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

Sport and Leisure in Gissing's Satirical Tales, Part 1

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Preliminary Remarks

Intellectual labour and rigorous academic studies undertaken in single hours of precious free time have so far appeared as the most worthy topics for researching George Gissing's intellectual artists and writers of the Victorian era (Schenke 61-88)[1]. Beyond the novelist's most famous urban world of *New Grub Street* (1891),[2] where recreational leisure[3] is an unknown concept for the unhealthy scholars desperately trying to make a living from their interest in high-brow literature (Korg and Korg, "Introduction"),[4] we wish to enter the lesser known sphere of exercise and travel as pursued by Gissing's ordinary heroes and heroines. In recent years we have at least seen an increased literary interest in Gissing's "working women" in London but their leisure still remains a side issue (Liggins).[5]

To compensate for the never-ending appraisal of the author's attitude towards the lower working classes as allegedly portrayed in his fiction (Goode 13),[6] we here plan to focus on

the humorous aspects of leisure pursuits across the social spectrum. By choosing physical exercise and travel as the prevailing free-time activities depicted in the numerous sideshows to the dramatic life stories of Gissing's classless heroes and heroines, we wish to point towards the seemingly mundane elements of Gissing's huge fictional corpus on a satirical note. As we are bound to find strong links between health and leisure in his social-realist novels, nevertheless, it appears tempting to research the author's personal pursuits of active leisure as conveyed by his notes, essays, and private correspondence. Through our attempt at gathering relevant historical knowledge about Victorians at leisure combined with insights into Gissing's private life, we hope to enhance our understanding of his fictional world, but we would also like to make clear at all times that his late-Victorian stories have never been designed simply to echo the author's immediate social reality. Instead of once more dismissing Gissing as a sombre pessimist[7] in an increasingly commercial world (cf. *The Times* 4 April 1898; James)[8] where the need to earn money apparently leaves no opportunities for fulfilled leisure, we shall ponder his satirical vision of social mobility through the amusing display of prestigious sports. Although George Gissing has often been wrongly accused of leaning towards an aristocratic lifestyle in his novels, his ironic depiction of up-market sports and foreign travel for either sex carries fewer visible class and gender markers than the real Victorian world would suggest.

1. *Leisure and Social Class*

1.1 *Concepts of Leisure in Historical Perspective*

For Gissing's many intellectual protagonists the idea of idle leisure often carries the temptation of sinful indulgence. Even when superficially freed from an ingrained Puritan work ethic,

they believe that their minds need to be disciplined severely by ancient history and philosophy before they can become worthy members of society. For those classical scholars who had mentally participated in Plato's *Republic* (ca. 360 BC)[9] *leisure* had always incorporated mental activities such as intense academic studies to prepare the mind for civil duties.

Whereas working through Britain's renowned literary canon used to be an aristocratic privilege in the early nineteenth century, the late-Victorian novelist George Gissing cast a very different light on the purpose of *new leisure* in the quickly evolving commercial world. To the rebel-author, who had spent a year in America, Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899)[10] would have had some effect on his social perception of recreational opportunities in urban communities. Although in the eyes of most twentieth-century literary critics Gissing presumably focussed on the ordeal of the lower working classes, it was in fact the idea of "classless" citizenship that characterised the behaviour of his rather low-born but well-educated protagonists. Lack of money in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *realist* fiction had often been diagnosed as a source of major evil, but in Gissing's multi-layered narrative, general education and integration are seen as a panacea for any criminal disposition displayed by the children of the slums (cf. the East End school project in *Workers in the Dawn* 206[11]; Schenke 224ff).

1.2 *Views on "Honourable" Leisure*

Possibly the most "honourable" type of leisure portrayed in Gissing's fiction with a social conscience takes the shape of charity missions undertaken by the wealthy heiress Helen Norman, who, among other projects, sets up an evening school for illiterate working girls and becomes their teacher. This self-

imposed duty of care may hardly be categorized as "leisure" anymore, even though her voluntary work takes up all her free time.

Although Gissing was far from ignoring the *nouveau riche* display of leisure previously reserved for the affluent gentry, in his fiction he put far more weight on the charity work of privileged benefactors using their abundant funds to help others in need (Schenke 116ff).

Those of our readers studying Gissing's private correspondence would quickly discover that the author felt strongly opposed to how the majority of his contemporary workers supposedly wasted their time and money on unproductive leisure pursuits (Schenke 146ff). Nevertheless, the narrative of his most acclaimed fiction could hardly have been accused of sympathising with London's intellectuals either, who were recorded as hanging over their dusty desks unproductively, without ever exercising in the fresh air. When travelling abroad the multilingual Gissing never came across as an ordinary tourist, and he revealed in his travel book *By the Ionian Sea* (written 1899, pub. 1901)[12] his deep desire for making contact with the locals of his favourite countries, Italy and Greece. Robert Selig therefore called him appropriately an "inner-directed traveller" (109)[13] because he was looking beyond the standard attractions pointed out by the guidebooks. Equipped with both an English Murray and a German Baedeker, Gissing still ignored the common warnings to stay clear of the impoverished South of Italy and openly admitted that its deprived standard of living was not so different from that of the slums in London's East End. By entering the so-called "back region" of his guest country, far away from the usual sightseeing tourists, he managed to display a genuine interest in "ordinary life" and was rewarded with personal medical care when he needed it (Selig 110ff).

There are no guidelines, though, for undertaking "honourable" leisure, either at home or abroad, to be found in Gissing's satirical novels because his literary portraits of social reality must appear distorted by the humorous mix of multiple narrative perspectives. As a classical philologist the author was well aware that *otium* did not imply complete freedom from work for the élite leisured classes in antiquity either, since they had to accept civil responsibilities as leading members of the state. By acquiring new linguistic skills as well as training their minds in rhetoric, algebra, and practical science, they were seen to contribute to the smooth running of public affairs. Pursuing philosophical debates in the Roman Baths while keeping the body in shape was an essential part of their public persona. Only those who had studied the wisdom of their ancestors would have been eligible for higher state office. According to the ancient motto of *mens sana in corpore sano* Roman patricians frequently remembered to strike a healthy balance between work and rest, but Gissing's impoverished classicist writers humorously ignored the official Victorian recommendations for exercising their worn-out complaining bodies.

