iniquity of his impatience and inattention. Never had his boys shown themselves so insubordinate. As soon as it was possible, he dismissed them and laid hold upon Julia's substitute.

“Her mother is so ill she could not leave her,” was the reply. “She sent me word last night.”

“Oh!” said Merrill in dismay.

But a few minutes later he had resolved upon a bold course. Not within his remembrance had he failed in attendance on morning service. To-day, he turned deliberately away from the door.

His truancy, however, was not for the purpose of returning to gloat over his riches. He traversed some byways among gardens so long as church bells were ringing, but as soon as they had stopped he was at Mrs. Turner’s door.

Julia opened it. She was not prepared for this, and the girl looked exceptionally beautiful as a deep blush suddenly overspread the pale and anxious features. Merrill coloured no less.

“May I come in?” said he. “Why did you not let me know?”

As soon as the door was shut, an impulsive intimate tenderness sprung up in Merrill. No matter what he betrayed now, with his hand on Julia’s arm he accompanied her into the room.

“But why did you not let me know? Surely I have the best right to be near you in trouble, to help and comfort you. Haven’t I?”

Julia faltered that she did not know. The visitor had not paused to consider that the situation was only altered in his own mind, and that he had given his secretly-cherished idol no hint before of the relaxation of his scrupulous restraint.

“Don’t know,” said he, all his frame quivering as he tightened his fingers on her own. “Then will you know now, Julia? Will you let me be near you? Will you give me the right to do anything and everything for you?”

“You are always kind to me.”

“Now I want to be more than kind.”

A bell rang.

“That’s mother,” said Julia, and escaped from his grasp.

In fluttering expectancy Merrill paced the parlour. Now that the reins were loosened a nobler passion than love of savings fired his soul.

Never before had he suspected what his feelings towards Julia really were and through her towards all womanhood. The world, the universe had suddenly assumed the tender and beautiful form of a woman. Unmindful even of impiety he bowed down and gave his soul up to her with religious ardour. Half an hour elapsed ere Julia returned.

Merrill heard the step approaching, fixed glowing eyes on the figure as it came in. Julia was more composed, and as the now undisguised lover stepped towards her with open arms she held up a reproving hand.

“Do not talk to me like this, Mr. Merrill,” said she. “I must not listen to it. Be kind to me as you have always been. For that I am grateful.”

Merrill was thunderstruck.

“Do you not care for me?” he stammered.

“As friends, but not in the way you mean.”

Julia was distressed, for the man collapsed utterly. He had never even distantly reckoned with such an alternative. It had always seemed to him that Julia was only waiting until he had accumulated those three hundred pounds. In his bewilderment his mind reverted to that hoard as the only firm spot in a tottering universe, but the gold grinned back at him with wholly new and unrecognised features.

“I must go. Forgive me, Miss Turner.”

Julia was distressed, and was murmuring some kind words as she followed him into the passage, when there was a loud knock on the street door. The young woman’s heart was in her throat. There was no escape. She stepped forward to open the door, and in came a laughing, sprightly figure. Merrill for an instant thought of the doctor, but his eyes met those of Jim Rodney.

“Ho, Merrill, you here!” cried Jim, as he held out his hand.

But Merrill shot past him without a word, and fled without ever looking back.

“Is that it?” cried Rodney, as he folded Julia in an embrace and flung a gay laugh into the rear.

“He never gave a hint until to-day,” said Julia, not relishing the joke. “I should have thought he knew.”

“He knows now, anyhow,” chuckled Jim.

And Merrill certainly did know that something like darkness and confusion had overwhelmed his soul. Jim Rodney, the only man he really hated, and of whose irregular life he knew too much. She could accept his attentions; she could be in love with him! Oh, the hideous deception of women! What could it all mean?

On and on out of the town fled Herbert Merrill without ever looking back. As he followed a long straight road, houses became fewer, fields and market-gardens were interspersed. At length he reached an open common. He left the road and plunged into the gorse and bracken. Two or three times he came upon contented lovers, basking rapturously in the June sun. Each glimpse gave him a fresh sting. Finally he dropped into a secluded hollow and flung himself upon the grass in a state of hopeless abandonment quite new to one of so regular and methodical an existence as his.

In an agony of doubt he sat up at length. His eyes fell at once on a female figure standing a few yards away on the rim of the little hollow in which he lay. She was gazing fixedly at him. The sun caught her features, which to Merrill seemed of transcendent loveliness, but they were agitated by distress or suffering. The two stared at each other for some seconds, and then the girl, as if coming to herself, said, “I beg your pardon.”

But Merrill leapt up.

“Please don’t go,” he entreated.

The other looked back in astonishment.

“You can’t help me,” she said.

“I should be glad to try.”

After a moment’s hesitation, the young woman took Merrill at his word, and stepped down to him in the hollow.

Apparently she was in the extremity of distress. His sympathy at first evoked only a flood of tears, which completely melted Merrill. He ventured to lay his hand upon the daintily-gloved one, and after a time, in response to his earnest and tender entreaties, she disclosed her woe.

There was nothing extraordinary in her story. Lifelong toil in a milliner's establishment, an unsuccessful father, an ailing mother. Through no fault of her own she had been dismissed from her situation after a bad season, and, in spite of all her efforts, she had failed to find any fresh employment. Merrill made various prudent suggestions. She had already tried them all. The work-house alone was before them. They had already had time given to pay their rent, but on the 1st of July it would end. Then they would be sold up.

"No, no, you shan't be that, said Merrill decisively.

The woe-begone features were raised suddenly, and the red, wet eyes fixed on him.

"But we must be. There is no help for it."

"I will pay your rent for you—if—if you will let me," stammered Merrill. "I can't bear to see your lovely eyes wet with tears. It is a wicked world. It is not right that women should have to suffer like this. Will you let me help you till you find a place?"

A nervous smile played on the man's features as he gazed intimately into the girl's face.

"How can I? What will they say?"

"Who say?" thundered Merrill. "I am free. I may help anybody I like. If you let me do it, whom else do I trouble about?"

After some diffidence and prevarication the damsel accepted the stranger's generosity with becoming gratitude. Another couple in passing peered into the hollow and laughed. But Merrill was reckless. By a flash of intuition he had weighed his glittering hoard of savings with beauty in distress, and had not found a moment's hesitation. He was lonely and wretched, he said, but not for want of money. He had regular work, and had saved a good bit. Would she come for a walk with him? They could help each other.

"What would you think of me if I did?" asked the girl coyly.

"Think of you!" said Merrill in blind earnest; "I should think you—an angel!"

"That is too much," smiled his companion.

And they did undertake their walk, going on and on into the country. Dinner, and then tea, they obtained at country inns, and not until the sun was lowering did the pair come to the town again. An appointment was made for the morrow, when Merrill undertook to bring with him the sum necessary for rent. He kept the appointment.

But he had not repaid his savings into the bank that day. It was from no set design—merely that he could not find courage to return to the bank with his burden and—tell one more lie. The money was safely locked up in his big box, and he did his best not to think of it.

