



Pierre Coustillas 1930-2018

The Gissing Journal

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

**Dedicated
to
Hélène Coustillas**

Contents

This is a special *Supplement to The Gissing Journal* with an obituary and tributes in memory of Pierre Coustillas from friends, colleagues, and admirers.

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Obituary

Professor Pierre Coustillas

He had discovered Gissing as a graduate student, and decided that this was the writer for him. He was an indefatigable researcher, and a popular colleague. But he had few relaxations. His work was his hobby and his hobby his work. His holidays were spent going where Gissing had been – especially to Italy, where Coustillas and his wife Hélène followed his journeys, some of which Gissing documented in his account of his journey to Calabria, *By*

the Ionian Sea (1901). Gissing also went to Florence, Naples, Rome, Siena, and Venice. A gifted linguist, Gissing could read Greek and Latin texts in the original; he also had a good command of French, German, Italian, and Spanish. His familiarity with European literatures was also formidable, as was Professor Coustillas's. In modern times his works have been translated into many languages, notably Japanese.

Gissing was born on 22 November 1857 in a room above his father's chemist shop in the centre of Wakefield. But he is chiefly associated with works set in London's slums. In particular, his novels of London working-class life – until the 1970s wholly unobtainable – which included *The Unclassed* (1884), *Demos* (1886), *Thyrza* (1887), and *The Nether World* (1889). His works on the evolution of culture included his masterpiece, his dramatisation of the commercialisation of literature and culture in *New Grub Street* (1891). He also wrote a commentary on the problems faced by unmarried women (*The Odd Women*, 1893), and accounts of the imperialist jubilee of Queen Victoria, of city life and of poverty in London. These are major works, admired by George Orwell and H. G. Wells, among many.

Gissing, indeed, had himself lived life as a hungry writer in the margins of urban London (in Colville Place, Gower Place, and Huntley Street, close to University College). He offered an idiosyncratic perspective of the popular mass culture and slum life he experienced for himself, which Raymond Williams later sought to analyse in *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*. As Professor John Sutherland has commented, "Gissing's fiction is notable for its agnosticism, realism and ironic pessimism." Coustillas's friend and publisher John Spiers said that Coustillas and Gissing had much in common: they were both most unusual, gifted, energetic, persistent men, always honest about the craft of writing, and about the personal ambiguities, contradictions and dilemmas of the life of the mind and of the heart.

On 28 December 2003 Professor Coustillas addressed a gathering in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where Gissing's gravestone had been refurbished (with an added medallion portrait) by admirers – including Jane Gissing, granddaughter of the novelist. This event being on the exact centenary of the novelist's premature death at the rented Maison Elgue at Ispoure on the French side of the Pyrenean border with Spain.

Coustillas summarised to that small gathering Gissing's candid depictions of contemporary society, being "one of the courageous thinkers who took a stand against arbitrary decisions, injustice and threats of violence." And "he had discussed the evolution of culture in a country on the way to democracy, the place of the writer in society, the conflict between rationalism and religion, the progress of feminism in an essentially conservative world, the

uneasy existence of two civilisations, the one urban and industrial, the other rural and agricultural.”

For a man with many busy international scholarly connections Coustillas was essentially a very private man. A selfless and a humble man despite his achievements, when he was told once that he gave too much time to his work his wife Hélène responded that “Gissing *is* his life!” He would, however, have been surprised to hear that he would feature in an obituary in a national newspaper. In fact, the married couple did their great work together. He was a significant book collector, too, which served his bibliographical work. To document what remained in print, where, and for how long he collected *every* edition of every one of Gissing’s books in every language. He had over 1,500 copies in 14 languages besides English. There seemed to be no limits. In the 1970s in the antiquarian Brighton bookshop of Holleyman & Treacher he once mused as to whether a particular and worn mauve-bound copy of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* – of which he had some 200 editions in English – was on his shelves. John Spiers said teasingly to him, “Pierre, you cannot start collecting variant fadings!” He appreciated the joke.

Coustillas was indeed himself a very witty man, in two languages, but never at the expense of others. He also had some enthusiasms besides books. He followed association football with his local league side Lille, and The Arsenal in England to which the French international Sylvain Wiltord and other star players were sold. He was amused by Arsene Wenger’s reply to the question “Are there too many French players at The Arsenal?” To which Wenger replied, “No. Not enough.”

Coustillas was born at Neuville-aux-Bois, a small town about 20 kilometers from Orléans, on 11 July 1930, in a modest family, the only child of René Coustillas and his wife Marie-Thérèse. His father was station master in various small stations on the line going east of Orléans in the Loire valley.

Pierre attended the local primary schools. At one of them the schoolmaster was so pleased with his work, he insisted on keeping him for a second year instead of letting him move to his first secondary school. His father objected to letting him stay for a third year! Pierre then moved during the war to a small secondary school in Gien, where he was a boarder, and an unhappy one in those difficult years. He finally spent the last three years of his secondary schooling, again as a boarder, at the Lycée in Orléans. This proved, however, to be a good preparation for his starring successes at the Sorbonne where he went in the autumn of 1949 and had a distinguished student career. He passed his B.A, and M.A., and then spent a year as French Assistant in an English School in Twickenham. His English became idiomatic. In 1955 he then passed his *Agrégation* – a fairly stiff examination which makes

it possible to teach in lycées and Universities. The most unmilitary of men, he then had to go through 27 months of military service, the last few months of which he spent on the Algeria/Morocco border during Algeria's war with France.

His career was one of gradual but upward progress in the complex Napoleonic French educational structure. On coming back to France at the end of 1957 he took his first teaching job at the Lycée of Charleville-Mézières on the Belgian border. And soon met again Hélène Albert, who had been at the Sorbonne in his first years there, but had then left and spent some four years working in England. At her marriage Hélène was working in Paris for a small shipping company. Pierre was allowed to move from Charleville-Mézières to the Lycée Paul Valéry in Paris, and they were married in the summer of 1958. He immediately started working on Gissing, an author he had discovered in his early years at university, in the big *History of English Literature* by Legouis and Cazamian which was a must for students. He had sworn to himself that one day he would try and do something to make Gissing better known.

After teaching in the Lycée he was appointed Assistant Lecturer at the Sorbonne in 1963. By 1966, when he was asked to move to Madagascar to take charge of the English Department (the university had been built by the French), he had already published the *Letters of George Gissing to Gabrielle Fleury* (New York Public Library, 1964), a bilingual edition of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, with an introduction and notes (Aubier-Montaigne, 1966), to say nothing of some 35 articles in various French, English and American journals.

From Madagascar, he moved to the University of Lille in the autumn of 1968, where he passed his State PhD in 1970 (on Gissing of course). In 1975 Pierre founded the Victorian Studies Centre at the University of Lille, which he directed until his retirement in 1995. He went on writing till 2013, his last book being the widely applauded 3-volume biography of Gissing published by Pickering and Chatto. For the previous 44 years he had also been editing *The Gissing Newsletter*, which became *The Gissing Journal* in 1990. This had been founded in 1965 by Jacob Korg, Shigeru Koike, and Pierre when they met for the first time in London.