2. *Health and Leisure*

Privately the author could occasionally be seen rowing on the river Thames between Kingston and Hampton as he longed to escape the inner city smog (Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 2: 22).[14] Given his lung condition he equally detested the polluted Parisian air and frequently retreated to the French coast, eventually to retire in St. Jean de Luz (Delany 357ff)[15].

As a pre-modern writer though, he also played with the stereotyped view that an impressive muscular body does

not always coincide with a high degree of brain power. Pre-shadowing our 21st-century obsession with *body culture* from pampering massages oriental style to eating root vegetables uncooked according to their colour-code, Gissing's ordinary heroes displayed considerable concern with the standard British diet and the ingrained lifestyle of the non-working classes.

2.1 *Lifestyle*

In his early twenties George was admired by his ailing brother, William, for his relentless stamina, but he was also warned not to continue his unhealthy lifestyle:

> How, I repeat, do you get through so much work? and on *lentils* too? No, I say, that won't do. I know all about lentils, they are, of course, nutritious (rather *less* so than oatmeal) but you must supplement them with other food. (From William, 14 March 1879; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1: 160)

In *A Life's Morning* (1889/2007: 4)[16], the Egyptologist, Philip Athel, actually showed an aversion to porridge, which he considered a "farinaceous mess," particularly when served with a sickening sweetener such as treacle. Concerning George's personal dietary requirements, however, we are led to believe from his travel diaries that he in fact heavily depended on his morning meal of milky cereals. He had even gone to the length of cooking himself porridge in the morning when first shopping in Italy at an expensive English grocery store.

In London George's exercise plan was increasingly determined by financial circumstances, as he freely admitted to his sister. Fortunately, though, his love for the outdoors was easily maintained as long as his sciatica was under control:

> It seems to me that a good country walk is all the exercise a rational creature need ask; unless, indeed, one is rich & can afford to ride a horse. I ought perhaps to except boating, of which I am very fond. Riding & boating I should go in for strongly if ever . . . I had the "cash." (To Ellen, 3 April 1880; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1: 256)

Four years earlier George had taken Nell to the Sussex coast at Hastings, where they both joined organized sailing trips. Rather than pointing out the benefits of the sport, though, George appeared to be dwelling on the aspect of seasickness, which only the new Mrs. Gissing seemed to have managed well (To Algernon, 30 June 1880; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1: 287).

2.1 *Outdoor Sports*

Bathing in the sea in "fine English weather," as George called his swimming attempts in the moderately warm English Channel, on the other hand, seemed to have lifted his spirits. However, swimming outdoors easily challenged those who, just like Gissing, were prone to infections. Apart from a dip in the hot summer months it was usually out of bounds for the fragile physique of most Victorian women.

The independent businessperson Rhoda Nunn, in his feminist novel, *The Odd Women* (1893)[17], also enjoys bathing in the sea to replenish her energies. Her companion, Everard Barfoot, has been swimming before breakfast as part of his fitness program,

and he regrets that girls apparently hardly learn how to swim at all. In his eyes the fair sex are mostly "trammelled by their clothes," but if they could more easily exercise their body, this would contribute to "every kind of health, physical, mental, and moral" (256). It is easy for the young "feminist" to agree that her physique is not ill equipped for water sports and that once her fancy attire has been disposed of she could easily build up her strength. As she willingly accepts that there is no need to exclude her from his masculine outdoor activities, they both set out for a cross-country hike from Seascale (257). The author himself was familiar with this mountainous area, since he had enjoyed many exploratory climbs back in January 1870. Just like the young George, Rhoda and Everard were making use of the outer branches of the railway lines, including a miniature track for tourists.

Climbing hills and mountains to explore the most challenging terrain in Britain and abroad had thus been the passion of the sporty author long before countless groups of city workers began their escape into the countryside for a short break. Trekking as a new leisure activity was gradually reaching the middle classes, while the old hunting and military associations of the term continued to imply virile endurance. According to the Historical *Timeline* of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), "having trekked grounds" was a commonly recorded phrase in the 1890s on both the literal and metaphorical level. In the second half of the Victorian period *the walkist* is "an athlete who competes in walking matches"; the terminology had been first applied in the United States and was then enthusiastically adopted in England.

In his novel, *Isabel Clarendon* (1885)[18], the almost thirty-year-old Bernard Kingcote has set out rambling from London and finds himself stranded near the fictional Salcot after three subsequent days of walking.

> It was plain that he enjoyed to the full the scenes through which he passed, and enjoyed them as a man of poetic sensibilities, but there was no exuberance of vitality in his delight. (4ff)

Unlike George's father, a hobby botanist, Kingcote had no "naturalist instinct" and could not pride himself on any knowledge about the regional fauna. Therefore, he preferred to commune with himself rather than with surrounding nature, but could not always escape "the shadow of brooding." When he eventually discovers that his purse has gone missing he remains remarkably composed and begins to calculate carefully his route back home to arrive at the conclusion that he cannot make it without asking for help at the rectory.

To show oneself as an all-weather traveller had come in vogue for the fit and wealthy at leisure, who had plenty of time to undertake extended trips into the British countryside from a central train station. Whereas walking had long been the only way of travelling for country people and city workers alike, venturing further afield was beginning to attract bored youths of independent means, who wished to conquer new "local" territory in superbly arrogant "imperialistic" demeanour. In Gissing's fictional world, accordingly, Kingcote amusingly shows a countenance of superiority in his "expeditions" and is tempted to judge people by the kind of books they display in their homes. Although he is temporarily out of pocket, having become the foolish victim of a thief, he does not feel in any way inclined to approach the villagers humbly (6).

As a walking enthusiast Gissing did not wish to share the latest fitness craze for biking. His German pen-friend Eduard Bertz had just published his book, *Die Philosophie des Fahrrads*, which he described as a practical "guide to the use of the

Bicycle." In his own experience of the *two wheel velocipedes* the English author saw no health benefits even for a summer cyclist. At least with the invention of the back-pedalling brakes in 1898 the risk of collision became significantly reduced.

> You know that I rather fear that I did myself harm by the exercise, and simply because I exaggerated it—the point on which you give such useful warning. Then again, I never had a cycling costume, which was a great mistake. I used to be drenched with perspiration, and of course caught colds and rheumatism and liver-complaint. (To Eduard Bertz, 7 May 1900; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 8:44)

Gissing shows himself amazed at the German prohibition of entering a court of law in cycling gear but quickly concedes that British *women* in knickerbockers have also caused quite a stir. This rebellious outfit has been worn by female cyclists much to the disapproval of Victorian society. Bicycles as such were not seen as appropriate for the use of any respectable woman before well into the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the fair sex had to adhere more closely to a dress-code up to a point where it defeated the point of their exercise.