Still, Merrill could not help finding that he had launched upon a wholly new existence. On the Tuesday he met Jim Rodney accidentally in the street, and the latter in good humour tried the friendly course of an explanation. Merrill stood this time and listened.

“Yes, I suppose I was a fool,” he admitted. “Tell her it’s all right. It was my fault.”

Merrill’s only refuge was in Emily Carr. With the help he had afforded, all the young woman’s tears had vanished. She was gay and hopeful. Every evening on his release from the shop she was awaiting him, and their rambles were prolonged till the last of the summer twilight. On the Friday night as they parted, Emily said casually, “What shall we do on Sunday?”

(To be concluded in our next issue.)

“Yes, Sunday,” observed Merrill, and a strange medley of thoughts assailed him. “What church do you go to?”

Each evening through the week he had meant to ask it, but had put it off.

“Sometimes one and sometimes another,” said Emily. “But let us have a walk. Never in my life shall I forget last Sunday.”

Merrill eventually agreed, and when he got home he wrote a note about his Sunday School class.

It was a lovely day, and they took train a little way into the country. Though quiet and subdued at first, Merrill roused himself in the sunlit fields and became as attentive and ardent as Emily could wish. He was eloquent on the subject of women. It was wrong that they should have to go out to work. There was only one place for a woman—in a man’s heart and as an angel beside his hearthstone.

That and several more rapturous days Merrill spent with her. He knew the full joy of accepted love now. He could think even of Julia tenderly and charitably, not without compassion also. Poor girl, would she not have to find out her mistake? Emily had her ring, and with the definite engagement Merrill found himself able to recover the threads of his life. First of all he returned regularly to his Sunday School and other religious duties. The difference with Emily over this was only a slight one, and he was not at all alarmed at her steadily declining to join him in his course. He was a bashful man, and it would save him a good deal of trouble. All would be right afterwards.

He had readily acquiesced in the suggestion that it was really not worth while for Emily to seek fresh work, for he had told her frankly that he wished to be married soon. Indeed, on her tender shame-faced suggestion had he not supplied her with various sums for the preparations?

When, therefore, in a determined mood towards the end of September Merrill found courage to recount his savings, he was disturbed to discover that in one way and another upwards of fifty pounds had melted from his store. It was a Saturday night he made the discovery, and after some hours of sleeplessness he went to the Sunday School in a thoughtful mood. For one thing he would have a quiet, serious talk to Emily that afternoon.

For the first time for many weeks Mrs. Turner was at church again.

The first glimpse of her kind, familiar features sent a pang of uneasiness through Merrill. He tried to glance at her without exciting her observation, but once unawares her eyes caught his, and she sent him that old, sweet, gentle smile which smote him to the heart. He coloured to the roots of his hair.

She simply asked him if he would come to tea that afternoon. It was long since she had seen him. Merrill said he would.

But he had not gone far before discovering the difficulty he had created. There had been already disagreements over Sunday between Emily and himself. When he had to announce that there could be no tea on the common that afternoon he readily foresaw another. It was not until he had finished dinner that he hit upon an idea of taking Emily with him to Mrs. Turner's. The opportunity was really an excellent one for making a commencement in the task from which he had shrunk. It would, besides, free him from a good deal of the constraint he must inevitably suffer in facing Julia if she happened to be present. It was really a brilliant inspiration, and Merrill set off to call for Emily in quite a vigorous state of mind.

When he came to the house he was daunted. Somebody was playing on the piano an air from the "Mikado." He must have made a mistake; but no, it was No. 42. There it was on the door. Merrill's soul fell. For an instant he thought of flight, but no choice was left him, for a window above was thrown open, and in a radiant voice Emily herself called out "Come in, old boy. My brother the actor's here. Such fun. Let yourself in."

And, smiling unsuccessfully, Herbert Merrill went in. He had not before heard a word of this distinguished brother. Emily had run downstairs and met him at the door. She kissed him demonstratively.

"Come in to him. He's just your sort."

Overwhelmed with doubts on the subject, and feeling no less guilty than if he was entering a public house, Merrill went into the room from which the piano sounded. The notes ceased abruptly, and a long-haired young man wheeled round on the music-stool with effusive cordiality.

"Gus, this is—" Emily began.

"Hah, Merrill, old man," swept in the actor, stretching out a hand. "No introduction needed for us, eh? I have heard all about you. I can see we shall hit it. A thousand congratulations."

The visitor was speechless. In spite of the cordial greeting, he could not compel his tongue to utter a word. He gazed with a fatuous smile at his prospective brother-in-law, but saw only his collar, waistcoat, and watch-chain. Emily and Gus, however, joyfully took up the talking, and it was speedily arranged that all three of them should take a stroll together.

"I'm—I'm awfully sorry, though," faltered Merrill, "we shall have to be back by tea-time. I've got an invitation, Emily, from an old friend, and I thought you and I would go there together."

“Oh, hang!” said the girl, who frankly adopted her brother’s mode of speech. “No, no, I can’t do that to-day. Give it up, Bert. You really must. I want you altogether to-day.”

“But I have promised,” pleaded Merrill. “I’m sure you will like her. It is only a dear old lady.”

“Then that settles it,” laughed Emily boisterously. “No old ladies for me to-day, I tell you, Bert, we’ll go and make a royal time of it at Winthorpe. Isn’t that it, Gus?”

“By all means.”

And the affair seemed settled.

But whilst brother and sister were getting ready, Merrill fled from the house. He knew no other way. The whole atmosphere so startled and unnerved him that he could not think coherently. Nor did he collect his senses until he got home.

Emily and Gus looked at one another. On the face of the latter was a serio-comic expression considered irresistible by his associates. Emily was pure tragedy. Gus took off his soft brown felt hat again.

“It’s you I must congratulate, Emm,” remarked he sagely, as he drew his hand over his black hair round the collar. “I really shouldn’t have thought it. It’s awfully clever. It quite settles the point. You can get your training out of him. He’s good for a hundred.”

“A hundred!” hissed Emily. “He shan’t pay a penny less than two hundred for this job, I can promise him.”

“I think you are right. Two hundred would be better. But don’t squeeze too hard. Even he would wriggle.”

And Gus took his place again at the piano.

Merrill reached Mrs. Turner an hour before tea-time. A shy little servant let him in, and assured him that her mistress was alone. Miss Julia was out.

As soon as he was seated, the fragrance and colour of this simple home made Merrill tremble with emotion. He looked into the fire and listened to his companion’s quiet talk with confused and remorseful agony. He could hear the strains of that piano far off, and they grated upon every fibre. Even the figure of Emily—these new and unsuspected tones of her voice—he shrank from himself in horror. Mrs. Turner’s voice was only vague music in his ears. He did not hear what she was saying. But the name James Rodney at last roused him.

“Isn’t it dreadful? Who can we know nowadays?”

Merrill was in such confusion that he was only thinking of himself and his own crimes. But he caught more of his companion’s words, and started up. She could not be meaning him?

“But what is it? What has happened, Mrs. Turner?”

“Haven’t you heard? James was arrested last night for robbing his employers.”

“Poor Julia,” muttered Merrill aghast, and again stared dolefully in the fire.