Pierre and Hélène were completely (and wittily) bilingual. These skills and commitments enabled Coustillas to become the doyen of Gissing scholars in a creative partnership. Together the couple worked on a huge range of works by and about Gissing. They also translated and edited work by Conrad and Kipling.

With Hélène he thus formed a 60-year collaborative partnership in the production of essays, criticism, a definitive three-volume biography of Gissing, a critical heritage volume, the major annotated bibliography, and multivolume editions of Gissing's letters and short stories. Together they were involved in the research, authorship or editing of more than 40 books and editions. Pierre's texts were all written out in his small writing. But Hélène was much more than a typist, and contributed much intellectually.

Pierre co-organised the National Book League exhibition "The Rediscovery of George Gissing" in London in 1971. He edited the first and several other volumes of the Harvester Press critical edition of 20 of Gissing's novels, and in 1978 Gissing's voluminous diary. His definitive edition of Gissing's first novel *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) was recently republished, as was his edition of George Moore's polemical work against the censorship of fiction by Victorian circulating libraries, *Literature at Nurse* (1885).

As a scholarly collaborator Coustillas was especially noted for his willingness to help anyone with their studies. No problem or enquiry was too slight to receive his courteous attention, and many are in his debt, young and older alike. He was generous with his time, despite his own incessant work, being kind and supportive to many. Typical is a comment by Professor Patrick Parrinder, in his 1977 edition of Gissing's novel *The Whirlpool*: "The editor wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Professor Pierre Coustillas, whose mastery of Gissing scholarship and generosity in replying to queries has considerably lightened the task of preparing this edition." He also supported important new research on Thomas Hardy. One of Pierre's long-time correspondents, Canadian antiquarian bookseller and Gissing collector, Debra Dearlove, said this week that "He was a kind, thoughtful, intelligent and generous person, as is Hélène."

As Gissing said of his own writings, Coustillas has done work "which will not be forgotten tomorrow." His immense Gissing library, with many artefacts which were Gissing's including books from his library and original photographs which he had diligently recovered by intensive searches in France and England, is to be lodged at the John Ryland's Library, Manchester – Gissing having been a student at Owens College, now the University of Manchester. Professor Coustillas is survived by his wife and his retired married daughter Françoise, who trained as an engineer and is now a local historian. He will be interred in south-eastern France, at Blacons, in the Alpine foreland of Vercors.

Pierre

M. D. ALLEN
University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley

My relationship with Pierre was very largely epistolary: for all but four of the forty years we were in communication we lived not in different countries but different continents. I met him face to face perhaps a half a dozen times. The first was at the Wakefield symposium and my memories of sitting opposite to him at one of the meals are to be found in an earlier issue of this *Journal*. He was pleasant, and treated an obscure graduate student with one minor article to his name with respect and good humour, rolling his eyes at my asking him when he was going to find *Mrs. Grundy's Enemies*. His occasional letters to me during the eighties, when I was teaching in the Middle East, always gave me pleasure and helped keep alive my awareness of an academic world beyond the occasionally isolated one in which I then lived.

The second time I met Pierre was at the Lille conference in 2008, when, for the first time, I was able to meet Hélène too. By then he was a little more astringent, speaking strongly against Sarkozy, whom he claimed to “despise.” In the early years of the century’s second decade I visited the Coustillas in their house for the first time, saw the extraordinary collection they had created over the years, and actually sat in the chair in which Gissing had sat, for anything related to his author was an object to be acquired. In addition to enjoying Hélène’s cooking I came to realise how encyclopaedic was her own knowledge of Gissing and how devoted she was to her husband and his work, a devotion that was to take a slightly different form in the last years of his life, for the final occasions when I managed to get to Lille occurred after Pierre’s stay in hospital, after which he was not quite the old Pierre.

I am aware of no other scholar who has done so much for his favourite author as Pierre Coustillas did for Gissing. Almost single-handedly at first he rescued a Victorian novelist from the obscurity of minor authorship in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and helped make him a prominent figure. Indeed, only Dickens and Hardy are the subject of more scholarly attention now, at least in terms of the number of published critical and editorial works, and we can reasonably doubt if this would be the case had Pierre decided to turn his own research interests elsewhere. If Pierre’s enthusiasm and its results were a little immoderate at times (his review of a certain Canadian scholar’s biography of Gissing has achieved some notoriety) then perhaps that was the price we had to pay for his tremendous achievement and the focused dedication it required. No one has known as much about George Gissing as did Pierre, and, very probably, no one ever will.

A Personal Remembrance

MARIA TERESA CHIALANT
University of Salerno, Italy

I first met Pierre at the George Gissing Conference which took place in Wakefield, in September 1981. I had been informed of it by the late Jacob Korg, the Professor of English and American Literature who taught at the University of Washington, Seattle, where I had spent a year on a Fulbright scholarship in 1965-1966; it was he, in fact, who introduced me to Gissing studies, and then suggested I should attend the Conference. It was an important opportunity for me, as I met there some scholars with whom I've been keeping in touch – David Grylls, Patrick Parrinder, and, of course, Pierre Coustillas. Since then, my interest in Gissing has continued to grow, thanks, also, to the scholarly impulse that Pierre has given to Gissing studies at an international level. His critical approach was mainly, but not only, biographical: he started from the factual data of the writer's life – with the discovery of people he met, places he visited and letters he wrote – to widen out to the cultural context and stylistic aspects of his *oeuvre*. The results of this wide-ranging research constitute an indispensable body of work for anybody intending to engage on Gissing's literary production.

Pierre devoted his scientific activity – and, I would say, his whole life – to the development and dissemination of the knowledge of Gissing with the significant and unflagging contribution of his wife H  l  ne. Both of them were always ready to lend a hand to young (and less young) academics. I shall never forget the concrete help they gave me when, in 2014, I published a bilingual critical edition of *Sleeping Fires*. As I wanted to reproduce on the book's front cover one of the images contained in Gissing's *Diary* (a sketch of the Acropolis included in the entry for 3 December 1889), Pierre and H  l  ne helped me get the authorisation from the George Gissing Estate. They got in touch with Ms Jane Gissing P  tremand (the writer's granddaughter), who wrote to the Curator of the Berg Collection in New York giving me her full permission to use the sketches, and the image was duly used for the front cover.

In recent years, my exchanges with Pierre have only been possible through H  l  ne. She is a wonderful letter writer, kindly with her correspondents and generous in providing useful information (scholarly and otherwise). She must be proud of having constantly helped Pierre in his work with intelligence, commitment and dedication. I shall miss him and shall always remain a friend to her!