2.3 *Competitive Sports*

At the *fin de siècle* the term "shamateur" acknowledged the underhand money-making ploys of the amateur sportsman, who was trying to bank on the new Victorian sports enthusiasm. Gissing disliked any kind of snobbery in sport and showed himself weary of the terms "gentlemen riders" and "gentlemen cricketers." He nevertheless conceded that there was no point in distinguishing between "those who play a game for its own sake and those who do so for money" (To Eduard Bertz, 7 May 1900; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 8:44).

Because of the restrictions imposed on young Victorian women wishing to participate in athletic games they hardly ever moved on to a serious professional level, and the so-called rough team sports, cricket and football, were strictly off-limits from the start. Dressed up in their best clothes, they were merely meant to cheer their male family members from a safe distance.

Competitive male sports had become a money-spinning industry that drew in the crowds to watch the town's fittest bodies fighting to exhaustion. For obvious reasons Gissing had no admiration for these professional sportsmen taking their disciplines to extremes as he would never have attempted physical hardship without mental rewards. Strangely, in a reversal of gender roles, it was his sister, Ellen, who was keen on serious group sports. She had dedicated herself completely to her rigorous gymnastic exercises. George had tried to respect this specifically female sport, although her so-called acrobatics were clearly running against his grain:

> I certainly should wish you a better occupation than contorting on horizontal, or any other kind of, bars. (To Ellen, 3 April 1880; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1: 256*)*

2.4 *Purposeful Leisure in the Outdoors*

Exploring the British countryside from an early age, young George used to combine healthy exercise with exploring nature's treasures and taking notes of his findings. His detailed perception of urban and maritime habitats in childhood pre-shadowed a distinct affinity with the creative arts that would later be of use in his writing. Whereas composing essays and stories in his teens had mostly been purpose-bound, first to win scholarships at school and later to enable him to make a living as a writer, drawing would always have a distinct leisure appeal

for Gissing. It appears that he wished to justify the time he had spent on "picturing Nature" by teaching Algernon. Just under thirteen years of age, he points out the simple rules of drawing with expert eyes:

> If you try colours do not make them flaring as nothing looks worse. It shows such bad taste and ignorance. Of course the colours of things far off must be lighter than things nearer. (To Algernon, 28 December 1869; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1: 6)

Unsurprisingly, young George would rarely have been spotted with an easel on his frequent seaside holidays, since he liked roaming about on the shore with his brother, William (1859-1880). To show off their most curious find they bottled up a sea-mouse to take home with them (from Seascale to Thomas Waller Gissing, 17 January 1870; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1:8). From the Northumberland coast he proudly reported to his nature-loving father how they managed to catch a two-pound fish for tea, thus once more putting their leisure fun to good use. They also enjoyed collecting shells "enough to stock the whole house" (27 July 1868, Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1:5). Three years later he wrote to a school friend about a series of "glorious walks" along Colwyn Bay, where he had "magnificent views" of the sea and mountains until thunderstorms drove him inland eventually to reach Cheshire, thus allegedly covering just under sixty-seven miles in two days (to Arthur Bowes 23 April 1873; Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1:14). His rambling[19] days had obviously been filled with joy, before his recurrent sciatica would stop such ambitious trips in later life.

Judging from his personal travel accounts and letters to his German pen-friend, the author himself had always been full of praise for the locals and would have tried his best to communicate with them in their native tongue. When travelling

through Britain, he found that the English language was hardly understood in Wales. He naturally accepted that Welsh should not be treated as an inferior dialect long before bilingualism was to be sanctioned by Westminster.

George Gissing would recommend walking in the fresh air to every city dweller independent of class and gender as he regarded exploring the unspoilt countryside as one of the few inexpensive pleasures open to anyone. He never approved of training up the young generation through extreme forms of physical exercise because he believed that such endurance tests were of no benefit to civilised human beings. In his perception, public schools had wrongly focussed on training "young and flexible muscle tissue" while incapacitating the most critical of young minds by demanding drilled synchronicity in their steps (cf. "Tyrtaeus" 1899)[20]. His pacifist fictional writer, Henry Ryecroft, has often been read as his mouthpiece when protesting against military parades on the playground:

> The routine of mechanic exercise was in itself all but unendurable to me; I hated the standing in line, the thrusting-out of arms and legs at a signal, the thud of feet stamping in constrained unison. The loss of individuality seemed to me sheer disgrace. (50)[21]

However, even Ryecroft did not deny that routine exercise requires a certain amount of self-discipline, particularly without the uncompromising instructions of a dedicated trainer. In need of fresh air, the long-term city-dweller gradually became used to stretching his legs while communing with nature. Not unlike Gissing, who had learnt to name a variety of regional plants on father-and-son outings, Henry found late happiness in his newly discovered botanic interest.

> Could anything be more wonderful than the fact that here am I, day by day, not only at leisure to walk forth and gaze at the larches, but blessed with the tranquillity of mind needful for such enjoyment? (65)

In *Isabel Clarendon*, which has largely an upper-middle-class setting, young Edgar Stratton, by contrast, has fully adopted his soldier-father's militaristic views and is amusingly keen to join the ladies' hunt on a pony. Joining in to kill a rabbit appears more attractive to him than playing his usual game of cricket with his peers. Also, he appears to have developed a taste for football, thus unexpectedly sharing a common working-class passion. His obnoxious social manners are easily excused by Bernard Kingcote, who generally praises the boy's upbringing as down-to-earth. In his eyes there is no need for him to study in-depth as only "vigorous bodily pursuits" would "keep his mind from turning inwards, and save him from reflection." For girls, the young man good-naturedly proposes much the same regime and recommends they should be kept physically active enough never to touch a book before they are "one-and-twenty." In his humorous vision Bernard even wants all young women trained up as one-breasted Amazons, dedicated to the God of War and destined to kill their male offspring. While his listener, the pacifist Ada, sees his suggestions as a "merciful provision," the observing narrator seems to identify reflective irony in favour of women (100).

