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

Gissing and the Topographies of Lambeth, Part One: Boundaries, Walks, *Thyrza*

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Introduction

George Gissing's understanding of specific London districts was rich and complex.[1] He is self-aware and often ironic when he writes of the East End, Clerkenwell or Camberwell. But critical approaches to the portions of London which Gissing describes remain under-sophisticated. Since the 1890s, these approaches have most often consisted merely in repeating the place names given in Gissing's texts as if the reader knew what they signified.[2] It is always tempting to blur the distinction between the place settings characterised in certain ways in realist and naturalist novels such as those of Gissing, and the actual places on the world's map bearing the same names. Establishing the relationships of writers and readers with the city spaces the former write about and the latter occupy or could potentially visit is challenging because of the near-limitless multiplicity of individual relationships to a city. Whereas Charles Dickens was a Londoner from the age of ten, Gissing moved there aged nineteen following youthful but adult spells in Manchester, Boston, and Chicago, so was perhaps not a Londoner but a migrant to London. Dickens and Gissing both presented themselves as London experts to a readership among whom Londoners were numerous but not in a majority. This meant a balancing of rich and accurate detail with comprehensibility.

Investigated more fully, Gissing's use of city toponyms and conceptions of districts and their boundaries often implicit in his writings could both reshape our view of him and contribute to urban cultural studies of London and beyond. Citizens invariably use these conceptions as scaffolding for their self-locations and interpretations of their native urban place. But city-dwellers' perception of neighbourhoods and their boundaries are fleeting, often dying with them.[3] They are often hard to access since the textual record they leave amounts to gossip. Existing humanistic accounts of cities, whether based on literary texts or archival sources, have rarely grasped the functioning of this experience,

marked as it is by acts of naming, but there are exceptions to the rule. Richard Dennis, for instance, has used Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* as a point of access to now long-obsolete conceptions of the East End of London as a mappable geographical location.[4] In 1880, the term "East End" could be used for areas in the City of London and directly to its north which have not been labelled "East End" since 1900. The East End moved east, this is to say.[5]

Various novel methods are available for reading city districts through Gissing and vice versa. Dennis is among the pioneers of an approach to historical geography and urban history which welcomes literary texts as materials and, equally, uses evidence typical of the former disciplines to read writers such as Gissing. Dennis's approach to Gissing's Lambeth via "*Thyrza*'s Geography," for example, considers the large-scale, highly accurate maps and commercial directories covering inner London which were produced in the last decades of the nineteenth century, evidence being unavailable for earlier periods.[6] Other narrative-based approaches to city experience have been developed by human geographers in recent years, sometimes incorporating autobiographical narratives and fictional imaginings in scholarship of a sort that used to typically exclude such dimensions of extreme subjectivity.[7] In my own earlier literary-spatial research I juxtaposed text-based apprehensions of places and their boundaries with physical encounters. The present article includes an account of my own walks through portions of Lambeth and its surroundings which Gissing wrote about.[8] This approach, which I have labelled *Deep Locational Criticism*, integrates personal narratives with the scholarly analysis of text via an oscillation between text-internal and text-external views of place.[9] The methods are inspired by "place writing from outside the academy that deals with geographic themes" produced by creative psychogeographers such as Nick Papadimitriou, Georges Perec, and Iain Sinclair.[10] This is, on Sinclair's terms, a "Secret History" of both Lambeth and Gissing, in which each reveals hidden facets of the other.

Gathering markers of Lambeth across different periods and media casts new light on Gissing's urbanity and the multiple meanings of the city and its portions as they emerge in his writings. In the article, Lambeth is seen across a historical *longue durée* connecting the Tudor and Stuart periods with the twenty-first century. Establishing the cartographies and topographies of (Gissing's) Lambeth requires multiple sorts of source material. These include those contained or alluded to in Gissing's texts, together with other writings of his (letters, diaries), put alongside evidence of Lambeth's importance in London and British popular culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (particularly the culture of the music hall). The embodied, phenomenological view of Lambeth as an imaginative place built up here rests on these sources,

and a pile-up of maps and topographic writings on the area of London being covered, as well as the acts of walking the topographies mentioned above.

The present article specifies Lambeth as an imaginative place, then investigates Gissing's 1880s encounters with it, notably as contained in the novel *Thyrza* and the aftermath of the death in Lambeth of Gissing's first wife Marianne Helen Gissing on 29 February 1888. A subsequent article will continue the analysis into the 1890s, touching upon Gissing's later suburban fictions of southern Lambeth, and comparisons between his writing and that of other authors concerned with plebeian South London in that decade.

Beating the Bounds

Cartographies are objective as well as subjective. Topographic literary research pays attention to areal dimensions, distances, and land elevation as spatial investigations drawing solely on texts cannot. As a local government unit, Lambeth is long and thin, extending from the banks of the Thames at Waterloo and the site of the 1951 Festival of Britain opposite Westminster at its northernmost extent, down to what between 1889 and 1965 was the southern perimeter of London County.[11] The London Borough of Lambeth that exists in 2018 is over seven miles long north to south and never more than about three miles wide, east to west.[12] When Lambeth as an ancient parish, Lambeth as a pre-1965 Metropolitan Borough in the London County Council era, and Lambeth as a post-1965 London Borough within Greater London are compared, a similarity in the extent of the three emerges which is rare among London local government units. This is perhaps because the districts of Lambeth that now seem part of central London were, until the early nineteenth century, still rural.

For Londoners, Lambeth typically denotes not the London Borough of Lambeth but the small portion of it directly across Westminster Bridge and Lambeth Bridge from Westminster. Westminster is the governmental headquarters of the United Kingdom and was, formerly, of the British Empire. As a local government unit, the City of Westminster also includes London's long-time centre of entertainment, retail, and consumption, the West End. Westminster and the West End, alongside the financial and commercial City of London to its east, form London's own capital district: a capital within a capital. Lambeth, Cinderella-like, faces this zone across the Thames. London proper, for Gissing's Lambeth-dwelling Thyrza Trent and her sister Lydia, is "that city on the far side of the Thames, known to these girls with scarcely less of vagueness than to simple dwellers in country towns."[13] Lambeth was developed relatively late considering its physical closeness to Westminster and the West End. Londoners often conceive of "South London" as somewhere

distinct, with its own identity and accent: London across the water. For centuries London proper and Westminster, north of the river, lay in Middlesex, while south of the river was Surrey, part of the London sprawl but formally somewhere else. South London can seem somewhere politically and artistically rebellious, somewhere neglected by north-of-the-river writers and artists, sometimes indeed somewhere other to London (Surrey, not Middlesex), yet also somewhere with a demotic quality that sums up the ordinary Londoner. Lambeth is a vital component in South London identities.

Lambeth proper, the small northernmost portion of the land area that would become that of the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth, has a riverine heritage and in the past had a dockside working class. It contained industries reliant on the water such as the Doulton ceramic works. More than for these aspects, the northern portion, and Lambeth as a whole, is perhaps best known among Britons for containing Lambeth Palace, official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Palace is in effect a relic of an earlier time when the Thames was alive with watermen ferrying people from side to side, and the bank of the river opposite Whitehall was built up with the showy mansions of courtiers. The southern parts seem very different: farming land that became first the houses of carriage-owning folk; later a dense suburbia built up in different phases from the 1820s to the 1930s.

The "Archbishop's Palace" is mentioned twice in the first ten chapters of *Thyrza*, whereas the water is only present in views from bridges across the Thames and their status as connection points with another London.[14] Industry matters deeply to Gissing's 1886 view of the district, though. The reader's first entry to it is in the company of two workmen, Gilbert Grail and Luke Ackroyd, on their way home from their shift at a factory.[15] Factories create light and noise. Equally important is the more elusive sensory characteristic of its atmosphere: music. Thyrza Trent's dead father is described in Chapter 3 of the novel ("A Corner of Lambeth") as having been "made o' music," and an aspect of Lambeth that was important to Gissing's dramatisation of it in *Thyrza* is its close link to musical and comic entertainment.[16] London's main theatre district since the Restoration had been the area east of Covent Garden and north of the Strand where the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane is. Lambeth was a sort of unofficial or democratic mirror of this area in its provision of entertainment.[17] The Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's period and other sites of entertainment had earlier occupied the South Bank of the Thames: Lambeth too was a site a short boat trip or cab ride from the more respectable portions of central London. Whether or not Lambeth developed as an entertainment centre because of a sort of unofficial status linked to this past, its emergence as such followed directly upon the construction of bridges across the Thames beginning in the

eighteenth century. The Royal Coburg Theatre opened near Waterloo Bridge in 1818; Astley's Royal Amphitheatre had occupied a site close to Westminster Bridge for over forty years then, having begun in 1773 as a permanent indoor circus.[18] The most prominent of Lambeth's theatres and halls of entertainment in Gissing's time and since have included the Old Vic theatre (once the Royal Victoria Hall) and the Canterbury Music Hall.[19] Gissing himself was a keen appreciator of the music hall. This was a relationship in which fascination mingled with disgust. According to one story, he met his second wife at the Oxford Music Hall in the West End of London. More certainly, in an 1880 letter to Frederic Harrison, Gissing pronounced that it was "sitting for an evening in the gallery of a mean theatre, or in the pit of a Music Hall, whither I was led by morbid curiosity" that enabled him to pen the ferocious grotesques of lower-class Londoners which so struck Harrison in the unknown writer's debut novel *Workers in the Dawn*.[20]

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Lambeth was not only the site of music halls and theatres. It was also an area where actors and others connected to show business lived. By the 1890s, when Gissing lodged temporarily in Kennington Road having returned to London from South-West England, he shared a street with a boy later world famous as the entertainer Charlie Chaplin.[21] Admittedly, it was a long street, one of the main arteries connecting central London with the countryside and south coast of England beyond. Chaplin's parents were music hall artists. Recalling his childhood, Chaplin writes of the Sunday morning carriage outing "vaudeville stars" resident in the neighbourhood would go on: "a ten-mile drive as far as

Norwood or Merton," then back again via various public houses.[22] From inner Lambeth, where theatres were also cheap lodging houses, successful music hall artists moved to Victorian suburbs in the next ring out: Brixton, Camberwell.[23] Chaplin includes in his autobiography a photograph captioned "Five companies outside Karno's office in Camberwell leaving for the music halls in and around London."[24]

In line with Chaplin's memory of these performers' Sunday drives, the history of Lambeth is as a link between town and country. The northern half of the London Borough of Lambeth in the twenty-first century seems a highly urban zone. It has a mix of social housing organised as 'estates' originating in the clearance as slums of the houses let as tenements, room by room, previously occupied by the area's working class, renovated nineteenth-century terraces now often the homes of very rich people, and, increasingly, high-density blocks of new housing built for private renters who fall between the two groups in income terms. Many associations the area has now are cosmopolitan: for black Britons Lambeth has a metropolitan status, and in the 2016 Referendum on membership of the European Union, a higher proportion of Lambeth voters wished to "remain" than in any local government district other than Gibraltar. Things looked different in 1912: a historical topography account published then states that areas in southern Lambeth, specifically "the districts of Stockwell, Brixton, Herne Hill and Tulse Hill owe their existence to their position neither in nor out of London."[25] Another example comes from early biographical investigations of Gissing's youth. During the 1930s, when his son Alfred sought information for a potential biography of his father from William Gissing Stannard, an elderly relative who had known the novelist in the 1880s, he was told "of the days & walks I had as a boy with your Father in his early days in London."[26] Alongside his memories of a picturesque and Dickensian central London ("Holborn with cobble stones & the shops with small panes with the glass blower blob in the centre"), Stannard recalled "old Westminster & the land beyond Lambeth to the Crystal Palace, Penge & Denmark Hill with fine houses & gardens."[27] Pierre Coustillas describes Stannard as an unreliable memoirist, inclined to sentimentalise and "whitewash" the past, but this perhaps makes him well-qualified to transmit Lambeth myth.[28] Gissing's choice of Lambeth as a highly urbanised working-class neighbourhood, in Gissing plays with a sense that its site, like that of North-of-England industrial centres which Gissing knew, had recently been fields, marshes and gardens like those which Stannard remembered "beyond" it. There is no air of antiquity in the streets through which Thyrza and her neighbours move.

The sense that in Lambeth the country enters London may result from the retardation of building there caused by the district's position on the other side of the river from London proper. Despite being fashionable with aristocrats of the Tudor and Stuart periods because of its waterfront setting facing Westminster, Lambeth remained isolated until Westminster Bridge was completed in 1750, followed by Waterloo Bridge (opened in 1817). Its waterfront was filled relatively early with wharves, but behind these lay open country, even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The name of Lower Marsh, off which Lucretia Street lay until its twentieth-century obliteration from the map, records the former Lambeth Marsh, where game was hunted in the seventeenth century.[29] Gissing taps into these traditions while also, in *Thyrza*, distilling Lambeth into an essence of working-class, industrial, inner London. This is to say that he makes it represent something, a pole of the city. Traditions and identities of Lambeth are present in Gissing's writing as suggestions or echoes perhaps more than as a result of deliberate placement. Gissing is, after all, not a writer who researches place in an antiquarian fashion but on foot. His efforts to walk the topographies have been adapted in the method of this article. The article reads his letters and diary alongside his fictions, chiefly *Thyrza*, as alike textual materials for grasping place, alike combining observational and thoroughly fictional elements.

Identifying Place(s): How Many Lambeths?

Lambeth has a long-established formal identity as a local government unit, as well as use as a descriptive term for a smaller part of that area. As such, the geographical area it delineates seems questionable or multiple. It is a relatively widespread pattern that the name of a centre in one zone has become the name for a borough, meaning a modern (post 1880s) local government area.[30] Well before 1965, the Borough of Lambeth already spanned several different concentric zones ranging from inner-city to twentieth-century suburbia.