They talked for a long time, but before Julia could return from church Merrill had departed. The confession of his engagement for the first time had revealed to

him the full madness of it. The original passion in which he had abandoned himself to the bewitching Emily had for some time been subsiding, but nothing had in the least prepared him for the shock of that afternoon at No. 42. His first impulse was never to see Emily again, but reflection showed him the impossibility of this. On reaching his lodging, however, he wrote a letter to her and before going to bed he went out and posted it.

So engrossed was Herbert Merrill in the purely human and emotional side of his experience that through all the genuine distress and humiliations of that day no thought of the English law at any moment occurred to him. That he had grossly wronged Emily Carr, that his was the duty to find out first their suitability to one another, he incessantly admitted, but he did not get beyond that. It was with considerable astonishment therefore, that he opened a letter which was delivered at his lodgings in the morning. It ran thus, and he read it, or tried to read it, several times.

“Sir,—We are instructed by Miss Emily Carr, of this town, to approach you on the subject of an alleged breach of promise of marriage, which we understand had been entered into between yourself and her. As these matters can generally be more amicably arranged by word of mouth, we shall be glad if you will kindly call at our office at your earliest convenience, or give us the name of a solicitor with whom we may discuss the matter in case you should prefer that course.—We are, sir, yours obediently,

“Watson and Giles.”

Merrill went to this office accordingly, and in a brief conversation admitted the promise and the breach.

The lawyer was a pleasant, good-humoured man, and played about the situation in a paternal way. But it was to no purpose. Merrill was now resolved. That morning he had learned more fully the details of Jim Rodney’s disgrace.

“Then there is only the unpleasant alternative,” said the solicitor in his professional tone. “Our client will not hear of any settlement for less than two hundred pounds.”

Then Merrill was visibly thunderstruck. The lawyer was busy and sounded his bell. They could allow a week for consideration, but after that—. Merrill was bowed out.

Two hundred pounds! All but the whole of his remaining savings.

Every night that week Merrill counted over two hundred sovereigns in a vacant, mechanical manner, but dared not again count what there was beyond. On the last day that was allowed him he slunk once more along the pavement with a heavy bag in his hand. His destination was not the bank. When he got home the bag was empty—at least it contained only a stamped acquittance from every claim for and on account of, etc. For some weeks Merrill was mysteriously ill. But he spent Christmas Day at Mrs. Turner’s, and after that he grew rapidly better.

It was, however, several months longer before Merrill and Julia compared their experiences. After that Merrill's frequent topic of conversation was the amount of a man's savings necessary to justify marriage. It was ultimately fixed at something considerably under three hundred pounds. But then Merrill had succeeded in obtaining a very much better situation.

Gissing Collection for Sale

A Gissing collection put together in the last 40-odd years and comprising over 1,000 items is offered for sale by owner

The collection is wide-ranging, comprising as it does most of the first English and American editions in both boards and wrappers as well as many uncommon reprints and ephemera. Specifically, the collection includes near fine copies of the first English editions of *Workers in the Dawn*, *By the Ionian Sea* and *Veranilda*, the last two in their original dust-jackets, a presentation copy of *Our Friend the Charlatan*, presentation copies of three Algernon Gissing titles, presentation copy of *Workers in the Dawn* from Robert Shafer to George Henry Adams, Algernon's annotated copy of *The Footpath-Way in Gloucestershire* for never published second edition plus typed and manuscript notes relating thereto, Henry Hick's copy of *Charles Dickens: a Critical Study*, 2 letters of George Gissing and several of Algernon Gissing and Morley Roberts, and Algernon's copy of *Coquet-Dale Songs*. Variant later printings include titles in the publishers' "series" Smith, Elder (14 in number), Sidgwick & Jackson (17), Lawrence & Bullen and A. H. Bullen (20), Methuen (8), Dutton's *Veranilda* (9), countless Constable's as well as 25 Colonial editions and a complete set of Harvester Press reprints. This is merely a sample listing from a vast collection, the bulk of which are in very good or better condition. For specific wants, please provide as much information as possible, including Coustillas No. if known. Enquiries to Cyril Wyatt cwy51063@bigpond.net.au

Book Reviews

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part I: 1857–1888*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011.

The incubation period of this magisterial biography must have been considerably longer than even the biographer himself could have foreseen when he wrote in 1969 in a “Biographical notice of the editor” in his Harvester edition of *Isabel Clarendon*: “He [Pierre Coustillas] has recently completed a full-length biography of George Gissing.” Forty-two years later the first volume of that biography has finally appeared, which we may be sure to be very different from the book conceived in the sixties of the last century. If Coustillas was a relative newcomer to the Gissing world in the sixties, he has since established for himself the reputation of the grand old man of Gissing studies and no other critic has contributed more and more generously to the fast growing body of scholarly texts about the life and works of George Gissing. The readers of the *Gissing Journal* do not need to be reminded of the numerous Harvester editions edited by Coustillas, his edition of Gissing’s diary (*London and the Life of Literature in late Victorian London: the Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*), his hundreds of articles in various academic publications, his meticulous and stimulating editorship of the *Gissing Journal* for over forty years now, the major role he played in preparing the nine-volume edition of *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (1990-97), and the masterly *George Gissing: the Definitive Bibliography* (2005).

Small wonder then that the sum total of this biographer’s critical efforts in the field of Gissing studies over a period of half a century has amounted to this exhaustive and probing study of Gissing’s life and works. As Coustillas’ title indicates, that life was nothing short of heroic. Heroism was required for fighting the narrowness and prejudice associated with his family background after the premature death of his beloved father. Heroism was required too, for braving bourgeois conventions by choosing to share his life with a prostitute and to face imprisonment as a consequence of his stealing money from his fellow-students. Above all, Gissing the novelist deserves our admiration for the heroism required for persevering in his literary career in the face of often hostile, uncomprehending and insensitive critics and publishers. And yet, the endlessly painful and frustrating struggle to continue life with a wife who had become a dipsomaniac street-walker perhaps required heroism of an almost superhuman degree.

The first volume of Gissing’s biography covers roughly the first thirty years of his life, from 1857 the year of his birth until the summer of 1888,

when he had finished what by general consent is thought to be his best working-class novel *The Nether World* and prepared for a trip to Paris in September. Coustillas has divided the first volume into two major sections, “I. Hopes Destroyed” and “II. Hard Times,” each further subdivided into chapters. The titles of the two sections give a stark indication of what was in store for the gifted chemist’s son from Wakefield, once the happy world of his childhood began to collapse, first with the death of his father in December 1870 [Chapter 1: Ancestry, Childhood and Family Life (November 1857–December 1870)] and then with his expulsion for theft from Owens College in June 1876 [Chapter 2: Alderley Edge and Manchester (January 1871–August 1876)]. Yet we do well to remind ourselves that only hopes that have been fostered first can be destroyed later.

