Contents

ISSN 017-0615

The Gissing Journal

Volume 49, Number 4, October 2013

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

Fred Barnard's Illustrations for "The Fate of Humphrey Snell" and "An Inspiration" in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 1895

PHILIP V. ALLINGHAM
Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario

> . . . when he had become a confirmed writer of short fiction, Gissing never expressed the same inordinate passion for the visual in relation to the verbal that he recognized in Charles Dickens. Although more than two dozen periodical illustrators eventually crossed his path, his lukewarm interest in, if not downright prejudice against, the pictorial rendering of his texts prevented him from interfering or collaborating with most of these artists. (Huguet 1: 26)

The notable exceptions to George Gissing's general antipathy towards magazine illustrators were Amédée Forestier, whose work in *The Illustrated London News* elevated him above the

level of the commercial hack, and Fred Barnard, legendary by the mid-1890s as "The Dickens of Illustrators" for producing some 450 wood-engravings for Dickens's novels. Prior to 1895, Gissing had appraised the efforts of seven illustrators working on nine of his early short stories. None had pleased Gissing as much as Barnard. Although the most important of Barnard's illustrations for "The Fate of Humphrey Snell" in the October number of *The English Illustrated Magazine* is available in the *Collected Short Stories of George Gissing*, the others and his equally fine work for "An Inspiration" in the same magazine are not generally known. Together, these two sets of illustrations commissioned by editor Clement Shorter serve as a fitting tribute to Barnard's interpretive powers in the final year of his life, despite his struggles with depression and opium addiction.

Apparently Gissing had no hand in Shorter's selection of Fred Barnard as the illustrator for either story, so that the Barnard illustrations cannot be said to be the result of the sort of collaborative arrangement that existed, for example, between Phiz (Hablot Knight Browne) and Charles Dickens for the serial illustrations of such works as different as *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). With the rise of magazine fiction late in the century, such truly collaborative relationships were indeed rare. Having had "The Honeymoon" and "Comrades in Arms" indifferently illustrated by house artists Melton Prior and Raye Potter respectively in *The English Illustrated Magazine* for June and September 1894, Gissing was pleasantly surprised when he saw "The Fate of Humphrey Snell" in print. Undoubtedly reacting to rush proofs, the writer commented with delight upon the main illustration in a letter to Barnard dated 28 September, 1895, the story itself about to be published in the October number as the magazine's lead item:

> I really must let you know how very much I am pleased with the full-page drawing you have done for my story in the new *English Illustrated.* I think it very beautiful, & excellent as a presentment of my thought. It shall be framed for my study-wall,—for indeed the picture is symbolical, & has more significance than the ordinary eye will discover in it. *(Letters* 6: 33)

Even if the celebrated illustrator of six novels and Forster's *Life* in Chapman and Hall's Household Edition of Dickens's works (1871-1879) sometimes injected humour into scenes where none was warranted, as Simon Houfe has observed, the illustrator of the London sketches of *How The Poor Live* by George R. Sims (1883) was a natural fit for these Gissing short stories. Barnard, both humourist and social realist, strikes exactly the right notes: wistfully romantic and aptly descriptive in "The Fate of Humphrey Snell," and ironic and almost farcical in "An Inspiration." Formally trained at Heatherley's in Newman Street in 1863 (aged seventeen) and in Paris with Léon Bonnat, Barnard in his magazine and book illustration combines elements of realistic portraiture and caricature admirably suited to Gissing's social satire. Justifiably, then,

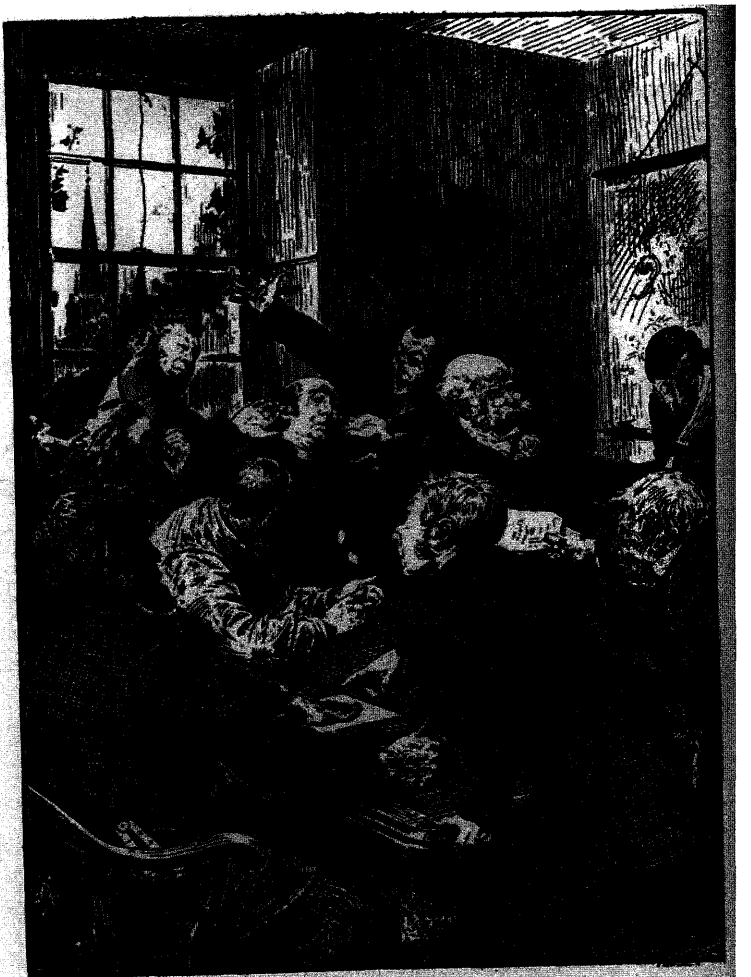
> Gissing felt flattered that such a well-known artist should have been recruited for two of his own stories: 'a man of less originality than Cruikshank's,' he conceded, but who 'has done better work in his pictures to the novels [of Dickens in the Household Edition], better in the sense of more truly illustrative.' (*Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* 35; cited in Huguet 26)

"It isn't my fault," sobbed the girl. "They've turned me out, and I don't know where to go."

ILLUSTRATION BY MR. FRED BARNARD TO MR. GISSING'S STORY IN THE "ENGLISH ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE" FOR OCTOBER.

As visual complements to these Gissing texts, the Barnard illustrations achieve effects not apparent in a reading uninformed by an awareness of these realisations; in other words, the reader of a Gissing story in an anthology is not likely to be able to construe the story in the way that his or her counterpart of the *fin de siècle* would have done in that story's periodical form. Here, Barnard's lithographs and wood-engravings are so juxtaposed as to sharpen the reader's sense of anticipation (a proleptic reading of the illustration) and awareness of the chief moments in each narrative. Ornamental tailpieces produce a contrasting effect, an analeptic reading informed by a complete reading of the story in advance of encountering the illustration.