When Gissing's narrative finally ventures into the spacious Stratton mansion, readers soon discover how four "robust" youths have been generously provided for with training equipment before they enter the military academy. In an upper chamber "they put on 'gloves,' and pummelled each other to their heart's satisfaction—thud—thud! Here they vied with one another at improvised trapezes." With sarcastic irony the narrative records that "when their noble minds yearned for

variety" they would rush headlong downstairs into the billiard-room, or rush out like "demon huntsmen," to eventually reward their mother with a healthy appetite if not with due respect (135).

Gissing's urban fiction had equally maintained the impression that keeping fit through well-balanced physical exercise and routine breaks from demanding labour was a particular requirement for the lower working classes. Walking in the city's abundant parks, stretching their limbs on the greens as well as playing ball games, offered relaxation to a great number of shop assistants. These outdoor pursuits did not exclude working women, but their degree of public exposure obviously had to remain limited.

3. *The Gender Aspect of Victorian Leisure*

3.1 *Keeping Women Safe*

In Catriona Parratt's (149ff)[22] in-depth analysis of "leisure" for working women (1880-1914) by their upper-class contemporaries, the labouring classes were described as an irresponsible pleasure-seeking race. Given the former's dreary day jobs, some social reformers presumably sympathised with their urge to join the drunken conviviality of the local pub in garish attire, along with the boisterous theatres, the gin-palaces, the dancing saloons. After a hard day's work at the factory there were no elderly church ladies waiting at the Club to lecture them on morality; instead they were allowed to play harmless games or learn country dances (*ibid.* 130). Others were convinced that exercising in fresh air was particularly important for working girls, who, unlike the lads, did not go fishing or bicycling routinely on Sundays and bank holidays. Mothers were said to rejoice over the excursions organized for their daughters while they secretly regretted

that in their days there had been no such treats.

The Girls Friendly Society, founded in 1874 by Anglican ladies, was aiming for a more elitist code by only allowing "virtuous" and unmarried women into their ranks. As the number of associated women's organisations would begin to multiply at the turn of the century, a wider range of female leisure activities, including various physical exercises, became accessible. Physical recreation was soon to be integrated into the curriculum for "factory girls," organized by a female professional trainer who was unaffordable for the free Leisure Clubs (Parratt 204). At the dawn of the twentieth century female physical educators would openly portray that "education of muscles and morals was one and the same thing that had gained broad currency."

At the dawn of the new century, physical recreation programs organized by the factories for their female workers began to include weekly evening lessons in both gymnastics and swimming: "Gymnastics . . . served similarly pragmatic ends and was imbued with a powerful ideology of social control, moral uplift, and motherhood" (Parratt 207).

Both the grace of movement and the training of the respiratory organs were meant to make young women more resilient and prepare them for their future duties as wives and mothers. At the dawn of the twentieth century female group drills with dumbbells might have had a touch of the military flair that Gissing had previously detested in the training of young boys at public schools.

3.2 *Displays of Female Leisure in Gissing's Fiction*

Gissing's social-realist fiction had suitably mocked the early signs of an emerging body culture in a typically male Victorian environment, while his narratives featured exceptional women in their rare attempts at physical recreation. Boating, as in real life, required no muscular input from the shop girls treated to a trip on the river. Although even the working-class girls of Gissing's creation felt the need to move about outdoors, their exercise regimes and travel arrangements were limited by what they could do without losing their so-called female grace and dignity. According to the royal etiquette upheld by Queen Victoria herself, bathing in the sea was supposed to be accomplished from the privacy of a bathing-machine via steps leading directly into the water, but the fictional feminist, Rhoda, in The Odd Women easily dismissed this approach. Her swimming could be accomplished in a hidden bay without such paraphernalia but public participation in more up-market sports such as riding and tennis remained the costly privilege of the social élite.

So Gissing's upwardly-mobile Isabel Maddison prepares for the genteel hobby of horse riding by practicing on a saddleless colt at her uncle's farm (*Isabel Clarendon* 15). As the aspiring wife of a wealthy but much older politician, she becomes the Lady of Knightswell, upholding the appearance of an aristocratic lifestyle at all costs:

> Mr. Clarendon never rode to hounds, but for his wife's sake hunters were bought, and Isabel proved herself the most splendid horsewoman in the field; that bareback riding at her uncle's farm had been of service to her. She entered into the joy of hunting with almost reckless abandonment; she risked leaps which made men stare and was in at the death with a face and figure which took away one's breath. (18)

By the end of the nineteenth century such sporty displays of privileged leisure were in reality no longer reserved for the wealthy gentry but had attracted the spoilt wives and pampered offspring of the newly-rich tradesmen. Gissing's late-Victorian narrative humorously reflected such trends by making fun of the most costly attempts at displaying active leisure. Ada Warren, Isabel Clarendon's so-called honourable protégée, had tried hard not to "overtax her strength" through avoiding any rigorous form of exercise when struggling with her private emotions. "Running with the dog" became her chosen regular activity, but she could easily be embarrassed when asked by Colonel Stratton's son, Edgar, if she was chasing a rabbit (97). His love for competitive blood sports, shared by the gentry's adults, however, is about to take a humiliating downturn:

> Were not the fowls of the air, the fishes of the deep and the foxes of the field created for the British sportsman? Surely no piece of teleology was clearer.

Although such sarcastic rhetoric tends to adhere to the perspective of the strong-willed Ada, transcended only slightly by an omniscient narrator, the author himself has often been blamed for attacking the British elitist sport of hunting inside the novel.

We find another less critical young woman setting the tone in Gissing's satirical novel *The Crown of Life* (1899)[23], who has all the time in the world to keep fit with no offspring of her own: the new Mrs. Jacks is apparently "well fitted to inspire homage" for always keeping herself well-balanced, even under more challenging conditions.

> Consummate as an ornament of the drawing-room, she would be no less admirably at ease on the tennis lawn, in the boat, on horseback, or walking on the seashore. (8)

To have such an attractive active wife fifteen years his junior would have remarkably flattered the husband, who was equally fascinated by her delicate beauty and emotional equilibrium.

The concept of "ordinary work" was strictly not applicable to her as a married woman. At the dawn of the new century, any paid occupation for married women was still considered inappropriate both in the old aristocracy and the newly rich merchant families. Only voluntary efforts at running a charity committee would be acceptable.