Gissing researched and presented *Thyrza: A Tale* (1887) as a Lambeth novel, and this is how its readers have treated it ever since.[31] In *Thyrza*, the toponym "Lambeth" is used for a small group of streets which only ever formed one sub-district of the parish, later borough, of Lambeth: those around Lambeth Walk. The area is introduced to the novel via industrialism: "the firm of Egremont & Pollard, with extensive works in Lambeth."[32] Grail and Ackroyd, in the third chapter of the novel, walk home into "[a] corner of Lambeth," which is recessive rather than prominent either for good or bad, "a district of small houses and multifarious workshops."[33] While preparing *Thyrza*, he wrote to his sisters, Ellen and Margaret, about the novel he had

underway. In the letters he concentrated on his researches in the district. Six years earlier, Gissing had written to Harrison that "hideous experiences of low life" acting on his own "strongly excitable temperament" had led him to the raw insights of *Workers in the Dawn*.[34] Now, he reinserted himself in his own "hideous" past as a way of getting a privileged insight into modernity of the sort Harrison had found so praiseworthy. "With me, it is a constant aim to bring the present & the past near to each other, to remove the distance which seems to separate Hellas from Lambeth," he wrote to Ellen, indicating that Lambeth's role in *Thyrza* is as an exemplar of extreme modernity, the polar opposite of the ancient world epitomised in Ancient Greece ("Hellas").[35] Lambeth could epitomise the world Gissing had been sucked into when expelled from (his studies of) Hellas. In Lambeth, Gissing declared, he had captured an elusive quarry: "the very spirit of London working-class life."[36] Writing to Margaret, Gissing called Lambeth a "strange world, so remote from our civilization."[37] Having immersed himself in Lambeth, Gissing claims to have the "strangest people & scenes floating in my mind," and now anticipates the sensations of a "Bank Holiday" to be spent "in the streets."[38] The juxtaposition of the "strange world" and "our civilization" echoes early efforts in European anthropology and sociology of which Gissing, a keen reader of serious new books, would surely have been aware. Equally, down to the interest in the carnivalesque character of a Bank Holiday in a working-class district, it anticipates the satirical social opposition around which *The Nether World* is built.

Whatever the reader's temperament, *Thyrza* works to convey Gissing's "experiences of low life" through the medium of the representative and so understandable literary formulation of the urban district setting, here Lambeth. Yet counteracting against a sense that the district in the novel works straightforwardly as a synecdoche of constrained working-class life and its struggles are aspects of naming: both the subtitle, *A Tale*; and the eponymous protagonist's first name lead perhaps away from Lambeth and towards Hellas. Thyrza may seem an unlikely name for a slum girl (although following Byron's use of it for a heroine it was not unheard-of, even in working-class inner London). Maugham's young female protagonist in *Liza of Lambeth* and William Pett Ridge's in *Mord Em'ly* (representing a street pronunciation of her name, Maud Emily), South London creations of the 1890s, contrast with her by being music-hall caricatures of the working-class urban young woman down to the mimicry of the accent. Similar considerations enter Gissing's late-1880s non-fictional writings. The title and subtitle of *Thyrza: A Tale*, in fact, indicate that it is not the reality but the fictionality of the novel's content which provide a key to the novel's meaning. Thyrza's name derives from Byron and there is something strongly poetic or Pre-Raphaelite about her. Fredric

Jameson calls her "the most golden and intolerably Dickensian" of all Gissing's heroines.[39] Not so much Dickensian as Tennysonian, we might respond. Jameson himself seems somewhat intolerant of the aspects of *Thyrza* that have to do with nineteenth-century story and poetry as opposed to those aspects that have to do with the grim struggles of the nineteenth-century city. While his reading remains powerful owing to its full appreciation of such tensions, it hardly comprehends nineteenth-century warmth and family feeling. Gissing told his own sister Ellen that in creating Thyrza and her sister Lydia he aimed to create "two of the most delightful characters in fiction."[40]

To move from the letters of 1886 to Gissing's diary entry for 1 March 1888, Gissing's first wife (almost invariably described in Gissing scholarship using combinations of the word "alcoholic" and the word "prostitute") sounds different referred to as "Helen" than as "Nell." The latter, of course, is the formulation Gissingites have tended to prefer following Gissing's own use of it in letters to his siblings when first married. Helen sounds more classical, and less of the streets; the Helen of Ancient Greece (Hellas not Lambeth) was of course beautiful and hence dangerous to men. In the diary for 1 March he does not refer to his dead wife as Nell but as "MHG," Marianne Helen Gissing, and the next day recounts how he redeemed "H's wedding ring" which she had pawned for drink.[41]

Gissing himself certainly considered the setting of *Thyrza* to be the same area as that in which his first wife, Helen or Nell, lodged at the time of her death in February 1888. In his diary, Gissing gives a spine-chilling account of the sight of Helen's corpse, racked by alcoholism, malnutrition, and disease, lying in the meagre room she rented with money provided by him. The room was in a house Gissing described as "a wretched, wretched place," in Lucretia Street off Lower Marsh, then a lively local centre a few streets from Waterloo Station.[42] Two days after the 1 March visit to Lambeth on which he made the arrangements for Helen's funeral, Gissing wrote to his brother Algernon: "It is rather strange that the scene of my last story lay in Lambeth. I shall take that field again."[43] In fact, the field he took immediately after Helen's burial (which he did not attend) at Lambeth Cemetery, some miles to the south in Tooting, was the area of another plebeian district on the fringes of central London: Clerkenwell. This district became the embodiment of "the nether world" in what proved to be his last novel set on the lower margins of the great city.

In Lambeth on 1 and 2 March 1888, according to his diary account of the two days, Gissing shuttled between municipal and commercial premises managing the practicalities of death. He records that he went first to a doctor in the Westminster Bridge Road, a prominent street connecting South London with the world of power across the river.[44] He then went with Helen's

landlady's "married daughter," "to see the undertaker, of whom a coffin had already been ordered, - a man called Stevens, whom we found in a small beer-shop which he keeps, 99 Princes Rd, Lambeth."[45] Princes Road, together with its eastward extension once called Workhouse Lane, had its name changed early in the twentieth century to Black Prince Road.[46] As late as the 1950s, Black Prince Road preserved numerous run-down nineteenth-century buildings already standing when Gissing walked there for twenty minutes or so from Lucretia Street to see the undertaker in the tavern he also kept.[47] To get to Stevens's shop they would naturally have walked along Lambeth Walk, the street around which the crucial action of *Thyrza* develops.

As well as the setting of *Thyrza* and the room where Helen lodged at the time of her death, there is another Lambeth. If the Lambeth of Thyrza and Helen lies a short walk from Westminster, Waterloo, and Lambeth Bridges and thus directly across the River Thames from London's key sites of power and fashion, this other Lambeth lies in relative obscurity three miles or so south of there. Gissing, his second wife Edith and their baby son lodged in Burton Road, today in the SW9 postcode area, during the second half of 1893 and in 1894. Should Lambeth in Gissing's writings be considered multiple? If the *Victoria County History* writer in 1912, or the ageing William Gissing Stannard in 1936, are to be believed, the suburban villas amid the greenery of southern Lambeth are in fact a smooth continuation of a single Lambeth identity. That connection with rurality is now hard to detect amid the former Lambeth Marsh close to where the Thames bends, or on the waterside there looking across to Westminster. Decades later, the authors of the *Buildings of England* volume *London 2: South*, Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner would use South London, inner and outer, to exemplify a destructive and unpleasant urban modernity.[48] How should the clash between these contrasting Lambeths be resolved? Lambeth's combination of smooth transition to rurality with extreme urbanity is unique in London, but every urban district has a personality. Gissing's mediation of its uniqueness is personal to him but also revealing of phases in urban change, especially when read alongside varied textual sources written from different but complementary perspectives: Gissing's own, in both fiction and non-fiction; those of Chaplin, the *Victoria County History* author, and Gissing's cousin W. G. Stannard.

Doing the Lambeth Walks

On Sunday, 18 February 2018, and Tuesday, 20 February 2018, I carried out two walks through the London Borough of Lambeth.[49] To call these journeys on foot "Lambeth Walks" is to reappropriate the name of both the street which is at the heart of the urban world of *Thyrza*, and the 1937 song which

turned the name of that street into a dance, "The Lambeth Walk." The song became the most famous part of the greatest stage musical hit of London's West End in 1937, *Me and My Girl*.[50] The musical was filmed in 1939 under the name of its most famous number as *The Lambeth Walk*.[51] Both musical and film starred the music hall comedian Lupino Lane.[52] Lane himself, and Lambeth the place could in the mid-twentieth century alike become symbols of plebeian London and its people in the shape of the lively, cheeky, irreverent but loyal and ultimately loveable figure of the Cockney. Gissing's treatments of Lambeth stand on the threshold between this view of London, its districts and populace, and an earlier one in which the working classes of the city threaten what in writing to his sister Margaret in 1886 Gissing called

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"our civilization"? Gissing's Lambeth writings are profoundly alert to the popular laughter and musicality represented fifty years on from *Thyrza* by Lane and the song and dance called "The Lambeth Walk," but equally ambivalent about these sides of inner South London.

The first walk began at Colliers Wood station on the Underground's Northern Line and went via Lambeth Cemetery through Tooting, Balham, and Abbeville Road in Clapham, to Brixton. The first started beyond the Borough boundaries with a visit to an extramural portion of Lambeth's territory: Lambeth Cemetery in Blackshaw Road, Tooting, London SW17, territorially part of the London Borough of Wandsworth. In the cemetery the unachieved goal was to locate the grave of Marianne Helen Gissing; there, instead, I found the grave of the music hall performer Dan Leno, who lived until his death in 1904 very close to where Gissing and his second wife Edith lived on the borders between Brixton and Camberwell.[53] In Brixton I aimed to find the site of Melbourne Square. It was from an address in Melbourne Square, a few minutes' walk from Burton Road where she had lived together with Gissing and their young son starting in the spring of 1893, that Edith was removed to a mental institution on 23 January 1902 after complaints from her landlords.[54] The rest of her life was spent in a series of private asylums. Apart from a tiny remnant abutting on the main north-south Brixton Road, Melbourne Square disappeared in slum clearance around 1970. Its site is now occupied by social housing, the Myatts Field South Estate. Normandy Road, just to its north, contains a plaque on number 22 marking the start there of the 1981 Brixton Riots.[55] Finally I reached Stockwell Station via what is now a millionaire's row, but was probably scabrous as recently as the 1970s.

The walk on Tuesday 22 February was from north to south rather than south to north, and ended like the earlier walk in the Myatt's Fields region where Gissing and Edith lived between June 1893 and February 1894 (when they took rooms in Hastings).[56] My walk took me from Bankside to the obelisk erected in 1771 at St George's Circus, marked with distances to London Bridge, Fleet Street, and Westminster, a good discovery.[57] The obelisk sums up the role of South London after the bridges were built: to connect portions of London north of the winding river with one another; at St George's Circus six main roads meet. Being well-connected whilst outside the overcrowded heart of London's entertainment district west of Covent Garden on the north side of the river enabled Lambeth to become a focus for the music hall industry of the city and, indeed, the whole country; the home of many performers and impresarios. A position as transport nexus, conversely, led to the perception in the twentieth century of South London as somewhere strangled by roads and railways.[58] If inner South London is a place of criss-crossing roads and railways this has positive as well as negative aspects. In it, one is frequently surprised by broad boulevards intersecting one another at narrow angles in a way rarely met north of the river. There, today's A13, A10, A1, A5, and A40 begin at a point on the perimeter of the City and run in a certain direction

seemingly eternally, without ever meeting one another. From the obelisk I passed via the Imperial War Museum, in the time of Thyrza the Bethlehem Hospital, Bedlam removed and modernised south of the river in the 1830s, to reconnoitre Lambeth Walk and its surroundings once more, passing murals celebrating Lupino Lane, the Old Vic, and those iconic Cockney figures, pearly kings and queens.[59]

I viewed the various estates, the remains of shops, the post-war health centre. Signs of gentrification were more apparent than on a previous field trip in February 2014: an artful shop window showing retro items such as records, posters and electrical equipment, themed around African art and Caribbean as well as African-American music; a Damien-Hirst-owned gallery with well-dressed visitors waiting slightly anxiously for an Uber outside; a pub turned fashionable café.[60] The large Ethelred Estate and a sports centre built in its heart off Black Prince Road and shops near there remain bastions of inner-London council estate culture. Across from the Ethelred Estate's entrance on Black Prince Road is the Edwardian Beaufoy Institute, built for locals by the philanthropic owners of a vinegar distillery nearby.[61] From there I walked to the Oval, built as an open space but now a famous sports stadium, home to Surrey County Cricket Club, then detoured into muddy and broad Kennington Park.[62] The route to the Lambeth Archives lies through streets such as Foxley Road, SW9, lined with fine early Victorian houses, past the mighty churches of St Mark's, and St John the Divine, Kennington.[63] Then I followed well-kept and cosy Myatt's Fields, then Burton Road, home to Gissing and Edith for eight months, the terrace of four houses perhaps built in the 1870s still standing.[64] I ended at the Lambeth Archives Centre, the Minet Library in Knatchbull Road, SE5, in the London Borough of Lambeth but with a Camberwell postcode.[65]

The walks reinforce a sense of Lambeth as both a quintessence of London, and other to London. It is Surrey, when London was until the end of the nineteenth century entirely in Middlesex. If Middlesex County Cricket Club play at Lord's, which is a branch of London high society, then Surrey play at the Oval in Kennington, plebeian down to its gasometers.[66]

Networked Neighbourhood: The Lambeth of *Thyrza*

Richard Dennis argues that the Lambeth of *Thyrza* should not be considered a slum district.[67] He makes the case by indicating the contrasts with Caledonian Road, Islington, in the same novel, and Whitecross Street, Finsbury, at the beginning of *Workers in the Dawn*, both of which are more spectacularly scruffy and smelly. In *Thyrza*, Dennis observes, we readers "become part of Lambeth society ourselves, and people rarely refer to their own homes as

'slums,' however modest or dilapidated the material conditions."[68] This insight holds in reading slum writing more generally, yet in *Thyrza* Gissing also continues the work of *Workers in the Dawn* and *The Unclassed*, namely that of providing an encyclopaedic topography of inner London plebeian districts. The "kaleidoscopic reality" of this vast proportion of the great city always involves borders and transitions between respectable working-class areas and zones where the truly desperate live.[69] Whether the word "slum" is to be reserved for the latter or also for the former when buildings deteriorate beyond a certain level is arguably the most important point at stake in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing of the London slum. In this essay, the term is used for a fairly broad range of lower London levels: what middle- and upper-class contemporaries themselves often indicated when they referred to "the slums."[70]

A striking sensory quality of the Lambeth of *Thyrza* is its musical noises. These range from the evocative and moving to the discordant. At the latter pole is the sound made by a peripatetic group of Sunday beggars:

> a sound of distressful voices, whining the discords of a mendicant psalm. A man, a woman, and two small children crawled along the street; their eyes surveyed the upper windows. All were ragged and filthy; the elders bore the unmistakable brand of the gin-shop, and the children were visaged like debased monkeys. Occasionally a copper fell to them, in return for which the chorus exclaimed "Gord bless yer!"[71]

These desperate, degraded people are making their way through largely respectable working-class streets such as Walnut Tree Walk, home of the title character and her sister.

