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

Born in Exile at 125

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This year's Literary London Society conference was held on 13-14 July at Senate House in the University of London and its theme was "Fantastic London: Dream, Speculation and Nightmare." A well-attended panel, on "Gissing's *Born in Exile* and the Fin de Siècle," celebrated the 125th anniversary of the novel's publication and brought together fresh considerations by the distinguished scholars Jeremy Tambling (Hong Kong and Manchester) and Constance Harsh (Colgate). Tambling opened the panel with a fascinating account of "Natural History in Gissing's *Born in Exile*." He considered the two kinds of books about religion that Peak says are fashionable – those that prove "agnosticism is respectable," and those that reconcile revelation and science – before directing our attention to two senses to the term "natural history," one that allows for a new sense of chronology and that regards humans in relation to nature and one that elides a theological way of reading life and one that sees life as being basically competitive. Against this critical context, Tambling advanced scholarship on the novel by attributing hypocrisy to Martin Warricombe, "who needs to have his contradictory beliefs reconciled, which they cannot be, and certainly not by Buckland, nor by [Hugh] Miller, neither of whom can reconcile Genesis with geology in the way Martin wants." Tambling thus reframed the question of Peak's hypocrisy to the novel's larger debates about "how much a person can afford to let his or her views be challenged." "It seems not much," according to Tambling, "which makes hypocrisy more widespread than even Gissing's commentary allows, and a more puzzling quality than Gissing's use of the word permits."

Harsh's paper, "The London Frame of Mind in *Born in Exile*," takes a different direction though she similarly calls for a rethinking of Peak: Harsh began by exploring the distance between Gissing, as implied author, and his

character, taking his meeting with his benefactor Lady Whitelaw as a point of departure. As Harsh convincingly argued, "The scene oscillates uneasily between a narrative adoption of Godwin's attitudes and some efforts to contextualize them." Harsh suggested an alternative way of reading the novel, one that attends to the importance of place to the development of Gissing's characters. "The complexity of London as a psychological environment," Harsh demonstrated, "underscores the extraordinary difficulty of developing a clear evaluation of the character and his career." Harsh followed the footsteps of John Earwaker, Marcella and Christian Moxey, and Sidwell Warricombe to reveal how each character follows a conventional story about the distinctiveness of city life – whereas Peak's experience is one of failed connection. Harsh concluded of London: "Its susceptibility to multiple, incompatible narratives ensures that any effort at naturalizing it will fall short. Its meaning will escape efforts to understand it. It is a perfect native land for someone who finds his truest reality in angry location."

My own essay is motivated by a pivotal scene where Earwaker asks Peak whether he would find satisfaction in the life "of an average gentleman . . . with house in town and country, with friends whose ruling motive was social propriety" (152). Peak protests that he "could enjoy the good and throw aside the distasteful," even should this manifest in his wife's conventionalism in religion: "It would not be *crass*, to begin with. If her religion were genuine, I could tolerate it well enough; if it were merely a form, I could train her to my own opinions. Society is growing liberal – the best of it. Please remember that I have in mind a woman of the highest type our civilisation can produce" (152). Earwaker recommends Peak to look for such companionship not in actual society, turning to Robert Browning's "Respectability." My paper, "Godwin at the Crossroads: Gissing, Browning, and the Ideal Woman," explores, to some extent, Gissing's engagement with Browning to provide some context for our reading of this allusion; suggests some possible connections between the dramatic monologue and the novel; and gestures towards the larger debates about ethics and desire in which both writers were actively engaged.

The three papers were followed by a rich discussion that explored Victorian education, London's geography, and Gissing's reading. Special thanks are due to Jenny Bavidge (Cambridge), who chaired the panel; Peter Jones (IHR London), who organized the Literary London Society conference; and the Institute of English Studies at the School of Advanced Study in the University of London. A special journal issue on *Born in Exile*

that brings together revised versions of the papers, along with contributions by Richard Dennis (UCL), Lynda Mugglestone (Oxford), and Rachel Bowlby (UCL), is currently in preparation.

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George Gissing's "nomadic thought" and the Vibrant Experience of *By the Ionian Sea*

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On 13 September 1897 George Gissing wrote a letter to Eduard Bertz, informing him of his imminent journey to Italy:

> Rather suddenly, I have decided to go to Italy for the whole of the winter. I leave England on Sept. 22nd.
>
> My motives are several. First of all, though my health seems greatly improved, I still have a little cough, & I want, if possible, to get rid of this altogether. Secondly, I am weary, for the time, of England, & long unutterably for the glorious warmth & colour of the south. Thirdly, it is clear to me that my historical novel will benefit greatly by studies made on the spot.[1]

After years spent in straitened circumstances, and in poor physical condition, the now 40-year old writer sets out for the third and last of his Italian 'wanderings,' and one that will result in a memorable book of travel writing, *By the Ionian Sea*, published two years before his death, in 1901.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the complexity of Gissing's book, whose textual strategies oscillate between those of an accurate report, a travel diary, an anthropological document and a fictional narration that verges on phantasmagoria. It is not only the expression of Gissing's well-known "Mediterranean passion,"[2] but also an escape from the distressing condition of modernity, with its capitalistic system and the unrelenting forces of commodification; in brief, it is an attempt to recover and rediscover a territory of memory within the immortal past that still vibrates in Magna Græcia.

In *By the Ionian Sea* Gissing's textual rendering of Italy is a reconstruction of an imaginary topography, a 'mental mapping' the writer had envisioned since youth through his readings, a world in which to seek refuge far from a society that made him feel exiled. And it is with these words that, right at the beginning of the book, Gissing refers to Italy in terms of an imaginary space, the land of a glorious past, at the same time evocative and soothing:

> Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful. The world of the Greeks and Romans is my land of romance.[3]

For Gissing, the thought of Italy has an exotic quality and a capacity both to soothe his deracinated proto-modernist anxieties, and to enliven his soul.[4] It is a place that often comes to mind when, under northern skies, he is "weary of labour and seek[s] in fancy a paradise of idleness."[5] This, then, is one of the several reasons why Gissing decides to abandon the uproar of contemporary London and the abysmal reality of the slums for a place of re-enchantment and communion, as he further reveals in his correspondence: "The familiar land beckons me as I lie awake at night among these Yorkshire hills; I hear the song of the Calabrian peasant, & see the colours on mountains & on sea."[6] And when he finally starts his journey for this mysterious territory, he is so fascinated by the seascape that he seems to be going through an otherworldly experience: "From my seat near the stern of the vessel I could discern no human form; it was as though I voyaged quite alone in the silence of this magic sea."[7] Far from the entrapment of urban space, Gissing here suggests the possibility of eluding the corrosive effects of Victorian modernity, at least for as long as he is finally immersed in the world of Italy's extraordinary past.[8]

Thus, *By the Ionian Sea* creates a space of "nomadic thinking," as Rosi Braidotti puts it, a space "framed by perceptions, concepts, and imaginings that cannot be reduced to human, rational consciousness."[9] The pattern of nomadic thought, according to Braidotti, "redefines memory as the faculty that decodes residual traces of half-effaced presences; it retrieves archives of leftover sensations and accesses afterthoughts, flashbacks."[10] And it is exactly through this travel writing testimony that Gissing suggests a dynamic perspective of time sequences insofar as the experience of the present mingles with reminiscences and dreams, and the travel itinerary does not follow the conventional circular trajectory *departure-adventure-return*. The

completeness of Gissing's journey, in fact, does not coincide with an expected homecoming, but with the author's wish "to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world"[11] his journey to Italy is a quest, it is an attempt to recover a dimension of the soul in which the magnificence of Horace and Virgil can live again in the visions of the modern traveller. Consequently, his voyage also coincides with the dissolution of chronological time, and the creation of a cartography of the mind that makes past and present overlap, in an atmosphere of unimaginable quietude:

> With half-closed eyes, one could imagine the true Tarentum. Wavelets lapped upon the sand before me, their music the same as two thousand years ago. A goatherd came along, his flock straggling behind him; man and goats were as much of the old world as of the new. […] After a dull morning, the day had passed into golden serenity; a stillness of eternal peace held earth and sky. […] The scent of rosemary seemed to be wafted across the ages from a vanished world.[12]

Making his way through the physical geography of Italy, Gissing travels in search of the places he already has in mind, places that belong to his knowledge of classical antiquity, to his passion for the Greco-Roman world, and through which he can seek escape from the decadence of the present. This act of memory retrieval activates remembrances but it also allows the traveller to mingle authentic events with the reality of his own imagination: "I had come here to think about Alaric, and with my own eyes to behold the place of his burial. Ever since the first boyish reading of Gibbon, my imagination has loved to play upon that scene of Alaric's death. […] How often had I longed to see this river Busento."[13]

As Virginia Woolf observes in her essay "Literary Geography," "a writer's country is a territory within his own brain"[14]; from this perspective it would be a mistake to look for any straightforward connection between Gissing's literary cartography of Italy and its physical geography. So, in *By the Ionian Sea*, he demonstrates his ability to map the Italian landscape and "re-write" it as "a country of the mind."[15] These are places that he has studied, imagined, pictured and finally portrayed, and that for this reason have assumed all the characteristics of an interior space. As we shall see, however, there is a lurking tension between the intrusive realities of the contemporary everyday, and the new spatial dimension his textual account opens up. Perhaps the most startling instance of this tension comes when Gissing is lodging in a small hotel in Crotone. On this occasion his memory and his strong imagination coalesce to create vibrant visions of Italy. Whilst lodging in the Calabrian south, he falls ill with pulmonary congestion which compels him to spend a long period in bed; it is exactly in the claustrophobic

space of a bleak room, and under the effect of high fever, that Gissing reaches a "visionary state":

> A violent shivering fit roused me from this gloomy dreaming, and I soon after fell into a visionary state which, whilst it lasted, gave me such placid happiness as I have never known when in my perfect mind. Lying still and calm, and perfectly awake, I watched a succession of wonderful pictures. First of all I saw great vases, rich with ornament and figures; then sepulchral marbles, carved more exquisitely than the most beautiful I had ever known. The vision grew in extent, in multiplicity of detail; presently I was regarding scenes of ancient life – thronged streets, processions […] fields of battle. […] Things which I could not know, which my imagination, working in the service of the will, could never have bodied forth, were before me as in life itself.[16]

Nothing is blurred in this visionary phase: images have vivid hues, colours are brilliant and the details are neat. Thus, through the language of dreams and reveries, Gissing can finally recover a much-loved dimension that reconnects past and present. Yet the visionary activity of the writer is caused by his physical debilitation and by the high fever which makes him delirious; but it is also, and inevitably, determined by his proximity to the spaces of Calabria. The visions are so powerful that they allow the traveller to recreate a tangible reality out of "ruined fragments," and to recompose and refill his personal "store of memories" of ancient times. The glorious past of Crotone can now live again in Gissing's imagination in a way that fuses well-documented historical details with the phantasmagoria of his visions. Such a state enables Gissing to retell the story of how Hannibal slaughtered those soldiers who refused to accompany him to Africa. True, these visions are in part lost when the effects of fever have passed, but they are so compelling that "the delight of these phantasms was well worth the ten days' illness which paid for them […]"[17]

> That gate of dreams was closed, but I shall always feel that, for an hour, it was granted to me *the vanished life so dear to my imagination*. If the picture corresponded to nothing real, tell me who can, by what power I reconstructed, to the last perfection of intimacy, a world known to me only in ruined fragments.[18]

The visionary dimension of Gissing's narrative is, nonetheless, only one aspect of it. Gissing's writing is also characterised by a constant and destabilising variation of perspectives and voices: at times the traveller writes as a historian or a geographer; at others his prose becomes a digressive act that coincides with an imaginary account. Most significantly, when he describes villages and towns, rivers, monuments, the habits, customs and clothing of the population, the linguistic register conforms to the modes of a documentary text, which is underlined by chronological and topographical

particulars and by the presence of a reliable autodiegetic narrator. But Gissing's more complex (and interesting) achievement is to conjure from the prosaic a dream or idyll that is often more real than the realities which are at its basis. For example, when he is facing the splendour of the Italian South, "so mournfully desolate, so haunted with memories of vanished glory,"[19] an imaginative impulse inevitably produces the most impressive reveries: "With half-closed eyes, one could imagine the true Tarentum"; or: "I, listening carelessly amid my dream, tried to imagine the crossing of those Calabrian hills under a summer sun!"[20] Here Gissing captures an experience that transcends the limits of a detailed description or ethnographic account. Before the splendour of nature, the magnificent twilights and sunrises, each extraordinarily different and unique, the imaginative stance of the narrator seems to prevail over his photographic perspective. As if unable to find a language in which to fix the forms of nature, Gissing furthermore expresses the limits of realism and finds in the language of dream-visions a modality for capturing reality and eternalising the experience of Italy. And even though his narratives are usually concerned with a pervasive urban topography that engulfs and prostrates its inhabitants, his characters frequently express the sense of uprootedness that define the condition of the modern man. This erratic state of the traveller, this "homeless drifting,"[21] as Hillis Miller puts it, prompts a certain dismissal of the mimetic and referential structures in favour of a more imaginative approach towards narrative – an approach that involves the creative resources of the imagination and a consequent temporal nonlinearity that constitute the paradigms of "nomadic thought."