Pierre

MARYSA DEMOOR
Ghent University, Belgium

My dear Pierre, what a huge debt I owe him.

When I submitted my PhD on Andrew Lang now 35 years ago my then supervisor, professor Willem Schrickx, had not read the manuscript yet. This was the time when research was done by one individual who was to bear full responsibility for the final product. There was no Internet, there were no computers, there was no supportive supervisor and, furthermore, in my department there was no expertise whatsoever in nineteenth-century culture. The support and advice came from abroad. I was encouraged by wonderful researchers such as Roger Lancelyn Green, the ultimate expert on Lang, who was very ill at the time but did make time for me when needed and Derek Roper a well-known specialist in early nineteenth-century literary criticism and periodicals. Derek became a dear friend and, unfortunately, left us three years ago as silently and modestly as he tended to work and live. But when Willem Schrickx thought of my Viva jury he did not go to any of those two, he came up with the name of Pierre Coustillas, a formidable French expert on the late nineteenth century and George Gissing and a scholar who lived nearby, in Lille. I did not know Pierre but was told by people who did know him that he was a very charming, very kind colleague who was unlikely to ‘kill’ me at this public defence.

Since my own supervisor did not think much of nineteenth-century literature and not that much of me either – I was then a very young, a very junior female PhD student – the evaluations of the external examiners were key. It needs to be said that a PhD submitted at Ghent University at the time was still given a certain grade: distinction, great distinction or the greatest distinction. Only the greatest distinction opened up the possibility of an academic career. That grade, however, was not always obtained on the basis of merit. Often there was an ugly game of university politics going on behind the scenes. Fortunately, I did not know that.

Enter Pierre Coustillas. Pierre was sent my PhD, two hefty volumes counting more than 1000 pages and he read everything. In return he sent a lengthy, meticulous laudatory report of more than 10 pages of single-spaced sentences. It did the trick for me. As soon as Professor Schrickx received the report he came to my office telling me how impressed he was and how convincing the report was. I had been saved by this unknown French super-

scholar. As a result the Viva was a success: I obtained “greatest distinction” and that was the beginning of my career.

And yes, I continued to see Pierre sporadically. When we met we spoke French. And we would write. But we wrote in English, on my account. My written French is very rusty. Also, Pierre was an avid collector of stamps and I had a small collection so our letters would be adorned by exceptional stamps, a rare commodity today in the age of email and adhesive stamps. His letters were always long, witty, informative and entertaining. I still have a

small stack of them in my office. This quotation will be recognisable to other friends of Pierre:

You will have been wondering whether I still walk the earth (A Gissing phrase) or whether I have joined what George Eliot called “the choir invisible.” No, not yet. The truth, the living truth, is that as per usual & in conformity with custom, we are very, very busy, ...we are mainly busy with editing G’s letters, translating & editing Kipling, – when I am not preparing lectures on George Eliot, Hardy & Dickens.



Professor Dame Gillian Beer, myself, and Professor Pierre Coustillas at the SFEVE conference in Ghent in 1992 (Marysa Demoor 2018).

We would continue to meet at the annual conferences of the SFEVE of which I, on one occasion, organised one in Ghent on (auto)biography (see above picture). We worked together a couple of times on an article and always on these occasions he was extremely modest, keeping a low profile.

And we would organise informal meetings, either in Bruges (where I lived then) or in Lille. At all times Hélène would be there as well and I grew to appreciate her complete dedication to and thorough involvement in the work of Pierre. She was the invisible hand in much of what Pierre was doing. Apart from being a superb researcher herself Hélène is also an excellent cook and home maker. Each Christmas we would write to each other but as time passed, my work accumulated and I moved into other subjects and there were fewer meetings. It is too late now to plan another meeting. Pierre has joined “the choir invisible” but the memories will remain of this active scholar, whose brain was in constant overdrive, whose generosity to other scholars was unequalled and whose work was nothing if not thorough and groundbreaking.

Memories of Pierre

RICHARD DENNIS
University College London

I met Pierre in person only three times, all during his 70s and my 50s, but each occasion was of critical importance for me. As a midlife convert to Gissing studies, I first encountered Pierre ‘in the flesh’ at the Centenary Conference on ‘Gissing and the City’ in London in 2003, but I was already familiar with *The Collected Letters*, the *Diary*, and some of the Harvester editions that he had edited. Since then, most of UCL’s or Senate House Library’s *Collected Letters* have spent more time on my shelves than they have in the library, as much for the copious footnotes as for the letters themselves. At the conference we both participated in Robin Woolven’s walk exploring Gissing’s former homes, and ending up at Cornwall Mansions (where I, rather presumptuously, proposed a brief extension to Oxford & Cambridge Mansions, not a Gissing residence but one of the key settings in *The Whirlpool*). I guess that Pierre recognised a kindred, somewhat obsessive, spirit in getting the facts right, because we quickly entered into an email correspondence about places, people, and routes in London.

Only a few months later we met again, when Pierre and Hélène returned to London to attend a Gissing lecture I gave at UCL, even though they cannot have expected to (and certainly did not) learn anything they did not know already. This, for me, was the seal of approval that gave me the confidence to continue as a geographer of Gissing; and the time we spent

together after the lecture in Waterstone's (lately Dillon's) coffee shop was very special.

Our third meeting was at the 2008 conference on Pierre's home ground in Lille, where he gave a plenary lecture on 'Gissing and France' and was presented with *Spellbound, George Gissing*, stories and essays dedicated to him and to Hélène. Really, every book written about Gissing in the last half-century should have been dedicated to them!

Thereafter, our dialogue was exclusively by email, usually initiated by issues associated with the *Journal*, but invariably extending into other matters. Often Pierre was the source of, to me, hitherto unknown insights; but just occasionally I was asked to supply the information that, presumably, only a London-based geographer was expected to know. Why, asked Pierre, did Eve Madeley travel by train to Earl's Court when the 'Healtheries' exhibition was on Exhibition Road, much closer to South Kensington and High Street Kensington Stations? We dare not conclude that Gissing had made a mistake. Then we moved on to the status and circumstances of Gissing's more-than-charlady, Mrs King. Earliest of all, and still unresolved, we discussed the identity of the Levy sisters visited by Gissing in 1886. Later, we ranged over Gissing's 'Nobodies'; his knowledge of Argentina (which I was about to visit), in the light of Malkin's return from and Peake's contemplation of going to 'Buenos Ayres' in *Born in Exile*; allusions to *By the Ionian Sea* in Tim Radford's *Guardian* 'Weatherwatch' column and, more profoundly, in sculptures by the artist, Cy Twombly; and whether the Miss Hand who was a friend of Mrs Gausson was the same Miss Hand who lived at 7L Cornwall Mansions before Gissing moved into 7K. When I wrote about Selfridge's in my book on *Cities in Modernity*, which Pierre generously reviewed at length, he alerted me to Selfridge's edition of Gissing short stories. We also discussed Rycroft's teatime ritual, representations of Niagara Falls in 1870s illustrations, and (another *Guardian* columnist) Rachel Cooke's recommendation of *Thyrza* as good holiday reading. It would be stretching the truth to call it a collaboration, but it was a pleasure to be involved in the Victorian Secrets edition of *Thyrza* (2013), mapped by me, but edited, introduced and endnoted by Pierre.