The night before the whined "discords" of the Sunday beggars are heard in *Thyrza* has also been devoted to music, varied in music hall fashion between the comic (city toponyms such as "'Ol-lo-w'y" included) and the sentimental.[72] A young woman with beauty, musical talent, and excellent manners forced by necessity to work in a factory, Thyrza has accompanied her friend Totty Nancarrow to a "friendly lead," a benefit evening for a local barber which is one of the "festive meetings" held upstairs in a local pub, the Prince Albert.[73] Thyrza herself proves to be the star turn of the evening, after she is persuaded to sing, and she leaves both overwhelmed by the reception and ashamed of herself for performing in such a place. But before she sings, another young woman goes:

> She was a pale unhealthy thing, and wore an ugly-shaped hat with a gruesome green feather; she sang with her eyes down, and in a voice which did not lack a certain sweetness. The ballad was of spring-time and the country and love.
>
> Underneath the May-tree blossoms
> Oft we've wandered, you and I,

> Listening to the mill-stream's whisper,
> Like a stream soft-gliding by.
>
> [The girl] had a drunken mother, and spent a month or two of every year in the hospital, for her day's work overtaxed her strength. She was one of those fated toilers, to struggle on as long as anyone would employ her, then to fall among the forgotten wretched. And she sang of May-bloom and love, of love that had never come near her and that she would never know; sang, with her eyes upon the beer-stained table, in a public-house amid the backways of Lambeth.[74]

Like painters who were his contemporaries, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec in France and Walter Sickert in England, Gissing established an evocative quality in the grim struggles of modernity by developing an aesthetic of the grotesque (the pale young woman's "ugly-shaped hat with a gruesome green feather"; the "beer-stained table"). More than the tragic, thwarted love plot of *Thyrza* as a whole, the novel's early scenes, including that of the singing at the "friendly lead," express Gissing's early and highly ambitious plan for the novel. This was, as had been his aim in both *Workers in the Dawn* and *The Unclassed*, to use the three-volume-novel format to capture an elusive essence of a culture extremely different from that of the format's middle-class readers: that of the London working classes sensed through his own immersion in the particular streets and areas they inhabited, including Lambeth. In the first ten chapters of *Thyrza*, Gissing builds up a sort of "thick description" of Lambeth, to use a later anthropologist's term, which then reappears sporadically in the remaining 33 chapters. Important in it are the voices of local characters, who are more varied and choric than Dickens's lower-class grotesques, and representative scenes. In Chapter 5, a "half-tipsy man and a nagging woman" are heard arguing in the street below the Trent girls' window, then the sound changes: "thud, thud, mingled with objurgations and shrill night-piercing yells" as the man beats the woman to the "windy side of murder," a sound "familiar enough to dwellers in this region."[75] The sound is close enough to mark these "dwellers" emotionally, even those like Lydia Trent who are indomitably pure and good. Along with horrors such as this violence and the hymn-singing beggar family, the thickness of Lambeth includes environmental and sensory aspects that may discomfit the outsider but which are not so clearly undesirable in the world of the immense city. There are the faces young and old, the food smells and the comic catchphrases of a working-class house itself riven by status divisions and the problematic of respectability, such as that of "The Little Shop with the Large Heart" owned by the Bowers, who consider themselves local dignitaries.[76] And there are the smells and sounds of the working-class street market on the night before a holiday, "burning naphtha and fried fish," and the music of a street organ.[77]

The toponym "Lambeth" stands for the utterly mundane, yet the word "backways" introduces a sense of mystery. The same sense is contained in a passage from *Thyrza* in which the voice of the authorial narrator asks readers whether they have heard "that music of the obscure ways," asserting that it can only be heard properly not "beneath your windows in the square." Instead, "you must stand in the darkness of such a by-street as this, and for the moment be at one with those who dwell around, in the blear-eyed houses, in the dim burrows of poverty, in the unmapped haunts of the semi-human."[78] Here Gissing strays, moving from immersion in a human environment towards a view of the urban poor as something beneath humans; still, the narrating voice is to some extent an ironised one, itself being mocked.

If the singing of the pale girl (and that of Thyrza herself) in the Prince Albert on a Saturday night is of an elevated level and has a spiritual quality, that of the beggars in Walnut Tree Walk on a Sunday afternoon is the opposite, profane and even sub-human. Still, both are musical animations of the "strange world" of Lambeth about which Gissing had written to his unmarried sisters, innocent of London as they were, in 1886. The two weekend days thus reverse their ostensible role in the official calendar of Victorian London. There, Saturday night is given over to profane leisure, even for the poorest members of the working classes. Sunday afternoon (time of "unutterable dreariness") is a time of enforced leisure and idleness deriving from the (said by the world to be) sacred nature of the day.[79] In *Thyrza*, by contrast, the Sunday beggars passing through Walnut Tree Walk are the most debased sort of slum-dwellers, all of them "ragged and filthy." The parents are alcoholics with faces marked by the habitual drinking of raw spirits (at least to the respectable working-class observer). The children, "visaged like debased monkeys," are explicitly linked to contemporary discourses of degeneration, the failures and dead ends of Social Darwinism.[80] The people crawl. And yet they sing a psalm, and call out "Gord bless yer" to those who throw out a coin, presumably to make them go away or relieve the conscience of working men who have slept through church and are now slumbering "after the baked joint and flagon of ale" or "dozing over the Sunday paper."[81]

Gissing emphasises that the linked passages in Chapters 4 and 5 represent a deliberate artistic juxtaposition of Saturday night in the amateur music hall with Sunday afternoon in the stultifying residential streets via the figure of Mr Jarmey, who lives in the same house as Thyrza and Lydia:

> From the lower part of the house sounded the notes of a concertina; it was Mr. Jarmey who played; he had the habit of doing so whilst half asleep between dinner and tea. With impartiality he passed from strains of popular hymnody to the familiar ditties of

> the music hall, lavishing on each an excess of sentiment. He shook pathetically on top notes and languished on final chords. A dolorous music![82]

Despite in his languor slipping perhaps unknowingly from sacred to profane music, Mr Jarmey's branch of Lambeth musicality retains the "dolorous" tonality of church music. He uses an instrument, the air-powered concertina, that is a street cousin of both the church organ associated with "popular hymnody" and also recalls the piano accompaniment of "a youth of the seediest appearance" to which Thyrza sang the evening before this stultifying Sunday.[83]

Gissing's portrayal of Lambeth in *Thyrza* is a staging post in his writing, a final attempt to grasp the richness and depth of the world of the urban lower classes, following the encyclopaedic and geographically wide-ranging slum representations of his first two published novels. After the ferocious caricature of *The Nether World*, two years later, Gissing abandoned working-class scenes and settings. When Gissing casts off slum settings, then, he also casts off a sense that the poor districts of a huge city contain the city's secrets. This sense of a hidden meaning that could explain the city as a whole clearly parallels the Freudian unconscious. Each novel emerges in a giant, recently greatly expanded, imperial capital during the last decades of the nineteenth century. This is a secret shame, which enters the novel when Lydia Trent feels "shame" hearing the vicious fighting, verbal and physical, of a passing couple outside the window.[84] Such a sense is present in the identification of Lambeth as a "strange country" in the letter to Margaret Gissing of July 1886. The same sense is brought to life unevenly but extremely powerfully in Volume 1 of *Thyrza* and sporadically thereafter in the same novel.

Gissing's third-person narrator speaks of "the unmapped haunts of the semi-human," exemplifying these by the back-street Lambeth children and their dance to a street organ. This clashes with the fact that, at key plot cruxes in the novel, Lambeth as a portion of the city is quite definitely mapped. In *Thyrza*, Lambeth is known through its topological network of street names and intersections.

> She was in the part of Lambeth Walk farthest from her own street, having come there by chance, for she had observed nothing on the way. She did not wish to go home yet. One end of Paradise Street joins the Walk, and into that she turned. If only there were a chance of Totty Nancarrow's being at home![85]

This is a networked city, its components named. The plot is driven by the venture into Lambeth of Walter Egremont, heir to an industrial fortune, mirroring Gissing's own explorations in the summer of 1886. Egremont's family factory in Westminster Bridge Road – which, now as then, cuts through the network of local streets in the neighbourhood – stands on the edge of what

in the novel is the working-class residential and shopping area of Lambeth Walk.[86] Egremont derives his money from Lambeth, enters it to carry out cultural philanthropy aimed at raising the residents above the level of the "semi-human," then is attracted to one of its denizens, the titular Thyrza. He gains knowledge of the place through modern cartographic technologies: "He knew Bunce's address, but had never before been in Newport Street. It was his habit to discover places by the aid of a map alone, and thus guided, he found the house."[87]

In *Thyrza*, Lambeth embodies a slum tonality. Chapter 9 builds a sense that the London slums are a world in themselves: strange perhaps, somehow at the heart of the city and also other to it; the "Golden Prospect" of the chapter's title that, for Gilbert Grail, of escape from slum existence via Egremont's patronage. On numerous occasions in this chapter Gissing uses adjectives that put a gloomy or depressing colour on what is experienced and observed. For instance the weather in the first paragraph, producing "viscid foulness" in the streets; rain that is "pestilent" and falls with a "doleful" sound, lamps whose light is "sickly."[88] The surroundings seem naturally to leave Thyrza "ailing."[89] A clear night in winter is a surprise: "For a wonder, there was no fog to-night, but the street lamps glistened on wet pavements, and vehicles as they rattled along sent mud-volleys to either side."[90] And on through the chapter: a "sad wind," a building that is "ugly," its interior "hideous."[91] Thus the tonality that Gissing applies to his slum neighbourhood.

Yet there is more to Lambeth than dirt, disease, and degradation. Sharing his initials with his creator, Gilbert Grail is the virtuous artisan abandoned by Thyrza when wealthy Mr Egremont seems to have fallen in love with her. It is his walk through the Christmas Eve street market of Lambeth Walk which leads readers through "obscure ways" to hear sounds which are perhaps those of London's hidden soul and depths, onto Lambeth Bridge. There he contemplates the city as a whole. The walk mirrors in reverse Grail's first entry into the novel which is in a walk from Westminster to Lambeth, stopping in Westminster Abbey and then crossing Westminster Bridge to the south side of the River.[92] Lambeth's uniqueness among London working-class neighbourhoods emerges here, a fascination which it retains today. This is that it faces on the opposite side of the Thames the visual symbols of London's concentrations of secular and spiritual power, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, yet it also seems to have the quality of somewhere in retreat and hidden away. It is both at the heart of the city conceived as a centre, somewhere that draws people like a magnet, and inherently other to the city.

Conclusion: On from the 'Eighties'

Gissing loads Lambeth with symbolic weight in *Thyrza*. It is both "A Land of Twilight" (the title of Chapter 5) and a place where working people can find their own "Corner of Lambeth" (the title of Chapter 3) in which to rest and care for one another. In interpreting this act, a challenge for Gissing scholars is to assess its relationship, or lack of relationship, to the writer's private life. There is no reason for disbelieving his statement that he had not seen his wife Helen for three years before he was called to view her corpse in Lucretia Street on 1 March 1888. Equally, it seems certain that he knew her address because he sent her fifteen shillings every week for her to live on. We do not know, however, whether she was residing in Lambeth at the time Gissing was planning and writing *Thyrza*. Still less do we know how much she resembled the workgirls of *Thyrza*. Gissing scholars must constantly struggle with the relationship between the fiction and the biography. This is so both because of the quantity and literary qualities (including the quality of being edited) of the diary and letters he left behind. Equally, his fiction deliberately and in a way that is sometimes treacherous to interpret includes so many markers of the world that Gissing himself inhabited, above all place names and references to amounts of money. Nowhere is the puzzle more complex than in Lambeth.

In a projected second part of this study, I begin by continuing the reading of *Thyrza*. In the 1887 novel, Lambeth stands as a microcosm for a plebeian London that cannot be contained by the word "slum," even less so by the highly satirical notion of a "nether world" existing underneath the upper with its own laws and standards of ethics on which Gissing's more widely praised 1889 Clerkenwell novel is based. Yet the brutal financial realities of the London which is at the heart of Gissing's writing in the first half of his career mean that there is always a porous and dangerously thin boundary between the respectable world and its lethal others: destitution, starvation, despair, and suicide.[93] Beyond *Thyrza*, this second part of the study of Gissing's relations with the extensive and varied topography of Lambeth moves on to a different portion of the parish and later borough of Lambeth, some three miles south of Lower Marsh and Waterloo. This was an area which Gissing, perhaps deliberately, never named as Lambeth. It was an area that he both chose to inhabit on returning to London from Exeter in early 1893, and chose to write about in the same period. Not even half way down the length of Lambeth ranging from north to south on the maps of both the 1889 to 1965 borough and the post-1965 one, in the 1890s this area was sometimes called South Lambeth, and blurred into Stockwell and Brixton. This was the zone of a suburban social kaleidoscope developing on what, when Gissing first came to London in the

late 1870s and associated with his Stannard cousins while struggling to launch himself as a writer, had still seemed fields and meadows dotted with gentlemen's houses.

The battle in topographic literary scholarship is always to demonstrate relevance. Gissing visited, wrote (intensely and artfully in *Thyrza*) about, and even, depending on where the boundaries are considered to be, later lived in Lambeth. How relevant is this fact to an understanding of his writing? Its importance is that, for Gissing, distinctions between areas are the stuff from which cities are made. Readings of the city and of Gissing in terms of the secrets and suppressed aspects of both, for example by Sinclair and Jameson, are indispensable. But the mechanics of London local government and cartography, and of the literary trade in which Gissing was so doggedly engaged throughout his adult life, hardly figure in such readings of London and literary history. In the skirmish with Lambeth, *Thyrza* emerges as a proletarian novel, a novel of industrial workers' lives dramatising their relations with the factory-owner class which could have been set in Manchester or Leeds rather than London. As such the Lambeth setting could seem incidental, or even a red herring like Shakespeare's Illyria (Gissing was a passionate Shakespearean and must have imbibed some of the dramatist's literary place techniques). Simultaneously, Gissing recorded Lambeth's social microgeography with a high level of cartographic and toponymic precision, as Dennis has shown; what he sought there and wrote to his sisters about in 1886, perhaps, was not so much a sense of place as a sense of class. And he sensed that the quality that made Lambeth vivid was its profound, if often discordant, musicality. Together with the high-cultural austerity he labelled "Hellas" was the side he labelled "Lambeth," in which he proclaimed the quality of these streets as one of popular entertainment.

[1] Jeremy Tambling, *Going Astray: Dickens and London* (Harlow: Longman, 2009), p. 163, calls Gissing "more district-bound" than Dickens, and he explains this quality via "the increasing size of London" which was driven by the growth of the railway network and in turn made necessary the expansion of (in Gissing's lifetime largely horse-drawn) road-bound public transport, specifically trams and omnibuses.