Although none of Barnard's seven illustrations for the two stories possesses the comic verve and pointed social criticism of "A Meeting of the Parish Council" in the November 1894 number of *The English Illustrated Magazine*, each affects the reading of the story in setting up expectations, consolidating expectations, and commenting on the characters' behaviours. For example, in "We shall have him on our 'ands" (5), Barnard contrasts Humphrey's romantic and somewhat unworldly nature (evident in his encounter with the tearful housemaid in "It isn't my fault") with the mundane, practical, and money-oriented natures of his fleshy father and brother, men of a far more realistic mind-set. As sturdy and unimaginative as the oaken cask on which the older brother, Andrew, sits in Barnard's twin character study, Humphrey's father Thomas and sibling regard Humphrey as a mere encumbrance. Compared to the aesthetic, slender Humphrey, denizen of the woods and fields, these other Snells are mere animals. The younger man is but a slighter reflection of the solid elder; the natural milieu of such commonplace thinkers is the public house, a setting which Barnard admirably and economically suggests through the pewter drinking mug (centre) and



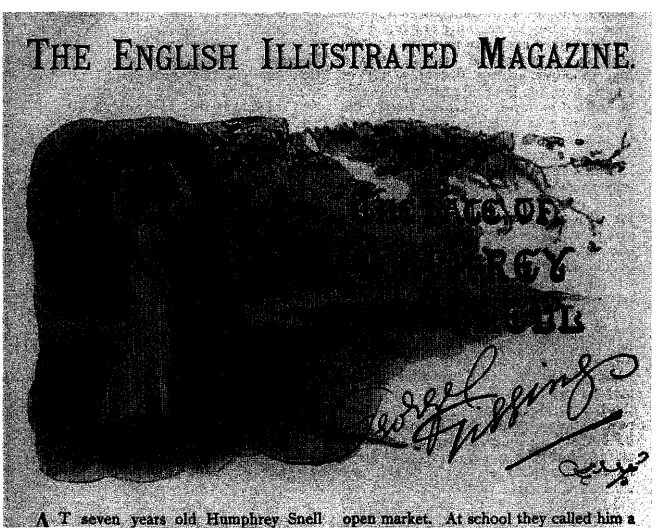
A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL.—Drawn by Fred Barnard.

beer taps (left of centre). In their expressions and postures, as in their pipes, the father and son are reflections of each other: prosaic, unimaginative, stolid.

come to town; he saw Humphrey, and in private talk with him learnt what was the lad's desire. Thereupon he proposed to the parents that Humphrey should go back into the country with him and try the Humphrey's passion for the study of nature, and old Mrs. Doggett so far inclined the same way that she had become a village authority on medicinal herbs: her teas and potions, cordials and

"WE SHALL HAVE HIM ON OUR 'ANDS."

But perhaps the most significant illustration is the first, in which the artist prepares readers of *The English Illustrated Magazine* for Humphrey's romantic encounter with the housemaid in the autumnal woods near the mediaeval city of Wells. Although Gissing's narrator remarks early in the story that the bashful protagonist as an adolescent was intimidated by young women—"girls, though he sometimes admired them from a distance, always frightened him at close quarters" (4) —the illustration of a languorous beauty leaning against an oak on the opening page (3) alerts the reader to the importance of the protagonist's chance meeting that will lead to his destruction. Barnard has correctly assessed, then, the significance of this nocturnal meeting with Annie Frost in the woods (at the bottom of page 7), and prepares the reader for the scene itself and its consequences at the very outset. The young woman in a siren pose is in close proximity with the word "Fate" at the top of this first page, a juxtaposition which implies a strong connection between the conclusion of the protagonist's story and the shapely beauty.



As opposed to the shapely beauty of the headpiece, Barnard gives the reader a tearful maid-servant who is hiding her face in her hands in the lithograph lengthily captioned "'It isn't my fault,' sobbed the girl. 'They've turned me out, and I don't know where to go.'" Although her clothing and hat as well as the tree trunk provide visual continuity, Barnard introduces an entirely new figure, that of the herb-gatherer Humphrey Snell himself, dressed in fustian and carrying one of those large wicker baskets which he learned to fashion under his relatives the Doggetts in the little Essex village in which the Snells originated. In profile the youthfully bearded Humphrey in this lithograph resembles his moustached brother in the illustration on page 3, but he wears an untrimmed beard and cloth cap more suitable to his calling. Although he is hardly disreputable, Humphrey in Barnard's study wears his pant-cuffs rolled up, and wears a labourer's neckcloth. Despite his roughness, Barnard's Humphrey facially has a certain aesthetic delicacy. And Barnard effectively communicates the atmosphere and the setting, the woods at ten on an autumn evening, with their tangle of branches and deep shade. However, Barnard may also be utilizing the realistic tangle of branches (right) symbolically, to foreshadow the romantic snare into which the girl is about to lead him. The specific caption as well as the postures and juxtapositions of the two very different figures point the reader to a specific passage at the top of page 8. Thus, Barnard compels the reader to push on to this significant textual moment, so out of character with the bashful failed postman with whom the story begins.

In the version in *The Illustrated London News* (28 September, 1895, 403) the picture on a page of reviews is clearly intended to act as advertisement for the October issue of the *English Illustrated*. Although the "Literature" page extols a few other "romances"—Max Pemberton's *The Little Huguenot* (a historical romance in the manner of Bulwer Lytton), Mary

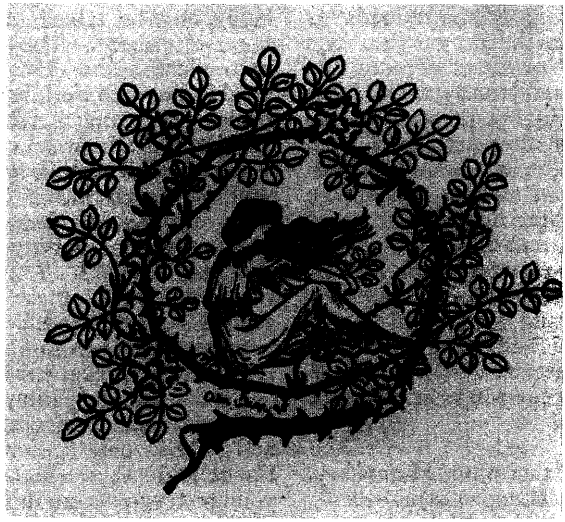
Beaumont's *A Ringby Lass, and Other Stories* ("a pretty little love story concerning a very good young man and an equally good young woman, who quarrel in a hurry and make up at their leisure"), and H. A. Hinkson's *Golden Lads and Girls* under the heading "Irish Characterisation"—only "The Fate of Humphrey Snell" is complemented by a picture, which occupies much of the page. Implying that the natural and unspoiled protagonist is a species of Wordsworthian leech-gatherer, the reviewer provides a brief synopsis to catch the reader's interest, but does not clearly define Humphrey's "fate":