Re-reading our occasional correspondence, I can only express my gratitude for Pierre's meticulous scholarship, his generosity in sharing his knowledge and his total commitment to Gissing's greatness as an observer and commentator on nineteenth-century society. I fantasised that at the last Pierre would be revealed as a hitherto unknown Gissing relative! It is up to

us – and our due to Pierre – to continue to fly the flag for Gissing through our own century.

Tribute to Pierre Coustillas

CHRISTINE DEVINE

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

I first encountered the gentle, courteous hawk-eyed attention to editing detail of Pierre Coustillas [and, of course, of Hélène] almost twenty years ago, in 2000, when I was a graduate student and had submitted, with great trepidation, an article to *The Gissing Journal*. Luckily for me, that article was eventually accepted [with corrections duly completed]. More importantly, the exchange concerning that article was the beginning of an ongoing correspondence with someone I felt exemplified for me what I could only hope to emulate as I began my career in the academy and in scholarship.

I had the pleasure of meeting and having dinner with both Pierre and Hélène – along with Simon James – in London a few years later to discuss the work to be done on editing the abridgement of *Forster's Life of Dickens* as part of the 3-volume *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*. I found, meeting them in person, that Pierre and Hélène embodied the generous and encouraging spirit that I had found in their emails and that had encouraged and helped me so much early in my career.

My heart goes out to Hélène at this difficult time. She is someone for whom I have the deepest respect. Probably none of us are entirely aware of the extent to which she has contributed to Gissing studies. The collaboration and teamwork between Pierre and Hélène speak of a marriage partnership that one can only regard with admiration and awe.

Pierre Coustillas exemplified the gentleman scholar. His intellect, his work ethic, his dedication and commitment, along with his good humour and generous, gentle spirit combined to produce a mountain of important scholarship as well as, I am sure, an army of hard-working scholars who were inspired and encouraged by his example. He has helped to keep Gissing in print and he has kept Gissing studies alive and well internationally. He was, I am sure, a man George Gissing would have been proud to know.

Remembering Pierre Coustillas

EMANUELA ETTORRE

University “G. D’Annunzio” of Chieti–Pescara, Italy

In an academic world that seemed to me still unfamiliar and immense, Pierre was so much more than a guiding spirit. It was 1990; I was then working as an undergraduate student on my thesis, and focusing on George Gissing and his short stories. My professor, Francesco Marroni, said I should get in touch with Pierre for advice and bibliographic assistance, and so I shyly wrote a letter to “Prof. Coustillas” (as of course he always was to me!). His prompt reply was extremely encouraging and after a brief exchange of letters, Pierre told me to fly to London, take a train to Dorking, and meet the legendary book collector C. C. Kohler. And in fact, it was in C. C. Kohler’s extraordinary antiquarian bookshop that I found myself surrounded by any number of wonders, and offered the possibility of obtaining the most precious publications by and on Gissing – publications that still give meaning to my bookshelves.

Since then the Gissing section of my library has grown, sometimes with books that Pierre kindly gave to me when we met in Pescara. With his lovely Hélène, he visited our university and gave lectures on Gissing. We were honoured to have his contributions to our publications and I was also very fortunate to work with him personally. In 1999 I translated a selection of Gissing’s short stories into Italian, and asked Pierre to write an introduction to my volume. He immediately accepted: this was the first of our two collaborations. In 2004 we edited a book together, which was published as a monographic number of *Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*. It was an experience I will never forget. From the very beginning our collaboration felt challenging, if not daunting: I keenly felt both the limits of my inexperience and the difficulties of working in a second language, and faced with his forthright comments and ironic touch, I sometimes felt inadequate and out of place. But his firm and precious guidance, *il suo rigore*, his boundless literary knowledge and his passion for Gissing made it possible for me to surmount the difficulties faced by a young researcher. His enthusiasm was infectious; Pierre made Gissing appear to me alive and powerful, even though most critics at the time still neglected Gissing or saw in his writing little more than a discordant and despairing voice from the abyss of a forgotten urban world. And so I didn’t give up.

Pierre devoted his entire life to Gissing, and sometimes it was difficult to separate the voice of the writer from the one of his main critic and biographer. Pierre’s power of recollection was astonishing; there was nothing he did not know about the Victorian writer and his work, and nothing he could not

therefore recall. To ask him a question about any aspect of Gissing was to be dazzled by his peerless command of his subject.

I will always be grateful to him for his example as a scholar, for his generosity, and for the wisdom I gained from our collaborations.

Reminiscences of Pierre

GEORGE GORNIAC
Grayswood, Surrey

My first encounter with Pierre almost never took place. This was back in the summer of 2003 – during the London Gissing Centenary Conference. We had arranged to meet up at his small London hotel to discuss my suggested idea of a three-volume edition of the collected writings of Gissing on Dickens. I was shown into a room and told by the receptionist that Pierre and Hélène would be down shortly. After a wait of nearly half an hour I began to think that something was seriously amiss. I stepped out into the corridor, and, looking into an adjoining room found Pierre and Hélène also fretting at my non-appearance! After the explanations and introductions, we got on very well indeed and I knew that Pierre would be the ideal collaborator on this project.

I first came across Pierre's name when researching an article on Gissing for *The Dickens Magazine*. One of the books read for the article was Pierre's 1971 Enitharmon Press book, *Gissing's Writings on Dickens*. I immediately took a shine to this writer who wrote so clearly, authoritatively, and enthusiastically on his topic. After reading Gissing's own writings on Dickens which were equally excellent I conceived the idea of bringing out the complete writings in three volumes. The plan was to make these as authoritative as possible with "Introductions" by Gissing experts and "Afterwords" by Dickens authorities, thus bringing together viewpoints from both the Gissing and Dickens camps. To make the books even more comprehensive I decided to expand them by adding addenda of some previously published and rare articles for each volume. Pierre was equally enthusiastic with this idea and we decided to meet up again at his home at La Madeleine to discuss the design and the contents in further detail.

A few weeks later I was knocking on the door of 10 rue Gay-Lussac and entering a home that would become very familiar to me over the succeeding months and years. Pierre and Hélène's home is a veritable paradise for book lovers and the holy grail itself for devotees of Gissing! Its hushed and subdued atmosphere, blocking out all the noise of the nearby main thoroughfare, makes

it ideal for study and writing. Pierre was keen to show me some of his Gissing treasures which included the eight-volume presentation set of Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* awarded to Gissing in his first year at Owens College. We had a very pleasant time inspecting many of the rarer Gissing books on the three packed levels of the house, including the corridors, before we finally got down to talking about the Dickens project! Pierre passed to me the contemporary press comments on Gissing's writings on Dickens while I chose the other addenda from Pierre's archives plus two essays I brought on Chesterton and Gissing. It was late evening before I finally managed to tear myself away from the house and speed my way back to the Channel Ferry.