[2] In 1890s New Zealand, Edith Searle Grossmann wrote in the *Otago Witness* (21-22 April 1892, pp. 40, 44) placing the novel in focus here, *Thyrza*, among Gissing's "treatises on the poverty of London." Grossmann observed that Walter Egremont in the novel owns a "Lambeth candle factory" (actually Egremont is not the employer of the working men Grail and Ackroyd, who do work in a candle factory: he owns a different factory, manufacturing oil-cloth). See her "Four Novels of George Gissing's," 1893, edited by Matthew Woollard, *Gissing Journal,* 48:2 (April 2012), pp. 29-36. In 1970, John Gross offered an interesting summary of *Thyrza* based on its status as a Lambeth novel. Egremont, Gross writes, "goes back to Lambeth determined to spread sweetness and light among the workpeople there," yet

his literary lectures fail to impress the toiling locals: "Candles are real, oil-cloth is real, the bricks and mortar of Lambeth are reality itself – and by comparison Elizabethan poetry seems like a remote tedious dream." See John Gross (1969), *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: English Literary Life Since 1800* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 213–214. Less precise is John Sutherland, who refers to Gissing's *In the Year of Jubilee* as "*his* Lambeth novel" in contradistinction to William Somerset Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth* in *Lives of the Novelists: A History of Fiction in 294 Lives* (New Haven, Connecticutt: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 291, cited by [Pierre Coustillas], "Recent Publications," *Gissing Journal*, 49:2 (April 2013). Gissing wrote *In the Year of Jubilee* not as a Lambeth novel but as a Camberwell one; still, the two were physically close and the porousness of their boundary is explored in the article planned as a sequel to the present one.

[3] For an investigation of this fleeting quality in a post-1960s London context see Jason Finch, "Grotland Explored: The Fleeting Urban Imaginaries of Inner West London," *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, 2:3 (2015), pp. 275-295.

[4] Richard Dennis, "Mapping Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn*," *Gissing Journal*, 46:4 (October 2010), pp. 1-20.

[5] See "An Imaginative Place: The East End of London," Chapter 7 in Jason Finch, *Deep Locational Criticism: Imaginative Place in Literary Research and Teaching* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016), pp. 153-172, also p. 149 for a researcher-created map captioned "The East End moves east." This chapter was written in ignorance of Dennis's 2010 article, and this lack of connection between the two pieces may support their identical findings: that the term "East End" was in the nineteenth century used for places a good way west of those labelled as such in later times.

[6] Richard Dennis, "*Thyrza*'s Geography," in George Gissing, *Thyrza*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013), pp. 560-567.

[7] For a provocative recent effort to combine creative writing with the research practice of human geography exploring urban experience, for example of public transport use, making use of both fiction and non-fictional auto-ethnography, see Giada Peterle, "Carto-Fiction: Narrativising Maps Through Creative Writing," *Social & Cultural Geography*, (2018), DOI: 10.1080/14649365.2018.1428820. "Writing place," as Peterle recognises, is an "art" as well as a science, and forms a marked trend in 2010s cultural geography research. See Miranda Ward, "The Art of Writing Place," *Geography Compass*, 8 (2014), pp. 755-766, who valuably summarises the "creative" or "telling" turns taken by geographers and their sources in writings on the boundary separating fiction and academic writing. Also, on the sometimes productive contrasts and contradictions dividing geographers' and literary critics' views of mapping and the map, see Tania Rossetto, "Theorizing Maps with Literature," *Progress in Human Geography*, 38:4 (2014), pp. 513-530.

[8] Such methods owe something to the "geocriticism" of Bertrand Westphal, with its "stratigraphic" emphasis on, in the summary of Eric Prieto, understanding a place via "an accumulation of past moments, an archaeological layering of successive historical phases," by peeling back multiple layers of memory and association. See Bertrand Westphal (2007), *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, translated from French by Robert T. Tally Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Eric Prieto, "Geocriticism Meets Ecocriticism: Bertrand Westphal and Environmental Thinking," *Épistémocritique: Littérature et savoirs*, 9 (2011). My own approach combining creativity and scholarship has developed in dialogue with such currents but also taken its own path. See Jason Finch, *E. M. Forster and English Place: A Literary Topography* (Turku, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2011); Finch, *Deep Locational Criticism*, e.g. Chapter 4, "The Precise Spot Occupied by a Renaissance Playhouse."

In the latter, inhabitants' and readers' perceptions of the large city of London are said to have "a potentially limitless quantity of nodes within itself, themselves all in flux yet displaying inertias as well" (p. 117).

[9] Finch, *Deep Locational Criticism*, pp. 17-18.

[10] Ward, "The Art of Writing Place," p. 757; Nick Papadimitriou, *Scarp* (London: Sceptre, 2012); Georges Perec, *"Species of Spaces" and Other Pieces*, tr. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1999); Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London* (London: Granta, 1997). On Perec, see also Finch, *Deep Locational Criticism*, pp. 36-37; Michael Sheringham, "Georges Perec: Uncovering the Infra-Ordinary," Chapter 7 in his *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 248-291.

[11] The *Wikipedia* (English language) articles "Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth" and "London Borough of Lambeth" provide reliable information about the extent and subdivisions of the post-1889 local government units bearing the name "Lambeth." The ancient parish is exhaustively described in the Victoria County History volume: "Lambeth: The parish," in *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 4*, ed. H. E. Malden (London: Constable & Co., 1912), pp. 50-64 (www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/surrey/vol4/pp50-64 [accessed 13 March 2018]). On the topographic history of Lambeth until the mid-twentieth century, focused on buildings in danger of demolition, see two volumes in the *Survey of London* series, *Volume XXIII, Lambeth: South Bank and Vauxhall* (London: Athlone Press for the London County Council, 1951) and *Volume 26, Lambeth: Southern Area* (London: Athlone Press for the London County Council, 1956); both available via British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/survey-london [accessed 13 March 2018]. For a topographic survey oriented around noteworthy architecture but also covering areal differences see the volume in the *Buildings of England* series, Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 2: South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983). Currently in early 2018, at least, the London Borough of Lambeth is providing useful maps and neighbourhood guides: www.lambeth.gov.uk/explore-lambeth [accessed 13 March 2018].

[12] Google Maps [accessed 13 March 2018] gives the walking distance from Waterloo Bridge to 117 Hassocks Rd, London SW16 5HA, on the southern extremity of the London Borough of Lambeth, as 7.6 miles, and expects an average person to walk the distance in just over two and a half hours, assuming no breaks are taken.

[13] *Thyrza* (2013), p. 73.

[14] Lambeth Palace: *Thyrza* (2013), p. 50 (as a local landmark); p. 134 (viewed by Gilbert Grail from Lambeth Bridge with a chiaroscuro evoking Wright of Derby: "dark, lifeless; the roofs were defined against a sky made lurid by the streets of Lambeth").

[15] *Thyrza* (2013), pp. 50-52.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 53.

[17] As in other fields of activity. Directly across the Thames from the Palace of Westminster, on the territory of the London Borough of Lambeth, lies the former County Hall, from 1922 until 1986 "the headquarters of local government in London" (*Wikipedia*, English language, "County Hall" [accessed 13 March 2018]). In the 1980s before the abolition of the Greater London Council by the UK's Westminster government, County Hall faced the Houses of Parliament adorned with a banner giving the number of London's unemployed (see Jonathan Glancey, "We'll Keep the Dead Cow Flying Here," *Guardian*, 4 April 2003, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2003/apr/04/saatchigallery.artsfeatures [accessed 13 March 2018]).

[18] Malden, "Lambeth," paragraphs 10 and 11.

[19] On the emergence of London's music halls, see Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2007), pp. 277-281. "Music and the public house had always gone together," according to White, p. 278. The Old Vic is known today as a major London theatre developed after 1912 by Lilian Baylis, who is commemorated via a mural in Lambeth Walk, near the homes of the main characters of *Thyrza*. As the Royal Victoria Coffee Music Hall it was operated in the 1880s and 1890s by Baylis's aunt the social reformer Emma Cons: as an alcohol-free entertainment site for the local working classes. See Judi Leighton, "Cons, Emma (1838–1912), Social Reformer and Theatre Manager," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online [accessed 13 March 2018].

[20] Letter from George Gissing to Frederic Harrison, 23 July 1880, in *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, ed. by Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, nine volumes (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1996), Vol. 1, p. 293.

[21] Gissing lodged at 186 Kennington Road in March-April 1893. One of Chaplin's numerous addresses in Kennington and elsewhere in Lambeth whilst a boy was 287 Kennington Road. Chaplin's mother and Gissing's second wife Edith were both, around the turn of the twentieth century, residents of Lambeth workhouse. See Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1964), between pp. 74 and 75; pp. 18-29.

[22] Chaplin, *Autobiography*, p. 1.

[23] This was not the only London zone popular with music hall artists who made it. Another, home for instance to Lupino Lane, Marie Lloyd, and Little Tich, ran north-west from the West End of London taking in Maida Vale and St John's Wood and, beyond them, Golders Green and Hendon. See the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* articles on all of these performers.

[24] Chaplin, *Autobiography*, between pp. 100 and 101. I was able to connect Chaplin to Gissing by finding the former's autobiography in the Minet Library, Knatchbull Road, London SE5, where Lambeth Archives are located.

[25] Malden, "Lambeth," paragraph 19.

[26] William Stannard, "About Your Father" (1936 note on George Gissing) in Pierre Coustillas, "William Gissing Stannard, Memorialist – History and Legend: A Rambling Commentary," *Gissing Journal*, 47:1 (January 2011), p. 19.

[27] *Ibid*.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 6.

[29] Malden, "Lambeth," paragraph 4. A small section of Lucretia Street remains, renamed Grindal Street in 1912.

[30] Examples include Islington and Barnet among post-1965 London Boroughs, Camberwell and Hampstead among pre-1965 Metropolitan Boroughs. All are one locality as well as the name for a larger unit.

[31] The subtitle *A Tale*, which appears on the title page of the 1887 first edition of *Thyrza*, published by Smith, Elder, and on those of later reprints, disappears from Coustillas's 2013 edition of the novel, even though in that edition it is stated (p. 542) that the first edition "is the text for this current critical edition." The subtitle, which *did* appear in the title of Jacob Korg's 1974 edition of the novel for the Harvester Press, has never received any attention from critics. Undoubtedly, though, it indicates how Gissing meant *Thyrza* to be read.

[32] *Thyrza* (2013), p. 35.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[34] Letter from George Gissing to Frederic Harrison, 23 July 1880, *Collected Letters*, Vol. I, p. 293.

[35] Letter from George Gissing to Ellen Gissing, 31 July 1886, *Collected Letters*, Vol. III, pp. 48–49.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 48.

[37] Letter from George Gissing to Margaret Gissing, 31 July 1886, *ibid*., p. 47.

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 88.

[40] Letter from George Gissing to Ellen Gissing, 22 November 1886, *Collected Letters*, Vol. III, p. 66.

[41] George Gissing, diary entries for 1 and 2 March 1888, in Pierre Coustillas, ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1978), pp. 22-23.

[42] Gissing, entry for 1 March 1888, in *Diary*, p. 22. For an image of the street market of Lower Marsh in 1896, see the London Metropolitan Archives *Collage* image repository website (https://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk, record number 90319).

[43] Letter from George Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 3 March 1888, *Collected Letters*, Vol. III, p. 188.

[44] E. M. Forster (1910), *Howards End*, ed. Paul B. Armstrong (New York: Norton, 1998), in Chapter 13, p. 80, speaks of Westminster Bridge Road as one of the London "thoroughfares" in which, during the morning "the city inhaling" can be detected, and then "in the evening […] exhaling her exhausted air."

[45] Gissing, entry for 1 March 1888, in *Diary*, p. 22.

[46] *Survey of London, Vol. XXIII*, p. 144. See also www.workhouses.org.uk/Lambeth [accessed 13 March 2018]. The institution on Prince's Road was the one purportedly described in James Greenwood's 1866 work of undercover journalism "A Night in a Workhouse," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12, 13, and 15 January 1866, pp. 9-10, 10, and 9-10.

[47] *Collage*, e.g. record numbers 88417 (taken in 1950) and 89892 (from 1969); an 1886 watercolour of Lambeth Walk itself shows a picturesque jumble of houses, many with fair-sized front gardens, in an orderly and spacious streetscape (*Collage*, record number 313775). It may of course have been painted with an eye for the picturesque, the painter eliminating mess as well as people from the scene.

[48] Cherry and Pevsner (*London 2: South*, p. 22) claim that the environment of South London for the passer-through combines an "apparently interminable sequence of dingy Victorian and Edwardian shopping parades" with "the occasional bleak concrete roundabout" and the "converging nineteenth-century railway viaducts which still overshadow the neighbourhoods close to the Thames." See also Finch, *E. M. Forster and English Place*, p. 287, for another literary topography of South London, this one focused on Clapham.

[49] Photographs taken during the walks and during the library research on the same London visit are available in Jason Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," a publicly accessible *Flickr* album: www.flickr.com/photos/jasonfinch1970/albums/72157691388994762 [accessed 13 March 2018].

[50] With music by Noel Gay, lyrics by Douglas Furber and L. Arthur Rose.

[51] See www.imdb.com/title/tt0032688 [accessed 13 March 2018]. The film of *The Lambeth Walk* followed the complete filming of the stage musical *Me and My Girl*, earlier in 1939.

[52] A biographer calls Lane "the embodiment of the cockney, dapper and jaunty, but with the true clown's gift of pathos – the endearing 'little man' whose cheerful resilience wins through" (W. A. Darlington – revised by Alison Light), "Lane, Lupino [real name Henry William George Lupino] (1892–1959), Actor and Theatre Manager," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online [accessed 13 March 2018]).

[53] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4102" (Dan Leno's grave).

[54] Anthony Petyt, "The Last Years of Edith Underwood," *Gissing Journal*, 46:3 (July 2010), pp. 4-15.

[55] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4209" (plaque commemorating Cherry Dorothy Groce).

[56] Gissing, *Diary*, p. 329.

[57] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4102" (the obelisk at St George's Circus).

[58] Cherry and Pevsner, *London 2: South*, p. 22.

[59] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4309" (murals on Lambeth Walk); see also photograph number "DSC_4308" (murals depicting ragged schools and the former Doulton ceramic works). Richard Dennis's map "Thyrza's World" could be worth consulting alongside these photographs: Dennis, "*Thyrza*'s Geography," p. 563.

[60] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4312" (retro goods shop), "DSC_4320" (Newport Street Gallery).