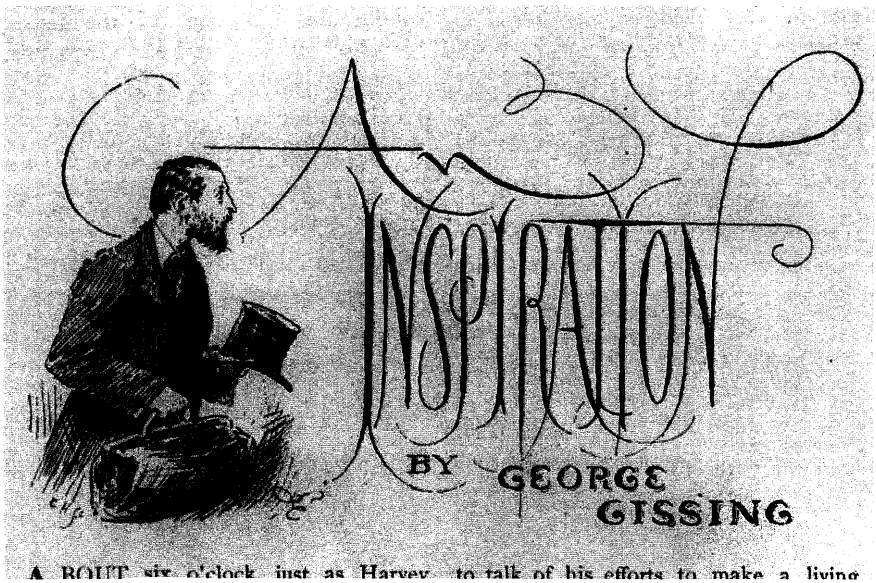
> The October number of this popular magazine opens with one of Mr. George Gissing's short stories, "The Fate of Humphrey Snell." Humphrey is a child of the woods, a culler of simples, a humble naturalist who earns his livelihood by selling roots to herbalists. The "fate" that comes to him is a girl with a foolish face, and the irruption of this disturbing element into his pastoral existence is very happily described. (403)

One must question Clement Shorter's motives in arranging to have this illustration published in *The Illustrated London News* just as *The English Illustrated Magazine* was being published, since at first blush doing so would seem a ploy to encourage *ILN* readers to purchase his magazine in order to appreciate the narrative elements of the picture. On the other hand, Shorter must have felt that the picture could stand as a work of art and be interpreted without benefit of the accompanying text. Certainly, the illustration must have been received as an attractive and compelling advertisement for Shorter's magazine, especially since the reviewer provides similar snippets of romantic deception, political conspiracy, "an

ingenious episode of crime," and a mention of another "excellent" illustration, Romney's "Lady Hamilton as Spinstress" (403). Indeed, one suspects that the anonymous reviewer is editor Clement Shorter himself. However, whether because he has mentioned Fred Barnard in the caption for the picture or whether Barnard, a realist of the seventies, was falling out of fashion, the reviewer does not include any analysis of the fine visual accompaniments provided by Barnard for "Humphrey Snell."

Although not by Barnard, the uncaptioned tailpiece seems to function effectively as a visual anti-mask, summing up the movement of the other visuals by placing the laughing girl in the midst of an abstract design based upon the woodland vegetation that forms the background in the two illustrations realising Humphrey's initial meeting with Annie Frost. As opposed to Barnard's characterization of the housemaid as the sexual force which, like Jude Fawley's atavistic desire for Arabella in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, seals Humphrey's tragic fate, in the ornamental tailpiece by Ada Clegg a strong wind blows her unbound hair to the right. Suggestive of the pains and pleasures of a romantic relationship, leaves and thorns encircle the female form whose clinging dress is decorated with berries. All of this is a visual complement to the closing lines of the story, in which the narrator equates the adolescent symbol for kisses ("a row of crosses," page 10) with a grave-marker, implying that Humphrey's yielding to the unfamiliar passion will ruin him financially and break his spirit. Oblivious to the pain she causes, the self-confident girl laughs at the ease with which she has deluded and robbed her dreamy, gullible swain.





A BOUT six o'clock just as Harvey to talk of his efforts to make a living

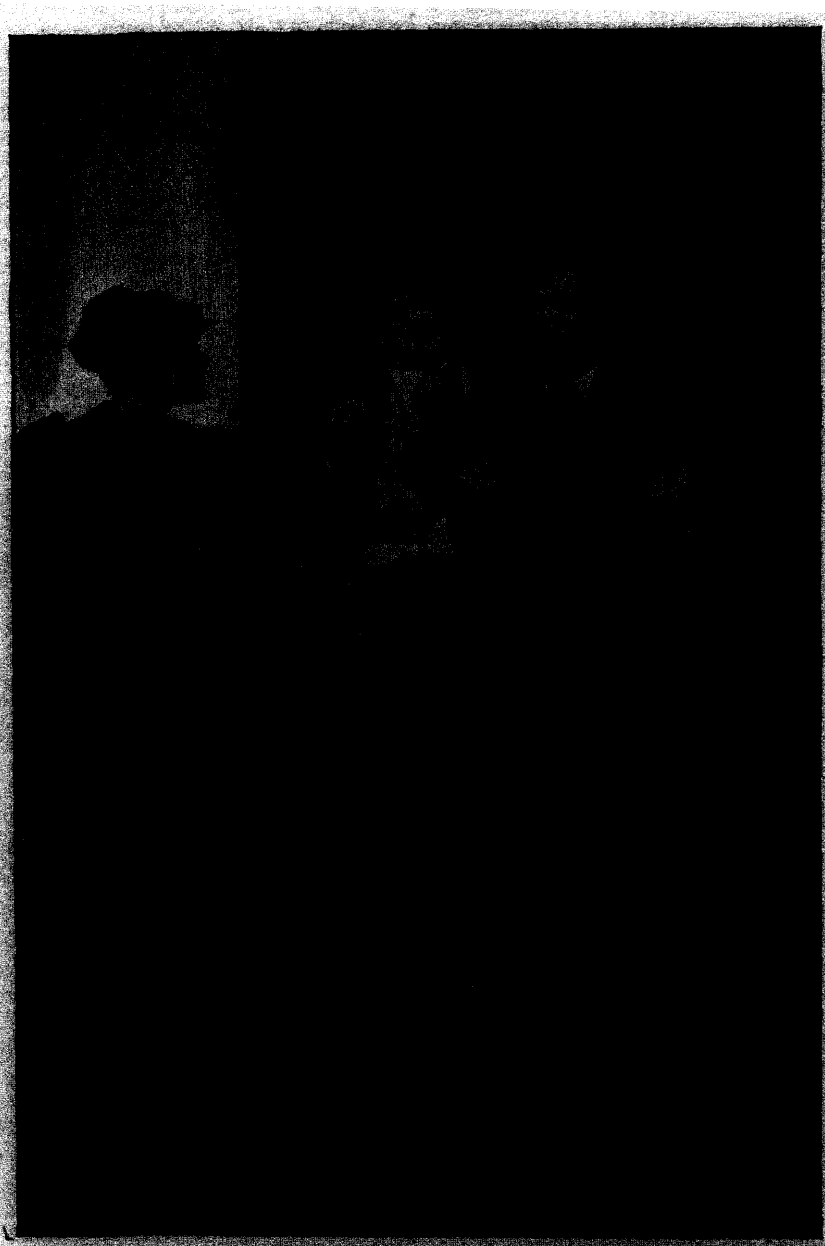
HE SELECTED A CIGAR WITH FASTIDIOUS APPRECIATION.