Though the label most frequently applied to Gissing is that of pessimist, Coustillas in his introduction claims somewhat ambivalently that “[b]asically—this is a fact which has very rarely been noticed—Gissing was an optimist and an idealist (2).” However, when he continues in the next sentence: “His early life wreaked havoc on him and he was at forty more disillusioned than many old men whom fate has dealt with roughly (2)” one is at once tempted to agree and to think that Gissing’s optimism was perhaps less real than the biographer makes out. And in a later chapter Coustillas does indeed argue that there is a significant similarity between the artistic creeds of Waymark in *The Unclassed* and his creator (“The truth is that Gissing was at one and the same time Waymark, Casti and the omniscient author” (236), claiming that “pessimism was the bedrock of [Waymark’s] credo: ‘Art now-a-days must be the mouth-piece of misery, for misery is the key-note of modern life.’” This does not deny, though, Gissing’s undoubted ability to enjoy life when it was showing its lighter and kinder face to him.

In chapter 3 of “Hopes Destroyed” [“The American Experiment” (September 1876–October 1877)] six months after the disastrous events of the summer of 1876 (his arrest and imprisonment for theft) we find Gissing in Waltham, Massachusetts, where he had been engaged as a teacher of modern languages in the local high school. Soon after taking up his responsibilities life did seem to show its lighter and kinder face to him. He wrote about it in a letter “instinct with self-confidence and happiness” (January 28, 1877) to his brother Algernon:

All the schools are free, and boys and girls attend the same classes. The perfect order that prevails, and the respect with which the masters are treated is delightful. I never saw anything like it in England (109).” “... The other night we formed a

sleigh-party at the school, and had a real good time. All the teachers went and about thirty scholars (*CL*, vol. I, 56-7).

Coustillas then goes on to quote one of Gissing's pupils whose comments on his teacher's experiences during the same period come as a surprise as they point to his lack of friends and the "lonely and pathetic figure" he cut. The biographer concludes: "Gissing, none of whose letters from February to December 1877 has been preserved, obviously had serious personal difficulties on his mind, of which nobody in Waltham, not even the young person who was involved in them, was aware (112)." Yet, how could they be aware of difficulties of which there is no trace in the late January letter just quoted?

Difficulties (of a predominantly amatory nature) must therefore have arisen in the course of February and "the (other) young person involved in them" was Martha McCulloch Barnes (1858-1946), "a lively, good-looking girl of eighteen" and one of Gissing's pupils. "Shortly after his arrival at the High School, Gissing had conceived a romantic attachment for her to which she responded (114)." Martha Barnes was born in July 1858 and the age difference between teacher and pupil was therefore a mere 30 weeks. She lived with four brothers and widowed mother at 34 Ash Street only a five minutes' walk away from the house of the Rev. Benton Smith at the corner of Orange and Moody Streets, where Gissing boarded. Martha had lost her father when she was only four years old and the mutual attraction between pupil and teacher may well have increased on account of their shared experience of growing up without a father. One can readily imagine the growing intimacy between teacher and pupil on their daily walks to and from school.

In a concluding paragraph concerning the relationship between Martha Barnes and Gissing, Coustillas argues persuasively that Gissing

could not feel happy in this new love because he could not forget Nell ... So, haunted as he was by the sense of his responsibilities ... he must have been smitten with remorse after allowing his tender feelings for his pupil to develop (114).

Coustillas quotes two passages (111) from the recollections of the High School student of Gissing's at the time, George Andrew Stearns (1860-1942), who in a personal memoir written fifty years after the event showed himself full of gratitude and admiration for the teacher only three years older than himself. A curious fact omitted from the biography is that Martha Barnes and George Stearns, who were both born and bred in Waltham and died there too, at some point in their lives lived at the same address, 486 Main Street, Waltham, though they were never there at the

same time. They both remained unmarried. It is more than likely that these two old schoolmates from time to time would share their memories of their young English master.

In this context an exciting discovery made by the biographer allows him to come up with an additional explanation for Gissing's totally unexpected and sudden departure from Waltham. The item in question is the draft of a letter dated February 1877 to Gissing from James Wood, his former headmaster at Lindow Grove School. It is a reply to "a letter from Gissing dated 30 December [1876] in which he expounded his prospects for the next few years and requested Wood's help (112)." Gissing had obviously been dreaming of Nell joining him in America and he therefore asked if Wood would help him again in sending Nell out to him once he could find the money to pay for her journey. Coustillas does not find it difficult to agree with Wood that the request was impertinent and uncalled for and the likely result of one of his recurring fits of depression caused by Nell Harrison's "heartbreaking appeals" to return to her in Manchester.

Coustillas's treatment of the Waltham episode offers a good example of his methods as a biographer. The collection of data comes first and this requires an exceptional ability to trace and locate all possible and relevant sources. In this instance his (re)search led him to Mrs Ruth Miller, James Wood's granddaughter at Colwyn Bay in North Wales, who was in possession of the draft letter mentioned above. Then follows the interpretation of the item in question and finally the findings are shaped to fit into the overall structure of the biographical narrative.

Another example of Coustillas's success in retrieving otherwise unknown material is the inclusion of three of Gissing's letters to his brother Algernon all dating from around the time of his moving into new lodgings with the Coward family in Chelsea. The letters are held by the New York Public Library and are dated 7 August 1882, 3 September 1882 and 20 September 1882. As they were not included in volume 2 of *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, we conclude they did not become available until after 1991.

It would be surprising if Coustillas the biographer had not come to the assistance of Coustillas the expert bibliographer in his efforts to incorporate fully Gissing's often painful and frustrating experiences with editors, manuscript readers and publishers into the larger story of his life. From Remington's "fantastic request ... to reduce each volume [of *Workers in the Dawn*] by half" (163) [Chapter 4: "Penury in London" (October 1877–June 1880)], to Bentley's exasperating indecision and hypocrisy over the

ill-starred *Mrs Grundy's Enemies* (211) [Chapter 6: "Defying Mrs Grundy" (September 1882–June 1884)], blackguard Chapman, "the Liar's" (225) total lack of compunction in brutally reducing the sum of £50 agreed in an interview between himself and Gissing to £30 in the memorandum of agreement, and the mutilation of the ending of *A Life's Morning* at the barbaric order of James Payn (298) [Chapter 8: "A Short-Lived Success" (May 1886–September 1888)], we are witnessing the sharp practices of Victorian publishers and their henchmen perpetrated upon an inexperienced, honest and gullible young author.

In view of these disheartening and frustrating experiences, Coustillas emphasizes the miracle of Gissing's resolve to continue the struggle to make a name for himself, resulting in the publication of six three-deckers and a double-decker novel in seven years. The fruits of heroic application and dedication.

An indispensable major source of information for the biographer obviously are the letters sent and received by Gissing. This inevitably leads to a degree of duplication between the biography and the letters with their extensive annotations published in the *Collected Letters*. A good instance is provided by the references to texts dating to Gissing's first few months in Boston, found in vol. I of the *Collected Letters* as well as the biography:

I have translated a great part of Heine's poems into verse, and I think it would be worth while to go on and translate the whole and then publish it. (*Letters*, Oct. 5, 1876).

I have just been writing some "Sketches of Life in an English Manufacturing Town." I have sent them to one of our Magazines, but have not yet heard whether they are accepted. (*Letters*, Nov. 13, 1876).

To the latter quotation the editor (Coustillas) has appended the following note: "No record of publication, and the manuscript has not survived."