[61] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4328" (former Beaufoy Institute, Black Prince Road, London SE11). The Beaufoys, down to their French-sounding name, merit investigation as possible originals for Gissing's morally ambivalent Lambeth plutocracy of Egremonts and Dalmaines.

[62] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. nos. "DSC_4338" (The Oval), "DSC_4345" (Kennington Park).

[63] St Mark's by David Roper (1824); St John the Divine by George Edmund Street (1871). Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. nos. "DSC_4339" (St Mark's), "DSC_4351" (St John the Divine).

[64] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. nos. "DSC_4357" (Myatt's Fields), "DSC_4360" (house inhabited by the Gissings at 76 Burton Road, London SW9).

[65] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4363" (Minet Library).

[66] Finch, "Lambeth, February 2018," photo. no. "DSC_4330" (gasometers on Vauxhall Street, London SE11, near the Oval cricket ground).

[67] Dennis, "*Thyrza*'s Geography," p. 561.

[68] *Ibid*.

[69] Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* (London: Viking, 2001), p. 122.

[70] Broadly, in the earlier nineteenth century the word "slum" was used for a smaller space such as an individual room, house or court, typically defined medically as unhygienic, so-called "fever-nests" (quoted by Anne Hardy, "Urban Famine or Urban Crisis? Typhus in the Victorian City," in *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History, 1820–1914*, edited by R. J. Morris and Richard Rodger (Harlow: Longman, 1993), pp. 209-240, here p. 221). In the twentieth century, the word "slum" continued to be used in the general late-nineteenth century sense for a whole region, but also in the UK specifically, came to denote areas that were marked for clearance and redevelopment in the implementation by local authorities of various Acts of Parliament. See also Jason Finch, "How Cultural? How Material? Rereading the Slums of Early Victorian London," in *Imagining Spaces and Places*, ed. by Saija Isomaa, Pirjo Lyytikäinen, Kirsi Saarikangas, and Renja Suominen-Kokkonen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 85-105.

[71] *Thyrza* (2013), p. 76.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 65.

[73] See James Winter, *London's Teeming Streets: 1830-1914* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), p. 106 for an account of a visit in about 1905 of the writer Olive Christian Malvery to a real-life "friendly lead," with emphasis on the charity and social care involved.

[74] *Thyrza* (2013), p. 66.

[75] *Ibid*., p. 71.

[76] *Ibid*., pp. 50-52.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 132.

[78] *Ibid*., pp. 132-133.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 76.

[80] William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel: 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), in Chapter 7, pp. 134-150, discusses the direct influence of Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinist *Education* (1861), read by Gissing ten years after *Thyrza* came out, on *The Whirlpool* (1897). Greenslade's whole book demonstrates the extraordinary level of influence which the theory of degeneration gained in this decade of Gissing's life and for another decade thereafter (in which period it can be felt in works such as Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* and E. M. Forster's *Howards End*).

[81] *Thyrza*, p. 76.

[82] *Ibid*.

[83] *Ibid*., p. 64.

[84] *Ibid*., p. 71.

[85] *Ibid*., p. 243.

[86] Dennis ("*Thyrza*'s Geography," p. 561) points out that although we cannot know exactly where on the Westminster Bridge Road the factory should be considered to be located in Gissing's novel, we can know where there were factories on the *actual* Westminster Bridge Road in the 1880s. Thus Dennis shows the complexities of literary mapping, when the text is dense with street names, as in the Lambeth scenes of *Thyrza*, although the relationship between these and a non-fictional Lambeth is still open for contestation: do they merely evoke and exemplify London's lower levels, or specifically comment on this area?

[87] *Thyrza* (2013), p. 274.

[88] *Ibid*., p. 120.

[89] *Ibid*.

[90] *Ibid*., p. 121. "The number of days on which London was foggy increased from around twenty or thirty at the start of the century to about forty-five in the early 1870s and between sixty and eighty-five in the 1880s," writes Stephen Inwood in his *City of Cities: The Birth of Modern London* (London: Macmillan, 2005), p. 7. London fogs killed people through respiratory disease as well as destroying fabrics such as curtains.

[91] *Thyrza*, p. 127.

[92] This walk is mapped by Dennis ("*Thyrza*'s Geography," p. 563) as "Grail's walk." Dennis's map does not cover Grail's later walk onto Lambeth Bridge in Chapter 9, but does contain one from Chapter 22 of a walk by Egremont onto the same bridge, "stopping […] to lean on the parapet at the same place where Gilbert had stood and mused one night when his happiness was almost too great to bear" (*Thyrza*, p. 276).

[93] As I have argued in relation to the struggling (and clearly, in cultural terms at least, not plebeian) authors of Gissing's *New Grub Street*: see Jason Finch, "The Peripheries of London Slumland in George Gissing and Alexander Baron," in *Literature and the Peripheral City*, ed. by Lieven Ameel, Jason Finch, and Markku Salmela (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 56-74.

25 St Paul's Crescent: Bleak Home of the Underwoods and Yules

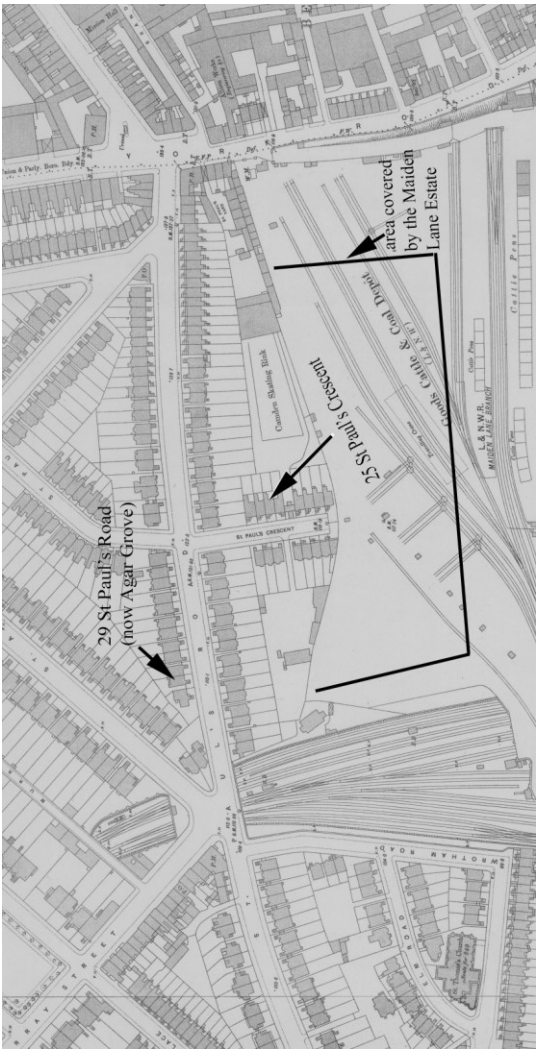
CHRISTOPHER DOUGLAS
London

In 2016 I wrote a two-part adaptation of *New Grub Street* for BBC Radio 4's Saturday Drama slot, in which I also played George Gissing. Reading the diaries and letters, I became interested in how Gissing's personal situation affected his creativity. He often experienced false starts and he had just abandoned his umpteenth attempt at beginning *New Grub Street* when a liaison with Edith Underwood seemed to unblock him. I chose to include this episode in the script. Their relationship began with a pickup near the Oxford Music Hall, in the West End of London, and soon developed into an unhappy marriage. As I looked at the sparse accounts of their early meetings, I realised that I live within walking distance of Edith's former family home at 25 St Paul's Crescent, London NW1. In *New Grub Street* it is described as a "quiet by-way" in the "remoter part of Camden Town." It feels equally cut off now, separated as it is by the London Overground railway line from the rising splendour of the new King's Cross development.

Gissing visited the house several times during their courtship, receiving a chilly welcome from the Underwood family. Perhaps that is what prompted him to use number 25 as the model for the abode of the curmudgeon essayist Alfred Yule, possibly Gissing's greatest tragi-comic character. The layout of rooms still matches the fictional representation; Yule's study can be imagined at the back of the upper-ground floor where Gissing and Edith shared their first awkward meals. It is where Yule's daughter Marian weeps for the loss of her fortune and for the man she loves. It is also where he has the first indication that cataracts are robbing him of his sight; on waking from a turbulent sleep, he looks out the window and sees what he thinks is a layer of frost covering the back yard. This is a vivid image which may have been inspired by the existence, at the time, of a skating rink behind the houses in the crescent.

Like Alfred Yule, Edith's father was unhappy with his daughter's choice of husband but, that apart, not much is known about him. Edith's marriage certificate records James Underwood's occupation as sculptor, and doubts have sometimes been cast over the accuracy of this. More than one writer has taken the view that he was a plasterer trying to elevate his professional status but there is no reason at all to disbelieve Underwood. Most 19th-century North London houses have some kind of ornamental masonry adorning their entrances, and stonemasons based themselves in Camden to

supply the demand. It may not have been sculpture in the high artistic sense but the people who did the work were undeniably sculptors. Many of their



workshops were situated within a few minutes of Cumberland Basin, which lay between Euston Station and Regent's Park, because it was here that stone for building and carving arrived in London by barge.

Well-known artists such as Sir Frederick Leighton and Walter Sickert also had studios around Cumberland Market, a lively bohemian hub. Although Gissing and Sickert only met once, they knew of each other's

work, which in fact could be said to be similar in character: stark realism with a finely-worked dramatic narrative. Both men remain very highly regarded by practitioners of their art: the one being the painter's painter and the other the novelist's novelist. Sickert was moving beyond the still popular 'problem picture' whose subjects were usually domestic catastrophes, while Gissing recorded city life with a new, rigorous psychological accuracy in a style that soared above most fiction of the working class.

The Underwood home in St Paul's Crescent is only a twenty-five-minute walk from the site of the stonemasons' workshops around the Cumberland Basin and its market. Gissing knew the area well; he lived at two addresses

25 St Paul's Crescent (Christopher Douglas 2018)

there, and when he wrote *The Odd Women* he located Mildred Vesper's top-floor rooms within a short distance of the market, which also traded hay and straw. "'Quite pleasant odours – country odours – reach us on market day,' says Miss Vesper." The area was rebuilt after the First World War and much of it is currently being redeveloped again to accommodate the HS2 rail link.

As for the humble dwelling of the Underwoods and the fictional Yules in St Paul's Crescent, it is unlikely that any artisan or essayist could afford to live there now. At the time of writing the Zoopla website values the house at £1.7m (or an estimated monthly rental of £5,300), and on the site of the old skating rink is a gated block of similarly priced warehouse-style flats. Surprisingly, perhaps, such figures are a little below the going rate for properties of this type and there is a reason for it: St Paul's Crescent is now the access road to the crime-ridden Maiden Lane estate, home of moped gangs and scene of two recent murders; it is a 1970s brutalist complex, uninviting to the casual stroller, and which pizza delivery bikes and the police are equally reluctant to enter.

Less than a hundred yards north of number 25 is the house on Agar Grove in which the prostitute Emily Dimmock was horribly murdered in 1907. The unsolved killing became known as the Camden Town Murder. Sickert appropriated the title for four paintings he produced at the time the crime took place. St Paul's Crescent forms a grim geographical link between the Camden Town Murder and the more recent crimes on the Maiden Lane estate. History has endowed the facades of these early Victorian houses with a sullen look. Did George Gissing sense a bad atmosphere all those years ago?

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George Gissing's Long Journey to Potsdam

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

When Eduard Bertz returned to Germany just before Easter in 1884 at the age of thirty-one, after years of exile, it seemed unlikely that Gissing would see his German friend for many years to come. At the time Gissing was struggling to make a living writing novels, whilst Bertz, less talented than his English friend, faced an uncertain future in his homeland.

Although, after Bertz's departure, Gissing missed his intellectual companionship and the close contact with German culture he provided, they began a mutually rewarding exchange of letters, which on Gissing's side represents in many respects the most interesting series in the collected edition of his letters. For all that, once he was able to travel on the continent for the first time, in the early spring of 1886, it was not to Germany that he travelled, but to Paris, where he spent a fortnight exploring the city. After France, Gissing's greatest wish was to travel south, first to Italy, and then to Greece. There was still no such yearning to see Germany, for, as Patrick Bridgwater writes: "Gissing's Germany was always more of an ideal, intellectual realm

than anything else."[1] However, it was not until two and a half years later, in late September 1888, after selling *The Nether World* for £150, that Gissing was able to fund a sojourn in Italy for the entire winter. 1889 followed exactly the same course, for, having written *The Emancipated* and received £150 on account from Bentley, Gissing fulfilled his remaining wish, leaving on 11 November to pass a month in Athens exploring old Greek sites. On his return from Greece, he stopped at Naples until 20 February 1890, before heading home on a steamer via Gibraltar.

Was it possible that 1890 would also follow the same pattern as the preceding two years? As a matter of fact, encouraged by the progress of his German at Naples, where he spoke it nearly all the time, Gissing was soon entertaining the idea of not only visiting Bertz but actually going to Berlin for an extended stay. In exuberant mood, he even went so far as to inform Bertz on 15 February, before leaving Naples, of his future plans, writing: "Have decided to come to Germany as soon as I have finished my new book, & to remain there until I have a decent command of the language. Perhaps you will not be sorry to hear this. Hope to be in Berlin by the beginning of October."[2] In Naples he had been staying at a lodging house run by a friendly young polyglot Swiss woman, whose friendly care, during a short illness, he had found quite congenial. Moreover, he was attended to by a German doctor, whom he refers to in a letter to Bertz as "one of the nicest fellows I ever met! In the best sense of the word a gentleman, & impressing one as admirable in his profession. A man of the bright German intelligence, but absolutely without pedantry."[3] As the place was much frequented by German travellers, the sociable evening meals had offered Gissing plenty of chances to get to know several likeable Germans. These two months in Naples daily spent in the cosmopolitan and convivial company of a group of highly educated Germans, soon kindled in him the strong desire to visit the country whose literature had so captured his imagination in his youth.

In April 1890 Gissing went abroad again, this time to Paris for ten days with his sisters. A month after this, on 25 May, Gissing reiterated his intention to Bertz of finally going to Germany. From Wakefield he writes,

> I have quite made up my mind concerning the visit to Germany. As soon as I can sell my next MS., I shall get rid of my furniture, store away my books, & set forth for Berlin, there to pass the winter. But there is one thing I want to say with emphasis. You must not apprehend that my coming will in the least interfere with your regular way of life. My own habits are those of solitude, & it would be anything but my wish that you should think it needful to take trouble on my account. If it were possible, I think I should like to find a house where I could eat with the family,—just for the sake of the language. But there will be time enough to think of that. Don't be anxious about me; some day we shall just meet each other, & resume the conversations of London as if nothing had intervened.