A more humorous and light-hearted tale of love thwarted and then realised is Gissing's "An Inspiration," a vehicle more congenial to Barnard's talents as a visual satirist. To ensure that the reader focuses on the character of the commercial traveller Laurence Nangle (identified by his sample bag), rather than his Fairy Godfather, Harvey Munden, Barnard features a portrait of the shy salesman in the headpiece. The same scantily bearded figure appears across the table from his confidant, "the finger of Providence," in the restaurant scene: "He selected a cigar with fastidious appreciation," a humorous detail suggestive of Nangle's social incompetence being his wearing his hat indoors. Finally, in the penultimate illustration, Nangle triumphantly elbows a surprised James Dunning aside to make his romantic appeal directly to the wealthy widow in "I brushed past Dunning, and went right up to her" (274) on the page facing the passage, telegraphing to the astute

magazine reader the story's climax in advance of his actually reading it.

Gissing's relationship with Barnard, although hardly collaborative in the sense that Dickens's was with Browne or even Hardy's was with Du Maurier, did involve the exchange of correspondence and even face-to-face meetings between illustrator and writer. Having completed *Eve's Ransom* at the end of June, 1894, Gissing had hoped to see the novel serialized that fall under Clement Shorter's editorship in *The Illustrated London News*. Cryptically in his diary for 4 August, 1894, Gissing notes that he "wrote to Barnard with suggestions" (343) for illustrations for the forthcoming novel. On 17 September, he records that publication of the novel has had to be postponed to the new year "owing to Fred Barnard's breakdown" (348), but the next entry indicates that Barnard is still working on the commission. Evidently, Gissing, disappointed with the quality of Barnard's preliminary sketches for the lithographs, decided to see the illustrator himself on the afternoon of 22 November. Jacob Korg, in *George Gissing: A Critical Biography*, notes that Gissing visited Barnard, addicted to alcohol and laudanum, and therefore unable to continue with so large a project as a thirteen-part serialisation. The writer was appalled to discover Barnard living in squalor and poverty, and realized that Shorter would probably have to give another artist the commission. Gissing's diary entry for 22 November, 1894 paints the scene most effectively:

> In afternoon to see Fred Barnard, at 105 Gloucester Road, Regent's Park. Wretched lodgings; his wife and two daughters in the country, and, I surmise, living at someone else's expense. The poor man very drunk, in a torpor, and only just able to talk connectedly.

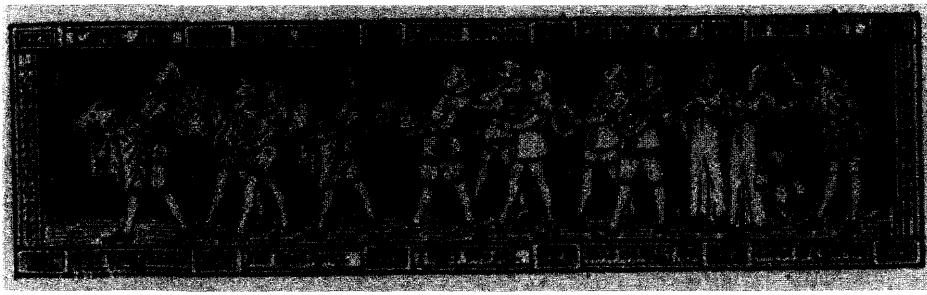


"I RUSHED EAST RUNNING, AND WENT RIGHT UP TO HER."

> Has done only one drawing for my story, and the *News* people are getting very impatient with him. I think it very unlikely that he will finish the job. Looks very young for his age, but has grizzled hair. Subject, I think, to delusions; says a man is going about offering forged work in his name. Told me he had got up at 5 that morning (as often) to wander about the streets, but I don't believe it. He probably used to do so in better days. Talked in melancholy strain of his son (an animal painter) who died at 21. When I left he came out with me, and insisted on drinking brandy at the nearest public-house. (354-55)

According to F. G. Kitton, Barnard died dramatically in September 1896, not yet fifty, of smoking in bed. Under the influence of "a powerful drug" rather than mere tobacco, his pipe still alight, he fell asleep, and, when the bedclothes caught fire, was suffocated and his body charred.

> Mr. Barnard, when he met with his death, was in the house of Mr. Mayall in Morton Hall Road, Wimbledon and the fatal fire originated in the artist's own room, where he had evidently been smoking in bed. Though he survived until the fire was extinguished, he was unable to give any account of the accident by which, under circumstances so tragic, he lost his life. (*ILN* 23 October 1896: 423]



Although the circumstances surrounding Barnard's death seem mundane, the inquest's details run in *The Times* reveal a tale of depression and addiction as pathetic as anything in Dickens. The Gissing novel that Barnard had been unable to illustrate appeared in thirteen weekly instalments in the *ILN* between January and March, 1895, accompanied by illustrations produced by house artist Wal Paget, who had provided that same journal with a sensitive and effective series of twenty-four lithographs for Thomas Hardy's *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* in 1892, 1 October through 17 December.

Almost six months after the conclusion of the serial run of *Eve's Ransom*, Gissing records that Barnard communicated with him again, this time about the full-page illustration for "The Fate of Humphrey Snell": "2 October, 1895-Letter from Barnard promising to give me the orig[inal] drawing of the illust[ratio]n" (390). In fact, Gissing's letter to his sister Ellen on 15 November, 1895 reveals that he was genuinely impressed with Barnard's work for this short story:

> Did you see Fred Barnard's beautiful illustration to "The Fate of Humphrey Snell"?–a favourite story of mine–symbolical of much, as Carlyle says. (*Letters* 6: 58)

Illustrations

"The Fate of Humphrey Snell," by Fred Barnard and Ada Clegg

"'It isn't my fault,' sobbed the girl. 'They've turned me out, and I don't know where to go'" (*ILN* 403); 17.6 cm by 13 cm (lithograph)

"A Meeting of the Parish Council." *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 12 (November 1894): 84 (wood-engraving)

"We shall have him on our 'ands," p. 5; 15 cm by 11.2 cm (wood-engraving)

Uncaptioned headpiece of the protagonist, p. 268; 7.4 cm by 12 cm (wood-engraving)

Uncaptioned tailpiece by Ada Clegg, p. 10; 5.4 cm by 6.9 cm (wood-engraving)