Thus, the imagination of the traveller is released amidst the "immemorial desolation"[22] but also amidst the timeless beauty of nature. While Gissing is wandering around Metaponto, he realises that "amid a silence which the voice has no power to break, nature's *eternal vitality* triumphs over the greatness of forgotten men."[23] Nature is vibrant; in materialistic terms, it is a vital actant, capable of regenerating itself, and triumphing over the glory of heroes; yet it is also through the emotions evoked by nature that the past can be resurrected and the valiant characters of ancient times can live again in the imagination of the traveller: "For the last half-hour I lay in a hidden corner of the eucalyptus grove trying to shape in fancy some figure of old Pythagoras."[24]

For Gissing, then, the colours of sunsets and dawns, the music of the sea, the "vast silence" and the scented air of eucalyptus and flowering rosemary,

produce a triumph of the senses and a progressive estrangement from the perils of his present. It is precisely in Italy, in a land that annuls all oppositions, a land at the same time luxuriant and desolate, magnificent and primitive, full of ancient glory but also "wearied and regretful […] and unable to hope sincerely for the future,"[25] that Gissing forgets the starving and degraded crowd of the city slums, the "diseased humanity" of his "nether world."

The experience of nature in Italy is an enchanting one, and through his contact with nature, Gissing is able "to resist the story of the disenchantment of modernity,"[26] to borrow Jane Bennett's words. This happens very often to Gissing, as here, when he finds himself at the Marina di Catanzaro, facing the wonders of a sunset:

> The sun was setting when I alighted at the Marina, and as I waited for the branch train my eyes feasted upon a glory of colour which made me forget aching weariness. All around lay orchards of orange trees, the finest I had ever seen, and over their solid masses of dark foliage, thick hung with ripening fruit, poured the splendour of the western sky. It was a picture unsurpassable in richness of tone; the dense leafage of deepest, warmest green glowed and flashed, its magnificence heightened by the blaze of the countless golden spheres adorning it. Beyond, the magic sea, purple and crimson as the sun descended upon the vanishing horizon. Eastward, above the slopes of Sila, stood a moon almost at its full, the yellow of an autumn leaf, on a sky soft-flushed with rose.
>
> *In my geography* it is written that between Catanzaro and the sea lie the gardens of the Hesperides [italics mine].[27]

The traveller's description incorporates numerous superlatives that attempt to convey the uniqueness of the place and its supreme beauty. The highly modified language expresses the triumph of sight that allows the viewer to lose himself amidst the magnificence of nature. It is a spectacle of lights, radiances, contrasts of tones that constitute Gissing's "space of perceived geography,"[28] a space that is not enclosed by a horizon, but which opens itself to the dynamism of imagination. And therefore, once he is in Catanzaro, although he cannot contemplate the sea, the brilliancy of the moon over the valley, can actually prompt him to "imagin[e], rather than discer[n], a glimmer of the sea."[29]

It is perhaps important to note that if before the Italian sunset or the vision of a full moon the traveller gives his imagination full rein, it is also because he recognises the indescribable quality of these natural events and the almost impossible attempt to transcribe their sense literally. The difficulty in rendering the changeable forms of nature is something that concerns not only storytellers but also anthropologists, amongst them

Claude Lévi-Strauss, who argued: "[…] the rising and the setting of the sun presented the beginning, development and conclusion of supernatural cataclysms. If I could find a language in which to perpetuate those appearances, at once so unstable and so resistant to description […] I should in one go have discovered the deepest secrets of my profession."[30] In the recognition of the limits of language, and in the parallel refusal of a referential code lies the modernity of Gissing's text – a travel account that cannot be considered simply as a chronicle, as its paratextual elements seem to attest. The representation of Southern Italy is the result of a voyage made through memory and recourse to the senses, in order to create a new reality, a new map that the traveller invents, explores and narrates.

Transparently, Gissing loved Italy – and he loved it above all because it reflected its glorious past. Nonetheless the present intrudes, and it often appears deceiving to his eyes, mainly when the people express themselves in all their coarseness. The traveller's acute observation reveals his ethnographic tension, and it is here that we may detect one of the main contradictory elements of this text: Gissing is very accurate in describing the physiognomic, the behaviour, the food habits of the Italians, because it is precisely in these traces that the past continues to live and animate the present. Yet, some of the characters are observed through the deforming lens of a narrator who outlines the idiosyncrasies and the weaknesses of the people with a poignant irony, as in the depiction of the domestic of Concordia Hotel in Crotone: "the most primitive figure of the household […] a woman of middle age, wrapped at all times in dirty rags (not to be called clothing), obese, grimy, with dishevelled black hair, and hands so scarred, so deformed by labour and neglect, as to be scarcely human. She had the darkest and fiercest eyes I ever saw."[31] But if Gissing is often critical towards Italy and the Italians, and if he sometimes compares them to Victorian England and the English at the expense of Italy and Italian manners, it is because what he finds in the South does not always correspond to the expectations he had formed in his mind and dreamed of for so long. Not surprisingly, then, he is sometimes very judgemental:

> The common type of face at Crotone is coarse and bumpkinish […] it is not easy to imagine luxury or refinement in these dreary, close-packed streets […] the dishes were poor and monotonous and infamously cooked. Almost the only palatable thing offered was an enormous radish.[32]
>
> […] The broth offered me was infamous, mere coloured water beneath half an inch of floating grease.[33]

Italy is also perceived as a place full of regrets, "a country […] looking ever backward to the things of old; trivial in its latter life, and unable to hope sincerely for the future."[34] Yet, despite a certain lack of civility, of cleanliness, and – strangely enough –, of good food that Gissing sometimes finds in Southern Italy, his descriptions also testify to his sense of compassion and respect for its inhabitants. Gissing is well aware of the social problems that afflict these regions, and alongside his indictment of the Italian government, the social services, the style of building, and the almost primitive conditions of public places, he cannot but express his profound sympathy and affection for the Italian population. When he is spending his days in Catanzaro, for example, he does not only admire the landscape, but also expresses his heartfelt appreciation for the Calabrian middle-class provincials that are chatting at the principal café:

> Watching and listening to the company […], I could not but fall into a comparison of this scene with any similar gathering of middle-class English folk. The contrast was very greatly in favour of the Italians. […] Among these representative men, young and old, of Catanzaro, the tone of conversation was incomparably better than that which would rule in a cluster of English provincials met to enjoy their evening leisure. They did, in fact, converse – a word rarely applicable to English talk under such conditions; mere personal gossip was the exception; they exchanged genuine thoughts, reasoned lucidly on the surface of abstract subjects. […] These people have an innate respect for things of the mind, which is wholly lacking to a typical Englishman. […] From many a bar-parlour in English country towns I have gone away heavy with tedium and disgust; the café at Catanzaro seemed, in comparison, a place of assembly for wits and philosophers.[35]

Thus, Gissing's representation of otherness is characterised by a combination of perspectives that comprise love and scorn, compassion and mocking reactions, because Italy, itself, is a land of impossible diversities that often shock the traveller, as when in Reggio Calabria, amidst the perfume and wonderful scenery of lemon trees and date palms, he chances upon the town slaughterhouse that unavoidably repels him: "To my mind this had no place amid the landscape which spread about me. It checked my progress; I turned abruptly, to lose the impression as soon as possible."[36] In Southern Italy Gissing's nomadic vision establishes what Braidotti defines as "the ethics of interaction with both human and nonhuman others."[37] In places left unvisited or unloved by so many of his contemporaries, but places that combine splendour and misery, Christian thought and folklorist practices, the ordinary and the sublime, Gissing separates himself from the trivialities of his present and is able to voice most fully his feelings, so as to create a dialogue, an

ethical connection with the territory of Magna Græcia and its evocative history.[38] In the new reality of the South that somehow deterritorialises the traveller through a dynamic sequence of remembrances, Gissing redefines his relationship to the world according to a vitalist approach that brings together everything that lives, organic and inorganic, human and non human.[39]

Here, in a nutshell, is the contradictory nature of Gissing, and of his relationship to a country which mattered so much to him, often in spite of what he found there. There is a constant tension between past and present, tawdry reality, and idealised illusion, but also between his sympathy with and simultaneous, often baffling, denunciation of indigence. Yet even this does not do justice to the complexity of a response that also embodies his often lyrical reaction to the lived realities of the day to day, and of sunsets real rather than imagined. All these complexities and contradictions are caught up in the chaotic but often inspired narrative that constitutes *By the Ionian Sea* – a valedictory testament to a writer and his concerns; above all, to his concern for Italy, as he wrote to Mrs H. G. Wells at the time of his last travels through the south:

> Does one *like* Italy? The fact is, I always feel it a terrible country; its unspeakable beauty is inseparable from the darkest thoughts; go where you may, you see the traces of blood & tears. To be sure, this will apply to the whole world; but here one *remembers* so much more than in other countries. Age after age of strife and tyranny, of vast calamities, of unimaginable suffering in the palace & the hut. You feel something pitiless in the blue sky that has looked so tranquilly on all this. And the people – you see centuries of oppression in their faces, hear it in their voice. Yes, yes, one likes Italy; but in a very special sense of the word.[40]

[1] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Six, 1895-1897* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 342.

[2] Cf. John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion. Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[3] George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea. Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*, ed. by Pierre Coustillas. Northampton, Mass.: Interlink Books, 2004, p. 5. All subsequent quotations will be from this edition.

[4] On the paradigm of exoticism in Gissing's text see Maria Teresa Chialant's "'Other scenes and other ages': Gissing's Reading of Southern Italy in *By the Ionian Sea*," in Christine Huguet (ed.), *Writing Otherness. The Pathways of George Gissing's Imagination* (Haren, NL: Equilibris, 2010).

[5] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 94.

[6] From a letter to Herbert Heaton Sturmer of 18 August 1897 in *The Collected Letters, Volume Six*, pp. 325-326.

[7] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 6.

[8] As Pierre Coustillas puts it, "This immersion in an alien yet familiar world was a way of distancing himself from the modern world and its absorbing problems, a way of proving to himself that mental peace, however artificially and temporarily, could be enjoyed if one knew where to look for it." Pierre Coustillas, "Introduction" to George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea*, p. xxii.