> […] Yes, I know I shall have a great deal to do in relation to the newest German literature. Throughout the winter, I probably shall not need to write, & all my time will be given to German studies. I look forward to rummaging in your library.[4]

Gissing had just been rereading the *Memoiren einer Idealistin* by Malwida von Meysenbug, the daughter of a German baron, who during a remarkable life became friends with many of the greatest personalities of the late nineteenth century including Alexander Herzen, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Richard Wagner. The personality of this cultivated female writer inspired in him a longing to meet women of her ilk, yet he was convinced that such sophisticated and noble females were only to be found on the continent. Much preoccupied with European literature, he next read the immensely popular romantic realist novel *Niels Lyhne*, by the late Danish writer, Jens Peter Jacobsen, in the German Reclam edition – of which 10,000 copies had been sold in just four years. Reading such books intensified his feeling of loneliness, convinced him that English literature had become stale and unoriginal. Increasingly, he desired to live abroad, and his reading of *Le Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff*, a month later, yet another work full of that "cosmopolitan atmosphere"[5] which he hoped one day to enjoy himself, only provoked his restlessness to get away all the more. In England he felt underappreciated as a writer and was convinced he was wasting his life there. Even his best friend, Morley Roberts, told him he would be better off living abroad in every respect. But Gissing had got himself into such a depressed state that he toiled on his next novel all summer to no avail. On 15 August he ultimately wrote to Bertz that he had to write his novel all over again, and that "all the plans [he] had made for the winter"[6] were destroyed. Instead, he added, it was now his urgent desire to find "some decent work-girl who will come & live with me."[7] Only then could he work properly and banish the crushing loneliness which so oppressed him. Within a month Gissing met Edith Underwood, later marrying her, and thus his plan to travel to Germany was postponed, seemingly for good.

After six years of marital misery, in September 1897, Gissing walked out on his marriage with Edith never to return. A month earlier, from the Yorkshire Dales, he had written to Bertz in the opening of his letter that, "I shall be here till the end of August; then back to Epsom from September; then—I don't know the next step, except that it must be to a place where I can work hard."[8] Towards the end of the letter, he writes, "You shall hear of my arrival at Epsom. I *think* I shall manage to live through the winter in the neighbourhood of London, but the fact remains that I still have a slight cough—so things may turn out otherwise than I hope."[9] Gissing was now living from day to day in a state of uncertainty about his future, although he seems clearer in his thoughts upon closing the letter. But there was an abrupt change of plan even before he

separated from Edith. Already on 13 September he informs Bertz "I am sending news which will surprise (but not astonish) you. Rather suddenly, I have decided to go to Italy for the whole of the winter."[10] In that letter he sets out his motives and plans for the entire winter. Then at its close, he writes, "Do find a pleasant home before next summer, & then let me *come to see you!*"[11] That last piece of news *will* certainly have "astonish[ed]" Bertz. Even more astonishing still is the fact that during the past seven years of correspondence – since 23 January 1891 – Gissing had not written a word to Bertz about Edith, let alone about marrying her.

Gissing left for Italy nine days later. From October 1897 to 13 January 1898 he wrote seven times to Bertz from in turn Siena, Cotrone, Cassino, and Rome, without again touching upon the matter of travelling to Germany. Wrapped up in the writing of his Dickens book, distracted by the daily sights and sounds of the country he loved above all others, and diverted in his leisure hours by the young and amiable Brian Ború Dunne, Gissing was clearly absorbed in the here and now. Curiously, Bertz did not, it seems, refer to Gissing's September news in any of his letters up to the new year. In Gissing's next letter from the Hôtel Alibert in Rome, dated 10 February, we can see why. In the first paragraph Gissing writes in response to Bertz's most recent letter, "I fear that, for once, you may have misunderstood me. Did you really think that I asked you to get a new house for *my* sake? No, no! Entirely for your own. To *me* it matters nothing where I am housed when I come to Potsdam. For, come I certainly shall, & it will rejoice me to shake hands with you again."[12] Bertz had remained silent about Gissing's intended visit either because he was unsure how to take his message, or, misinterpreting it, he felt wounded by its intent. In his reply to Gissing's letter of 13 January he had finally mentioned the September message which Gissing was then able to clarify. At the same time Gissing had committed himself to seeing Bertz in the near future.

Gissing's letter, a notable one in his correspondence with Bertz, continues:

> But ————!
> I come to see you, & to see you only. I beg you to remember:
> 1) that, I am a wretched invalid, weak in body & mind.
> 2) that, I cannot *talk* German; nor even *speak* it with any comfort.
> 3) that, I dread the sight of strangers.
> No, no. Let you & me pass one day together, one day more in this life; & let no one else intervene. Rehfeldt does not speak English, & to him I should only appear a stammering idiot. Let us say nothing to any body, but creep about in secret, like two old fogies.
> Seriously, I dread the thought of seeing anyone but you. I am sure you will not mind.
> You see a new address at the head of this letter. I have been so ill, that in a day or two I am going to move to a hotel, where I can get my food without going out. My health is now utterly ruined, I fear. Congestion, influenza, &ᶜ, have played the devil with me.

I long to be back in England. I shall never travel again.

Let us hope there may come a few fine days in April, that I may travel northward as soon as possible.

All good be with you.

Yours ever,
GEORGE GISSING[13]

As this letter reveals, Gissing was just then at a particularly low ebb. Marked, or as Bertz might have said, *gezeichnet*, by his struggles as a writer and in more recent years by his dreadful marriage with Edith, he was no longer the man his German friend had once known, as he was especially keen to point out. Still, he was no invalid yet, and *of course* he could speak German well – in reality, he just wanted to spend valuable time with Bertz without distractions of any kind.

Bertz had replied sending a newspaper report about a treatment for tuberculosis recommended by a Professor Ernst von Leyden of Berlin. Upon obtaining the medicine, Gissing wrote on 20 February "I will not write to Prof. von Leyden, because I don't think he could say more (without a personal examination) than 'Try!' […] But, when I am in Germany, I should certainly like to consult the Professor."[14] Three weeks later, telling Bertz that Creosotal was doing him a power of good, he reported from Rome that he had written to von Leyden and been advised where to get a good supply of it in Germany. He ended that letter, "Well, it will not be long now, I think, before we meet. I look forward eagerly to that time, & hope I shall hear much good of your work. Heavens! how we shall talk!"[15] As yet he had not told Bertz when he was coming, but had that same day written to Herbert Heaton Sturmer that he had to be back in England by early May, so the journey to Germany was evidently planned before then. Finally, on 5 April, he writes,

Am getting very restless, & anxious to be at work. Hope to leave Rome on *Ap*. 12, & to travel to Berlin, with one night's rest at München. Could you tell me how I get from Berlin to Potsdam? Fear I shall not be able to let you know hour of arrival; yet I might *telegraph* from München perhaps. —This will not be too soon for you.

The place where the Creosotal is bought is:

D^{r}. F. von Heyden Nachf., in Radebeul, bei Dresden.

Look forward with delight to seeing you. Hope to stop three days.

Ever yours
G.G.[16]

Not since they last saw each other in 1884 had Gissing been so definite in his plan to visit Potsdam. Still Bertz would have been disappointed to learn that he only intended a brief stay. But Gissing was swayed into trimming his visit by his urgency to get back to England to find a new home and to start work on a new book. Days later, on 8 April, he wrote a short message to

Bertz from the Hôtel Alibert at Rome, which he ended, "Looking forward to our meeting next week."[17]

France (1886), Italy (1888-89), Greece (1889), Italy (1889-90), France (1890), Italy (1897-98): – if there was a pattern to Gissing's European travels up to 1898, it was finally altered when he left Rome and journeyed northwards on Tuesday 12th April. Though troubled by thoughts of the uncertain future awaiting him on his return to England, he would have had ample time on the journey through northern Italy to reflect upon the country he was approaching. In his youth and later apprentice days as a writer, Germany had signified to him the country that had brought forth such mighty beings as Goethe, Jean Paul, Heine, and Schopenhauer. These were his literary gods. Now when he looked towards Germany, the harsh realities born of imperialism, science, and industrialism impressed themselves on his thoughts. Just as the France of his beloved Daudet was now in disgrace both because of the Dreyfus Affair and its ugly reaction to Émile Zola's act of heroism in coming to Dreyfus's defence, modern Germany represented to him everything that was wrong with what the military, scientists, and industrialists regarded as progress.

After a sleepless night on the train, Gissing had his luggage inspected at the Italian frontier town of Ala and again at Kufstein on the Austrian border, 50 miles northeast of Innsbruck. As Gissing reported in his *Diary* on the Wednesday evening of 13 April he "reached Munich in wind and rain, and went to the Bamberger Hof."[18] Located on Kaufingerstrasse, a few minutes' walk from the famous Marienplatz, the Bamberger Hof was then the largest, most elegant, and luxurious hotel in Munich. Opened in 1854 on the site of a brewery and retaining the original stables and malt house, it soon acquired its own concert hall. By the late 1890s this latter had been transformed into a palace of beer, where some years later the German comedian, Karl Valentin, performed. The Bamberger Hof existed until 1944 when allied bombs obliterated the building. During his one night there, Gissing recorded that he had "[g]reat difficulty in speaking German" with the local Bavarians and liked "my Munich beer."[19]

He was up early on a rainy and windy Thursday morning to catch the 8.25 train to Berlin from Munich Hauptbahnhof. The more than twelve-hour journey took him through Regensburg, providing him with a "[s]triking view of the great Cathedral,"[20] then on to Hof, Leipzig, Dresden. During the journey he would again have had much time to dwell on the passing years and what he knew of Bertz's life up to the present hour, as he wondered what effect all those years had had on his old friend.

Eduard Bertz, born in Potsdam on 8 March 1853, like Gissing, had lost his father, a merchant by profession, in his youth. His mother later married a

widower, for whom he cared little. From that time Bertz was both miserable at school and at home in the holidays. In 1875 he enrolled as a student of political sciences at the University of Leipzig. Then he did military service, as a one-year volunteer, in Tübingen, where he made friends with some radicals. In June 1877 he organised a student protest against the demotion of Eugen Karl Dühring, the Professor of philosophy and economy at the University of Berlin. That autumn Bertz wrote six articles for the *Berliner Freie Presse*. Thereafter, in his absence – he had since travelled to Paris – he was sentenced to five months' imprisonment for allegedly insulting the Prussian military. Towards the end of 1878, after less than a year in the French

1905 postcard of the Bamberger Hof at Munich

metropolis, he decided to seek his fortune in London. Shortly after his arrival, he put an advert in a newspaper hoping to find intellectual companionship. It was in this way that he came to know Gissing. In the next few years, whilst meeting up with him as often as possible for lively conversation about shared interests and contributing a chapter entitled "Mind-growth" to Gissing's first published novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, about the heroine's intellectual education in Germany, he barely supported himself by means of an occasional teaching job and penning reviews of German books for the English press. Early in 1880, realising he was earning too little to focus on his studies, he made his mind up to fall back on the small capital he had kept in reserve,

sufficient, in his own estimate, to allow him a decade and more of carefree existence.

At first Bertz wrote fairy tales which mostly went the rounds in vain. He then determined to study towards a doctorate but that also came to nothing. The following year, whilst suffering from ill health and discouraged by his lack of progress, he made the acquaintance of Thomas Hughes (1822-1896), the famous politician and writer of *Tom Brown's School Days* (1858), who told him about the Utopian colony he had founded at Rugby, Tennessee. Persuaded by Hughes to start a new life in America, Bertz made the bold decision to use his savings to purchase farmland from the trustees of the colony. Soon after, on 27 July 1881, Bertz took leave of Gissing and England, journeying to America to lead what he hoped would be an ideal and healthy agrarian life in the back of beyond. Yet, within a year, his farm on the rugged Cumberland Plateau, the world's widest hardwood forest, had failed. He was then given the more suitable post of librarian. Here he made his most enduring contribution to the Rugby colony, cataloguing the entire contents of the library. By the spring of 1883, "the ideal community" was in decline, and, by 8 June, he was back in London. For a while he resumed his old life in lodgings, seeing Gissing frequently. But after some months he lost his way, taken by a religious fervour which saw him spend all his time at Salvation Army meetings. Bertz soon came to his senses, finding work at the London Library, whilst writing into the new year a short novel, *The French Prisoners, A Story for Boys,* which is set in a German town during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Gissing arranged terms for him with Macmillan, who paid Bertz £25. Now that the German government had proclaimed an amnesty to socialists in exile, this enabled him to pay his way to Ilmenau, where he spent some weeks with a friend before taking up residence in Stuttgart.

Once there Bertz continued a translation into German of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters,* begun in New York in May 1883, which Reclam of Leipzig brought out in 1885. The following year saw him back in Potsdam writing juvenile stories for magazines. In 1888 he joined the Deutsche Schriftsteller Verband, eventually becoming its secretary, and over the next few years wrote a number of articles for the Verband's journal, the *Deutsche Presse*, about philosophers and writers, including Gissing. In 1891 he published *Glück und Glas*, a novel set in and around Tübingen.

For the next three years Bertz settled in Frankfurt an der Oder, birthplace of the pioneering poet, dramatist, and fiction writer, Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811). Here he devoted himself to reading history books and novels about the Mark Brandenburg region around Berlin, and writing articles for Victor Ottmann's *Litterarisches Echo*. He then spent a year in Berlin before returning

to live in Potsdam in 1895. The following year he published *Das Sabinergut*, a fictional account of his Utopian adventure in the backwoods of Tennessee. In the mid-1890s, his ability to dedicate himself to his various literary projects had been undermined both by occasional ill health and his acute sensitivity to noise which resulted in many changes of address in pursuit of the perfect place to work. By the spring of 1897, he was established at Neue Königstraße 21, to the northeast of Potsdam city centre, where he remained for two years.

Gissing's reflections were at once dispersed when the train halted alongside the platform at Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin-Kreuzberg at nine in the evening, where he was met by Eduard Bertz. Fourteen years after last seeing him, Gissing found "him looking very old; silvery hair. Yet seems in good health."[21] Bertz, who was only in his mid-forties, for his part, wrote to Gabrielle Fleury four months after Gissing's death:

> Ich für meine Person muss gestehen, obwohl die plötzliche Todeskunde mich schwer getroffen hat, dass ich doch an George's volle und wirkliche Genesung nach seinem Besuche in Potsdam niemals geglaubt habe und eigentlich immer darauf vorbereitet gewesen bin und fürchtete, dass er einmal ganz unerwartet hinweggenommen werde würde. [I must admit myself that, although the sudden news of his death hit me hard, following his visit in Potsdam, I had never believed in his full and true recovery and had really always been prepared for and feared his being quite suddenly taken from us. (my translation)] [22]

They left the station after meeting to eat at a local restaurant. Then Bertz took Gissing to the nearby Berlin Potsdamer Bahnhof (this was closed in 1946 and demolished in 1980) to catch the Berlin to Magdeburg train, which called at Bahnhof Potsdam, where the two got off later that evening.