Even with all the addenda I was still worried that volume one would be noticeably slimmer than volumes two and three. I mentioned this to Pierre and asked if he could make his proposed "Introduction" a bit longer. I had already asked each of the contributors to provide 5,000-word essays and was hoping that Pierre could add a few extra thousand words. I need not have worried. Exactly six days later I received an essay of 15,000 words including 75 detailed references! A remarkable achievement! And what an essay – fully comprehensive in its biographical and bibliographical scope, with no detail too small to be left out – and arranged and written in such a gripping way that one finished it with regret that it could not be even longer. I still look back on this essay as one of the finest from Pierre's extensive portfolio. A writer at the very height of his considerable powers and with total command of his subject.

Pierre was already 73 when I first met him – but the ten years of our collaboration coincided with the ten most productive years of Pierre's long career – a wonderful Indian summer – which included his monumental bibliography and the three-volume biography – all finely matured from a lifetime's study and research on his beloved author. To talk of Pierre at the height of his writing powers may sound like a misnomer. From his earliest writings as seen in *The Gissing Newsletter* and his first book introductions Pierre displayed a clarity of expression and a felicity for the right phrase and sentence – an admirable talent in a language not his mother tongue!

His later work with Grayswood Press included a new edition of *Isabel Clarendon*, the first one-volume edition of Gissing's *Three Novellas*, and *The Collected Essays*. Another major highlight in our collaboration was the three-volume *Collected Short Stories*. One further big project that had been discussed was a pictorial biography of Gissing, but sadly, it proved to be a book too far. When I broached Pierre again on this topic in the autumn of 2013 he was already too ill to undertake the task. I am now just thankful for all the pleasant memories, the friendly and extensive correspondence on all

matters literary, the various ideas and projects discussed, and the books we worked on together. They will remain as a legacy of this remarkable scholar and those remarkably productive years.

Pierre Coustillas

WILLIAM GREENSLADE
UWE Bristol

I was fortunate to come to Gissing in the late-1970s when Gissing studies were very much in the ascendant. By now the Harvester Press editions of the novels were appearing with pleasing regularity. But it was the publication by Harvester of Pierre Coustillas's edition of Gissing's *Diary* in 1978 which immediately became an indispensable source of reference for Gissing, his life and his work. Coustillas's wide-ranging and sharply-observed introduction, his pertinent notes, his quite magisterial 'Who's Who in Gissing's Diary' and comprehensive index, superbly supplemented the diarised evidence of a life spent in the service of writing. 'Bitterly cold, and foggy. Nothing done; nothing read[.],' was a not uncommon entry into the *Diary* (this from 3 December 1893): during an unproductive day on the thesis a curious, imaginative connection might be struck. And in Pierre it seemed that the melancholy strain in Gissing found a receptor of 'rare device.' Later, Pierre and I corresponded when I came to edit *The Whirlpool*. He, and Hélène, could not have been more supportive in supplying me with suggestions and advice.

Was there ever a more knowledgeable Anglophile? In his enthusiasm and deep understanding of British literary culture Pierre was the epitome of the non-parochial literary critic and historian for whom artificially-devised barriers between nations sounded a retreat from the Enlightenment values to which he was so strongly committed. For Pierre, it was the task of the humanities, and of literary culture in particular, to render these barriers irrelevant to the spread of ideas and civilised values. In this Pierre shared the convictions of Gissing who, whatever his gloomy reservations about the fierceness of contemporary culture, saw himself as a belated representative of a civilising mission originating in the ancient world. Pierre furthered this mission in bringing Gissing so commandingly to our attention.

Pierre Coustillas

DAVID GRYLLE
Oxford

The death of Pierre Coustillas, while not wholly unexpected for those who knew him and his wife Hélène, is a momentous event in Gissing scholarship. For more than fifty years Pierre was the touchstone for accuracy and thoroughness in Gissing studies. His crucial role for students of this author was already apparent when I first met him in September 1981 at the “Gissing Symposium” in Wakefield (in effect the first international Gissing conference). Although we had only briefly corresponded (I had written a piece for *The Gissing Newsletter*), I had formed a distinct impression of his character. Searching him out as participants arrived, I told him I had read a great deal of his work. “Ah, probably too much,” he said with a shrug. I immediately recognised the self-deprecating irony, but as we moved quickly into Gissing arcana, his devotion to his subject and concern for precision were also abundantly confirmed.

What I later became familiar with was his enormous generosity. Once Pierre felt confident you shared his serious commitment to Gissing, he in turn shared his prodigious resources – of texts, facts, proofreading skills and inexhaustible patience. We corresponded for more than thirty years. Over that period, he helped me unstintingly. He answered queries punctually and precisely. He courteously corrected slips and errors. With Hélène he read the typescript of my critical book on Gissing. Later he made materials available to me (such as his and Hélène’s transcript of Gissing’s “Scrapbook”) that saved me hours of additional research. They visited me and my family in London and Oxford and we called on them at their house in Lille (where of course we had a guided tour of his jaw-dropping collection of Gissing texts and memorabilia). In October 1999, with Pierre and Hélène and the Postmuses, I toured the sites in Calabria that Gissing so memorably describes in *By the Ionian Sea*.

Although Pierre’s knowledge of the whole range of late nineteenth-century British culture was profound and he published on other authors, especially Kipling and Conrad, Gissing was his lifelong vocation. Almost single-handedly (though aided always by Hélène) he transformed the field of Gissing studies. No critic, editor or biographer in this area has been able to operate successfully outside the vast structure of scholarship he built. His unrivalled knowledge will be much missed (as will his humour and

generosity), but his critical, biographical, and editorial work will survive as an indispensable resource for as long as Gissing is read.

Pierre Coustillas

CONSTANCE HARSH
Colgate University

Anyone who has taken even a casual interest in George Gissing will have been saddened by the death of Pierre Coustillas this August. For those of us who study Gissing, the loss naturally hits deeper. We all owe Pierre an incalculable debt. It is impossible to take his measure fully as an exceptional editor, critic, and biographer. I am certainly not alone in feeling profoundly grateful to him; without him, my own scholarship would have been terribly impoverished or even impossible.

It is immensely fortunate for all of us that Pierre Coustillas came along when he did, dedicating himself to a writer who had been underserved by previous scholars. When he began his work, Gissing's lifetime still lay within living memory, and many materials were scattered but still available to a diligent investigator. We are now well past the centenary of Gissing's death. Who knows what might have been lost to us by now without the herculean efforts of Pierre, always assisted by the remarkable H  l  ne Coustillas? This foundational work has been exceptionally important for all who follow.