[9] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory. The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 2.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 131.

[12] *Ibid*., pp. 32-33.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 17.

[14] Virginia Woolf, "Literary Geography," in *Books and Portraits* (London: Grafton Books, 1986), p. 189.

[15] J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford, California : Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 19.

[16] *By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 65-66.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[18] *Ibid*., pp. 66-67.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 24.

[20] *Ibid*., pp. 32, 12.

[21] Hillis Miller, p. 11.

[22] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 41.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] *Ibid*.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[26] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 4.

[27] *By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 80-81.

[28] Edward S. Casey, *The World at a Glance* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 102.

[29] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 84.

[30] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, translated by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman. London: Penguin, 2011, p. 62.

[31] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 69.

[32] *Ibid*., pp. 56-57.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 70.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 73. Unsurprisingly, as Gissing reveals to Eduard Bertz in a letter dated 29 October 1897: "Ah, but Italy is in a bad state. Things cannot go on like this. The country seems to be all but bankrupt, & I am afraid it contains very few honest men," *The Collected Letters, Volume Six*, p. 368.

[35] *By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 98-99.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 129.

[37] Rosi Braidotti, p. 210.

[38] Gissing in fact started his voyage in Naples with the awareness that "[t]o-day seemed an unreality, an idle impertinence; the real was that long-buried past which gave its meaning to all

about me, touching the night with infinite pathos. Best of all, one's own being became lost to consciousness, the mind knew only the phantasmal forms it shaped, and was at peace in vision," *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 6.

[39] Most significantly, as Pierre Coustillas points out in his monumental biography of George Gissing: "his humanitarian concern for all things living […] became striking in the last year or two of his life," Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part III, 1897-1903* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 250. In Southern Italy Gissing recovers a dimension that allows a certain correspondence with the non human, as in the following extract: "*The animal population* was not without its importance. Turn where I would I encountered lean, black pigs, snouting, frisking, scampering, and squealing as if the bad weather were a delight to them. Gaunt, low-spirited dogs prowled about in search of food, and always ran away at my approach. In one precipitous byway, where the air was insupportably foul, I came upon an odd little scene: a pig and a cat, quite alone, were playing together, and enjoying themselves with remarkable spirit. The pig lay down in the running mud, and pussy, having leapt on to him, began to scratch his back, bite his ears, stroke his sides. Suddenly, porker was uppermost and the cat, pretending to struggle for life, under his forefeet. It was the only amusing incident I met with at Squillace, and *the sole instance of anything like cheerful vitality*," p. 109, italics mine.

[40] *The Collected Letters, Volume Six*, p. 357, italics in the original.

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Chit-Chat
Botanical Notes from Worcestershire for March

To the Editor of the *Suffolk Chronicle*.

WORCESTER, April 3rd, 1854.

DEAR SIR,—The very fine month just passed has tended to develope the spring vegetation very quickly. Had it not been for the severe frosts I doubt not I should have had many more plants to have added to my list, as being in flower. The following are the chief ones seen since the end of February:–

March 12th.—Chrysosplenium oppositifolium, (*opposite leaved Golden Saxifrags*.) Caltha palustris, (*marsh Marigold*.) Helleborus fœtidus, (*stinking Hellibore*.) Glechoma hederacea, (*ground ivy*.) Luzula campestris, (*field Woodrush*.) Adoxa moschatellina, (*tuberose moschatel*.)

March 17.—Cardamine pratensis, (*cuckoo flower*.) Ranunculus sceleratus, (*celery leaved crowfoot*.) Brassica napus, (*rape or coleseed*.) Sisymbrium thalianum, (*common shale cress*.) Viola hirta, (*hairy violet*.)

March 26.—Draba verna, (*spring whitlow grass*.) Cardamine hirsutas, (*hairy cuckoo flower*.) Vinca minor, (*lesser perriwinkle*.) Primula veris, (*cowslip*.) Viola canina, (*dog's violet*.) Cheiranthus cheiri, (*wall flower*.)

Ranunculus auricomus, (*wood crowfoot*.) Agraphis nutans, (*blue bell or wild hyacinth*.) Authriscus sylvestris, (*wild beaked parsley*.) Ulmus campestris, (*elm*.) Populus nigra, (*black poplar*.)

The celery-leaved crowfoot is very early.

I am, dear Sir, yours respectfully, T. W. GISSING.

[From the *Supplement to the Suffolk Chronicle or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, 8 April 1854, p. 6.]

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Imagining the Past: Renger van den Heuvel on Gissing and Geerten Meijsing

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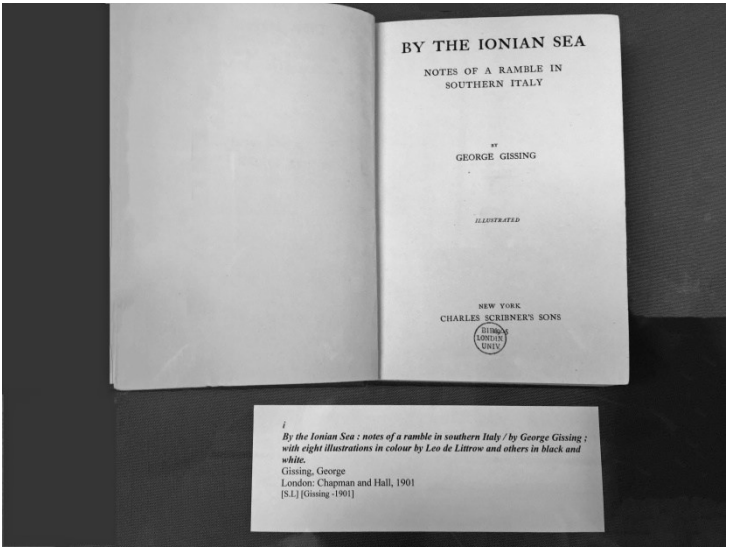
Gissing made his first appearance on screen in Juan Carlos Medina's *The Limehouse Golem* (2016), an adaptation of Peter Ackroyd's 1994 novel. In a forthcoming interview for *Film International*, actor Morgan Watkins, who played Gissing, relays how he had prepared for the role and how he tried to capture the young writer's insecurities in the late 1880s: "I would read his diaries out loud in my living room and tried to find his soul. I loved researching him and I think he's a wonderfully rich character to study." *Golem* will be released on VOD, DVD, and Blu-ray on 7 November 2017. Gissing is an informing presence, also, in Renger van den Heuvel's *Full Throttle III – End Times*, an essay film that concludes a trilogy about Dutch author and translator Geerten Meijsing and that is the first part to be released. The film follows Meijsing's travels through Calabria to Siracusa and it has been shown in the US (Anthology Film Archives/New Filmmakers), in the UK, in the Netherlands (including on Dutch cultural TV), in Austria, in Spain, and in France. On 12 June, it had an exclusive screening organised by Senate House Library and the Ernst Bloch Centre of the Institute of Modern Languages Research in the School of Advanced Study at the University of London, with financial support from the Dutch Embassy in London. The 44-minute film was introduced by Johan Siebers and followed by a discussion with van den Heuvel. Rare copies of works by Meijsing as well as Gissing and Norman Douglas, two novelists whose writing he has translated, were on display (see images).

Works by Gissing, Douglas, and Meijsing on display (Renger van den Heuvel)



First American edition of *By the Ionian Sea* (Renger van den Heuvel)

Geerten Meijsing's 1989 translation of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is the second edition in Dutch, the first of which had appeared in 1920.[1] Reviewing it in the October 1989 issue of *The Gissing Newsletter*, P. F. Kropholler describes Meijsing's interest in Gissing: "Like many admirers of Gissing he feels a strong commitment to the author. He confesses that the authors whom he has found the most comforting in moments of depression are Frederick Rolfe and George Gissing, not that they had a cheering effect, but rather that their struggles have encouraged him to face his own difficulties as a literary man."[2] Kropholler finds much to admire about the translation, especially in the light of *Ryecroft*'s complexity: "The book was written nearly ninety years ago in an archaizing style. The present-day translator has to steer a middle course between the obtrusively old-fashioned and the blatantly modern. In any case the numerous echoes of English literature cannot be properly conveyed. By and large Meijsing has been successful."[3] Kropholler hopes that the translation will be followed by others. Bouwe Postmus offers an incisive account of Meijsing's borrowings from and his comments on Gissing in the January 1993 issue of *The Gissing Journal*.[4]

Van den Heuvel's experimental film draws inspiration from Meijsing's reading. The film is formally organized around seven sections, each announced by a title card: The Writer, The Car, Dead Writers, The Woman, Serra San Bruno Revisited, The Crossing to Sicily, and End Times. Early in the film, a version of Gissing's *By the Ionian Sea* (1901) is quoted in a title card: "Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and I [*sic*] dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. . . . The world of the Greeks and the [*sic*] Romans is my land of romance . . ."[5] Meijsing reminisces on his early journeys into Southern Italy, "My Grand Tour also had to have the character of a discovery. I would not take the obvious roads along the great monuments." Norman Douglas' *Old Calabria* (1915) lent romance to his travels: "This erudite Scotsman became my cicerone. Calabria was an utterly remote place, forgotten and destroyed, a land bridge between Italy and Sicily. Ten years before Douglas[,] George Gissing had travelled into the deep South." Time and memory figure centrally in van den Heuvel's project. The titular "full throttle" and the genre of the road film may be suggestive of progress. Yet the extreme close-ups of Meijsing and the long shots of picturesque Italy that pepper the film invite introspection, while the shooting of the film in Super 16mm with a Bolex camera and Meijsing's

driving a Citroën CX Prestige 2400 from 1979 contribute nostalgia. Van den Heuvel is a Dutch independent filmmaker living and working in Vienna. He studied at the Friedl Kubelka School of Independent Film. His debut film *Victory. Moscow 1980* (2008), a portrait of Moscow in the year 1980, was screened in several countries and on Dutch TV. In what follows, van den Heuvel and I discuss the creative process behind his essay film. *Full Throttle III – End Times* is now available in a limited edition DVD at: https://www.fullthrottle3.com/grand-tour.

How did you come to know Geerten Meijsing's work?

At the age of 19 I read an interview with him in a Dutch opinion magazine. He said he saw Proust and Flaubert as the writers that he wants to emulate, not the Dutch writers I knew until that moment. So I read his first novel *Erwin* (1975) and it touched me deeply. On the one hand, it described feelings I recognized so well; on the other, it offered an unknown world to me, one that seemed unreachable. I have followed him as a writer ever since.

Full Throttle III **evokes the genres of the documentary, the experimental film, and the road movie. What led you to format your essay film in this way?**

A lot of films about writers follow the same pattern: interview, archive material, a friend says something, and an enemy says something. But often it seems you could have put the information in a book or an article. I wanted to weave something else: get under his skin, into his universe, and paint a picture of what this writer and his work are about. Being independent here meant that I could work using different styles. I saw over 100 road movies, biopics, and essay films, decided to work with chapters, with quotes from George Gissing, Norman Douglas, and Meijsing as signposts, etc. And an essay by Meijsing himself on autobiographies gave me the idea of a biography by simply showing the landscapes that he and other writers before him travelled through.

Why did you shoot in Super 16mm?

We considered using analog film as it brings back the feeling of movies from the 60s and 70s – films Meijsing also likes. And the film is very much

about the past. Then in Vienna, where I have lived since 2012, there is a strong analog tradition, with the independent film school founded by Friedl Kubelka, the Filmmuseum, the links with avant-garde filmmakers from the 60s. My Director of Photography Paul Krimmer, who I met in 2014, is a real master in shooting analog film. So then it all came together.

The film follows the Dutch writer and translator on an intimate journey through Calabria to Siracusa. What led you to hone in on this part of the trip?