Outside the station they could have taken a horse-drawn tram (the red line). In those days three such tramlines ran – electric trams were introduced to Potsdam in 1907. But, as Gissing had spent two days cooped up on trains, one imagines they enjoyed the night air and walked the one and half miles to Bertz's house. In any case, after leaving the station, they crossed the recently built Lange Brücke which Kaiser Wilhelm II had had decorated with statues of famous soldiers from Prussian history by the sculptor, Ernst Herter (1846-1917) – a sight that would have appalled Gissing (the statues survived until the bridge was dynamited in April 1945 by an advanced allied force). The two friends would have eventually found themselves going up the right side of Neue Königstraße, a long thoroughfare leading towards Glienicker Brücke on both sides of which were blocks of residential flats known as *Mietshäuser* and numerous villas. Further along was number 21, the house in which Bertz had been living for well over a year.

This was an attractive three-story villa built in 1879, typical of those one finds in affluent, green districts of German cities. After 1945 the street was

renamed and renumbered and the house in which Gissing stayed became Berliner Strasse 41. The house-front was renovated in 1991 and repainted yellow. The villa stands to this day and trams still pass by on their way to and from Glienicke Brücke. Except for a few modern buildings and shops, the street looks much as it did when Gissing occupied an upper-floor room at the back of the house in mid-April 1898. Away from the classical centre of Potsdam, this part of the city may seem forlorn and alien to the English traveller, but Gissing walked these streets and they were home to Bertz.

Bertz and Gissing will have stayed up talking into the early hours, as they had much to catch up on as well as much to talk about which could not be adequately expressed or revealed in their correspondence. The next morning they rose late as they did not leave the house until it was already midday. Gissing, having slept poorly, complained in his *Diary* about the "[e]vil German

Berlinerstrasse 41 – formerly Neue Königstraße 21 (Markus Neacey 2018)

bed; no sheet or blanket, but one huge pillow to cover one."[23] Furthermore, as a later entry reveals, he was not at all pleased about "the *raw* Westphalian ham at breakfast!"[24] Indeed, his entries over the next few days show all too emphatically that he was constantly comparing Germany with the image of beauty that his beloved Italy represented to him, and, of course, Germany and the Germans came out worst in every comparison.

That Gissing had his own preconceived idea of Germany, and viewed the country with a measure of hostility prior to travelling there, is clear from the comments he made to Brian Ború Dunne during their time together in Italy. Among his prejudices one must emphasise his intense dislike of Kaiser Wilhelm II, whom he saw as a rampant militarist. But, if we were to imagine that Gissing had cultivated a personal animosity towards all things German, we would be wide of the mark, for in fact his view of Germany had been profoundly influenced like every contemporary Englishman's by what he learned about the country in the daily English press. The one difference being that what Gissing had himself read was confirmed by what he actually saw.

Just six weeks previously in the 25 February issue of the satirical English weekly newspaper, *Moonshine*, Alfred Bryant offered readers a quintessential caricature of Kaiser Wilhelm II, an image of him that is still presented to English schoolboys in history lessons today. Entitled "A Day with the German Emperor,"[25] it shows the Kaiser rising at 4 a.m., holding a military review before breakfast, writing a play and also composing an opera. After breakfast he paints a picture – the theme being "The Subjugation of the World" –, gives his children military drill, changes the map of Africa and China and sends a telegram to Krüger. Then he makes a fiery speech to the Reichstag, teaches a bootmaker his trade, meets a few Emperors, gives an interview to a satirical journal, dines with Lord Lonsdale, and spends the rest of the evening smoking, drinking, singing, and duelling until 2 a.m.

And what was the reality? After becoming emperor in 1888 and ousting Bismarck in 1890, Kaiser Wilhelm II ruled Germany and the military with an iron hand. Under his rule the country was ultra conservative and forward-looking, whilst Jewish people, socialists, and communists were held in check on all fronts – and excluded from positions of military and political influence. If anti-Jewish sentiments were rife in France because of the Dreyfus affair, they were no less present in the German press of the late 1890s. In Wilhelmine Germany, moreover, fencing and duelling became masculine cults among aristocrats, high-ranking officers, and university students. Indeed, a large scar on one's face, known as the duelling scar or "bragging scar," was a mark of honour. Instances of self-mutilation in order to imitate such scars were frequent among young men at the time. Thus, at the height of this cult of German militarism, everywhere Gissing went in Potsdam and Berlin, he would have seen little boys proudly wearing sailor suits, a mode of dress meant to instill them with pride in the German navy, so beloved by Kaiser Wilhelm.

On that first morning, Gissing had woken up to a Germany that was close to the end of its long transition from a romantically idealised country – still

discoverable in late Victorian guidebooks and in some spa towns – into a modern, industrialised, imperialistic power. Symbolic of this marked change from the old to the modern was the demise of both the man who started Germany on the road to imperial might and glory, Otto von Bismarck, who was now ailing and would die three months hence at the end of July, and of the country's greatest writer of that era, a man of liberal temperament, a lover of England and the English, Theodor Fontane, who would also breathe his last scarcely six weeks later, on 20 September 1898.

Gissing's view of the Havel and the Flatow Turm (Markus Neacey 2018)

That first day Bertz showed Gissing around the main Potsdam sights, starting with the river. The Havel, the principal river joining Potsdam with Berlin, runs parallel with Berliner Strasse (formerly Neue Königstraße) but hidden from view behind the houses that line the street. Gissing's bedroom window "look[ed] right over the Havel, with the Flatow Thurm rising from trees on the far side."[26] Bertz then took him to Sanssouci, the magnificent park that Friedrich the Great had laid out between 1745 and 1747 to rival Versailles. But Gissing was not impressed by what he saw, writing in his *Diary*,

> Went to Sans Souci [*sic*] and walked all about the gardens; it pleased me very little. Remember the terrace on orange-houses in front of the palace. Slim French Statuary

> behind the Mausoleum of Emp. Frederick III. In cortile close by, Thorvaldsen's Christ, a fine figure. Inscription on wall of church: Christus unser Frieden. The glaring contrast between these things and the rampant militarism everywhere about.[27]

A visit afterwards to the "Sans Souci Café" [*sic*] did little to improve Gissing's mood. The "Inscript[ion] on wall," he writes, read as follows, "'Trinkt, Brüder, trinkt, bis der letzte sinkt [Drink, brothers, drink, till the last man drops].'"[28] That first day Gissing summed up with devastating severity, "The sheer *commonness* of it all, after Italy."[29]

The second day, a Saturday, was

> spent in Berlin. Showery and dull. Hours of walking about streets and parks. Impression of wealth and ambition; little beauty. Feature of the houses, the deep balconies. These new monuments in the Siegesallée [*sic*] of the Tiergarten—the beginning of a great avenue of national statues.- The Goethe statue fine; finer that of Luther, with its groups of reformers.- Immense public buildings. The blatant statue of old William, with the ferocious lions below. – The Maria Kirche, on place where people used to be burnt.- Tired to death after it all.[30]

Poor Bertz! Doubtless he keenly felt Gissing's hatred of modern Germany. For, having been profoundly disheartened by the contrast between the idealised Germany he cherished in the German romantics, and the harsh reality all around him, Gissing would have struggled to hide his true feelings from Bertz. The statue of Goethe was pleasing, that of Luther still more so, but all finer sentiments were at once brutally crushed by sight of the bombastic memorial to the late Kaiser Wilhelm I. Unveiled in 1897, the statue, showing the stern Kaiser in military garb astride a fierce-looking horse with lions roaring savagely on either side below, endured until 1950 when it was dismantled and hidden away. Meanwhile the miserable grey, showery April weather, so typical of Berlin springtime, did not help either. But at least the few days in Germany gave Gissing the opportunity to talk *vis-à-vis* with Bertz as they had not been able to for many years and never would again.

Sunday, Gissing's last full day in Germany, was spent wandering around Potsdam. But he seems to have lost all interest in describing what he saw as his thoughts were gradually tending homewards. In his *Diary* the next day, there is no mention of his parting from Bertz. It is all rather matter of fact:

> Dull. Left Potsdam at 1.28pm, by thro' train for Köln. On straight to Ostende, and thence, at 6am., to Dover. About 11 o'clock reached Hick's house at New Romney, where I passed the night.[31]

Yet it must have been a difficult farewell after three intense days with his old friend, with the memories of past times flooding back, and with the inevitable thought on both sides that this was a final *adieu*. Anyway, the correspondence would continue, and it was the letters that counted, for Bertz was the only friend to whom Gissing could truly reveal his most personal thoughts. Yes, it

was goodbye, and possibly forever, but the friendship would go on at a distance. So, burdened with financial and family concerns, Gissing hastened back to England to restart his life there after the long European hiatus, little knowing that a life in Europe awaited him in the not-too-distant future.

Writing to Bertz a month later, Gissing gave a friendly gloss to his stay in Potsdam, declaring "I think very often of the delights of my visit to you. Splendid days, not to be forgotten!"[32] His *Diary* tells a different story, but what does that matter, if Gissing wished to put friendship first.

(I wish to thank Wulfhard Stahl, from whose work many of the facts about Eduard Bertz's life are drawn, for his advice and proofreading my article. I am also grateful to the Stadtarchiv and the Bauarchiv Potsdam for providing me with the history of the building at Berlinerstrasse 41.)

[1] Patrick Bridgwater, *Gissing and Germany* (London: Enitharmon Press, 1981), p. 46.
[2] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, eds. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Four, 1889-1891* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1993), p. 192.
[3] Letter of 22 February 1890 to Bertz. *Ibid*., p. 195.
[4] *Ibid*., pp. 221-222.
[5] Letter of 22 June 1890 to Bertz. *Ibid*., p. 226.
[6] *Ibid*., p. 232.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, eds. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Six, 1895-1897* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 326.
[9] *Ibid*., p. 327.
[10] *Ibid*., p. 342.
[11] *Ibid*., p. 343.
[12] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, eds. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Seven, 1897-1899* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 58.
[13] *Ibid*., pp. 58-59.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 65.
[15] Letter of 8 March 1898 to Bertz. *Ibid*., pp. 72-73.
[16] *Ibid*., pp. 82-83.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 83.
[18] Pierre Coustillas, ed. *London and the Life of Literature in Late-Victorian England. The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 489.
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] *Ibid*., p. 490.
[21] *Ibid*.
[22] Quoted from an unpublished letter dated 9 April 1904 in Xavier Pétremand's possession.
[23] *Diary*, p. 490.
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] Alfred Bryant, "A Day with the German Emperor," *Moonshine*, 25 February 1898, p. 99.
[26-31] *Diary*, p. 490.
[32] *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Seven, 1897-1899*, p. 90.

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Odd Women Read *The Odd Women*

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"*The Odd Women* is yet one of the more spirited and serious studies of the relationships between the sexes to appear in the last two decades of the century."
Joyce Evans[1]

I teach "Classic Literature" at an adult learning centre. The class is small, consisting of six to seven students who are all women since the death of our only male student. The students are well-educated and well-read; it is like a graduate seminar. Every student thoroughly reads the assigned work and thoughtfully comments on both the literary content and the social and cultural issues raised by the author.

In 2017 we studied George Gissing's *The Odd Women* because I wanted my students to become familiar with his work. The class was attended by: Renee Maxwell, retired teacher; Katharine McCleary, retired teacher, chemical engineer; Pat Dursan, retired teacher; and Barbara Zucker, who was then nursing a very aged husband. Except for a few graduate students who may remember *New Grub Street,* most people I ask have never heard of him. Once in a while there is an exception. One day at our post-class luncheon a month after we had read *The Odd Women,* a student related that she had met up with an old friend who was a PhD Chemist. While making casual conversation, she mentioned that she had read *The Odd Women.* Her friend was delighted and informed her that he had read everything Gissing wrote! (Barbara Zucker)

I asked Markus Neacey to recommend a suitable novel, and he suggested *The Odd Women.* He wrote, "I think it is the most accessible and one of the more relevant Gissing novels."[2] When the husband of the only member who still was married died, we were all either divorced or widowed and hence all odd women. We examined our own oddness as we read *The Odd Women*. And oddly enough (pun intended), although all of us had had careers, none of us went much further in career aspirations or positions than the students of Mary and Rhoda's typing school. Career choices open to us were still somewhat limited in our era: we are all past our sixtieth birthday. One student wrote:

> Although we all had traditional occupations, possibly selected by default, at least in my case, it was by choice. I chose teaching and then chose chemical engineering (when women comprised less than 5% of its workforce). I also chose not to aspire to the higher ranks in either profession. I saw the long days, endless meetings and travel that my father endured in his managerial position and just didn't want that for myself. And there would be no loving wife to provide comfort and nurture when I arrived home! In contrast, the limitations imposed upon Victorian odd women were societal, and available work was onerous. It was no wonder that Monica chose unwise marriage over such drudgery. (Katherine McCleary)

Gissing's novel helped us understand some of the more subtle points of the nineteenth-century relationship of women to careers, love, and a deeply held passion. Although our contemporary cultural and social mores present greatly expanded choices for women, they also present new challenges. Women today are free to pursue many more options: our choices were made decades before, and we are all retired teachers except for one student who was a retired nurse (she was recently killed by a car that jumped the sidewalk.)

Accustomed to the leisurely pace of the opening chapters of Victorian novels, students were soon caught up in the plot, characterisations, historical references, and of course, Gissing's own inimitable style. We played with the significance, if any, of the characters' names. Nunn was easy to figure out, but we were divided – did it suggest she was having none of it or that she was nun-like in her dedication? One student remarked that at a connotative level, Mary Barfoot's bare feet made her think of Jesus. She was certainly a fine woman, but Gissing makes her human. For instance, did she err in revealing a confidence? Monica Madden was mad to marry Mr. Widdowson … there is a name for you! (And if he got through the entire book of advice to students, no wonder he was cranky!) And the Micklethwaites waited.

More seriously, we discussed the contemporary nature of "the woman question," which Gissing raises but fails to solve. (No offence, Mr. Gissing. No one has solved it yet!) In conjunction with our study of *The Odd Women*, I distributed a copy of Martha Nussbaum's "Woman's Lot," which is a long historical overview of women's place in society through the ages.[3] I also referred to "Some Notes on *The Odd Women* and the Woman's Movement," from *The Gissing Journal* [see endnote 1]. Gissing's conclusion is open-ended. It is a Rorschach-like situation: our pessimists had little hope for Monica's child, but the optimists pointed out that Gissing presents a promising future for the baby: financial security (not to be over-looked!), the chance to be educated beyond learning to type, and having loving caretakers. And marriage?