4. *Intellectual Pursuits*

As George Gissing is known for portraying struggling writers such as Edwin Reardon, who dedicate their little spare time to reading Greek and Roman authors in their dingy garrets, the distinction between academic "work" and "leisure" becomes more and more blurred in London's expanding book and magazine market towards the end of the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that the novelist's urban scenes supply a rich number of academic pursuits, these activities do not strictly fall into the realm of our chosen topic and have been dealt with elsewhere extensively (cf. our preliminary remarks).

Unsurprisingly, an increasing number of female writers were ready and willing to supply the growing middle-class readership with lighter fiction because they could put their hobby horse to good use (Schenke, *Female Victorian* Fiction, 37ff)[24]. While for a married woman such as Elizabeth Gaskell writing would not

primarily serve pecuniary purposes, there were also numerous single women who were pressing in on the market to establish financial independence (cf. Miller 19)[25]. As they were often ridiculed in their attempted role as breadwinners, whether trying their hands at fiction or composing an essay for the *Athenaeum*, their efforts were mostly seen as a symptom of superfluous leisure.

To guide the growing readership of young women through the jungle of allegedly menacing contemporary fiction, mainstream female authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell tried to incorporate an educational element into an otherwise predictable romance plot so that their young fans could embark on a semi-intellectual journey of self-improvement (cf. Schenke *Female Victorian Fiction*, 76ff).

By contrast, there is a potentially humiliating display of an unschooled housewife in Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn*, who is being taught reading and writing by her husband. Although Arthur Golding's new wife, Carrie, is meant to devote her so-called free time to acquiring a basic education, her growing resistance to his private project clearly marks her additional homework as the most difficult of her daily chores.

We may rarely have read about young women studying literature at home to improve their chances on the job market, but Jasper Milvain's sisters are being encouraged by him to become writers of female fiction in *New Grub Street* (106ff). In the same novel we find the Victorian equivalent of a modern research assistant frequenting the British Museum. However, Marian Yule's research is meant to help along her father's publications so that it can hardly count as an erudite leisure pursuit.

In *The Crown of Life,* in comparison, the obscure son of a political writer, Piers Otway, is driven by his very own ambitions beyond his publicly displayed love for art and science. He is thus prepared to devote *all* his time to arduous studies despite the fact that his inheritance merely supplied him with a meagre sum from his late mother. His intellectual pursuits may look to outsiders just like the kind of luxury indulged in by the new moneyed élite of British society, but the young man himself assures everyone in his boarding house that he needs to study to improve his immediate chances in a competitive examination. By not allowing himself any time off he can manage a study regime of fourteen hours per day, to drift off into oblivious sleep at the end of his intellectual shift.

Irene Derwent, the daughter of a medical doctor, warns Piers not to neglect his body, but she admiringly suspects that he has devoted his long hours to a higher purpose. Although he does not flaunt his ambitions in front of her, readers already know that he is hoping for a more advanced position in the diplomatic service. He has learnt that speaking modern languages such as Russian opens professional opportunities, and he is therefore prepared to make an effort with the Cyrillic alphabet.

Irene, by contrast, shows no such perseverance at her writing desk as her vigorous drive to live her life to the full shortly draws her away from her books. Her father has happily accepted her as his travel companion and welcomes her assistance on research-related field trips. She has therefore enjoyed staying abroad extensively, where she has picked up foreign languages automatically. In sharp contrast to the bookish intellectual Piers, Irene has thus collected knowledge about the world first hand in the company of an international scientist. Her allocated position in a select society has all the while opened rare opportunities for abundant leisure far beyond the restricted

social sphere of ordinary Victorian women. Without having to familiarize herself with the academic content of her father's work, Irene could fully enjoy socializing on their business trips with all expenses paid.

Notes

[1] Schenke, Petra. *Commerce and Cupido in George Gissing's Artistic World: Provocations of a Late-Victorian Novelist.* Saarbrücken: Lehrbuchverlag, 2014.

[2] One hundred years after the publication of *New Grub Street*, Bradbury and McFarlane (180) would describe Gissing's "darkest" London as an ideal source for urban fiction with a "jungle and abyss" at the core. (*Modernism, 1890-1930: A Guide to European Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

[3]According to the *OED*, "leisure" has implied "opportunity afforded by freedom from occupations" ever since the fifteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century it was thus not uncommon to hear that some working people had "neither leisure nor taste for higher pursuits." Note, however, that the description, "a lady or woman at leisure," was to carry a slightly different, rather ambiguous, meaning by the mid-twentieth century: she was either supposed to be without regular employment or free from obligations to others. In our contemporary usage of the word "leisure" the Latin root licere (to be permitted) still appears relevant. Chambers Dictionary uses "leisure" as a synonym for "free time away from necessary business." It implies recreational time or pursuits. The collocation "to have leisure" is now archaic and to be replaced with "to have free time."

[4] Jacob and Cynthia Korg in their introduction to *George Gissing on Fiction* stated that "his best novel, *New Grub Street*, exposes the problems of the writer in a commercial age with such vividness and candour that the subject has become to be regarded as his special province" (13).

[5] Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture*. London: Ashgate, 2006.

---. "'Citizens of London?' Working Women, Leisure and Urban Space in Gissing's 1880s Fiction." *Gissing and the City,* ed. John Spiers. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006: 100-108.

[6] John Goode, *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction*. London: Vision, 1978. The influential critic made the point that "nobody else could give such an immediate report on working-class London in the eighteen-eighties when the populace was beginning to erupt into the West End once again . . . ; nobody else could register so graphically the economic oppression of the literary producer at the beginning of the epoch of the mass media" (13).

[7] Frank Swinnerton's flawed biography described Gissing as socially inept and "tempermentally unhappy" (18).

[8] *The Times*, 4 April 1898, wrote that "his outlook on life, as far as can be judged from Demos, New Grub Street, and others of the series which lays bare so much misery, unrest, and discontent of modern workers and idlers, has little in common with the determined cheerfulness and the overbrimming humour and high spirits of Dickens."

Simon James calls "lack of money" a Victorian ailment in his *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing*. (London: Anthem Press, 2003). For a more accurate assessment of the economic circumstances of a Victorian writer see *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* by Nigel Cross. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

[9] In Plato's *Republic* Socrates makes the point that an athlete must soon become stupid by feeding and training alone and become a wild beast. The true statesman, by contrast, should be able to manage soul and body by using the arts of music and gymnastics in equal measure. Gissing seemed to be similarly alarmed about mindless athletic training although he respected the need for physical recreation for white-collar workers. Gissing also agreed with Socrates that nourishing the soul one-sidedly through emotional music would lead to nervous irritability.