In the biography all of this information is conflated to:

Unfortunately, of his other writings of the period – the translation of Heine's poems and "Sketches of Life in a Manufacturing Town," [sic] the latter of which he sent tentatively "to one of our Magazines" – none achieved publication, and the manuscripts have been lost (107).

Robert L. Selig was the first to suggest that Gissing saved one of his "Sketches of Life in an English Manufacturing Town," reworking it into his first published story, "The Sins of the Fathers," whose opening paragraph contains the revealing phrase "the heart of a great English manufacturing town." Apparently, Selig's shrewd suggestion did not find favour in the biographer's eyes, as he fails to mention it in the detailed analysis of the

story. If the first part is clearly based upon the encounter between Gissing and Nell at Manchester, the second part as clearly takes its inspiration from the encounter between Gissing and Martha Barnes in Waltham.

In a book so full of facts and figures that one occasionally wishes the biographer to have been a little more selective about what to include and what not. E.g. it does not seem to serve any useful biographical purpose to be told that Don, the dog of Gissing's friend Bertz died in 1893 (346), some ten years after it had been given to relatives of Morley Roberts. Neither does the enumeration of the names of wealthy Lancashire families (148) that sent their children for music lessons to Gissing's younger brother William seem to be sufficiently relevant to a biography of George Gissing. The claim that "[t]he month of July [1888] was also marked by much literary reading and various interruptions" (313) begs so many questions that it could safely have been omitted.

Yet it would be churlish to carp at these superfluities in this first volume of a sophisticated, wide-ranging, scholarly biography, whose slow, steady accumulation of detail, allusion and contextualization builds into a fascinating portrait of a late Victorian novelist who is finally beginning to be recognized as a significant precursor of modernism.

It is to be regretted that Pickering and Chatto did not decide to publish the complete set simultaneously in a box containing all three volumes. Despite the publisher's assurance that volume 2 is scheduled for January and volume 3 for July 2012, there is something unnatural and unsatisfactory in having to wait for the complete biography to become available. As a result it is difficult to judge the present work fairly and coherently, as there is the likelihood that we cannot really arrive at a final understanding of Gissing's achievement until we have digested the other two volumes.

Another cause for regret is the absence of any illustrations. If e.g. Richard Ellmann could find room for 32 pages of photographs in his 680-page biography of Oscar Wilde, and Ann Thwaite also included 32 pages of illustrations in her 567-page biography of Edmund Gosse, surely a balanced selection of the pictorial items relating to Gissing might have been added for the reader's instruction and delight.

Coustillas has given us in the comprehensive description of the things that make up a man's life—people, places, events—a biography that must come close to being definitive.

Bouwe Postmus, University of Amsterdam
Writing Otherness: The Pathways of George Gissing's Imagination, edited by Christine Huguët, Haren, Netherlands: Equilibris, 2010, 311 pp.

Following as it does closely on the heels of *Spellbound, George Gissing* published in 2008, also edited by Christine Huguet, this collection reminds us that there is a burgeoning group of scholars who are interested in writing about Gissing. The collection includes scholars new to Gissing studies, along with those who have already published on Gissing, and those who have been long-time students of his work. These two collections, publication of the first volume of Pierre Coustillas's biography of Gissing, monographs published in recent years, new editions of the novels and several dissertations and theses focusing solely on Gissing, combine to suggest no slow-down in the enthusiasm for Gissing studies. Scholars are looking at his work in new ways as well as looking at different portions of his oeuvre previously somewhat neglected. This interest in Gissing is not confined to the UK; this collection has its genesis in the third International George Gissing Conference held in March 2008 at the University of Lille 3, which attracted scholars from around the world. And the essays in this volume are from an international group of scholars also, scholars from Italy, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Canada, the United States and, of course, the UK, thus ensuring a multifaceted approach to the study of a writer who traveled not widely but enthusiastically, and whose intellect, interests and tastes were assuredly far from provincial.

Consisting of nineteen essays divided into five sections—"Perilous contact Zones; Gissing's Discourse of Foreignness; The World of Books; Vain Hopes, Untenable Positions; The Lures of Pessimism"—this collection takes the idea of "otherness" broadly as a starting point for considering Gissing's work. In her important and beautifully written introduction Huguet argues that "Gissing's art is rooted in his recognition of separateness," and that "Gissing himself saw his receptiveness to otherness as a crucial aspect of his artistic stance" (11).

As Huguet points out in her introduction, present-day readers are seduced when reading Gissing's fiction by the notion of visiting, as it were, late-Victorian scenes—especially those in London. She writes that we are "Charmed into acquiescence, urged on by a sentimental desire to 'go native,' we credit the illusion and delightedly register the convincingness of this recreated Victorian everyday . . . we readily dream our way back to a significant past" (12). Yet, we must keep in mind, she reminds us, that "Gissing's Victorian Britain is all of his own too, that his figurations of otherness are seen (and distorted) through the lens of his own, very personal, sensibility,"—hence the book's subtitle (12). While the "dis-

tortion” is here rendered parenthetical, it is perhaps in this so-called distortion that one discovers Gissing’s “Configuring otherness artistically,” that is, Gissing’s attitude towards and way of dealing with otherness. And it should be noted perhaps that the word otherness as used in the collection (implying as well Gissing’s notion of the “other”) does not necessarily connote simply the sort of detrimental, imperialistic attitude for which this term is frequently used as shorthand these days in literary criticism. Instead, this term is used to suggest alterity more broadly; as Huguet explains, Gissing’s “stage managing [otherness] with an eye to the beauty of the resulting artifact, is Gissing’s privileged mode of appropriation of, and adaption to, the contingent” (12).

Chapters focus on a wide range of examples from Gissing’s works; of particular interest are essays that investigate previously unexamined aspects of his oeuvre. Simon J. James, for example, offers up a look at Gissing and railway travel. Representations of railway travel occur frequently in Gissing’s fiction and evoke other aspects of the onrushing modernity often hovering over the characters in his works: for example, advertising—itsself an evocation of mass-market commerce, and the corruption of culture in the form of mass literacy. Ironically, James notes that Gissing was surprised to see his own novel *Demos* on sale at W. H. Smith’s bookstall at Oxford station, it having been remaindered. But a more complicated argument is at work in this essay. James explains that Gissing’s fiction “has increasingly been understood as dealing compellingly with negotiations between the integrity of the self on the one hand, and the threats posed . . . to the self by different kinds of public space” on the other (60). And in his use of the public space of the railway carriage and station, Gissing is able to depict a contact zone where the integrity of the self—a necessity for the process of “othering”—risks damage through that contact.

Nicky Losseff, a musicologist whose work is concerned with the interface between music and literature, focuses in the present volume on the sound of bells in Gissing’s fiction, and it is not a pleasant sound. Offering some facts about the casting of bells at the end of the eighteenth century when bell-founding was apparently not hitting a high note, Losseff is able to conclude that London’s bells—many of which were cast at that time—were, in reality, out of harmony with each other and even with themselves. However, it is in analyzing Gissing’s extensive use of bells that Losseff manages to bring the sound of those bells into relief. She writes that, “bell sounds are portrayed as discordant not just to create a depressing atmosphere; they also form a soundtrack to scenes of discord between

people or within the person” (73). She points out that Gissing often imbues bells with “the hallmarks of vocality,” suggesting that bells have throats, or are heavy-tongued (75). Bells are also associated with organized religion, of course, and the clanging of bells with their “sheer volume of sound mirrors institutional dominance . . . in obvious ways,” Losseff notes (74).