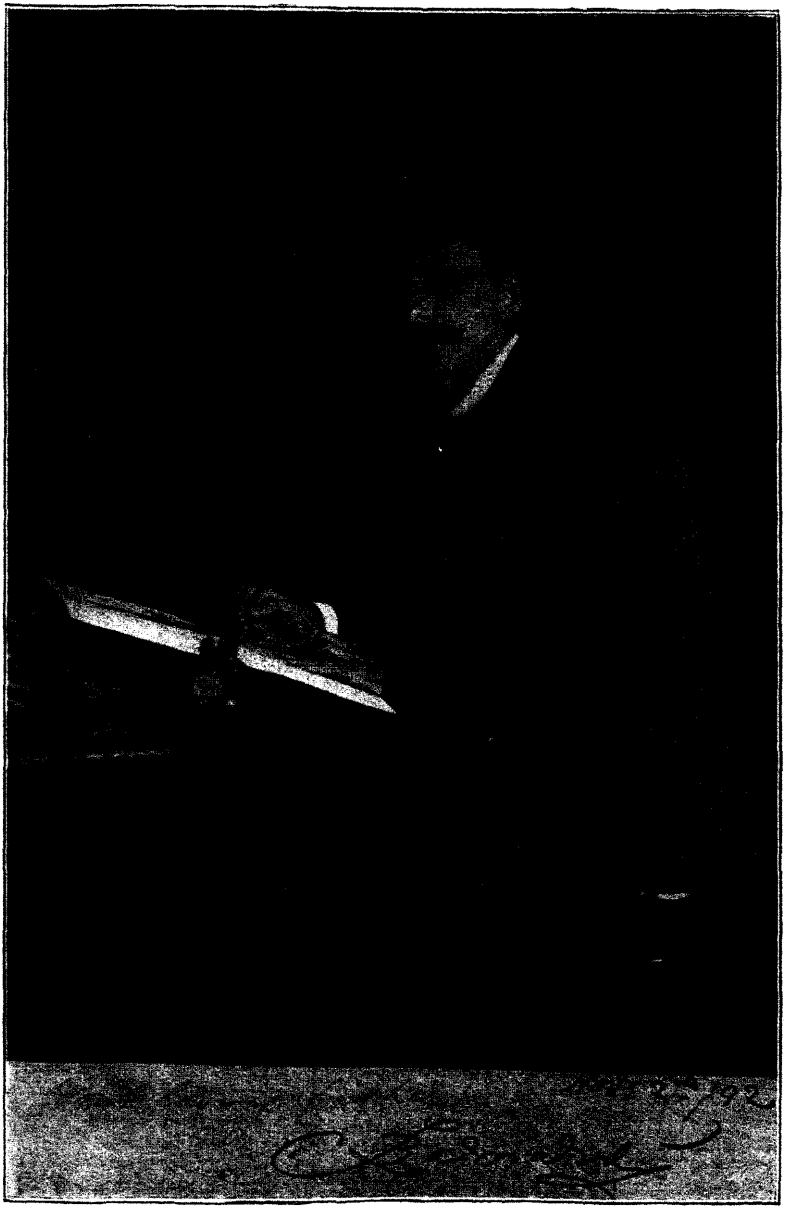
"An Inspiration," by Fred Barnard

Uncaptioned headpiece of the protagonist, 7.4 cm by 12 cm (wood-engraving)

"He selected a cigar with fastidious appreciation," p. 271; vertically mounted, full-page, 12.4 cm by 18.2 cm (wood-engraving)

"I brushed past Dunning, and went right up to her," p. 274; 19.1 cm by 12.6 cm (lithograph)

Uncaptioned tailpiece, p. 275; 2.1 cm by 7.4 cm



The image, dated 2 November, 1892, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* for 3 October, 1896, with the artist's obituary. "The Late Mr. Fred Barnard." *The Illustrated London News* 3 October, 1896: 423 (photograph by J. W. Roller, 1892).

References

Barnard, Fred. "A Meeting of the Parish Council." *The English Illustrated Magazine*. 12 (November 1894): 84.

Coustillas, Pierre, ed. *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist.* Hassocks: Harvester; Lewisburg, Bucknell UP, 1978.

Gissing, George. "The Fate of Humphrey Snell." *The English Illustrated Magazine*. No. 145 (October 1895): 1-9.

----. "An Inspiration." *The English Illustrated Magazine*. No. 147 (December 1895): 268-275.

----. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*. Ed. Simon J. James. Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2004.

Houfe, Simon. "Barnard, Fred." *The Dictionary of 19th Century British Book Illustrators*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Antique Collectors' Club, 1978, rev. ed. 1996: 53-54.

Huguet, Christine, ed. *Spellbound, George Gissing*. 2 vols. Haren, Netherlands: Equilibris, 2008.

Kitton, F. G. *Dickens and His Illustrators*.London: Chapman and Hall, 1899. Rpt., Honolulu: University of Hawaii P., 2004.

Korg, Jacob. *George Gissing: A Critical Biography*. London: Methuen, 1965.

"Literature: *The English Illustrated.*" *The Illustrated London News.* 28 September, 1895: 403.

Mattheisen, Paul F., Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing.* 9 vols. Athens, OH; Ohio UP, 1990-97.

Gissing and Poe: A Postscript

GEORGE GORNIAK
Grayswood, Surrey

In the first two parts of this essay evidence was produced showing that Poe was a major influence in the early works of Gissing and that five of the early short stories were fully Poe-esque in nature and one early novel, *Workers on the Dawn,* had identifiable sections that would not have been written without a deep familiarity with the works of Edgar Allan Poe.[1]

Apart from these overt associations a study of the remaining early short stories reveals a number of tales where there are further Poe-esque footprints that for the sake of completion should not be overlooked. Taken in chronological order Poe-esque motifs can be detected in the following tales:

"R.I.P" is a tale of a mysterious shrouded lady who arrives at an inn, somewhere in southern France, during the night. She dies a few days later and is buried in the local cemetery. Many years later an elderly gentleman visits the village with enquiries about the lady. When he explains his story it turns out that he was due to marry the lady—but through a misunderstanding she was given the impression that he did not love her and this precipitated her flight and eventual death.

"R.I.P" is pervaded from the start with an unmistakable Gothic atmosphere that certainly in the early part of the story is very suggestive of Poe.

"The Warden's Daughter" is a short melodrama of a prisoner who falls into a cataleptic trance and is pronounced dead. The warden's daughter who has been attracted by the prisoner visits the "body" at night and discovers that the prisoner is only asleep and helps him escape. The possibilities of the cataleptic state were exploited by Poe in a number of his most famous stories and thus this tale bears another identifiable Poe-esque footprint.

"Brownie" is an eerie tale about a girl with a fey nature who sees the dark side of her elder sister's trustee—her uncle, William Denby. This tale of revenge sees the inclusion of a number of verse couplets reminiscent of Poe's regular inclusion of verse in his own tales.

"The Artist's Child" is part of a series of short stories which Gissing wrote around the theme of art and artists. Gissing was a competent artist himself and it is understandable that he would write on a topic with which he was very familiar. Stories where an artist or a picture is the main focal point include the following: "Gretchen," "The Portrait," "The Mysterious Portrait," The Picture," "An Heiress on Condition" and "A Victim of Circumstances." With the exception of the last story—published in 1893—these stories were all first written and published in 1877 during Gissing's sojourn in America.