The outlook for marriage in Gissing's *The Odd Women* is at best dismal and at worst doomed. The only happy marriage portrayed is that of Fanny and Thomas Micklethwaite. Our class sighed happily over this scene in the Micklethwaite home: "Then Mrs Micklethwaite placed herself at the piano, and played simple, old-fashioned music, neither well nor badly, but to the infinite delight of two of her hearers."[4] Our readers commented on the exquisite writing of this brief scene: Imagine the subtlety of "neither well nor badly"! But other marriages were bleak. That Monica suffers in her ill-fated union with Mr. Widdowson, we were not surprised. Other mating choices for odd women were even more limited: out-of-wedlock motherhood puts the offending woman out of society. Mary was inclined to be forgiving of the

unmarried mother who wanted to return to the school, but Rhoda remained opposed. Most students expressed sympathy for the unfortunate young woman, although one pointed out that Rhoda had a point that for the good of the school, the unmarried mother should not be admitted.

The out-of-wedlock episode Everard – and presumably Amy Drake – enjoyed is another example of the hard choices for healthy young women. Although constrained by Mrs Grundy, Gissing makes it clear that women have sexual longings, but any sexual activity for an odd woman is *verboten*. Any satisfaction of natural erotic inclinations was fraught with peril. Birth control was almost nonexistent, and if a woman conceived, the father would not have been held accountable, and her chances for acceptance in decent society would have been doomed. Amy acted on her sexual longings, and in Everard's view, seduced him. She bore his – read "her" – child, who conveniently died. This episode prompted a vigorous discussion about contemporary sexual mores. Not bound by Victorian niceties, we twenty-first century women took from the novel an obvious exploration of sexual activity. While we are pleased that today's young women are no longer doomed to celibacy, we did ponder the new challenges that sexual revolution has presented. The world changed radically with the advent of birth control, and not only for women. Nineteenth-century odd women were expected to abstain from intercourse; a woman was a virgin or not, but our class also reflected on what Gissing wrote about men's sexual life. There were choices: a mistress, prostitutes, women like Amy Drake simply seeking sexual fulfillment, self-satisfaction, or, like their female counterparts, abstinence. At this point, I introduced a few topical elements from Gissing's biography and a few situations in his other novels.

Gissing was not writing about social issues, but about human beings and their very human problems. Rhoda and Everard are roundly developed, and readers feel for them. Monica, Alice, Virginia, Mary, and the Micklethwaites are sympathetically portrayed. If there was only a little sympathy for Widdowson, some of us did allow for a positive view of the reprehensible Everard. We discussed the impossible dilemma faced by him and the obdurate Rhoda at great length. The scenes of their meeting at the seashore are among the most moving in the novel. They obviously enjoyed each other's company and were intellectual equals. Why did Rhoda turn down marriage? Or who in fact did turn away from marriage? Rhoda did not trust Everard to be truthful and he could not accept her lack of faith in him. The power struggle ended in a stalemate, and Everard later married a more compliant woman. Rhoda must have realised she was resisting the call of love (did we speak of love? actually, not much) as she turned to dedicating

herself to her passion for a more equal and independent place for women. Several of us noted that Gissing was very convincing as he wrote about the thoughts and reactions from a female standpoint. One student wrote, "*The Odd Women* shows us that life was so difficult for women who did not marry or conform to the social mores of the day. Gissing truly writes from a woman's point of view when it was not common to do so" (Barbara Zucker). Scholars have made similar observations, for example, Joyce Evans, who asked, "Where did he learn the arguments, the tone of voice, the feelings of Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot?"

We odd women concluded that romance for an odd woman in the Victorian era was frustrating, incomplete, even tragic. We are glad things have changed, although the woman question is still a question, and odd women are still odd.

[1] Joyce Evans, "Some Notes on *The Odd Women* and the Woman's Movement," *Gissing Journal,* 2:3 (September 1966), p. 3.

[2] Markus Neacey, email, 24 March 2017.

[3] Martha Nussbaum, "Woman's Lot," *New York Review of Books*, 30 January 1986. This discusses "Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of an Educated Woman," by Jane Roland Martin.

[4] George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (Oxford*:* OUP, 2008), p. 141.

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Why the Dickens is Gissing Missing?

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

Now that several of Gissing's major novels, among them *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* are becoming more widely known, a number of voices have made themselves heard in the press and on the Internet, regretting the lack of a tv series based on one of these or some other Gissing novel. Upon the recent showing of the latest adaptation of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* on BBC television, Rachel Cooke wrote in the *New Statesman* (26 April):

> I don't think we need detain ourselves for long on the subject of the BBC's workmanlike adaptation of Wilkie Collins's gothic novel *The Woman in White* (9pm, 22 April) […] And why this book, now? It has been a while since the last adaptation, in the 1980s [*sic*], but it would be so good if the BBC occasionally ventured into the 19th century's wilder, more arcane corners. Why doesn't it ever bring us Rhoda Broughton or George Gissing? Both wrote gripping novels that are also (dread word, I know, but they really love it down at the BBC) amazingly relevant.

One could not agree more, for it is positively frustrating to witness decades passing without a single series or tv film of a Gissing novel to cheer one up.

That brief glimpse of an actor impersonating George Gissing in *The Limehouse Golem* was balm for a few moments, but as Oliver Twist said, "Please sir, I want some more." To highlight "the same again" principle that tv companies follow, I have compiled a list of British television adaptations showing the best represented nineteenth-century authors. Having consulted the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), I have only listed films and mini-series (but not animated features) of novels made for British television since 1936 – when television as we know it began – up to the present year.

Walter Scott:

Ivanhoe	1958/1970/1982/1997
Kenilworth	1957/1967
Redgauntlet	1959/1970
Rob Roy	1956/1961/1977
The Heart of Midlothian	1966
Woodstock	1973
The Fortunes of Nigel	1974
The Bride of Lammermoor	1977
The Talisman	1980

Jane Austen:

Mansfield Park	1983/1999/2007
Pride and Prejudice	1938/1952/1958/1967/1980/1995/2014
Emma	1948/1960/1972/1996/2008/2009
Persuasion	1960/1971/2007/2008
Northanger Abbey	1952/1987/2007
Sense and Sensibility	1971/1981/2008

William Makepeace Thackeray:

Vanity Fair	1950/1957/1967/1987/1998

Charles Dickens:

David Copperfield	1956/1959/1965/1970/1974/1986/1999/2000/2001
Great Expectations	1959/1967/1974/1981/1987/1991/2011
Nicholas Nickleby	1957/1968/1977/1982/2001/2012
The Pickwick Papers	1938/1946/1952/1963/1969/1985
Little Dorrit	2008
Our Mutual Friend	1958/1976/1998
The Old Curiosity Shop	1962/1979/2007
Oliver Twist	1962/1980/1982/1985/1999/2007
Barnaby Rudge	1960
Dombey and Son	1969/1983
The Mystery of Edwin Drood	1960/2012
Martin Chuzzlewit	1964/1994

Bleak House 1959/1985/2005
A Tale of Two Cities 1957/1958/1965/1980 (series & tv film)/1989/2009
Hard Times 1977/1994

Elizabeth Gaskell:
Cranford 1951/1972/2007
Wives and Daughters 1971/1999
North and South 1966/1975/2004
Mary Barton 1964
Cousin Phillis 1982

Anthony Trollope:
The Warden 1951
The Small House at Allington 1960
The Palliser Novels 1974
Barsetshire Chronicles 1959/1961/1982
He Knew He Was Right 2004
The Way We Live Now 1969/2001
Doctor Thorne 2016
The Eustace Diamonds 1959

George Eliot:
Adam Bede 1992
Middlemarch 1968/1994
Silas Marner 1964/1985
Daniel Deronda 1957/1970/2002
The Mill on the Floss 1965/1978/1997

The Brontës:
Jane Eyre 1946/1948/1956/1957/1963/1970/1973/1983/1997/2006
Villette 1957/1970
Wuthering Heights 1948/1953/1959/1962/1967/1978/1997/1998/2009
The Tenant of Wildfell Hall 1968/1996

Wilkie Collins:
The Woman in White 1966/1982/1997/2018
The Moonstone 1952/1959/1972/1996/2016
Basil 1998

R. D. Blackmore:
Lorna Doone 1963/1976/1990/2000

George Meredith:
The Ordeal of Richard Feverel 1964

Thomas Hardy:
Jude the Obscure 1971
The Mayor of Casterbridge 1976/1978/2003
Far From the Madding Crowd 1998
Tess of the D'Urbevilles 1952/1960/1998/2008
The Woodlanders 1970
The Return of the Native 1994/1995
Under the Greenwood Tree 2005

Henry James:

The Portrait of a Lady	1968
Washington Square	1958/1969/1974/1975
The Ambassadors	1965/1977
The Wings of the Dove	1965/1975/1979
The American	1998
The Golden Bowl	1972
What Maisie Knew	1968
The Sense of the Past	1948/1959
The Spoils of Poynton	1970

Robert Louis Stevenson:

Treasure Island	1951/1957/1958/1960/1968/1977/1990/1995
Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde	1956/1973/1980/1990/1995/2003
Kidnapped	1952/1956/1963/1995
The Black Arrow	1951/1958/1972/1985
St. Ives	1955/1960/1967
The Master of Ballantrae	1962/1975/1984
The Ebb-Tide	1953/1959/1998
Weir of Hermiston	1973

As this table reveals the television companies have their own fixed conception of the literary canon, or what they think viewers want to see. For all that, over the decades, one is able to observe the gradual fall in popularity on the small screen of certain writers. Thus, whereas Walter Scott had his heyday from the 1950s until the 1980s, but has since completely lost his appeal, George Meredith has never really belonged to the canon after F. R. Leavis banished him from the field in *The Great Tradition* (1948). Most surprisingly, George Eliot has fallen into neglect since the early years of this century. But with the bicentenary of her birth coming up in 2019, one can be sure that the tv companies have several adaptations of her novels planned and rightly so. Meanwhile, Dickens, the clear winner in every period since the 1930s, the Brontë sisters, and Jane Austen continue to dominate on our tv screens with *Jane Eyre* being the most popular novel – ten productions –, whilst RLS rivalled them until the 1990s. As for Henry James: if his novels are poorly represented on the small screen – only one series since the late 1970s –, it is evidently because they (like those of E. M. Forster) work better on the big screen as the many successful cinematic versions prove. Elsewhere, Gaskell, Trollope, Wilkie Collins, and Hardy are well represented, with Thackeray and Blackmore on the margins. But oh! for a place on the margins. We would take that for Gissing any day of the week!

Notes and News

On 12 January 2018 Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag published a bilingual anthology of English short stories called *Love is a Funny Thing*/*Wohin die Liebe fällt*. Priced at €10 the collection has been selected and translated by Richard Fenzl, who previously translated Gissing's first volume of short stories, *Human Odds and Ends* in 2000. The Gissing story included here is the much anthologised "The Prize Lodger," which in Fenzl's German version is correctly titled "Der hochgeschätzte Untermieter." Gissing's story finds itself in good company alongside short works by George Egerton, William Schwenck Gilbert, Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, George Moore, and Arthur Morrison.

In January 2018 *Elle*, the popular French magazine, asked some famous women to name their favourite works of fiction. Kate Winslet selected *Thérèse Raquin*, Julia Roberts *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers, Michele Obama *The Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison, and Sarah Jessica Parker? She chose *New Grub Street* about which she writes: "Cette histoire sur l'amour et le monde de l'édition à la fin du XIXème siècle vous transporte. L'une de mes préférées!" Parker had previously praised the novel in an interview with the *New Yorker* in 2008, in which she said: "This story about publishing and love is one of the great, turn-of-the-century sweeping tales. It's one of my all-time favorites." In the more recent article, of the 16 books selected by among others J. K. Rowling, Oprah Winfrey, and Emma Watson, *Elle* remarked that Gissing's novel of literary life in 1880s London was the only one which is "[u]niquement disponible en anglais." It would be wonderful if this article were to spur a translator into offering French readers a new translation of a novel last translated into French in 1901 by Gabrielle Gissing; it would be more wonderful still, if Parker were to ask some director to produce a film version or mini-series of her favourite novel.

Currently, there is an interesting item for sale on ebay.co.uk, a "v. nice" three volume second edition of *New Grub Street*. Offered at a starting price of £50, after four bids the price has risen to £74 with one day left for bidding. The same website is also offering the Smith, Elder 1908 hardback edition of the novel with the striking red and black cover at a "buy now" £12 price tag. On abebooks.co.uk, meanwhile, one notes that the barbaric practice of tearing out pages of a story or article from old volume editions of Victorian periodicals and selling them individually has become more widespread. At present the serialisation of *By the Ionian Sea* in the *Fortnightly Review* during 1900 is

being sold by Cosmo Books of Shropshire at £15.60 per 4-chapter part. The complete serial can be bought for £78 not including postage. Cosmo Books are selling every other article from the same volume at £15.60 per portion as well as articles and stories from many other Victorian periodicals – a lucrative practice, no doubt.

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Recent Publications

Articles, reviews, etc.

Edmund Birch, "Literary Machines: George Gissing's Lost Illusions," in Marcus Waithe and Claire White (eds), *The Labour of Literature in Britain and France, 1830-1910*. Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 187-201.

Eva Chen, "Its Beauty, Danger, and Feverish Thrill: Speed and Cycling Women in Fin de Siècle Fiction," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 63:4 (Winter 2017), pp. 607-627. The article analyses some works by Gissing, Grant Allen, and Edward Kennard, in relation to the impact of speed on the female subject.

Jason Finch, "Pedestrianism, Money and Time; Mobilities of Hurry in George Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*," in Phillip Gordon Mackintosh, Richard Dennis, and Deryck W. Holdsworth (eds), *Architectures of Hurry – Mobilities, Cities and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 175-193. The introductory chapter to the book includes brief references to Gissing.

Zeynep Harputlu, "Senses of Place, Filth and Purity in Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* and Gissing's *The Nether World*," *Edebiyat Fakultesi Dergisi* (*Journal of Faculty of Letters*), 34:2 (December 2017), pp. 95-106.

Sam Popowitch, "Libraries, Labour, Capital: On Formal and Real Subsumption," *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 4 (March 2018), pp. 6-19. Gissing's *New Grub Street* is cited on pp. 8-10 as an example of a novel describing hack writers as "commodity producers."

Jonathan Taylor, "Review of *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing* by Heather Tilley," *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 May 2018, p. 31.

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Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays and book reviews 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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