Few writers have been so lucky in the scholars they have attracted. Pierre had a unique understanding of the life and mind of George Gissing. He also had a warmly human appreciation for him. His three-volume biography is not only an outstanding account of a life, but a sympathetic engagement with an artist and man. Pierre was a loyal partisan as well as a perceptive critic.

One final legacy Pierre has left is a record of generosity. He shared his knowledge widely. And he was supportive of scholars newly entering the world of Gissing studies, no matter what critical perspective they brought to bear. I speak appreciatively of this attitude as someone who was once such a newcomer. There was wisdom in this approach: he understood the value of attracting new critics into the scholarly conversation. But there was also in it, very simply, a great deal of kindness.

He will be deeply missed.

Pierre Coustillas

SIMON J. JAMES
Durham University

Can there be any scholar in Gissing studies who is not in the debt of Pierre Coustillas?

Certainly, it is true that I got my first academic ‘start in life’ thanks to Pierre. I had presented for the first time at an international conference (‘Lands and Wonderlands,’ New York University, February 1996); I still remember the excitement when reading, in my PhD digs, Pierre’s suggestion that I might consider placing a written-up version of my paper in *The Gissing Journal*. The subsequent article, on *The Whirlpool*, a novel on which I wrote again and which I continue to teach, twenty years later, with postgraduate students in Durham, was my first academic publication. (A collaboratively authored piece on ‘Teaching Gissing in the Twenty-first Century’ is, in turn, my most recent work on Gissing, also published, of course, in the *Journal*). Pierre and Hélène’s thoughtful suggestions for this first piece helped buoy my confidence in what was then still an unfinished PhD thesis, a thesis which became, in due course, my first book, developed from the Gissing sections of the PhD. Once more, a kind enquiry from the Coustillas sent work in progress from Durham University to Lille. All I had expected was perhaps an early steer as to whether my readings might be or not be on the right track – what I received was pages and pages of helpful suggestions, even including (to my eternal shame), the correction of mistranscribed quotations from Gissing’s work ...

Pierre was such a generous supporter of the book and was unstinting in his support (even writing a reference to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for a successful application for a grant which funded an extra term of leave to finish *Unsettled Accounts* in time for the hundredth anniversary of Gissing’s death). As many readers of the *Journal* will know, the choice to work on a writer a little outside of the standard undergraduate Victorian canon can sometimes feel as if one is plowing a somewhat lonely furrow: encouragement from the greatest scholar of one’s chosen author had such a positive effect on the endeavours of a PhD student and junior scholar.

I might have been more heartened still had I known that Pierre’s support was not freely and uncritically given to any toiler in the ‘valley of the shadow of books’! He set high and exemplary benchmarks for his own work, and, quite rightly, Pierre expected others to aspire to high standards of accuracy and scholarship too. Looking back, therefore, his encouragement of such promise as he saw in my earliest labours is all the more of an honour. How delighted I

was to make such tiny gestures of thanks as I possibly could! – one literary allusion identified, one posthumous letter between two friends of Gissing transcribed, a stray cutting on Morley Roberts which somehow had hitherto escaped the Coustillas’ Argus gaze ... A day on which one was able to identify even the tiniest detail which had somehow thus far eluded the attention of ‘the Dean of Gissing studies’ (in my friend and colleague Christine Huguet’s words), that was a very good day indeed. To be asked to collaborate with Pierre, Hélène, and David Parker on one volume of Grayswood Press’s splendid edition of Gissing’s writings on Dickens was a further honour. I have yet, I am sorry to write, to follow through on Pierre’s warm support of also editing *In the Year of Jubilee*; but a book themed on ‘Dickens in Memory’ will follow in future, so perhaps Gissing continues, in his way, to cast a shadow on my future plans nonetheless. More tangibly, the chance to dedicate my and Christine’s *George Gissing and the Woman Question* to Pierre, and to review Pierre’s magisterial (there is no other word) biography for *Victorian Studies* allowed the opportunity to express in firm black and white my appreciation and my gratitude.

Looking over my correspondence with Pierre and Hélène I note not only many approbations of various scholarly efforts, in Gissing studies and in other endeavours, but also warm and thoughtful words around various personal and professional milestones over the time that we knew each other: my first academic appointments, promotions, even my marriage. Pierre was not only an indomitable and highly erudite scholar: he could be a warm and gracious human being too.

Adieu, Professor Coustillas. You will be missed. There will never be another Gissing scholar like you.

Pierre Coustillas

JOHN KEAHEY
Salt Lake City

Pierre and I had lost touch in recent years, but he was never far from my thoughts. He was a major help on my first book, *A Sweet and Glorious Land: Revisiting the Ionian Sea*, which detailed my 1998 journey in Gissing’s 1897 footsteps through southern Italy as recorded in his classic 1901 travel narrative *By the Ionian Sea*. In my initial research, I came across Jacob Korg’s Gissing biography. At first, I was slow to contact any of the Gissing scholars about what I was doing because of my grossly unfounded, ridiculous belief that a writer’s work should remain a secret.

When I finally wrote Jacob about Gissing, he immediately recommended that I contact Pierre. I did, and Pierre's response was immediate and full of information about the life of George Gissing, especially his ten-day journey across southern Italy. Pierre and H  l  ne had journeyed there, discovering all the places where Gissing had stayed, and he gladly shared all that information with me. We, at one time, planned to go together to Calabria and take the old mountain road between Paola and Cosenza that Gissing took by carriage. Pierre and H  l  ne had failed to find that winding, still-dirt road that was made obsolete by a modern tunnel that bore through the coastal mountains of Calabria; I had stumbled upon it merely by chance, and Pierre had wanted to take that ride, laughingly saying that perhaps we could find those wagon ruts. Sadly, we were never able to take that joint journey.

Pierre read my manuscript twice, correcting errors (even grammatical, non-Gissing ones). The grasp this Frenchman had on the English language was second to none. I well remember the day my wife Connie and I spent at his and H  l  ne's home in Lille, France, to review his edits of the penultimate draft. To peruse his vast collection of Gissing first editions in every language the Victorian has ever been published in was a treat. Pierre pointed to Gissing's chair and desk, saying I should sit there. I couldn't bring myself to do it, and Pierre understood perfectly.

My last contact with Pierre was when I read somewhere that he had just published the Gissing bibliography. I called to congratulate him and H  l  ne, and we had a long, warm conversation. He was interested in my various projects that involved writing about Italy and was full of questions. I asked him when he was going to finish his Gissing biography, and he was not sure he could get it done with everything else that occupied his (and H  l  ne's) full life devoted to this remarkable Victorian writer.

I was glad to learn that his three-volume biography of the Englishman was finally published – a project he had spent decades on and one that he was only able to pull off after he compiled that 600-page Gissing bibliography and nine-volume collection of Gissing's letters. I don't have any of the sets, but would like to think that my tiny pedestrian effort made it into the bibliography.