"The Artist's Child" is notable for being published in two separate versions. The first, the American edition, appeared in the Chicago *Alliance* in June 1877 and was in fact published before "Brownie," while the second, the English edition, was

published in *Tinsleys' Magazine*, in the UK in January 1878. The following comments refer to the English version.[2]

"The Artist's Child" is a story centred on the prized portrait of a collector. The portrait is of a young girl painted with great vivacity, which the narrator describes in detail: "The lips, which are rather pale and thin, seem to tremble with the utterance of ravishing mysteries; the whole face is that of one whose mighty spirit strove with her frail body, and conquered. The picture might bear the title of Genius" (183). The narrator investigates the story behind the painting and discovers that the artist was in fact the father of the girl and that she, sadly, died after contracting smallpox. On her death-bed the father drew the picture of his child, "not as she then looked, wan and colourless as a faded lily; but sketching the outline of the face before him, made it live and breathe with the warm hues of health" (191). The artist in his skill had somehow transferred the life of the girl into the portrait.

Gissing's short story bears comparison with Poe's "The Oval Portrait"[3] where we read about a traveller in Italy who comes across a portrait of an attractive young girl and is struck by its life-like appearance. He later finds out that the artist was the husband, who after dedicating many weeks to the painting exclaimed on its completion: "This is indeed *Life* itself" (484), only to discover that in the very moment of completing the portrait the wife had died.

Gissing's use of this portrait motif is reprised in his 1887 novel *Thyrza*,[4] when on the death of the heroine, her friend Mrs Ormonde requests that a portrait be prepared: "Will you let me have one made—drawn from her face now, but looking as she did in life? It shall be done by a good artist; I think it can be done successfully" (520). The finished portrait by the artist is then later appraised:

> The work was of course masterly in execution; it was no less admirable as a portrait. In those few lines of chalk, Thyrza lived. He had divined the secret of the girl's soul . . . one marvelled at the insight which had evoked it from a dead face . . . her eyes *saw* something, something which stirred her being . . . A face of infinite pathos, which drew tears to the eyes . . . (531)

Of all Gissing's short stories written in America the one that seems least Poe-like in appearance would be "An English Coast-Picture," which was first printed in the prestigious *Appletons' Journal* in July 1877. This story is interspersed with a short travelogue of the Northumberland coast and the Farne Islands, which are visited by the narrator and a few of his friends. On the mainland they visit a small graveyard which is the resting place of the Farne Islands lighthouse heroine Grace Darling. In the story Gissing mentions her rescue of sailors during a storm in 1832. The melancholy scene of the surrounding gravestones marking the place of those others who perished in storms and were then with great difficulty recovered from the sea by their friends evokes the following stanzas from the narrator:

> ". . . Sweeter seems
> To rest beneath the clover-sod
> That takes the sunshine and the rains,"
>
> than that the hands of those they loved so dearly
>
> "Should toss with tangle and with shells." (137)

This story is one of Gissing's most descriptive narratives from these early tales. Large parts of the story are verbatim descriptions of the history of the islands and the bird life to be found on the different islands.[5]

> . . . each one of the islands was appropriated and held exclusively by a distinct species of bird. . . . The island we had just landed upon was sacred to the cormorant. No sooner had we landed than we observed the cormorants, black as night, sitting upright in their nests, in long, parallel rows. At the sight of their visitors they rose *en masse* into the air, positively darkening it with their numbers, and filling it with their piercing cries. . . . the atmosphere of the island was strongly odoriferous. The solid rock was covered to a depth of some feet with the remnants of the fish partly caught and partially devoured by these birds, who are blest above all creatures with an unfailing appetite. . . . The next island at which we touched was one consecrated to the use of various kinds of gulls—the great black-backed gull, the lesser black-backed gull, and many other doubtless worthy families. . . . At last we came to the island where dwelt the man who had special care of all the birds, for they are preserved by act of Parliament. This island was appropriated by the guillemots. It was large and abounding in crevices. All around the farther side the rocks rose sheer from the waves, and on the very face of such precipices, making use of a little

> ledge perhaps not more then six inches wide, the guillemot lays its one egg—a large, beautiful, vari-colored egg, and shaped like a bell-pear, so that, if perchance it receives a shock, it will roll on its small end and not fall from the ledge; for the bird makes no nest. (143-145)

Overall, this gentle tale of Northumberland and the Farne Islands and of a growing love between the narrator and a lady friend would seem to be a far cry from the horrors to be found in Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. However in the midst of the wildness of this novel, in two central chapters, Poe provides descriptive details of the Kerguelen Islands in the southern Indian Ocean, and, similarly to Gissing, includes historical details and extensive accounts of the bird life on the islands:

> Penguins are very plenty, and of these there are four different kinds. The royal penguin, so called for its size and beautiful plumage, is the largest. The upper part of the body is usually gray, sometimes of lilach tint; the under portion of the purest white imaginable. . . . The other kinds are macaroni, the jackass, and the rookery penguin. They are much smaller, less beautiful in plumage, and different in other respects. . . . The great peterel is as large as the common albatross, and is carnivorous. It is frequently called the breakbones, or osprey peterel. They are not at all shy, and, when properly cooked, are palatable food. . . . The albatross is one of the largest and fiercest of the South Sea birds. It is of the gull species, and takes its prey on the wing, never coming

> on land except for the purpose of breeding. Between this bird and the penguin the most singular friendship exists. Their nests are constructed with great uniformity, upon a plan concerted between the two species—that of the albatross being placed in the centre of a little square formed by the nests of four penguins. Navigators have agreed in calling an assemblage of such encampments *a rookery*. These rookeries have often been described, but, as my readers may not all have seen these descriptions, and as I shall have occasion hereafter to speak of the penguin and albatross, it will not be amiss to say something here of their mode of building and living. . . . The penguin's nest consists of a hole in the earth, very shallow, being only just of sufficient depth to keep her single egg from rolling. The albatross is somewhat less simple in her arrangements, erecting a hillock about a foot high and two in diameter. This is made of earth, seaweed, and shells. On its summit she builds her nest. (1117-1119)

Poe goes on to describe in further detail the bird and mammal life of the islands over the next few pages! Parts of these two chapters in Poe's narrative have been identified as extracts from a guide book to these islands.[6] They come as a surprise in a novel of such intense terror and emotion. However, appearing half way through the novel, they provide some welcome relief from the surrounding horrors and also provide some semblance of narrative credibility to the story.

Gissing's familiarity with Poe's novel[7] may well have given him the idea of writing "An English Coast-Picture" with the

inclusion of similarly lengthy descriptive passages.[8]

It is surprising how few of these Poe-esque connections have ever received comment. For example there is no article on Poe and Gissing in the *Gissing Newsletter* or *Gissing Journal* over the last fifty years. And yet it is not as if Edgar Allan Poe were some obscure and forgotten writer. Indeed he is almost as much studied and revered as his contemporary writer, Charles Dickens. It is inconceivable that an academic studying a nineteenth-century author such as Gissing would not have studied some of Poe's writing as well. Perhaps this blindness to the Poe connection has something to do with academic labelling. The world of academia has for long labelled writers under neat categories such as classical, Gothic, romantic, realist, magic realist, naturalist, modern, or post-modern.