Initially I wanted to do the whole trip, reflecting his life story from Amsterdam to Siracusa. (Part I traces the storyline from Amsterdam to Bellagio; Part II from Venice to Tuscany). For budgetary reasons, we stayed close to Siracusa, where Meijsing lives, and we just went up to Calabria. Of course, themes, meant for Parts I and II, slipped into it; like the theme of the Grand Tour. And I thought, when I start with Part III, I at least have an end.

What, in your view, is *Full Throttle III*'s "thesis"?

The longing for an ideal and imaginary home, your own universe, the inevitable solitude that comes with it.

How did you decide what to include and what to exclude?

Although the film plays constantly with time (past and present), desires, and with fiction versus reality, it follows in a certain way the course of the road trip we (three men, the Citroën CX, two Bolex cameras, only briefly accompanied by actress Loredana Cannata) made in October 2014. For Meijsing, this trip meant once more – and probably for the last time – travelling in the footsteps of George Gissing and Norman Douglas, and following his own track, going south, further south, and ending up in the place where he lives now: Siracusa. We had only 3.5 hours of footage as we shot analog. That made it, of course, a lot easier to choose. Some parts were edited as we actually shot them, as for many shots we did only one take. Working with analog films means you are very much focused on the moment. When it happens, you have to capture it: you simply have to.

Your use of extreme close-ups, I feel, gets to the crux of some of Gissing's arguments about life writing. As close as you take us to the authorial subject, his or her thoughts remain largely elusive. Tell us about your decisions here.

It gives the viewer a lot of freedom to interpret. People tell me afterwards that they like that instead of being told what is going here, which happens constantly in films. The film has very little dialogue (or monologue). At the end, Meijsing speaks, after almost half an hour without text; but then his words begin to give context to what you have seen before.

Along the way, Meijsing meets his muse (played by Loredana Cannata), but importantly, we hear little of what they say to each other. How do you balance between speech and silence?

This part is crucial in many ways. I think in the night scene you see and feel at the same time; and any explicitness, any word would just be disturbing. The windows with the raindrops slowly crawling down, the golden inner car light, the looks of Loredana, and the young man in the face of Meijsing set the atmosphere. We do get a glimpse of Meijsing's universe here. We shot the scene from all sides of the car. One window was actually open. I left it out from the edit: it was an empty shot compared to the others. Without the window glass and the raindrops, the magic was simply not there: the universe had fallen apart.

There is often something disturbing about the film's music. How did you decide on its sound?

Paul Krimmer has his own cinema in Vienna (Tonkino Saalbau). For five days in a row we invited musicians to play live music, mostly improvised: we had, on different evenings, respectively electronic music, guitar, theremin, violin, and saxophone. The last day we had a pianist from Belgium, Johan Hoogewijs. He is an experienced film composer. He knew when to step back, coming back in with dark or light tones, depending on the scene (I gave him total freedom). The film I made, I do not see it as a finished picture. For me it comes together in the viewers' minds. And in this case we invited the musicians to add an extra layer. For screenings we mostly use Johan's interpretation.

I think that this quote from Meijsing neatly sums up part of the film's tone: "*By the Ionian Sea* is one of the most beautiful and saddest travel books [*sic*] stories I've ever known. The voice of his heart had always drawn the unfortunate Gissing towards Ancient Times. In his fictional memoirs he describes his travels through Italy. These were the only moments in his life he was truly happy." Can you comment on this and on Gissing's larger influence on your project?

I think Meijsing identifies himself a lot with Gissing. So my picture of Gissing is much painted by Meijsing. From the books of Gissing I read myself, the essence of longing seems crucial. His quote about the world of the Greeks and Romans as his land of romance sets the tone for the film. It is an imaginary world that you can only get close to, without totally really reaching it. Loneliness is often seen as something negative in our society. But the travelogues of Meijsing and Gissing show a perfect symbiosis of loneliness and happiness at the same time; this feeling is embedded somehow in the landscape you longed to be part of for such a long time.

What is next for the film?

For Part III, I am working on screenings in Russia, Italy, Belgium, and Germany later this year. We have been shooting the missing Parts I and II of the *Full Throttle* project already. We shot in Amsterdam and Haarlem, where Meijsing grew up; crossed the Alps; and filmed in Golino and Caviano (Switzerland) and in Bellagio. We expect to continue filming in early 2018. In terms of form, it will be even more free than Part III. There will be adaptations of Meijsing's work; we will work with actors again (someone will play the young Meijsing); and so on. It will be an even more varied pattern, like what Justine is saying in Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60): "Why shouldn't people show more than one profile at a time?"

What is next for you?

Preparing for the next shoot in early 2018, meaning reading a lot, seeing films that deal with themes that will come back in Parts I and II, fundraising, and making sure I can work with the same crew. In the meantime I will make short experimental films with my own Bolex. I am

also preparing a film about bridges in the city of Groningen, referring to the Dutch documentary tradition of the 60s.

Acknowledgements

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[1] Coustillas, pp. 355-356. For an insightful account of Gissing's early reception in the Netherlands, see Marysa Demoor's "Dutch Commentaries on Some of Gissing's Works," *Gissing Newsletter*, 20:4 (October 1984), pp. 18-29. Web.

[2] P. F. Kropholler, "Book Review: *De Intieme Geschriften van Henry Ryecroft*, Dutch translation and afterword by Geerten Meijsing, Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1989," *Gissing Newsletter*, 25:4 (October 1989), p. 27. Web.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 32.

[4] Bouwe Postmus, "Geerten Meijsing, A Dutch Gissing Enthusiast," *Gissing Journal,* 29:1 (January 1993), pp. 27-31. Web.

[5] See Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*, p. 5.

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Thomas Waller Gissing and His Wakefield Friends: Their Work in Natural History from 1850 to 1870

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Introduction

T. W. Gissing and his associates made a significant contribution to the development of natural history in Wakefield in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in botany. Gissing and his friends were active members of the Microscopical Society, the Natural History Department of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution, and the Bazaar, and led excursions locally and made botanical collections. They were also involved and played a major part in civic affairs. Gissing went beyond that by publishing local floras and papers on plants including his specialism, the Pteridophytes (ferns). His botanical collections are preserved and to be found at several locations in England.

Brief Biography and Family

Thomas Waller Gissing (1829-1870), the son and grandson of shoemakers, was born in Halesworth, Suffolk on 2 August 1829, and died on 28 December 1870 of congestion and inflammation of the lungs and is buried in Wakefield Cemetery. His early life has been described by Postmus (2010). He trained as an apprentice pharmaceutical chemist, briefly in Ipswich and Leicester, before a longer period in Worcester and it is here that he met his future wife Margaret Bedford (1832-1913). They were married at Grasmere in 1857 and had five children, three boys and two girls. His eldest son, George Robert Gissing was a novelist and the third son, Algernon Fred Gissing,[1] a writer and a plant collector, whose herbarium is now at the National Museum of Wales. Gissing senior arrived in Wakefield in 1856 to run a chemist's shop on Westgate, which he initially rented (previously numbered 56 and now number 60 and the National Westminster Bank) and the family lived in the house behind, 2-4 Thompson's Yard, now The Gissing Centre.[2] He later bought the premises via a mortgage which was unpaid when he died prematurely. Thomas Gissing was described by John Stainer (1831-1904), an assistant who worked for him in Wakefield, as an "extremely quiet man given to botany and cultured reading" (Stainer 1923). Marland (1987b), quoting John

Halperin (1982), claims that Thomas Gissing was reputed to have "bourgeois pretentions."

Thomas Gissing's "short life … was packed with public activities" (Brook 1992) and he was a leading figure in Wakefield, "a club man if ever there was one" (Postmus 2010). A Liberal, he was on the committee of several local organizations including the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution and the Lancasterian School.[3] He was a town councillor, treasurer of the local Liberal Party, secretary of the Wakefield Book Society but it was in botany that he had a special interest and where he made his mark.

It is difficult to categorise Gissing as either a professional or an amateur botanist. In the nineteenth century botany formed an important and integral part of a pharmacist's training and may have led to his life-long interest. As with the "druggist" and botanist William Wilson (1799-1871) at Warrington, he "doubtless had to know his plants in order to prepare medicines for dispensing … and searched for plants in the countryside around Warrington" (Lawley 2008). There were however other influences, such as meeting and becoming a close friend of William Medley (1826-1875) when Gissing was working as a chemist's assistant in Worcester.[4] Another person with whom he corresponded and who influenced him was William James Linton (1812-1897), the wood engraver and botanist. However, Gissing not only had interests in botany but in the wider field of natural history and in Wakefield was an active member of the Wakefield Microscopical Society and helped to set up a Natural History Society at the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution. He was also something of a poet.

T. W. Gissing's Fellow Naturalists in Wakefield

T. W. Gissing had several good friends in Wakefield, who were members of the Banks, Binks, and Milner families but perhaps his closest was William Stott Banks, another naturalist and collector of plants (Petyt 2006c). Gissing, with the help of Banks and Milner, raised funds for the Wakefield Lancasterian School by selling their collections of British ferns and other preserved plants.

His closest associates in local natural history pursuits were John Binks (1826-1890), William Ralph Milner (1810-1868) and William Stott Banks (1821-1872). John Binks (1826-1890) was born at Bolton le Moors, Lancashire and was a corn merchant on Thornes Lane in Wakefield; a Liberal and a Quaker he was involved with the Mechanics' Institution and other local charities in the same way as Gissing (Petyt 2006a). The *Leeds*

Mercury (16 June 1890) records – "Mr. Binks was undoubtedly one of the most popular and respected gentlemen in Wakefield." Petyt (2006a) gives more details about him and his family. William Stott Banks**,** a local solicitor and historian was born in Wakefield, and educated at the Lancasterian school. He and Gissing "had much in common … relatively humble backgrounds … progressed through life by reason of their own intelligence and hard work" (Petyt 2006c). They worked together on several committees in the town and Banks was anxious to provide educational opportunities such as those offered by the Mechanics' Institution. Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley, which forms part of the Bradford Museums collections, houses about 300 vascular plants, under the name of W. S. Banks, presumed to have been collected by Banks between 1853 and 1862, mainly from West Yorkshire but also from other parts of the UK (G. McGowan pers.comm. 18/8/2015 and Hartley 1977). Banks, a keen walker, wrote books on walking around Wakefield and other parts of Yorkshire (Banks 1866, 1983).

William Ralph Milner was born in London but had family connections with Wakefield. Apothecary at the Dispensary (1832) and Resident Surgeon to the convict department at the West Riding Prison, Wakefield (House of Correction), he was for a time in partnership with Dr Samuel Holdsworth, a local GP. Like the other two, he actively supported the Mechanics' Institution (as committee member and Vice-President), was on the managing body of the Lancasterian School (Petyt 2006b) and a committee member of the local Literary and Philosophical Society. His many interests in science included sanitation, sewage, water supply, microscopy, physiology, and photography. He was also a member of the British Meteorological Society and the Ray Society. Following his death, it was discovered that "he owned eleven microscopes, one telescope and a chronometer" (Petyt 2006b). He was involved, with Gissing, in selling specimens of ferns, for example, "The sale of a collection of 39 Fern sheets and 11 different *Selaginella* species prepared to be sold for the benefit of the Wakefield Lancasterian School by Mr W. R. Milner" (Edmonds 1999).

T. W. Gissing's Botanical Work.

T. W. Gissing had begun serious botanical work in Worcester prior to his arrival in Wakefield, almost certainly being helped and encouraged by William Medley, a local chemist who was also an active field botanist. Postmus (2010) quotes a poem written by Gissing about Medley, which both

illustrates his affection for him and includes the lines "Thou wert the first to give thy kindly hand" and "We've rifled nature's garden, in pursuit of floral gems, and reaped the pleasant fruit." Clearly Medley and Gissing went on botanical collecting trips together and Medley may have been the first to set Gissing on his way botanically. Medley became a qualified chemist in 1853 and was named executor in Gissing's will (Postmus 2010).