It is with sadness that my dear friend Jacob Korg passed, in his early 90s, in 2015. And now Pierre – two giants in the study of a Victorian writer that they brought out of undeserved obscurity, each contributing to George Gissing's niche in the world of English literature.

Gissing Swings in the 1960s

CHRIS KOHLER
Dorking

The 1960s. The swinging 60s. In February 1961 I was 19 and started my apprenticeship in antiquarian bookselling with E. Joseph in the Charing Cross Road. I left in June 1963, on my 21st birthday, to start my own business in my parents' house in Westhumble, Dorking.

I put an advertisement in the *Times Literary Supplement* and Pierre, then 33, wrote to me on the 6 February 1964 from 58 Boulevard Pasteur, Fresnes, Seine, France asking if I had anything by Gissing. I replied on 10th February that I didn't but "I'll be very happy to search for the titles which you want ..." and sent him my second catalogue. On 25th February he wrote thanking me for the catalogue, ordered books by Leigh Hunt, Charles Kingsley, and Bulwer Lytton and hoped I'd be able to find some Gissing for him, and so it went ...

Here are a few "edited highlights," as the television programmes have it, from my 1964 Coustillas file. I am "Mr. Kohler" at this stage and my new French friend is "Mr. Coustillas."

25 May 1964 [Pierre]: "I have just received your catalogue, which took two days to reach me, so I fear I shall be too late to get item 123: Gissing's Charles Dickens at 7/6 ..."

1 June 1964 [Chris]: "I'm sorry to report that the Gissing title which you wanted was already sold ... in future I'll notify you of any Gissing material before I catalogue it. [I then quote him a 1929 *Will Warburton* at 12/6 post free] ... Is there a standard biography of Gissing which you could recommend?"

3 June 1964 [Pierre]: "Collecting Gissing's works has become something of a passion with me. ... Yes, please send *Will Warburton* ... There is no definitive biography of him, but the best one is that by Jacob Korg of Seattle ... I am at present writing a rather ambitious biography & critical study of his works; preparing an edition (for Harvard University Press) of unpublished essays and short stories by him and translating *The Private Papers of Henry Rycroft* for a French publisher. I have also edited his correspondence with his third wife for an American publisher, it should appear in the forthcoming months. This will give you an idea of my contribution to the Gissing revival, which is well on the way. One of the reasons why I collect his works is that I plan – though not in the near future – to publish a bibliography of his writings."

Mid-June 1964 [Pierre]: "I will certainly come and see your stock when I go to Dorking next month. Perhaps you will be able to tell me the way to Clifton Terrace where Gissing lived in 1898-99."

Late July 1964 [Pierre]: "Dear Mr. Kohler, (I suggest that we drop the Mr. in future correspondence) ... You will find enclosed a list of my English *Ryecrofts*. [14 items] Anything you come across which does not seem to be any of them I am prepared to buy."

2 August 1964 [Pierre]: "... Following your suggestion, I went to Thorp's, at Guildford ... I have seen many bookshops in various countries but none that could compare with Thorp's ... I brought back nine new Gissings, of which five *Ryecrofts* ..."

31 August 1964 [Chris]: "... I haven't come across any *Ryecrofts* yet but expect that I will obtain some when I have issued a Wants List to some 300 booksellers ..."

2 September 1964 [Pierre]: "... a new *Ryecroft* has been sent to me as a present by a friend: 5th impression with a green binding, (1904). I had the same with a blue one ... Apart from a few variant bindings, the only first English edition I have failed to receive is the scarcest, i.e. *Workers in the Dawn*. I shall probably never get it ..."

12 October 1964 [Pierre]: "Have you found new Gissings? ... The revival is in full swing. A new edition of *Demos*, among other things, is announced in America. They are very active in Japan too ..."

14 October 1964 [Chris]: "I've been hoarding *Ryecrofts* up so that I could offer you several all in one go ... I have just ordered a copy of *The Unclassed* published by Sidgwick & Jackson 1911, name on endpaper, slightly faded, else good and can offer it to you for 17/6 post free ..."

30 October 1964 [Pierre]: "Am delighted our collaboration is so fruitful and hope you will some day take a trip to Paris that we may have a look at my shelves together, though none of the books will be for sale. It would be a great day!"

19 November 1964 [Chris]: "I have now acquired the Gissing collection and am offering most of the items to you ... when you came here a few months ago you mentioned a 'Gissing Newsletter' has this appeared yet?"

21 November 1964 [Pierre]: "I received your marvellous letter this morning. Well-nigh incredible! So you got the collection after all. Assuredly a feast! ... There is a certain variant binding of *A Life's Morning* and your copy might happen to have it ..."

25 November 1964 [Chris]: "*By the Ionian Sea* is in a green cloth (by the natural light) and what I'd call blue-green by artificial light so it's obviously

the same as your copy ... Now to get down to the business of bookselling. 4 items that might interest you ...”

3 December 1964 [Pierre]: “Thanks to you the G. collection here numbers 180 different edns! ... You may add Arnold Bennett’s *Fame & Fiction* (1901 or 1902) to my wants list.”

8 December 1964 [Pierre]: “Was delighted to see your advertisement for books by G in the *TLS* of last week. Hope it will bring some results. You must make a speciality of him and let people know it ...”

14 December 1964 [Chris]: “The *TLS* advert is bringing quite a good response. I bought *The Nether World*, 3 vols. 1st edn. 1889 for £4-10-0 (spines faded else good) for my own collection and am in the process of buying about 30 other titles (mainly cheap reprints) but as soon as I’ve got them all I’ll let you have full details and the first pick.”

17 December 1964 [Pierre]: “Now ... your edition of *Human Odds & Ends*. It is a curious one indeed ... The fact that your copy bears the name of S & J means that it was not bound until 1911 at the earliest. So, let us say it is a first edition with a late binding ... I hope you will consent to part with *Human Odds & Ends*. What is it worth? It is difficult to say ...”

31 December 1964 [Pierre]: “Yes, 25/- for *Human Odds & Ends* is a fair price ... The maximum sum we can send abroad (without complications) is 100F, i.e., about £7 ... Yours ever, P. Coustillas.”

Our correspondence continued like this until about 1990 when Ros Stinton took over the administration and distribution of *The Gissing Newsletter* which became *The Gissing Journal* from January 1991. Ros also took over my Gissing bookselling activities at this time and set up, with Michael Compton, as The Idle Booksellers. She continued to ferret out variants for Pierre and remembers “measuring ampersands on spines.” They have issued five Gissing catalogues and presently have over 1000 Gissing books in stock as well as many shelves of Yorkshire topography.

Pierre bought from many other booksellers throughout the world of course and continued his Dorking connection, corresponding with my friend John Coombes, a bookseller specialising in British topography. John sold him books about local history, with Gissing connections, between 1970 and 2013.