For example Poe is usually labelled as a writer of Gothic and horror short stories. In fact Poe, like most other writers and artists, had a complex, human personality with many interests and wrote on a great variety of topics, including science fiction, crime and detection, humour, poetry, literary and social criticism, travel writing, and plays. But once a "category" is assigned to an author it tends to stick. Poe's assessment as a writer may be the more unbalanced—but popular perception of Gissing may require some adjustment as well.

One cannot deny that assigning authors to some sort of category is a useful exercise and indeed without these categories any comprehensive study would end up in complete chaos. However, on the other hand these categories can take on a life of their own and develop rigid boundaries which eventually morph into dogmas that cannot be questioned.

Authors can then lose their complex humanity and become "artists as ciphers" to be labelled and filed in these man-made constructs. Students and academics thereafter only study these authors in the context of these pre-labelled categories. Thus, taking the argument to its conclusion, Gissing *de facto* is always a realist writer—no matter the evidence. The authenticity of any story not fitting into this category is questioned, or the story is somehow twisted to fit into a realist narrative or ultimately it is conveniently ignored or dismissed as juvenile or atypical. Whatever happens to the ruling paradigm, consensus scholarship and labelling should not be questioned.

This sort of labelling and the problems that it can lead to is not confined to the arts. Science with its paradigms has led to many scientists ignoring evidence that contradicts current accepted thinking. A random example could be the many years' delay in accepting bacterial infection as the main cause of stomach ulcers due to the reigning paradigm in which stress was accepted as the overriding cause.[9] Thus both currently accepted paradigms and indeed self interest can and do influence research and the conclusions reached in both the arts and sciences.

Of course the categorisation of authors is not of such ultimate importance when compared to those rigid categories in medicine where actual patients' health and lives may be at risk. However, this exercise has perhaps been a useful reminder that these categories should not always be so rigidly applied and scholars in whatever discipline should retain an open mind and evidence contradicting current paradigms should not be dismissed out of hand but followed through to its conclusion.

However, as study of the arts becomes more specialised and scholars learn more and more in an increasingly restricted area this sort of "ghettoising" of authors can only become a greater problem and hindrance to understanding the full range of an artist's writings and philosophy.

There is another angle worth commenting on in this topic. Many academics and researchers have understandably relied on the letters, diary, and notebooks of Gissing for references to other authors and books in their search for literary inspiration in the works of Gissing. The very few direct mentions of Poe—only two in the *Letters* and two in the *Diary*—have given rise to the impression that Poe was not an important influence. However it should be borne in mind that Gissing mentioned authors and other works in his notebooks and diaries that were usually new to him at that time and which he wished to use as possible sources for future works. As he had obviously closely studied the works of Poe, there would have been no need to mention his works as a reminder in his notebooks and diaries. Absence of an author's name in his notes does not necessarily mean an absence of influence in his works.

Poe, like Gissing, was not served well by many of his critics or by his first biographer. His literary executor, Rufus Griswold, harboured a grudge against Poe and did his best to demean both the author and his works. Later critics have also been unhelpful. For example, Henry James in 1878 wrote the following of Poe: "to take him with more than a certain degree of seriousness is to lack seriousness one's self. An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection."[10] James would later completely alter his written views on Poe but these early unjudged comments from such an influential writer undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on Poe's reputation. They may also have influenced Gissing.

These three essays on Poe's influence on Gissing are not based on an exhaustive reading of all the works of both these authors; hence, further Poe-esque allusions will undoubtedly be identified over the years. Hopefully the results of any further research will help to portray Gissing as a more rounded author and artist. There is far more to Gissing as an artist than the dour, narrow, po-faced realist of current popular perception.

A few scholars have already drawn attention to the complexity of Gissing's writings, including aspects such as his humour, sensation writing, and romanticism. However, such aspects are too often quickly forgotten.[11]

We bring this essay to a conclusion with two further general examples of the influence of Poe on Gissing that have been overlooked in the past.

The ambiguities in many of the stories of Poe are well known and are a feature that ran counter to the neat and tidy storytelling that was the hallmark of the nineteenth-century tale. Gissing admired this ambiguity and examples can be detected in many of his novels such as the endings of *Isabel Clarendon* and *Thyrza*, and in some of the storylines in the other later novels. That he preferred the more subtle type of story is evident in an 1883 letter to Algernon in which he gives friendly advice for the improvement of his brother's current manuscript: "I would omit the instructive part of the description. Hints of the associations are of course needful, but let them only fill up the background . . . the secret of art in fiction is the *indirect*. Nothing must be told too plumply."[12]

Some of the observations of the social reformer, philanthropist, and literary critic Edith Sichel are also very

revealing. In a review of the novels of George Gissing and Walter Besant published in 1888 she concludes with these comments on Gissing:

> . . . he faces, nay, he over-faces truth. It is a diseased truth which he gives us, devoid of sweetness and devoid of faith and hope. Happily morbidity is not the reality of life . . . we will not say with him that "to sleep is better than to wake; and how should we who live bear the day's burden, but for the promise of death?"[13]

In a later correspondence with Edith Sichel, Gissing rejected any claims to philanthropic motives in his writings and insisted that he strived after artistic truthfulness and that the dolorous impression given in his writing was the effect he intended:

> . . . just as a graphic artist strives his utmost to represent gloom if gloom be the characteristic of the scene he has chosen, or at all events the aspect of the scene as he beholds it,—so do I put forth every effort to make a harmonious whole of my work, to make it subjectively & artistically a truthful transcript.[14]

Both the comments above, from Edith Sichel to Gissing and his response, could equally be discussing the works of Edgar Allan Poe, an artist who similarly strove after artistic truth, were it never so gloomy or morbid.

If the academic world could just slightly loosen the realistic straightjacket in which it has encased Gissing it would discover an even more complex and multifaceted literary figure.

References and Notes

1. "George Gissing and Edgar Allan Poe." *The Gissing Journal* 48.1 (January 2012): 1-12; "George Gissing and Edgar Allan Poe—Part Two." *The Gissing Journal* 49.1 (January 2013): 26-37.

2. Coustillas, Pierre, with the assistance of Barbara Rawlinson and Hélène Coustillas. *Collected Short Stories: George Gissing*. Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2011:1, 182-191. All future references to this edition.

3. Poe, Edgar Allan, *Poetry and Tales*. New York: The Library of America, 1984: 481-484. All future references to this edition.

4. George Gissing, *Thyrza*. Ed. Pierre Coustillas. Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013.

5. Gissing had recourse to John Murray's 1873 edition of *A Handbook for Travellers in Durham and Northumberland*, ed. Augustus Hare. See Bouwe Postmus, "The Popularity of the Picturesque: Oliver Bell Bunce and Gissing's 'An English Coast-Picture.'" *Spellbound: George Gissing*. Ed. Christine Huguet. Haren, Netherlands: Equilibris, 2008: 2: 23-36.