Maria Teresa Chialant, who has published extensively on Gissing and has translated at least one of his novels, turns her attention here to Gissing’s travel writing, specifically *By the Ionian Sea*—a quintessentially Gissing text in that the author uses his tour of Southern Italy to ponder not just the landscapes and people he encounters, but classical times, more specifically a textually meditated classical civilization, one that had captured his imagination through the words of another writer. At the same time, “Numerous passages reveal the narrator’s awareness of the social problems and his concern for the difficult conditions of the poor—in Southern Italy as well as in England.” Chialant notes that “being aware that such words as ‘picturesque’ and ‘romantic’ belong to a stereotyped vocabulary in the representation of the South, the narrator uses them self-consciously and always clarified his position with comments of a political kind” (106).

Interestingly, Barbara Rawlinson examines a series of essays Gissing wrote for the Russian journal *Vyestnik Evropy*, articles that were published between February 1881 and November 1882. Carefully documented this essay shows us Gissing as “a commentator of his own country’s doings” (18) as Huguet puts it, and evokes a picture of the radical Gissing who then later not only turned down all invitations to contribute to such periodicals on a regular basis, but also modified his radical views. However, noting links with the fiction Rawlinson points out that “he continued to express his condemnation of imperialism and militarism throughout his later fiction” (122).

Gissing was “a highly critical observer of religious practice,” argues Constance Harsh in her thoughtful essay on the writer’s religious views; he saw religion as a “delusion” (217). But again, there is not simply one unchanging view to be grasped, for as Harsh points out, “in [his last and unfinished novel] *Veranilda*, his ultimate attitude is a surprisingly tolerant one, founded in a deep historical understanding that was shrewd and without rancor” (233).

Bouwe Postmus surprises us with his scientific approach to suicide in Gissing’s fiction, bringing us the observations of historians, and sociologists, and even, suicidologists, noting that of the approximately 1,700 named characters in Gissing’s fiction, twenty-three committed suicide. And

Richard Dennis dazzles us with his in-depth analysis of Gissing's use of London topography in his writing. It needed emphasizing, as Dennis argues, that Gissing's knowledge of the East End itself was not vast and his fictional settings are seldom those of the East End as is often assumed by critics simply because he was writing about London's poor. He uses, for example, Clerkenwell as the all-important backdrop for *The Nether World*. Though "backdrop" is perhaps not an accurate label for what constitutes a major component of these characters' lives. But more interestingly Dennis explains how Gissing reworked certain novels later in his career—*The Unclassed* for example—to incorporate the East End, the novelist's reaction, Dennis claims, to changing views of the East End. This very detailed and well-researched essay provides excellent cultural context for a reading of the novels of poverty.

Who better to give us an essay on Gissing's relationship with France than Pierre Coustillas, who explains that no study has yet been published on this topic. As he reminds us, Gissing not only fell in love with Paris when he first visited it in 1886, but lived in France from May 1899 until his death in December of 1903. Aside from giving us a few personal details like the fact that Coustillas could almost have met Gabrielle Fleury shortly before her death, and can claim to have slept with his wife H  l  ne in the same bed that was once occupied by Gissing and Fleury (he remembers it was "an impressive four-poster and not a very comfortable one" [86]), this consummate scholar provides a survey of the writer's links to France and the ways in which his romanticized attitude towards that country changed over time. He details Gissing's knowledge of the French language claiming: "Never have I found [Gissing's] interpretation of a French word, phrase or text at fault," and also praises his understanding of French writers (93). As a writer from a century when many English novelists read the work of their European counterparts in the original as a matter of course, and who were startlingly well-read and well educated—even when self-educated, Gissing stood out. One is inclined to be somewhat in awe of him anew after reading Coustillas's essay. And, as I said, who better to point this out to us than the doyen of Gissing studies, himself a standout in academe.

Since he was such an erudite author, the section titled "The World of Books" seems particularly suited to a writer such as Gissing. William Greenslade's essay looks specifically at readers and reading in Gissing's fiction, noting that "Gissing's writing participates in an extended cultural conversation [on reading] . . . which turns on the idea of reading as an

index of value, as literacy becomes more and more central and, in an increasingly secular society, more pivotal” (174). He argues that “Through mobilizing the resources of realism in his fiction, he enjoins the reader to take the subject of reading seriously and permits us to experience a sharp understanding of how the matter of reading in late Victorian Britain is entangled with the significant pressures and forces of the age” (184).

Also in this section, in her essay on humor in Gissing’s depictions of lower-middle-class characters, Arlene Young argues that while Gissing “employs the conventions for representing lower-middle-class characters” as comical, seeing them as “vaguely absurd” and “obsessed with propriety,” “what seems to be missing paradoxically, is the actual humour—or, more precisely, the good-humour” with which such characters were commonly depicted in fiction of the time (136). Like H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, Gissing originated himself in the ranks of the lower middle class, but, Young argues, he was more “haunted” by his origins—perhaps suggesting a reason for his heavy-handed depictions of these characters in earlier fiction. With *Will Warburton* (1905), however, she sees his characterizations as “more deftly” and “more subtly handled” than in the work of these other writers (144).

The large number of essays in this volume makes it impossible to comment on all of them in this review; suffice it to say that there are other notable essays that I have not covered here. And while the number of essays and the fact that they are based on conference presentations means that they are necessarily fairly short and therefore unable to sustain lengthy meditations on their topic, still they are on the whole extremely well researched and informative. There is a somewhat tenuous connection to the overall theme of “otherness” in some of the essays; most likely again as the result of constructing a collection from conference presentations, still this volume is an excellent companion to Gissing’s work providing helpful information and readings for both the beginning student of Gissing and the knowledgeable Gissing scholar.

Christine DeVine, University of Lafayette

Notes and News

The digitization of newspapers as some scholars are currently living it is sure to have revolutionary consequences. It would be interesting to know what librarians think of these developments. The critical reception of literary works in both hemispheres will probably have to be reconsidered and one can imagine days when long stays in English and American, perhaps also in Australian and New Zealand libraries, from people anxious to reconstruct the literary climate in the Commonwealth over a century ago will no longer be of vital importance. Conversely, it seems safe to write that Gissing would not have been much interested to hear, for instance, that the Colonial edition of *Denzil Quarrier* had been reviewed in the *Otago Daily Times* for 13 July 1895 or that Mlle Le Breton's translation of *Demos* had been flatteringly discussed in the *Revue des Livres nouveaux* on 15 May 1890. Journalists' comments on his work would not greatly affect his reputation. Still one feels that his name, as distinguished from his works, was probably a little better known at the time than he himself believed. Before long we hope to be in a position to reprint some reviews which never reached his desk. For him desirable information concerning the diffusion of his works stopped at the number of copies sold of each book and at the royalties paid by publishers, and they were at no time considerable. The inexpensive editions that Constable published of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* from 1903 to the eve of World War II would surely have cheered him, but by and large the publication of his books was more profitable to his publishers (*vide* the Fenno edition of *The Unclassed*) than to him.