[10] The son of Norwegian immigrants, Thorstein Veblen (*The Theory of The Leisure Class* 1899; ed. Martha Banta, [London: OUP, 2009]), had started publishing his ideas about the affluent American classes in the 1890s to mock new commercial trends in popular leisure activities. Whereas in his experience scholarly achievements such as classical studies, "domestic music and other arts," had been acceptable as worthy substitutes for proper industrial work in the tradition of Plato, the latest proprieties "of games, sports, and fancy-bred animals, such as dogs and race-horses" all regrettably proceeded from pecuniary acquisition. In his fiction Gissing seemed to adopt some of Veblen's satirical notes on commercial leisure activities as a way to parade membership to a social elite. The social reformer regretted that beautiful American women were mostly treated as mere trophies and would have to fit into an organized leisure schedule that could demonstrate their husband's wealth beyond

decency (*Dress as an Expression of Pecuniary Culture*, 111ff). Gissing humorously used similar social set-ups in his novel *Isabel Clarendon*, but in his private life he merely regretted not having enough money to follow his favourite pastimes when he felt like it.

[11] George Gissing, *Workers in the Dawn*, ed. Debbie Harrison. Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2010.

[12] George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea. Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*. London: Chapman Hall, 1901.

[13] Robert Selig, *George Gissing*. Revised edition. Boston: Twayne, 1995.

[14] Gissing's quoted letters to and from friends and family are mostly to be found in the first and second of nine volumes of , *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, Pierre Coustillas. (Athens: Ohio UP). His frequent correspondence with his German penfriend is preserved in *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz 1887-1903,* ed. Arthur C. Young (London: Constable, 1961).

[15] The ex-Londoner, Paul Delany, offers a thorough and fair analysis of George Gissing's life and work by distancing himself from the judgemental tone of earlier biographers. His research could have been even more fruitful if he had resisted the positivist temptation to treat the novelist's fictional characters as an expression of their creator's personal attitudes. Delany, George Gissing: A Life (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008).

[16] George Gissing, *A Life's Morning*. London: Smith & Elder, 1889.; acceptable rpt. Echo Library, 2007.

[17] George Gissing, *The Odd Women*. London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1893; acceptable rpt. Virago 1980.

[18] George Gissing, *Isabel Clarendon*. London: Chapman and Hall,1886; acceptable rpt. Echo Library 2009.

[19] The final decades of the Victorian Age defined our modern meaning of *rambling* as "to walk for pleasure or recreation" (*Chambers Dictionary*).

[20] George Gissing, "Tyrtaeus." *Review of the Week.* Reprinted in *The Gissing Newsletter* 10.3 (July 1974): 2-3, "Gissing on Matters of War and Ethics".

[21] George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* London: Constable, 1903.

[22] Catriona M. Parratt, *"More Than Mere Amusement": Working-Class Women's Leisure in England, 1750-1914.* Boston: Northeastern UP, 2001.

[23] George Gissing, *The Crown of Life*. London: Methuen, 1899.

[24] Petra Schenke, *Female Victorian Fiction: Shaping the Reader's Mind*. Göttingen: Optimus Verlag, 2013.

[25] Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel.* University of Chicago Press, 1997.

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In Memoriam: Anthony Curtis (1926-2014)

HÉLÈNE COUSTILLAS

The Gissing Journal, formerly *Newsletter*, is fifty years old this year, and on a number of occasions during the last half-century it has been its sad duty to commemorate the loss of friends, often of long standing, from the Gissing world. The list was headed in 1980 by Denise Le Mallier, Gabrielle Fleury's relative, through whose efforts a plaque was put up in 1957 on the house in Paris, rue de Siam, where Gissing lived for a few years at the end of his life. She was followed in the same year by Alfred Slotnick and C. S. Collinson, then at intervals by Helmut Gerber, Heather Lawrence, Clifford Brook, who was instrumental in preserving Gissing's home in Wakefield and creating the Gissing Centre, Douglas Hallam, Paul F. Mattheisen, co-editor of the *Collected Letters*, Sydney Lott, Alan Clodd, Edward Clodd's grandson, whose Enitharmon Press published an attractive Gissing Series in the late sixties and seventies, and Francesco Badolato, indefatigable for decades in his efforts to make Gissing better known in Italy. Most of them contributed to the Gissing periodical and their names are sure to be well known to its readers. To these names we must now add that of Anthony Curtis, another staunch and faithful Gissingite, who died on 29 June, 2014 in hospital in Toulon where he had been flown from the small island of Porquerolles, off Hyères, in Southern France, on which he and his wife were holidaying. They were great travellers, and frequent visitors to France.

After leaving school, Anthony Curtis had begun reading history at Merton College, Oxford, but his studies were interrupted by the war, during which he served in the R.A.F. After the war, he went back to Merton, which he left with a first class degree, not

in history, but in English. He tried his hand at freelance journalism, then in 1950-51 found himself in Paris, lecturing at the British Institute. Back in London, he joined the *Times Literary Supplement*, before winning a year-long Harkness Scholarship to study in the United States. On his return, he was briefly sub-editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, then in 1960 became books editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, a post he held for ten years. His next appointment, in 1970, was as arts and literature editor of the *Financial Times*, where he remained until his retirement in 1994. He did much reviewing himself, yet busy as he must have been, he found time to write a number of books, among them *The Pattern of Maugham: A Critical Portrait* (1974), *Somerset Maugham*, a biography of the author (1977), and in 1987 edited the Critical Heritage volume devoted to him in collaboration with John Whitehead. In his retirement he published *Lit Ed: On Reviewing and Reviewers* (1998), which is partly autobiographical, *Before Bloomsbury: the 1890 diaries of three Kensington ladies: Margaret Lushington, Stella Duckworth, and Mildred Massingberd* (2002), and *Virginia Woolf: Bloomsbury and Beyond* (2006). And as late as 2010 he wrote a one-man play, *Mr. Maugham at Home*, which was successfully staged in London and is an index of his lifelong interest in Maugham.