6. Poe's main source for these descriptive passages was the explorer Benjamin Morrell's 1832 *The Narrative of Four Voyages*. See Edgar Allan Poe, *Imaginary Voyages*. Ed. Burton R. Pollin. Boston: Twayne, 1981: 1: 288-316.

7. See Gorniak, "George Gissing and Edgar Allan Poe—Part Two."

8. Gissing may later have felt that he overdid the descriptive borrowing from the guide-book. In an intriguing parallel his brother Algernon would include the same Northumberland locale in one of his own novels. On asking his elder brother's advice apropos his manuscript Gissing is enthusiastic for the inclusion of scenic descriptions: "Give a more detailed picture of the scene, from shore to inland horizon. Shun assiduously anything that can suggest the guide-book." Paul Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*. 9 vols. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1991: 2: 177-179.

9. Part of the inertia was due to leading opinion leaders whose careers were under threat due to the new discoveries. There is a great deal of reluctance in academia when accepted ideas need to be overturned. It is interesting to note that there are a growing number of independent thinking scientists who are willing to question and challenge the academic consensus (for example see *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome* by John Sanford [2005] and *Seeing Red* by Halton Arp (1997)]. However, despite insurmountable problems, we can expect academia, for philosophical rather than scientific reasons, to cling for the foreseeable future to established "theories." Science, even more than art, can become hedged in by narrow academic consensus.

10. Henry James. *French Poets and Novelists*. London: Macmillan, 1878: 76. James's attack on Poe was really a sideline on his attack on Baudelaire, whose theories on evil he regarded as very simplified and representing merely "an affair of blood and carrion and physical sickness." However, the collateral damage to Poe was real.

11. For example see Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing as a Romantic Realist." *Gissing Newsletter* 17. 1 (January 1981): 14-26.

12. *Collected Letters of George Gissing* 2: 177-179.

13. Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge. "Two Philanthropic Novelists: Mr Walter Besant and Mr George Gissing." *Gissing: The Critical Heritage.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972: 126.

14. *Collected Letters of George Gissing* 4: 75-76. This may seem a neat summary of Gissing's views but it is worth noting that it contradicts his earlier philanthropic views from 1880, when, in a letter to his brother Algernon, he robustly states the following: "I mean to bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental & moral,) of our poor classes, to show the hideous injustice of our whole system of society, to give light upon the plan of altering it, &, above all, to preach an enthusiasm for just & high *ideals* in this age of unmitigated egotism & 'shop.'" *Collected Letters of George Gissing,* 1: 307.

Notes and News

A private vendor has a set of the nine-volume *Collected Letters* for sale, complete with dust-jackets. $300, post free in the USA; postal charges by arrangement rest of the world. Contact M. D. Allen (address p. 40) in the first instance.

Brewer, Lawton A. "The Function of Religion in Selected Novels of George Gissing." Diss. Georgia State U. 2010. Dissertation Abstracts International, Section A: The Humanities and Social Sciences (DAIA) 2012 Mar; 72 (9): 3276. *Abstract no.* DA3463438. (Thanks to Constance D. Harsh for this item.) As previously noted in this journal (46.2 [April 2010]: 48), Dr. Brewer has published a twelve-page

article, "George Gissing's Manifesto: *The Odd Women* and *The Unclassed*" in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* (online), issue 4.1, Spring 2008.

On 26, 27, and 28 June, 2013, Radio 4 Extra broadcast the three one-hour episodes of the dramatisation of *New Grub Street*, with Harold Pinter as narrator, as a repeat of the "Classic Serial," previously broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 8, 15, and 22 September 2002. See Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing on the Air." *Gissing Journal* 38.4 (October 2002): 21-24. (Thanks to Pierre and Hélène Coustillas for this item.)

Next year will see the fiftieth anniversary of *The Gissing Newsletter/Journal.* Your editor invites suggestions for suitable commemorations and celebrations. A special issue?

Recent Publications

Huguet, Christine and Simon J. James, eds. *George Gissing and the Woman Question: Convention and Dissent.* Farnham Surrey: Ashgate, 2013. Essays by David Grylls, Constance D. Harsh, Tara MacDonald, Roger Milbrandt, Emma Liggins, Rosemary Jann, Anthony Patterson, Cristina Ceron, Debbie Harrison, Adrienne Munich, Maria Teresa Chialant, Diana Maltz, and M. D. Allen.

Patterson, Anthony. *Mrs. Grundy's Enemies: Censorship, Realist Fiction and the Politics of Sexual Representation.* Bern: Peter Lang, 2013. pp. 235, including a 22-page introduction. Patterson is, of course, referring to the title of Gissing's novel which was printed, but never published, by Bentley. Gissing appears on pp. 1, 2, 28, 55n, 67, 98n, and 129; *The Nether World* on pp. 55-56n; and *The Odd Women* on p. 129. Patterson is Assistant Professor at the American

University of Ras al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates. (Thanks to Pierre and Hélène Coustillas and Simon J. James for this item.)

Selig, Robert L. Rev. of vol. 2 of *A Heroic Life* http://www.nbol-19.org/view_doc.php?index=223

_____. Rev. of vol. 3 of *A Heroic Life* http://www.nbol-19.org/view_doc.php?index=259

Stahl, Wulfhard. "The *Philosophy of the Bicycle*: An Educational Treatise of 1900." *Cycle History 22: Proceedings of the 22nd International Cycling History Conference, Paris, France, May 2011*: 21-22 (abstract in English and French), 241-45. Deals with "Bertz's best known and most important book." Gissing appears on pp. 242 and 245, n. 7. (Thanks to Wulfhard Stahl for this item.)

Xiao Da, Chinese translation of large extracts from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* Hailongjiang Kexue Jishu Chubanshe, 2011. pp. 203, including a two-page introduction and twenty black-and-white illustrations. Pierre and Hélène Coustillas, to whom I am indebted for this item, inform me that "Since at least the 1940s the Chinese seem to have published quite a few translations, mostly of extracts of Gissing's book. Pierre Coustillas holds copies of some of them that appeared in Taiwan (Tah Chien Cultural Enterprise, 1969, and Chih Wen Publishing Company, 1998) or in the People's Republic of China (Shanxi People's Press, 1987; the neighbouring province's Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 2005; Horizon Media, Shanghai, 2007), but Xiao Da's edition may be the first bilingual one."

Subscriptions

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

Rates per annum will be as follows:
Private subscribers (USA): $20
Private subscribers (rest of the world): $30
Libraries (USA): $30
Libraries (rest of the world): $40

You can make the payment via PayPal on **uwfox.uwc.edu/gissingjournal**.

Single copies and sets are available for most back years. If the request is for issues prior to vol. 49, no. 3, payment should be made in pounds sterling to *The Gissing Journal*, by cheque or international money order sent to: *The Gissing Journal*, 7 Town Lane, Idle, Bradford BD10 8PR, England. Later issues are available from the editor, below.

Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with biographical, critical, bibliographical, and topographical subjects. They should be sent to the editor, Professor M. D. Allen, University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, 1478 Midway Road, Menasha, WI 54952-1297, USA, or by e-mail to **malcolm.allen@uwc.edu**.

Editorial Board