Gissing contributed to local floras (Gissing 1862, 1867) and wrote several papers which appeared in *The Naturalist* and *The Phytologist* in the 1850s and 1860s (see bibliography) mainly on botanical excursions and the plants recorded in various places around the country, including Devon, Teesside, Suffolk, Worcestershire, "the Wye," and Yorkshire.

His major contributions are the books, *The Ferns and Fern Allies of Wakefield and its Neighbourhood* (1862) and *Materials for a Flora of Wakefield and its Neighbourhood* (1867). John Edward Sowerby (1825-1870)[5] a well-known botanical illustrator and author produced the drawings for Gissing's book on ferns, which includes beautiful illustrations in colour of all the species described. The book also demonstrates Gissing's interest in drugs: "The real or supposed uses of the plants are enumerated, not for any great faith in their value, but to show that ferns [have been] … considered potent remedial agents" (Gissing 1862). The list of subscribers includes W. S. Banks, J. Binks, S. Holdsworth, H. Briggs, W. R. Milner, and T. G. Wright.[6]

Herbaria – T. W. Gissing's Collections of Ferns with Other Plants and Collectors.

Gissing's herbarium collections survive and have been found at several locations in Yorkshire. Two "fine leather bound volumes" (Edmonds 1999) consisting of ferns, lycopods and Selaginella, which once formed part of the herbarium at the University of Leeds are now housed at the Discovery Centre, part of the Leeds City Museum. One, a collection of British ferns and lycopods, consists of 38 sheets "collected in the mid 1850s" and titled "*A Collection of British Ferns and Lycopods Chiefly Gathered and Arranged by T. W. Gissing*" (Edmonds 1999). The other is "*A Collection of Foreign Ferns and Selaginella* … prepared to be sold for the benefit of the Wakefield Lancasterian School by Mr W. R. Milner" (Edmonds 1999).

There was also an important Gissing herbarium at "Bradford Museum" (Desmond 1977) which, following local government reorganisation in 1974

and the uniting of the herbaria at Bradford and Keighley, are now held at Cliffe Castle, Keighley. The Wakefield herbarium is stored on a "long loan" basis (Hartley 1977) and has been catalogued and conserved. It includes material by W. S. Banks and T. W. Gissing, plus plant specimens from S. A. and H. E. Taylor, also from Wakefield. The Gissing collection consists of around 1250 vascular plants (30% without data) collected between 1840 and 1897 (G. McGowan, pers.comm., 18 August 2015).This is long after Gissing senior's death and it is believed the collection was added to by Algernon Gissing, his son. There are also 31 ferns collected between 1852 and 1861. The Bradford botanical collections have been collated and summarised by Hartley (1977).[7]

Another herbarium collection is held in Wakefield (pers. comm. Elaine Merckx., 10 September 2015) entitled "A collection of British Ferns and Allied Plants" prepared to be sold for the benefit of The Wakefield Lancasterian School by T. W. Gissing and W. S. Banks and dated December 1859. It forms a total of 48 sheets mainly collected and communicated by Gissing (22) and Banks (14) and some collected by others but communicated by Gissing (9) or Banks (3). This collection is housed at the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Wakefield. The fact that the latter collection contains two sheets from Jersey is an indication that both Gissing and Milner were probably separating and rearranging herbaria collections for sale in order to raise money.

There is further detailed information on herbaria@home (see below) listing the sedges, *Carex canescens* and *C. divulsa* and an aquatic plant *Potamogeton gramineus*, collected by Gissing in the 1850s, the latter from Lough Corrib [a lake] in [the west of] Ireland. There are other local collections in different parts of the UK including the University of Aberdeen, the Oxford Botanical Gardens, and at Kew, London (pers.comm., Bruce Brown and Graeme Coles, September 2015) but these have not been explored.

The Wakefield Microscopical Society.

The Society was founded in 1854 by a number of medical men from the district who wished to meet and discuss medical matters using their own microscopes. Several similar societies were founded around this time such as the one at nearby Bradford (Baker and Gill 2015a). The first meeting at Wakefield was held on the 26 October 1854 at the home of Samuel Holdsworth, the seven founding members being William Dawson, Henry

Dunn, Francis Horsfall, William Ralph Milner, Samuel Holdsworth, William Wood, and Thomas Giordani Wright. It was soon realised that numbers were unsustainable as such and in 1858 non-medical men were admitted and the emphasis changed to the study of the minute forms of plant and animal life. Although not one of the founder members, Gissing joined soon after he arrived in Wakefield and became one of their active members. Baker and Gill (2015b) have described the work of the Society and its membership, which included attendance and displays at bazaars and exhibitions in Wakefield and nearby towns, as well as lending microscopes for other exhibitions and talks.

The Natural History Department of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution.

Thomas Gissing was closely associated with several institutions in Wakefield and especially the Mechanics' Institution (Anon, 1850s-1860s) where he was, for a time, the librarian, committee member and leading light. Some of the members decided to set up a Natural History Department in 1856, as part of the Institution, with John Binks and Gissing part of a committee of four. The first annual report opened with a statement from the first annual meeting, "A communication of facts and ideas, in various branches of natural history, being desired by several individuals during the early part of 1856, it was agreed to endeavour to form a Natural History Department in connection with the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution" (Anon 1857). Binks, Banks, and Gissing were all involved, Binks having been honorary librarian of the Mechanics' Institution before Gissing whilst Banks was Treasurer.

They planned to have talks, excursions, exchange specimens, hold exhibitions and to form a natural history collection with the aim of starting a museum and to record the "flora and fauna of the immediate district" which they considered to be "not more than five miles beyond Wakefield" (Anon 1857). Both Banks and Gissing delivered papers in the second session, the former on British mosses and Gissing on British ferns, and members were particularly interested in the discovery of "rarities." The department initially had around twenty-five members. Although not in their original plans, several members thought it was important to build a collection which could form the basis of a museum and quite quickly several of them made donations, including plants collected within 10 miles of Wakefield (Gissing), several British birds (Talbot and Gissing), fossils (Thompson and Naylor, Brooks and Hodgson) and "a very valuable series

of Jersey plants," from J. Piquet, Esq. of St. Helier**,** Jersey through Mr Gissing.[8] Numerous other donations were listed in the second report (Anon 1858), including a "series of grasses" (Binks) and a "collection of British ferns" (Banks). No trace can be found of activities in the 1860s reports of the Mechanics' Institution and it can only be assumed that the department was short lived although this has not been verified.

The Bazaar

Bazaars not only provided a gathering place and exhibition but "were a favourite and frequent form of fund raising" (Taylor 2008) for such as the Mechanics' Institution. In 1855 a bazaar was held, which included an exhibition, and a special publication called *The Bazaar Gazette* (Anon 1855) was printed. The plan and route of the exhibition was described as well as the objects on display, including "Microscopes and Stereoscopes; an Exhibition of interesting objects of natural history etc., and Mechanical Apparatus" (23 October 1855, No. 1). More detail of some of the exhibits was given later in the week (26 October 1855), for example, under the heading Microscopes, "Instruments from each of the Principal English makers viz. Ross, Smith and Beck, Powell and Lealand and Pillischer" which varied in price "ranging from £40 to £70 according to its fittings." A more modest priced new one made by Smith and Beck, called the "Educational microscope," was on display and for sale (£10 to £15) at the close of the exhibition, along with a demonstration of the circulation of the blood in a fish under the microscope. The Wakefield Microscopical Society had been formed a year earlier and it is virtually certain that the members of the Society were involved in this microscopical demonstration and display.

It can be seen that this small, closely knit group of men were powerful members of the community, involved in many activities within Wakefield society. As well as being prepared to take part in civic affairs they were promoting science in the town, educating the public and making a lasting and significant contribution to natural history.

Acknowledgements

Anthony Petyt, who was especially helpful, showed me round the Gissing Centre, provided information on the family, sent me photographs and a list of T. W. Gissing's publications. Bruce Brown gave me a clearer insight

into ferns. Thanks also to Hannah Cullen, Archive Assistant, West Yorkshire Archives and staff at the Local Studies Library, both in Wakefield. Gerald McGowan, Natural Sciences Curator for the Bradford Museums, has been a great help in providing details of the Gissing and Banks collections at Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley, West Yorkshire. Elaine Merckx, archivist, confirmed the presence of the herbarium at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield.

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http://herbariaunited.org/collectorsearch/1094.

[1] Algernon Fred Gissing, L.L.B. London, trained as a solicitor and practiced for a short time in Wakefield. He then turned to writing books, thirty in all, but was not very successful. Amateur botanist like his father. Collections at Cardiff Museum (National Museum of Wales).

[2] The Gissing Centre in Wakefield lies in Thompson’s Yard off Westgate behind the National Westminster Bank. There is a small library of books relating to the works of the family, photographs of local scenes in Wakefield in the nineteenth century, portraits of family members and other memorabilia. It is open to the public on a limited basis.

[3] The Lancasterian Schools were named after Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838), a Quaker and public educator. His schools were based on the monitorial system (now peer tutoring) when the more advance pupils taught those less advanced. The Wakefield school was reconstituted and reopened in 1856.

[4] T. W. Gissing’s poem about Medley is reproduced by Postmus (2010) which includes other poems by him.

[5] John Edward Sowerby, the British botanical illustrator illustrated other books on ferns.

[6] The book lists and describes 19 ferns, 2 club mosses, and 5 horse tails. Following each description is a short paragraph on the locations where the species was found and a note on medical “uses.”

[7] T. W. Gissing’s name is also included in the Bradford (Keighley) collections with J. H. Davies, H. Ibbotson, J. Nowell, and J. Dugdale in a collection of 500 bryophytes (mosses) collected mainly in Yorkshire between 1833 and 1867.

[8] John Piquet (1825-1912) who collected these specimens was a plant collector on Jersey and a specialist on algae and Spermatophytes. See under the annual reports of the Natural History Department, Wakefield Mechanics’ Institution.

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Book Review

George Gissing, *Le donne di troppo* [*The Odd Women*], transl. by Vincenzo Latronico. Milan: Baldini & Castoldi (La Tartaruga series), 2017. 472pp. ISBN 9788894814002. 18 euros.

This is the first translation of Gissing's *The Odd Women* to appear in Italy, and as such it must be welcomed because it contributes to making this author better known in this country. The book has been brought out by a very good publisher, Baldini & Castoldi, in the series La Tartaruga, which, after having published well-known women writers such as Alice Munro, Nadine Gordimer, and Doris Lessing in the past, now aims to offer novels that deserve to be considered classics, but that an Italian public would have difficulty in finding. Gissing is the first author to be included in the new series. *Le donne di troppo* presents itself in an elegant paperback edition, with a pretty but (to me) meaningless cover design: a bough of purple flowers against an indigo blue background. The inside cover introduces Gissing as a member of the "medium" (*sic*!) class who, after his studies at Owen's College, became an academic (*sic*!). The translator of *The Odd Women* is Vincenzo Latronico, a young man with a recognised reputation also as a writer himself. Well advertised, the book has been positively reviewed in the cultural pages of wide-circulation newspapers, to my knowledge, exclusively by women: two writers and critics[1] and two journalists,[2] who have appreciated Gissing's novel for its "modernity" regarding issues of gender and class.