One valuable advantage of digitization is that it brings to light some reprints of Gissing's minor works hitherto unknown to biographers and bibliographers. An intermediate case between information and ignorance is that of "Christmas on the Capitol." When Gissing closed with Tillotson's offer to publish an article by him, he was confident that it would be published more or less simultaneously in dozens of provincial newspapers—only about half a dozen, including Tillotson's *Bolton Evening News*, have been identified so far—but Tillotson was not any more candid than C. K. Shorter was to be a few years later. So the accidental discovery of "Christmas on the Capitol" in the Albany, NY paper *Sunday Express* (22 December 1889) was one of the miracles wrought by digitization. A similar unexpected exhumation was that of "At the Grave of Alaric" from the *New York Times*, retitled "Alaric's Grave," on 18 June 1898, with a subtitle which cannot have been superfluous for most American readers: "George

Gissing's Quest of the Spot Where a River Was Turned Aside to Provide a Burial Place. From The London Daily Chronicle."

Who has ever seen the Russian translation of *New Grub Street* published in the same year (1891) as the original? A few years ago correspondence with a Russian bookseller only produced a friendly but negative reply. But patience has paid, and we are pleased to reproduce on the next page the mysterious title page of what the translator in the land of nihilism called "Martyr of the Pen." Gissing is not likely to have known of this translation.

Mainly after his death, many of the short stories were reprinted in anthologies—English, American, German, French, Swedish, Japanese, etc. The latest resurgence on record is "The Justice and the Vagabond" in a tiny volume published by Collins in 1940, *Nine Modern Stories*. Gissing's story, the first in the volume, is followed by one of the best by Arnold Bennett, "The Lion's Share."

Bibliographical oddities and scarcities continue to turn up in bookshops and little known collections. The 1915 edition of *Will Warburton*, the last novel completed by Gissing, is scarce, probably as scarce as the two variants of the sixpenny edition published in 1908 with pictorial covers which the flight of time has naturally made more attractive. But a hitherto unknown variant of the 1915 edition, neither in the expected green cloth nor in light grey paper-covered boards, recently turned up in Lancashire which no bookseller or collector known to us remembers having seen. In dark grey boards, like the recorded variant in light grey boards it carries the publisher's monogram on the front cover but the spine is very light grey and the monogram on a black instead of maroon background. The title on the spine is printed in black vertically without the author's name. So that, the happy purchaser of this scarcity tells us, in the bookshop where it awaited him, it was classified as though the author's name was Warburton!

June Parry has sent the Gissing Centre in Wakefield another of Kate Boughton's possessions, a silver teaspoon with the initials KB. As it was hall-marked in London in 1904, Tony Petyt humorously remarks that Mrs. Boughton cannot have used it to stir Gissing's tea!

Richard Dennis reported that on 26 July the BBC Home Page contained as its “thought” for the day the same quotation that he had sent us last year from Twinings Tea:

“The mere chink of cups and saucers turns the mind to happy repose.
GEORGE GISSING (1847-1903)”

Dennis then added: “Unfortunately, as you can see, they have managed to misquote the quotation, converting the perfection of ‘tunes’ into the mundanity of ‘turns,’ and added ten years to Gissing’s life. Yet again, I suppose, any publicity is better than no publicity.”

On 8 July and again on 4 August 2011 the *Wakefield Express* printed articles about the “Wakefield hotel to be transformed,” that is about the conversion to be carried out within the next three years by Mr. Abdul Hussein of the seven houses in Stoneleigh Terrace, where Gissing’s mother and sisters lived in the 1880s, into 27 flats with the permission of the Wakefield Council. The terrace had been converted into a hotel in the second half of the 20th century. The hotel remained in use until 2006, and was then left vacant.

Correction: in the Tailpiece to our number for April 2011 a mistake was introduced concerning the preface written by Canon Lacey to one of Ellen Gissing’s two books. Canon Lacey prefaced Ellen Gissing’s first book, *The Hidden Life of the Blessed Virgin*, not her second, *Angels and Men*.

Recent Publications

Volumes

Christine Huguet (ed.), *Writing Otherness, The Pathways of George Gissing’s Imagination*. Haren, Netherlands: Equilibris, 2010. Pp. 311. Hardback, £79, ISBN 978-90-5976-011-0, and paperback, £56, ISBN 978-90-5976-012-7. The front cover of both hardback and paperback reproduces Joe M. Clay’s picture of the Gissing house in Thompson’s Yard, Wakefield. The book contains papers that were read at the 2008 Gissing Conference in Lille by M. D. Allen, M. T. Chialant, Pierre Coustillas, Richard Dennis, Constance Harsh, Christine Huguet, José Díaz Lage, Paola D’Ercole, Emanuela Ettorre, William Greenslade,

Simon J. James, Nicky Losseff, Claudia Martin, Lewis D. Moore, Bouwe Postmus, Barbara Rawlinson, Eleonora Sasso, Ryan Stephenson, Luisa Villa, and Arlene Young.

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, Vol. I 1857-1888, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011. Pp. x + 366. Hardback with portrait of Gissing on front cover. ISBN-13: 9781848931718. £60. Vol. II 1888-1897 will be published in January 2012, Vol. III 1897-1903, with two posthumous chapters, in July 2012.

George Gissing, *The Unclassed*. The 1884 Text. Edited by Paul Delany and Colette Colligan. Victoria, BC.: ELS Editions, 2010. Text, notes and contexts, pp. xxii + 419. ISBN 978-1-55058-387-8. The names of Edward Gibbon and Eduard Bertz are both given incorrectly. £20.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Yukari Oda, "The Function of Provisional Freedom in George Gissing's *The Nether World*," *Bulletin of Fukui University of Technology*, Part Two, 39 (2009), pp. 432-40.

M. D. Allen, "New Grub Street," *Masterplots*, Fourth Edition, 12 vols., Ed. Laurence W. Mazzeno, Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2010, vol. 7, pp. 3940-42.

M. D. Allen, Review of Debbie Harrison's edition of *Demos* published by Victorian Secrets, in the Spring 2011 issue of *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature*.

Sarah Churchwell, "This week in books," *Guardian Review*, 9 July 2011, p. 5. Comments on the Bogus British Book List published on 8 July by the American online paper *Huffington Post*. Gissing appeared as number 7 out of 16 British writers who were supposed to be the favourite authors of American readers.

Anthony Quinn, "Books: A hasbeen is reborn a hero," *Observer*, 11 September, 2011, p. 42, with a photo of Gissing in 1901, taken by Elliott and Fry at H. G. Wells's desk. Review of volume I of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* (1857-1888).

Wulfhard Stahl, "Frauen früher," *GenderStudies*, no. 19, Autumn 2011, pp. 26-27. Review of the Grayswood Press editions of *Isabel Clarendon* and *Three Novellas*, and Maria Teresa Chialant's bilingual edition of *Eve's Ransom* (Aracne Editrice).