We don't know when his interest in Gissing really started, but as a young man he contemplated writing a biography of him. He started his research and tried to get in touch with people who might have known him and be ready to share their memories. In 1957, when preparing a centenary portrait, broadcast on the Third Programme in November, he asked James Gaussen, Mrs. Gaussen's eldest son, by then well over eighty, for an interview which could not take place. However, James Gaussen later sent him a long letter of reminiscences and a sonnet which Gissing had written by way of thanks to Mrs. Gaussen in September 1884 for the flowers he had received from Broughton Hall when

he moved into new lodgings at 18 Rutland Street. Then, in 1959, during his one-year stay in the United States, and on the recommendation of Royal A. Gettmann whom he had met at the University of Illinois, Anthony Curtis visited in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the man whose company had cheered Gissing in Siena and Rome in 1897-98, Brian Ború Dunne, who, he found, "did have fascinating first-hand memories of the novelist"—with which readers of *With Gissing in Italy: The Memoirs of Brian Ború Dunne* (1999) will readily agree. In the 1950s he also visited Alfred Gissing, Gissing's son, at Les Marécottes, in Switzerland. The Gissing biography was never completed, but we know that in the summer of 1971 Anthony Curtis visited the Gissing Exhibition at the National Book League, and gave warm accounts of it in both the *Financial Times* (28 June) and the *Times Literary Supplement* (2 July). Four years later he and his wife Sarah, also a writer and for many years a regular reviewer on the *Times Literary Supplement*, were among the small band of Gissing enthusiasts who attended in Chelsea the unveiling by Pierre Coustillas of a Blue Plaque on the house in which Gissing lived for some time in the early 1880s. They attended in 1999 the Gissing Conference in Amsterdam where he read a paper on Gissing and the Lushingtons which was published in *A Garland for Gissing*; he chaired a workshop at the Conference in London in 2003, and they both came over to Lille in 2008.

Over the years he made seven contributions to the *Newsletter/Journal*. Besides "Gissing and the Gaussens: Some Unpublished Documents," *Newsletter*, October 1976, and "A Visit to Bee Bee," that is Brian Ború Dunne, *Journal*, April 1999, the *Journal* carried "We visit Gissing," July 1993, about a visit to the Norfolk village of that name, in which he managed to introduce allusions to the novelist; "Gissing and the Betjeman Circle," January 1997; the introduction to Walter Allen's "The Dispossessed: A Consideration of George Gissing," January 2001; "Gissing

and C. S. Lewis", July 2004; and his last piece was "Anthony Powell and George Gissing," July 2010. All written in his pleasant, lively style. To the last he subscribed to the *Journal*, and read it as well as books about Gissing, an author in whom his interest never flagged.

A man with a particularly active mind and artistic leanings, who cared for many things besides books and literature, including opera and chess, he became as years went by a Member of the Society of Authors, Treasurer of the Royal Literary Fund, Trustee of the London Library, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He will be remembered by those who knew him as a kind and courteous person, with a mischievous gleam in his eyes, a gleam which also often appeared under his pen, as a genial host, and as someone whom a friend of ours described, and Gissing himself would have described, as an English gentleman.

Book Review

Anthony Quinn, ed., *New Grub Street*, London: Vintage Classics, Random House, 2014.

For a Gissing enthusiast it is good to see that, with the exception of *A Life's Morning*, all of his works from the 1880s, *Workers in the Dawn* (Victorian Secrets), *The Unclassed* (ELS Monograph Series), *Isabel Clarendon* (Grayswood Press), *Demos* (Victorian Secrets), *Thyrza* (Victorian Secrets), and *The Nether World* (Oxford World's Classics) are now in print in modern editions. The works of his maturity from the 1890s and later fare less well. Still there are currently editions of *New Grub Street* (see below), *The Odd Women* (Broadview Press, Oxford World's Classics, Penguin Classics), the three novellas, *Eve's Ransom*, *Sleeping Fires*, and *The Paying Guest* (Grayswood

Press), while The Whirlpool is soon to become a Penguin Classic. The major omission is Born in Exile, which many deem his best novel, although one would also welcome updated editions of In the Year of Jubilee, The Town Traveller, The Crown of Life and Our Friend the Charlatan. Meanwhile New Grub Street is available in the following imprints: Modern Library Classics, Penguin Classics, Penguin New English Library, Oxford World's Classics, Broadview Press, Wordsworth Classics, and the ELS Monograph Series. As this brief survey bears out, Gissing's novel of literary London remains the most popular of his novels.

And now we can add to this list a Vintage Classics edition issued by Random House, the leading publisher in the UK of mainstream contemporary and classic literature. One may wonder why they have chosen to bring out *New Grub Street* knowing they would be competing with those other editions. I was in the flagship Waterstones bookshop at Piccadilly recently and saw the Penguin New Library, Oxford, Modern Library, and Vintage editions standing next to each other on the "Classics" bookshelf there, along with *The Odd Women* and *The Nether World*. Evidently, Gissing's works are more present in bookshops than ever before. Nevertheless he is the only major novelist of the past 150 years whose best novel is not currently in print. Imagine the outcry if *Middlemarch* or *Jude the Obscure* or *The Ambassadors* were allowed to go out of print. As the above list illustrates *New Grub Street* has now become a popular classic. But *Born in Exile* is introspective and less likely to attract publishers. It is the kind of literary work that Edwin Reardon aspired to write in *New Grub Street*.

As a reading of *New Grub Street* reveals, the economic conditions of the late-Victorian literary marketplace are practically the same as in 2014. Now, as then, the popular taste dictates to the market. And now, as then, Gissing's

novel resonates because its realistic portrayal of the upside and downside of literary life remains wholly relevant to the modern perception of the writer's life. Essentially, it is a cautionary tale, for Gissing's unrelenting focus is on the Edwin Reardons, Harold Biffens, and the Alfred Yules of his day. These are writers similar to, among others, John Davidson, Edwin Pugh, and Algernon Gissing, that is writers who, if they have not fallen by the wayside in their struggle to earn a living from their pens, a generation later will be making despairing applications to the Royal Literary Fund. These are writers whose harsh experience of the daily fight for survival in the literary marketplace is in stark contrast to that of the type embodied in the popular novelist, journalist, and publisher's reader, James Payn (a man Gissing loathed), who in his 1894 autobiography bemoans the fact that he only earned on average £1500 per annum over a period of thirty-five years as a writer. Yet it is not just this larger picture of the writer in the marketplace, but also the smaller details that capture our interest. For instance, it is fascinating to observe Reardon at work desperately trying to fatten out the three-decker novel he is writing: by having characters waffle on about this and that, by padding out scenes and descriptive narrative, by widening margins and including plentiful blank pages. Gissing was consciously doing this himself in *New Grub Street*, whilst his brother, Algernon (one of the last writers to produce a three-volume novel in 1897), was an expert at such expedients.