The present translation is, on the whole, both accurate and respectful of the language, style, and narrative rhythm of the original, but a few comments are required. A first remark regards the title. *Le donne di troppo* ("The women de trop"; in French: "Femmes de trop," slightly different from *Femmes en trop*, chosen by Pierre Coustillas and Suzanne Calbris for the edition of Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1982) inevitably offers a single interpretation of the term "odd." This word has a plurality of meanings, among which "strange, unexpected, peculiar" and "not even in number, without other in pair"; although both apply to this novel, the latter is the more relevant as it clearly echoes a crucial sentence uttered by Rhoda Nunn: "… do you know that there are half a million more women than men in this happy country of ours? […] So many *odd* women – no making a pair with them. The pessimists call them useless, lost, futile lives. I, naturally – being one of them myself – take another view. I look upon them as a great

reserve."[3] But, as Silvia Albertazzi has pointed out, the women characters of the novel are both those who "don't make a pair" with men (that is, the unmarried ones), and the "new women," like Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot, whose opinions and behaviours are undoubtedly strange and eccentric when compared to the views, attitudes, and morals of the time. Unfortunately, no Italian term renders the double meaning of "odd" in this context; however, a better title would have been, in my opinion, *Le donne in più* (Femmes en plus), a more neutral expression which does not contain the derogatory implication of the Italian "essere di troppo" (to be de trop).

I have been struck by a few peculiar linguistic choices made by the Italian translator; for instance, by the way the physical descriptions of Virginia and Alice Madden are rendered in the first pages of the text. While Gissing adopts a realistic but sympathetic and elegant vocabulary to describe their lack of beauty and the signs of aging on their faces, Latronico uses cruder and rougher terms which do not respect the author's intentions, and seem to heap a certain male chauvinist scorn upon plain women (but I myself may be too gender-oriented in my critique):

> […] her shapeless chin lost itself in two or three fleshy fissures [...] her lax lips grew laxer […] the flesh of her neck wore away. (*The Odd Women,* pp. 9-10)

is translated:

> […] aveva un mento sfuggente perso in due o tre rotoli di pappagorgia […] le labbra erano sempre più grinzose […] la carne del collo si rinsecchiva. (*Le donne di troppo*, pp. 16-17)

which would correspond to:

> […] she had a receding chin which lost itself in two or three rolls of double chin […] her lips grew more and more craggy […] the flesh of her neck wrinkled up.

An alternative translation might be:

> […] il mento informe si perdeva in due o tre pieghe grasse del collo […] le labbra di per sé non turgide si erano ancor più rilassate […] la pelle del collo aveva perso tonicità.

I have also found a few misinterpretations, such as "Virginia's [hair] inclined to be ruddy" (in the same passage), translated as "I capelli di Virgina erano crespi" (Virginia's hair was frizzy), while the correct form would be: "I capelli di Virginia tendevano al rossiccio"; "There was an awkward silence" (p. 116), translated as "Seguì un silenzio nervoso" (p. 162), while "imbarazzato" would be the obvious equivalent term for "awkward." Unsatisfactory renderings: the title of chapter four, "Monica's Majority," is

translated literally as "La maggiore età di Monica," instead of "Monica diventa maggiorenne" or "Monica raggiunge la maggiore età," which are the Italian expressions commonly used. Small inaccuracies: the title of chapter five, "The Casual Acquaintance," is translated as "Il conoscente" instead of "Il conoscente fortuito" (which would underline the "casual way" in which Monica meets Edmund Widdowson: a relevant element that sheds light on both characters' personalities), and the title of chapter six, "A Camp of the Reserve" is rendered as "L'accampamento delle riserve," which somewhat suggests a military camp, while "Un campo della riserva" would sound better as it explicitly refers to the "great reserve" of unmarried women in Rhoda's sentence quoted above. Some current and trite colloquialisms, as in the use of "un filo" (followed by an adjective), with the function of an adverb, which should be translated as "un po'" ("a little"); see: "their expression a condescending good-humour" (p. 115), translated as "un'espressione allegra e un filo sdegnosa" (p. 162), which would be perfect but for "un filo" ….

Since it would be unfair to dwell only on some of the weak points of this translation, I want to point out an example of felicitous rendering in the description of the flat of Edmund Widdowson's sister-in-law, in chapter twelve ("Luxurious fashion, as might have been expected, distinguished Mrs Luke's drawing-room …," p. 117 *et passim*): "Il suo soggiorno, come c'era d'aspettarsi, era estremamente sfarzoso. C'era una sovrabbondanza di oggetti belli e costosi, e del profumo aleggiava nell'aria. Solo con la vedovanza la donna aveva avuto modo di dare libero sfogo alla sua passione per l'arredo domestico moderno ed esuberante" (pp. 164-165). In this, as in similar cases, Latronico's translation is altogether pleasant and fluent, and has the merit of conveying well the timbre and tone of the original.

A concluding comment on the translations of Gissing's works in Italy, which, to my knowledge, amount to twenty titles.[4] Among these, *New Grub Street* (transl. by Chiara Vatteroni; introd. by Benedetta Bini. Rome: Fazi Editore, 2005); interestingly enough, there exist more than one Italian version of *By the Ionian Sea* (3), *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (3) and *Sleeping Fires* (2). Most of the translations have no introductions, and only two provide the original texts as well.[5] Gissing is an author who has aroused a certain interest among Italian critics and common readers perhaps partly due to his love of Italy (which he visited three times), and as witnessed by some of his works – *The Emancipated*, *By the Ionian Sea, Veranilda* –

and by his *Diary* and letters. The late Francesco Badolato, a secondary school teacher of English from Calabria, with a passion for Gissing, was one of the first in Italy to translate him,[6] while Carlo Pagetti has been the first to offer a critical appraisal of his work. I like to mention Pagetti also because it was with him that I began to discover Gissing and write on him in the late sixties-early seventies. The other main Italian academics who should be mentioned in this context for their scholarly research on this author are Clotilde de Stasio, Emanuela Ettorre, Francesco Marroni, and Luisa Villa.

To conclude, *Le donne di troppo* offers Italian readers a "new" novel to enjoy and appreciate by a late-Victorian writer who himself maintained an intense and complex relationship with this country throughout his life.[7]

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[1] Elisabetta Rasy, "Rhoda, la protofemminista [Rhoda, the proto-feminist]," *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 19 febbraio 2017, p. 24; Silvia Albertazzi, "Il trionfo delle eccentriche" [Eccentric women triumph], *il manifesto - ALIAS*, 19 marzo 2017, anno VII, No. 11, p. 1.

[2] Eva Grippa, "Due libri su donne comuni che hanno scardinato ogni convenzione [Two books on ordinary women who have refuted all conventions: on *Le donne di troppo* and *Il diritto di contare* (the Italian title of Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*)]," D'ATTUALITÀ – LA REPUBBLICA.IT, 20 gennaio 2017; Giulia Blasi, "Le donne di troppo di George Gissing [G. Gissing's odd women]," *Il tascabile*, 21 marzo 2017. http://www.iltascabile.com/recensioni/donne-di-troppo-gissing/.

[3] George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (New York: The Norton Library, 1971), p. 37. *Le donne di troppo*, p. 54.

[4] A list of 17 titles is provided by the UNILIBRO site, which does not include, though, *Un'ispirazione ed altre novelle*, transl. and introduced by Francesco Badolato. Novara: EPIDEM, 1975; *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft*, transl. and introduced by Francesco Marroni. Rome: Lucarini, 1990; and *Il sale della terra*, ed. and transl. by Emanuela Ettorre, introduced by Pierre Coustillas. Pescara: Edizioni Tracce, 2000.

[5] *Eve's Ransom*/*Il riscatto di Eva* (Naples: Liguori, 2005, reprint 2008), and *Sleeping Fires*/*Il fuoco sotto la cenere* (Rome: Aracne, 2014); both of them have been translated, introduced and edited by the author of the present review.

[6] It is not surprising that Gissing has received particular attention in Calabria, as this is a region he knew very well. Two books devoted to him from this perspective are: Mauro F. Minervino, *La vita desiderata. George R. Gissing, un vittoriano al Sud* (Cosenza: Editoriale Bios, 1993); and Daniele Cristofaro, *George Gissing. Il viaggio desiderato* (Calabria 1897), with an afterword by Pierre Coustillas. Cosenza: Luigi Pellegrini Editore, 2005.

[7] See: Catherine Waters, Michael Hollington, and John Jordan, eds., *Imagining Italy. Victorian Writers and Travellers* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); and, in particular, Maria Teresa Chialant, "Pictures from Naples in Dickens's and Gissing's Italian books," pp. 89-114.

Italian Editions of George Gissing's Works

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

To complement Maria Teresa Chialant's review of the most recent translation into Italian of a work by Gissing, I have compiled an up-to-date list of the works so far published in Italy, both in translation, in English, and in bilingual editions (which does not include special editions of journals devoted to Gissing such as *Merope* and *Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*). From 1970 up to 2009 Francesco Badolato was at the forefront of scholars who introduced Gissing's works to the Italian reading public. The 1970s was a busy period, but so too the 1990s thanks largely to the efforts of Mauro Francesco Minervino, whilst the first seventeen years of the new millenium have seen major contributions from Chialant and Vincenzo Pepe. As many of the books to find favour in Italian editions are those in which Gissing wrote about Italy, we may hope that his 1890 novel *The Emancipated* will also soon be translated into the language that was always music to his ears.

1. *L'amore di Thyrza*, transl. by Elisa Baruffaldi. Milan: Sonzogno, 1939. Pp. 636.

2. *Nato in esilio* [*Born in Exile*], transl. and with an introduction by A. Pettoello. Torino: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1955; second edition 1969. Pp. 574.

3. *Sulla riva dello Jonio: appunti di un viaggio nell'Italia meridionale* [*By the Ionian Sea*], transl. and with an introduction by Margherita Guidacci. Bologna: Cappelli, 1957; Second edition 1962; Third edition 1971. Pp. 151.

4. *Il giornale intimo di Henry Ryecroft* [abridged translation], transl. and with a preface by Jole Pascarelli. Milan: Edizioni Paoline, 1957. Further editions: 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1966. Pp. 199.

5. *Un'ispirazione ed altre novelle* [*An Inspiration and Other Stories*], selection of eight stories transl. and with an introduction by Francesco Badolato. Como: Schisano, two editions July and October 1970. Pp. 198.

6. *The Paying Guest*, with an introduction and notes in Italian by Francesco Badolato. Treviso: Edizioni Canova, 1973. Pp. xix + 127.

7. *Six Short Stories*, with an introduction and notes by Francesco Badolato. Treviso: Edizioni Canova, 1973. Pp. xix + 161.

8. *Un'ispirazione ed altre novelle* [*An Inspiration and Other Stories*], selection of fifteen stories transl. and with an introduction by Francesco Badolato. Novara: Edipem, 1975. Pp. 200.

9. *The Salt of the Earth and Other Stories*, edited and with an introduction by Francesco Badolato. Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1978. Pp. 183.

10. *Lungo il Mar Jonio* [*By the Ionian Sea*], selection in English with notes in Italian by Paolo M. Reale. Reggio Calabria: Edizioni Parallelo 38, 1980. Pp. 80.

11. *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina*, selection of diary entries transl. and with an introduction by Francesco Badolato. Rome: Herder, 1989. Pp. 227.

12. *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft*, transl. and with a preface by Francesco Marroni. Rome: Lucarini, 1990. Pp. 214.

13. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (A Selection), with an introduction and notes by Francesco Badolato. Rome: Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 1991. Pp. 150.

14. *Sulle rive dello Ionio: un vittoriano al Sud* [*By the Ionian Sea*], transl. by Mauro Francesco Minervino. Torino: EDT., 1993; second edition 1996. Pp. xvii + 141.

15. *La terra del sole: lettere dall'Italia e dalla Grecia, 1888-1898*, transl. by Francesco Badolato. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1999. Pp. 238.