Ross Bradshaw (ed.), *Maps*, the first of a series of annual journals published by Five Leaves Publications of Nottingham. Contains a reprint of Richard Dennis's article "Mapping Gissing's Novels" which originally appeared in the October 2010 number of the *Gissing Journal*.

Tailpiece

During one of his moments of failing inspiration, Edwin Reardon, the novelist of *New Grub Street*, reads a line or two of the *Odyssey*, reflecting that Homer did not write to earn money or to meet a deadline. This reproach is inherent in all of the criticism Gissing directed against the modern world. He was no builder of Utopian systems. He rejected all the characteristic social remedies of the nineteenth century, but did not show that he had any principles on which a better order of things could be based. The seclusion, love of study, liberty and individuality which are praised in his novels and the Ryecroft papers do not amount to a social system. Yet he did have an unconscious standard of value by which he measured the deficiencies of nineteenth-century civilization. That was the culture of Greece and Rome, as he conceived it.

Gissing was already a devoted classical student when he was a schoolboy in Wakefield, and his attachment to antiquity grew steadily throughout his lifetime. He was a constant reader of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, had a superb command of many classical texts and steeped himself in the sixth century in preparation for writing his historical novel, *Veranilda*. In spite of this quasi-professional knowledge, however, he always saw antiquity through a haze of romance and personal associations. During the travels in Italy recorded in *By the Ionian Sea* (1901) he felt resentment toward the intrusions of modern towns and factories into lands once sacred to Homer, Apollo, Horace and Virgil. For him, visiting these places was a way of entering a closed world, like Yeats' Byzantium, where the imagination could wander without encountering the painful realities of the present. Describing a steamer trip across the Bay of Naples in *By the Ionian Sea*, a trip he was to include in *Veranilda*, he wrote, "To-day seemed an unreality, an idle impertinence; the real was that long-buried past which gave its meaning to all about me, touching the night with infinite pathos. Best of all, one's own being became lost to consciousness; the mind knew only the phantasmal forms it shaped and was at peace in vision." The classical world was not only an escape however; it was also the embodiment of the virtues that were missing in modern life. For one

thing, it was pre-Christian, and therefore free of one of the illusions of the contemporary world that Gissing found most pathetic and contemptible. Its surviving art and literature were prevailingly aristocratic, exempt from mercenary motives. Among them Gissing had found philosophers who praised wisdom, study and moderation, lyric poets who dwelt on the placid, uncontentious life of the countryside, and tragedians and epic poets who saw man's life as a lofty and significant drama in which he encountered forces beyond his control, and was forced to acknowledge his limited capacities. To Gissing the most striking defect of modern industrial civilization was its inability to share the heritage of antiquity. His social criticism is unintelligible when it is divorced from his love of classical culture.

His classicism explains, for example, his consistent rejection of contemporary proposals for social reform. The later nineteenth century was, of course, a time of broadening democracy in England, when male suffrage was universal, Parliamentary government was strong, the labor unions were growing, and various socialist movements were building their power. Victorian liberalism was based on the principle of perfectibility, with its implications that the poor could be improved by just treatment, and that the majority of the populace could be educated to govern. Gissing himself had been a radical when he was twenty, but a few years later, when he wrote a novel about socialism, he called it *Demos*, the term used for the common people of the ancient Greek city-states. As we have seen, he knew from his own experience that the life of the London poor did not encourage generous instincts or wise judgment, and for a time this had the effect of making him sympathetic with them. But when he observed them through classical eyes, he adopted a view toward the proletariat found nowhere else in the wide spectrum of contemporary opinion, the contemptuous attitude an aristocrat of Periclean Athens might have had toward the mob which threatened his traditional power. In Aristophanes' comedy *The Knights*, Demos is personified as a deaf and credulous old man who is victimized by unscrupulous servants fighting for his favour, a situation that the playwright meant to reflect the contemporary political situation. In titling his novel as he did, Gissing was opposing the prevailing liberalism of his time with an attitude toward the poor borrowed from antiquity, and characterizing them as unstable, ignorant, easily led and unworthy of political responsibility. The novel itself articulates this case vividly, showing the socialist leader giving in to temptations, and the masses responding to manipulation by rival factions until they ultimately turn against him and kill him.

Because he loved learning, Gissing might have been expected to agree with the view that education was the key to the solution of social problems. Ever since Robert Owen's time Victorian liberals had felt that the improvement of the individual through education was a sure way of improving society. "Let us reform our schools," said Ruskin, in a magisterial formulation of this principle, "and we shall find little reform needed in our prisons." But Gissing thought that mass education would tend to debase learning rather than to uplift the people. In *Thyrza* (1887) he presents a thoughtful young reformer who tries to make a difference in

the life of workingmen by giving them lectures in English literature; the class is a failure with most of the men because their interests are limited to practical matters. Gissing perceived the painful contradiction inherent in mass education: that it promoted freedom at the expense of allowing the tastes and opinions of the mediocre to prevail. In *On Liberty* J. S. Mill had blamed education for the conformity which was already conspicuous among Englishmen: "Comparatively speaking, they now read the same things, listen to the same things, see the same things, go to the same places, have their hopes and fears directed to the same objects, have the same rights and liberties, and the same means of asserting them. ... And the assimilation is still proceeding. ... Every extension of education promotes it, because education brings people under common influences, and gives them access to the general stock of facts and sentiments." Gissing might have taken this passage as his text for such works as *New Grub Street* and *In the Year of Jubilee*, which were written about thirty years after *On Liberty*, and showed the advancement of the process Mill described. He objected to all forms of expression that depended on popularity, including newspapers, periodicals and even plays. He felt, with the example of classical literature in mind, that genuine culture is accessible only to an aristocracy that enjoys the leisure and tranquillity for it. As he shows through *Thyrza*, and through the example of Jessica Morgan in *The Whirlpool*, who is always preparing for examinations, mere study in the absence of conditions conducive to true liberality of mind is futile. Besides, he saw that the spread of literacy made the production of literature for profit rather than for artistic motives inevitable.

...

What Gissing saw in the contemporary world that corresponded to Hellas was the spectacle of noble human beings striving against powers far stronger than they. The social and economic forces released by industrial civilization are in his world what the fates were to the Greeks; his victims, however, are not the robust heroes found in the ancient epics and tragedies, but men whose virtues are particularly vulnerable to the world in which they find themselves. It is a part of Gissing's classical inheritance that he does not consider human beings to be the mere instrumentalities of social forces, but creatures capable of intense sufferings and high aspirations. Even his novels on social themes devote a major part of their action to private issues, especially those of love and courtship, in which human nature displays itself without disguise. For these also, misfortune is the usual outcome. There is a dark pagan feeling, in every aspect of Gissing's novels, that the universe is in the possession of powers who tolerate man only at their pleasure.

From Jacob Korg's essay, "George Gissing: Humanist in Exile," *The Victorian Experience: The Novelists*, ed. Richard Levine, Ohio University Press (1976), pp. 259-64.