This edition of *New Grub Street* was published in paperback form on 7 August 2014. The covers of Vintage books are generally attractive with their combination of white back covers, red spines, and colourfully illustrated front covers. I especially like the elegant 1920s style front covers of their Somerset Maugham editions. Regrettably, the cover of *New Grub Street*, a dark, bleak image by Steve Banks of three partly bordered up wooden window frames with the novel's title in

large white ink-stained characters impressed upon them, seems to suggest something ominous lurking within, perhaps a creepy story by Edgar Allan Poe or Wilkie Collins. What relation it is supposed to have to Gissing's story is beyond me. The novel deserves a more appropriate cover similar to the image of a writer at his desk which adorns the Penguin Classics edition. Being uniform with the other Vintage Classics, the text, which has been reset, is prefaced by a short introduction, but otherwise does without a scholarly apparatus. Following a concise biography of Gissing and the title page, it is pleasing to see a page listing all his novels in chronological sequence. The book itself runs to 656 pages and at first sight looks bulky, yet it feels comfortable in the hand and the size 12 font is easy on the eye. As the contents page indicates, the text retains the division into three parts marking the points at which the three separate volumes of the 1891 Smith, Elder first edition begin.

A few years ago I complained in these pages about the new Penguin edition using an antiquated introduction originally written in 1958. Happily Random House have called upon a modern critic and novelist, Anthony Quinn, to provide the introduction. Quinn wrote a novel two years ago set in Somers Town in the 1880s entitled *The Streets* (also published by Vintage) in which there are many allusions to Gissing.

Quinn's introduction is aimed at those reading Gissing for the first time probably because Vintage books are intended for the more general reader. To begin with, as he rightly informs the reader, "The tension between writing as a noble vocation and the cold necessity of making it pay lies at the heart of *New Grub Street*." Indeed Gissing masterfully conveys the conflict the writer confronts in striving to create whilst trying to put bread on the table, and also shows the stress and damage this conflict does to personal relationships. Quinn then makes the telling point that *New Grub Street* "deepens in the rereading." He adds,

"On first encounter the story traces a simultaneous rise and fall" as it describes the struggles of "an ensemble of types—novelists, journalists, editors, publishers, even a newfangled 'agent'—who strive to earn a living by the pen." At the start Edwin Reardon, having enjoyed a minor triumph with his first novel, has clambered up the ladder of success and attained a beautiful, middle-class wife. Jasper Milvain is by contrast on the bottom rung optimistically striving to work his way up by whatever means he deems necessary. But Reardon is already beginning his painful descent, while Milvain is the coming man, ably, Quinn writes, "ingratiating himself with editors and influential patrons." By the end Reardon has died an abject failure while Milvain has not only succeeded as a journalist but also married Reardon's widow.

Quinn argues that "a knowledge of the author's own life will lend an ominous perspective to a second reading of the novel." And for those readers who don't know their Gissing, he plunges into a brief account of the main acts of his life. He pertinently explains that Gissing "felt himself disqualified from marrying 'well,' in the belief that no respectable middle-class woman would be willing to endure poverty." This is, he asserts, "dramatised" in "the case of Amy Reardon." As he notes, "ambitious," and ever urging Reardon to be "pragmatic," she is also "sometimes cold," and yet he feels that she is essentially "sympathetic" and "more tolerant than many a wife would be, faced with a husband as needy and despairing as Reardon." Perhaps she is for a woman of her day, but to my mind, she is at heart utterly disloyal and one could say in modern parlance that she and Jasper deserve each other. Had Gissing socialised more after Nell's death in 1888 (there were sufficient invitations) he might well have found a middle-class wife. But whether such a woman would have been a support to Gissing or eventually fled in times of hardship we shall never know. However, as the later union with Gabrielle Fleury shows, the blueprint of marital

disaster "dramatised" in Amy's marriage with Reardon is too pessimistic. As Quinn suggests, I would urge any new reader of Gissing to tackle the novel first *sans connaissances*, and then come back to it after reading a biography. For, undoubtedly, reading through the lens of Gissing's life experience adds to the novel's poignancy.

Quinn concludes with the fascinating observation that "the idea of writing as a professional skill is losing its constituency and becoming something else—self-advertisement, confessional therapy, 'feedback.'" One wonders whether Gissing would have welcomed the democratisation of writing we are witnessing nowadays. With his many false starts, abandoned drafts, and revisions, he would certainly have appreciated the uses of a computer. But would he have been able to avoid the distraction of the Internet? Although he disliked critical reviews of his novel, had he ventured to look up *New Grub Street* on Amazon, he would have been delighted to see numerous readers expressing their positive enjoyment of the novel.

Referring to Marian Yule at work in the British Museum Reading Room, Quinn recalls her famous "vision of the readers at the radiating lines of desks as 'hapless flies caught in a huge web.'" Gissing is notorious for anticipating his own destiny, but in the twenty-first century the phrase seems especially prophetic. After all, are we not all now the "hapless flies caught in a huge web"?

This is a fine, affordable paperback edition that will gain Gissing many new readers.

Notes and News

Tom Ue read a paper entitled "Premonition of the End: Fictionality in Dickens' *Edwin Drood* and Gissing's *Henry Ryecroft*" at "The Mystery of *Edwin Drood*: Solutions and Resolutions." 20 September, 2014, Senate House, London.

Recent Publications

Allen, M. D. "George Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* as a Dickensian Novel." *Reflections on/of Dickens.* Eds. Ewa Kujawska-Lis and Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014: 157-66.

Gurling, Jonathan. "Literary Landscapes of England: The North Cotswolds of Algernon Gissing." *This England* Autumn 2014, pp. 22-25.

Quinn, Anthony, ed. *New Grub Street.* London: Vintage Classics, Random House, 2014. Reviewed in this issue.

Schenke, Petra. *Commerce and Cupido in George Gissing's Artistic World: Provocations of a Late-Victorian Novelist.* Saarbrücken: Lehrbuchverlag, 2014.

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Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with biographical, critical, bibliographical, and topographical subjects. They should be 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**.

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