16. *Un presentimento e altri racconti vittoriani* [*An Inspiration and Other Victorian Tales*], selection of five stories transl. with an introduction and notes by Mauro Francesco Minervino and an essay by Virginia Woolf. Catanzaro: Abramo Editore, 1999. Pp. 280.

17. *Il sale della terra* [*The Salt of the Earth and Other Stories*], selection of three stories transl. and with a preface by Emanuela Ettorre and with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas. Pescara: Edizioni Tracce, 2000. Pp. 118.

18. *Il riscatto di Eva* [*Eve's Ransom*], transl., edited, and with an introduction by Maria Teresa Chialant and an afterword by Laura Di Michele. Naples: Liguori Editore, 2005. Pp. lii + 410.

19. *New Grub Street*, transl. by Chiara Vatteroni and with a preface by Benedetta Bini. Rome: Fazi Editore srl, 2005. Pp. 617.

20. *Il giorno del silenzio* [*The Day of Silence*], selection of ten short stories transl. by Vincenzo Pepe and with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas. Cava de' Tirreni: Marlin, 2008. Pp. 204.

21. *George Gissing: Diari napoletani*, transl. with an introduction by Vincenzo Pepe and a preface in Italian by Pierre Coustillas. Nocera Inferiore: Viva Liber Edizioni, 2011. Pp. 95.

22. *Il fuoco sotto la cenere* [*Sleeping Fires*], transl. by Maria Teresa Chialant. Rome: Aracne, 2014. Pp. 258.

23. *Fuochi sopiti* [*Sleeping Fires*], transl. by Claudia Iannessa. Rome: Aracne, 2014. Pp. 132.

24. *Le donne di troppo* [*The Odd Women*], transl. by Vincenzo Latronico. Milan: La Tartaruga, 2017. Pp. 472.

Books completely or partly about Gissing in Italian

1. Francesco Badolato (ed.), *George Gissing: antologia critica*, with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas. Rome: Herder Editrice, 1984. Pp. xxiii + 268.

2. Giorgio Spina, *Il pessimismo di George Gissing*. Genova: E.R.S.U., 1990. Pp. 103.

3. Mauro F. Minervino, *G. R. Gissing: le strade del ritorno: viaggio al Sud (1897-1898).* Lungro: C. Marco, 1990. Pp. 47.

4. Mauro F. Minervino, *La vita desiderata: George Robert Gissing, un vittoriano al Sud*. Cosenza: Editrice Bios, 1993. Pp. 142.

5. Luisa Villa, *Figure del risentimento: aspetti della costruzione del soggetto nella narrativa inglese ai margini della decadenza* [second chapter is devoted to Gissing and entitled "*Born in Exile* e altre storie di risentimento: Luoghi, trame e affetti nella narrativa di George Gissing"/"*Born in Exile* and other stories of ressentiment: places, plots and sentiment in the narrative of George Gissing"]. Pisa: ETS, 1997. Pp. 202.

6. Daniele Cristofaro, *George Gissing: il viaggio desiderato (Calabria 1897)*. Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2005. Pp. 167.

7. Francesco Badolato, *George Gissing, romanziere del tardo periodo vittoriano*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005. Pp. 300.

8. Maria Teresa Chialant (ed.), *Eve's Ransom: George Gissing e le sfide del romanzo tardo-vittoriano*. Rome: Aracne, 2010. Pp. 213.

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Notes and News

Following J. C.'s recent mention of the difficulty in finding an out-of-print copy of *Born in Exile* (*TLS*, 21 April), Inez Lynn, the first ever female head librarian at the London Library, wrote to the *TLS* on 12 May to propose that readers "need do no more than join the London Library to borrow the original three-volume edition of 1892 or one of our other editions." A fortnight later (26 May) Andrew Sabl of New York praised Lynn's suggestion but advanced another:

> Given that this work is long out of print – and out of copyright – Google Books offer it as an ebook free, in an immaculate scan of a Bodleian Library copy. Alternatively, because Google makes its vast collection available to print-on-demand services, one can order a copy for $15 (£12) online. If the local bookstore has its own printing machine, the price may be even lower. The quest to own, or borrow, old books in their original covers remains glorious. The joy of reading what's in them no longer requires success in that quest.

Alternatively, to avoid paying the London Library's extortionate annual fee of £510 (for which one could actually buy an 1891 first edition in three

volumes), I would recommend anyone in search of a copy of *Born in Exile* to purchase a secondhand copy of the 1985 Hogarth edition for £2.50 on ebay.co.uk or the 1993 Everyman edition at abebooks.co.uk for £9.50 including postage. In response to Sabl, I can only advise that it is far better to acquire an authentic paperback or hardback edition: the Hogarth, Everyman, or 1978 Harvester Press (obtainable on abebooks.co.uk from Badgers Books of Worthing for £15 including postage). Besides these there are also half a dozen copies of the various Nelson pocket editions from the 1910s on offer on the same website for between £10 and £20. If ebooks (which vary dramatically in quality) have their uses, scans and print-on-demand editions are by contrast rarely worth the paper they are printed on. Even as immaculate reproductions, they are often a bland, unaesthetic alternative to the genuine article with outlandish cover illustrations bearing no relation to the contents (see the Dodo edition of *Isabel Clarendon*).

An unexpected find I made recently on the Internet is a lengthy illustrated article by Glenn A. Davis, the Academic Dean at All Saints Episcopal School in Lubbock, Texas, devoted to Gissing's posthumous 1905 novel, *Veranilda*. The article, "A Historical Novel for Our Time: George Gissing's 'Veranilda,'" was penned for the online edition of *The Imaginative Conservative*. In his opening Davis writes, "One of the great attributes of the historical novel is its attempt to root a story in an earlier period while implicitly commenting on the time contemporaneous with the author." He feels that Gissing achieved this best in *Veranilda* as he was able to render "something that he had not succeeded in doing in his short, but prolific writing career: a successful imaginative depiction of society's leaders." Thus the novel is, he adds, "a lesson for all decadent societies, which I may also suggest includes twenty-first century America." Davis sums up:

> what we have of this novel is a very careful and dignified study on a tumultuous period in Roman history that undoubtedly the author thought significant for the readers of his own Victorian England. At an important level, it is a story of the laying out of the "politics of prudence," of the actions and feelings of love rightly understood. This is not the love of a restless Romantic and not the love of a pop culture figure insisting that "love is all you need." Rather, Gissing has created a story rooted in history that cultivates the virtue of prudence, of finding the right and appropriate means to achieve the good in a world in disarray.

Since *Veranilda* has received scarcely any attention in recent decades, it is pleasing to find a reader who appreciates Gissing's sixth-century novel and sees its relevance to the modern political climate.

On 1 July this year Wulfhard Stahl published a short article entitled "Wanda von Sacher-Masoch: Ein außergewöhnliches Temperament" to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Frau von Sacher-Masoch's death (still accessible online at: http://derstandard.at/2000060593839/Wanda-von-Sacher-Masoch-Ein-aussergewoehnliches-Temperament). The article is principally about her confessional autobiography, *Meine Lebensbeichte* (1906), in which she presents a revealing picture of her married life with the Austrian writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, whose novella "Venus im Pelz" ["Venus in Furs"] earned him notoriety because of its sado-masochistic content. Stahl also briefly mentions Frau Sacher-Masoch's correspondence with Bertz about Gissing's relationship with Gabrielle Fleury. At the close Stahl laments the lack of a critical German edition of the autobiography – an English edition, *The Confessions of Wanda von Sacher-Masoch*, was published in 1991 by Re/Search Publications of San Francisco.

Continuing their series of heritage leaflets, the Worthing Society have this year published *Heritage Leaflet No. 7: W. H. Hudson*. The two pages show a colour map of Worthing marking the street in which Hudson lived and a photograph of him. There is also a topographical description of his and his wife's, Emily's (1826-1921), association with the West Sussex seaside town along with images of the blue plaque and building at Huntington House, 8 Bedford Row which they occupied in 1914, and of their grave at Broadwater Cemetery. A pdf file version of the heritage leaflet can be found online at http://www.worthingsociety.org.uk/WS_WH_Leaflet.pdf.

Pamela Erens, the bestselling American author of *The Understory* (2007), *The Virgins* (2013), and *Eleven Hours* (2016), has recently written about her discovery of Gissing in an article for *Tin House Magazine* entitled "Lost & Found: Pamela Erens on George Gissing." She writes,

> I came across the work of Gissing, whose name rang a distant bell, on the fifty-cent sale shelves at my local library. It was a different novel I discovered first: his wonderful *The Odd Women*, about turn-of-the-century English feminists. I was impressed that a book written by a man in 1893 could offer such a rich and sensitive account of what happens to women deprived of choices in love and work.

This led her to *New Grub Street*, which surprisingly, considering there are currently several editions on the shelves of modern booksellers, she "was only able to obtain secondhand, through an online bookseller." She was fascinated by the novel describing it as "a book about the problem of the nongenius writer, an effort to show what happens when the merely very

talented make art in a thoroughly monetized culture." She makes some interesting observations in her conclusion:

> It's clear that Gissing admired and even envied his character's vitality, optimism, and sheer instinct for survival. The ambiguity that animates every character makes *New Grub Street* not just a great, plotty read (there is also a love match beset by obstacles and a rich relative whose will offers surprises) but a novel of enduring interest. Gissing saw that men collude in their own failures and that the world needs its hustlers and finaglers as well as its oversensitive dreamers. Still, his message is unmistakable: there are no viable lives for the serious writer. Reading *New Grub Street* today, you can look at our culture of welfare benefits, free emergency-room visits, NEA grants, and MFA teaching jobs and say things are certainly better now. Or you can feel that the oppressive structures are still intact, the game is still rigged, failure still a near certainty, but that you've just spent several hours in the company of a writer and characters who understand. Either or both. I vote for both, which must be why I always close this dark, rather bitter novel feeling remarkably cheerful.

Since the records of the Northern Newspaper Syndicate are no longer extant, Pierre Coustillas's *Definitive Bibliography* (2005, p. 372) tells us that pure chance led to the discovery of the serialisation in 1905 of Gissing's posthumous novel, *Will Warburton*, in *New Age*, the *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, and the *Adelaide Observer*. Now we can add the *Irish Weekly Independent* and the *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic* to the list, as they both serialised the novel in twenty instalments from 7 January to 20 May 1905. The syndicate paid Gissing £100 for the right to serialise the novel in their newspapers. The novel was published in volume form on 23 June 1905.

On the weekend of 9-10 September this year the Gissing Centre in 2-4 Thompson's Yard, Westgate, at Wakefield offered free entry and had extended opening hours from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. as part of the Heritage Open Day supported by the Wakefield Civic Society. Also on 9 September the *Yorkshire Post* printed an online report of the recent second-hand Book Fair in nearby Ilkley at which the Idle Booksellers, Ros Stinton and Michael Compton, took part. Whilst describing a few of the four dozen booksellers represented in the "balconied Winter Garden and adjoining King's Hall, its stage arch dotted with white Yorkshire roses (plaster ones) and its boxes fronted by carvings of Shakespeare, Milton, Scott and other, less recognisable, authors," the reporter Stephen McClarence also mentioned the Idle Booksellers. He remarked,

> Some dealers cater for highly specific interests. The artfully named Idle Booksellers, based in Idle, near Bradford, have brought *Tales of Bolton Methodist Church*, the

programme for the 1929 Bradford Hospital Gala, and *Jaggermen's Bridges on Packhorse Trails* (published by the Sledgehammer Engineering Press). They also have a small selection of the thousands of books they stock by and about the Wakefield-born Victorian novelist George Gissing.

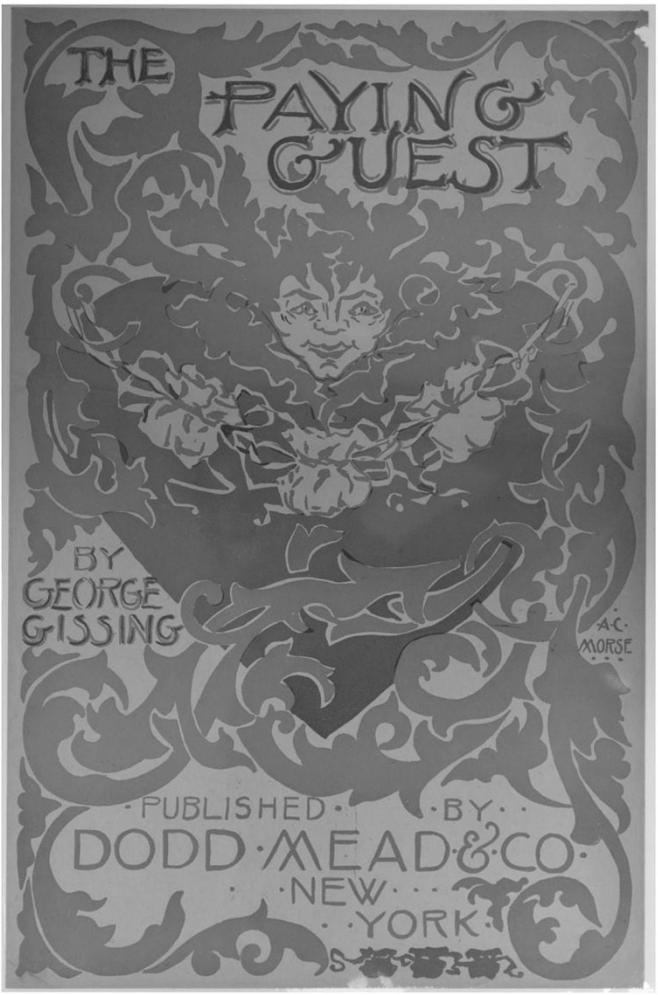
He even took the opportunity of briefly interviewing Ros Stinton, who said, "Most of the people who buy books by him are readers rather than collectors."

"And the Idle Booksellers name?" He asked. "It amuses people and they remember it," Stinton replied.

At the upcoming Modern Language Association convention to be held in New York from 4th to 7th January 2018, there will be a special panel on Historical Time Machines: Time-Criticalities of Nineteenth-Century Media. The panel "presents nineteenth-century media histories in which a growing awareness of slow temporality confronts the rapidity of advances in print circulation, the standardization of time-keeping, and the algorithmic functions of mechanical computing." Among those planning to present papers are Andrew Burkett on "Big Time: London's Big Ben, Deep Time, and Time-Criticality Studies"; Roger Whitson on "Babbage and Blake, Lovelace and Byron: The Algorithmic Condition of Nineteenth-Century Poetics"; and Richard Menke on "*New Grub Street* on Paper." Menke, an Associate English Professor at the University of Georgia, previously wrote about Gissing in a paper entitled "Aesthetic Self-Consciousness in *New Grub Street* and *Tit-Bits*," which he read at the Conference of the Victorian Interdisciplinary Studies Association of the Western United States in October 2011 at Houston.

Jarnydyce, the well-known antiquarian bookseller based directly opposite the British Museum, currently have for sale what they call "a near fine, if not the finest surviving copy of one of the great rarities of nineteenth-century literature, *Workers in the Dawn*," at £13,750!

Elsewhere Jeffrey H. Marks of Rochester, New York, was recently selling a promotional poster for the Dodd, Mead & Co 1895 American edition of *The Paying Guest* on abebooks.com for $900. It is described as "printed in red and green after a design by A. C. Morse. 18-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches. Tiny chip to the upper right corner; crease to the lower left corner; otherwise fine."



The Paying Guest promotional poster for the Dodd, Mead & Co., 1895 American first edition of the short novel (Jeffrey H. Marks)

In our July 2017 issue Roger Milbrandt's "Note on the New Transcription of 'The Hope of Pessimism'" mistakenly stated that the essay Gissing wrote in September-October 1882 but did not deem advisable to publish in his lifetime had only previously been published in 1970. In fact the essay was republished in the 2015 Grayswood Press edition of the *Collected Essays – George Gissing*, and Bouwe Postmus also translated and edited

Pierre Coustillas's transcription for a bilingual Dutch-English edition in 2009 published by Uitgeverij Flanor of Nijmegen. We apologise for this oversight.

Please note that the *Collected Essays* and all other Grayswood Press books are now available through Amazon.

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Recent Publications

Volumes

Heather Tilley, *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing* (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. 300. ISBN 9781107194212. £66.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Zahid Habeeb Al-abbasi, "New Historicism in George Gissing's *The Odd Women*," *Journal of Kufa Studies Center*, Vol 1, No. 46 (2017), n.p. Accessible online at http://uokufa.edu.iq/journals/index.php/ksc/article/viewFile/6061/5331.

Hans Bouman, "*New Grub Street*: De broodschrijver en de artiest [The Breadwriter and the Artist]," *Volkskrant*, 15 August 2015, n.p. Accessible online at http://www.volkskrant.nl/boeken/de-broodschrijver-en-de-artiest~a4119916/.

Glenn A. Davis, "A Historical Novel for Our Time: George Gissing's 'Veranilda,'" *Imaginative Conservative*, 7 August 2015, n.p. Accessible online at http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2015/08/george-gissings-veranilda-historical-novel-for-our-time.html.

Pamela Erens, "Lost & Found: Pamela Erens on George Gissing," *Tin House Magazine*, 14 September 2016, n.p. Currently accessible online at http://tinhouse.com/lost-found-pamela-erens-on-george-gissing/.

Anna Foti, “Memorie – George Gissing, appunti di una passeggiata nel Sud Italia [Memories – George Gissing, notes of a walk in Southern Italy],” *Strill.It*, 5 July 2017, online newspaper.

Penelope Hone, “Harsh Sounds: George Gissing’s Penetrating Literary Voice,” in Julian Murphet, Helen Groth, and Penelope Hone (eds.), *Sounding Modernism: Rhythm and Sonic Mediation in Modern Literature and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017). Chapter nine is devoted to Gissing.

Inez T. P. A. Lynn, “Letters to the Editor: Gissing,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 May 2017, p. 6.

Stephen McClarence, “Peeling Back the Dust Jacket at a Yorkshire Second-hand Book Fair,” *Yorkshire Post*, 9 September 2017, n.p. Online edition.

Mario Molegraaf, “De eerste zin van George Gissings *New Grub Street*, vertaald door Mario Molegraaf [The first sentence of George Gissing’s *New Grub Street*, translated by Mario Molegraaf],” *Athenaeum*, 30 June 2015, n.p. Accessible online at http://www.athenaeum.nl/nieuws/archief/de-eerste-zin-van-george-gissings-new-grub-street-vertaald-door-mario-molegraaf/.

Susan Poursanati, “Gissing’s Zolaist determinism and the heroines of *The Nether World*,” *International Journal of Women’s Research*, 3:2 (Autumn 2014), pp. 169-184.

Andrew Sabl, “Letters to the Editor: Gissing,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 May 2017, p. 6.

Lucy Scholes, “Classic newsroom books: A memorable saunter down the Street of Shame: From George Gissing’s *New Grub Street* to F. E. Baily’s extraordinary *Fleet Street Girl*,” *Independent*, 24 March 2016, n.p. Online. Baily was also the author of *Six Great Victorian Novelists* (1947).

Scott Spencer, “On Novels about Work: *New Grub Street* by George Gissing,” *Wall Street Journal*, 8 July 2017, reprint online of original article from print edition.

Wulfhard Stahl, "Wanda von Sacher-Masoch: Ein außergewöhnliches Temperament," *Der Standard Supplement* (Wien), 1 July 2017, p. 2. Accessible online at http://derstandard.at/2000060593839/Wanda-von-Sacher-Masoch-Ein-aussergewoehnliches-Temperament. Stahl refers briefly to Frau Sacher-Masoch's correspondence with Bertz about Gissing's relationship with Gabrielle Fleury.

Patrick Symmes, "The Naturalist Who Inspired Ernest Hemingway and Many Others to Love the Wilderness," *Smithsonian*, May 2017, n.p. This is an extensive pictorial article describing W. H. Hudson's early life in Argentina and Symmes's recent visit to the William H. Hudson Cultural and Ecological Park in Quilmes, which is under threat at present from thieves and squatters taking over parts of the reserve. The article is available online at http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/naturalist-ernest-hemingway-others-love-wilderness-180962775/.

Bernd Villhauer, "TexturenGeschichte: George Gissings *New Grub Street*," *Texturen: Zeitschrift für den Literaturbetrieb*, n.d. Currently accessible only in German online at https://www.texturen-online.net/geschichte/gissing/.

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Tailpiece

[In the immediate aftermath of Gissing's death in late 1903 and early 1904 many friends, acquaintances, journalists, and contemporaries went public with their various views, some good, some not so good, of the man and the writer. Among the good opinions it is pleasing to include that of William Morris Colles, his former literary agent, whose brief article is printed below.]

It is a sad privilege to say these few poor words on George Gissing. I am the more glad of the opportunity because many of the "notices" which have appeared are inadequate and unworthy. Gissing seems to have been destined to misrepresentation after his death as during his life. A true artist, a fine scholar, and a most capable workman in letters, he is baldly described as though his views of life were limited to his immediate horizon and that he was nothing if not autobiographical. In a word George Gissing, a master of his craft, a writer imbued with the true spirit of

Greek tragedy, is spoken of, no doubt by many of those who vexed him so terribly when living by their misinterpretation of his method and cheap judgment of his work, as if he were the veriest tyro who could not get beyond his own surroundings. Others, again, speak of him as if he were an unhappy misanthrope who never smiled. Humourist he may never have been, not even in the "Town Traveller." Tragedy seemed to him at once the truest criticism of life and the highest plane of art, but genial and full of fun, a boy all through, he was from first to last. Taine's Law was no doubt true of him as of all great writers. He was the product of his age and environment. But let me give a few brief extracts from letters. He lived in the shadow of death. "Lung trouble," he wrote in 1897, "is still hanging over me; the future is very uncertain." And again he speaks of "three months of weary idleness dodging the east winds," and that he is "off northwards in the vain hope of getting a little strength for next winter." Writing to me once more he says: "What I am bent on doing is to write books which will be read not only to-day but some years hence." Later he speaks anent social engagements: "Society is a delight and a refreshment to me, but I am a prisoner nearly all my time." Again, I find on a postcard from Catanzaro a touch of him at his best: "Weather wretched, gales and rain, tornadoes, wrecks, but the Calabrian wine is no less good." He had a passionate admiration for Vesuvius. He once told me that when he caught his first glimpse of the great volcano from the deck of a steamer he exclaimed, to the great amusement of the captain: "This is the proudest moment of my life." I find a picture of his on a postcard, "There is about a mile of red-hot lava down the slope of Vesuvius – a splendid glow at night."

Gissing was one of the most loveable of men and the brightest of companions. His laughter was whole-hearted. His sensibility was reflected in his refined face, and as he spoke his eyes lighted up with a rare brilliancy giving a glimpse of a bright and beautiful soul. The vulgar and the sordid were to him an abomination, and in the midst of his greatest necessities he would never stoop to work he considered unworthy, or to "take occasion by the hand." Literature can ill spare George Gissing.

William Morris Colles, "Personalities: George Gissing," *Academy and Literature*, 9 January 1904, p. 40.

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Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays, book reviews, and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with bibliographical, biographical, critical, and topographical subjects. They should be sent as a Word document to the editor, Markus Neacey, either by email to forfarmarkus@fastmail.co.uk or by post to:

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