Pierre was the booksellers’ dream as we could feed his insatiable completist appetite by selling him multiple copies of the same title as long as each one was a variant “unknown to Coustilodge” as he sometimes called his house at 10 rue Gay-Lussac in Lille.

These few extracts from my 1964 file flag up what was to come. Look at the entry for 3rd June. The “passion” resulted in one of the greatest author

bibliographies of all time, the “no definitive biography” was published in three volumes in 2011/2012, the “I have also edited his correspondence with his third wife ...” is an early hint of *The Collected Letters*. On 2nd September he writes, “... the revival is in full swing. A new edition of *Demos*, among other things, is announced in America. They are very active in Japan too ...”

All these pave the way for a glorious end to “the swinging 60s” as John Spiers bursts on the scene in 1969 with his first Harvester Press book, *Isabel Clarendon* edited by Pierre Coustillas. And the rest is history.

Pierre was a great scholar, and with H  l  ne as his collaborator, achieved extraordinary things but I will remember above all his humanity, his sparkling wit and his and H  l  ne’s friendship over the past 54 years.

Thanks from Japan

SHIGERU KOIKE
Tokyo Metropolitan University

What I can do for Pierre Coustillas now is to state what he has done for Gissing devotees in Japan, and to thank him.

Following the kind suggestion of Professor Jacob Korg in 1963, I sent him a short essay, “Gissing in Japan.” It was published, thanks to him, in *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library* in November 1964. Pierre read it and took interest in a distant Asian country. I then taught at Tokyo Metropolitan University and had a chance to stay one year from September 1963 for study in London. Pierre and I wrote to each other, and I paid a visit to Paris in April 1964 to see him.

We talked much about Gissing, and I told him what I thought might seem to him a strange phenomenon, that in Japan only *The Private Papers of Henry Rycroft* and some short stories had been widely read and nothing else. Many reprints and translations were published and well received. Many of them were used as textbooks in school rooms, and many passages were used as materials for the entrance examinations. They were welcomed as examples of good standard English, not necessarily as of good literary work. So, Japanese young men, who were not interested in literature and who studied natural or social sciences, got acquainted with Gissing, and some of them got interested.

I was surprised and pleased to find that Pierre did not think it strange. He took a great interest in Japan and loved the Japanese. This is how we became good friends. Later in 1964, when Professor Jacob Korg paid a visit to London, Pierre and I met him, and we enjoyed a good talk in London. One

of the fruits was that we agreed to originate *The Gissing Newsletter*. The first number was published in January 1965. I did my best to help, giving Japan-related information, however small.

Pierre was a very earnest book collector and asked me to inform him about every book published in Japan, however trivial. I sent him many books and introduced many young Gissing devotees in Japan. So, he made young Japanese friends and gave them good pieces of advice and great encouragement.

I am very glad to say that Gissing studies in Japan made a remarkable advance. Young scholars published good studies and bravely translated some of Gissing's works, which would never lead to financial success or to academic glory. And there were some publishers who bravely helped them.

Pierre and Hélène, his wife, paid a long-wished visit to Japan in 1989. I took them to meet many people, and they said they were satisfied and grateful. But I am sure that those who should say thank you are Japanese Gissing lovers. The French couple did much more for the Japanese than we Japanese did for them.

**For PIERRE COUSTILLAS,
in memoriam**

FRANCESCO MARRONI

University "G. D'Annunzio" of Chieti-Pescara, Italy

The death of Pierre Coustillas is an enormous loss for both Gissing studies and the academic world which will remain ever grateful to him for his rediscovery of a writer who, until the 1960s was virtually unknown and whom no editor dared publish either in England or anywhere else. From a personal point of view, I can only say that I owe to Pierre my youthful passion for Gissing as well as the inspiration to write on Gissing's works in various moments of my career.

When he came to the Gabriele d'Annunzio University in Pescara many years ago (in the mid-1990s), we had already been writing to each other frequently and in his letters Pierre Coustillas would ask me, as the editor of his *Collected Letters*, for information about Gissing and Italy. I had recently founded the Victorian and Edwardian Studies Centre at Pescara and Pierre was one of its first guest speakers. Needless to say, he held a seminar on George Gissing in which he presented the writer in all his complexity, simply and clearly, but at the same time conveying his immense literary knowledge. Our doctoral students had thus the opportunity of discovering a writer they would doubtless never have heard of. But what Pierre offered was much

more than a mere biographical description of Gissing. He was extraordinarily skilful in combining historical and biographical facts with the multiform manifestations of literary phenomena. Indeed, Pierre's erudition was apparent to all in the way in which he brought the writer to life by presenting him in terms of the broader cultural context.

My memory of this encounter with Pierre, which occurred more than twenty years ago, is a particularly fond one. On that occasion I also met his wife Hélène, who was also an enthusiastic promoter of Gissing studies. During our encounter in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, (I cannot recall whether at dinner or another moment) I confessed to Pierre my passion for Joseph Conrad. Seeing his eyes suddenly light up I immediately understood that he was also an admirer of Conrad. In fact, a few moments later, he revealed to me, in his characteristically unassuming style devoid of all conceit, that he was preparing a new edition of his French translation of *The Duel* for Gallimard. Well, the following year a book arrived at my house with the following dedication: "To Professor Francesco Marroni, friend & fellow scholar with cordial remembrances, Pierre, 28.2.98."

During our intense correspondence, I invited Pierre, as editor of *Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*, to edit a special issue completely dedicated to Gissing in 2003. He very gladly accepted and, without any hesitation immediately set to work producing an issue – published in 2004 and co-edited by Emanuela Ettore (Special Issue on "George Gissing: New Explorations into His Fiction," *Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*, 9, 17, January 2004) – of a high critical standard. During the following years our lively correspondence continued and we were always honest with each other about our respective positions. I remember how, after having published one of my short story collections in 2000 which included "George and Nell" (in *Silverdale*, Palermo, Edizioni della Battaglia, 2000, pp. 91-100), he immediately wrote to me – after having read my story – to tell me that my fictional version of George Gissing was nothing like the real Gissing and that he had precise documentation testifying the opposite of what I had written in "George and Nell."

The truth behind his letter was somewhat different. Pierre's defence of his 'hero' made me realise that, after thirty years of continuous study, the author of *Born in Exile* was no longer simply a writer: he was a part of his daily life, a living part of his world. Gissing was the reality in which he was immersed every hour of the day and the presence with which he was engaged in a permanent dialogue, one that, not infrequently, bordered on self-identification. In reality, Pierre was already composing in his own mind the three volumes of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* and would read all that concerned the life

of *his* Gissing, whether directly or indirectly, with a certain diffidence. In recent years, when I was at last able to read *The Heroic Life*, I understood that Pierre's biography had not only opened up new paths for critical exploration and offered precious stimuli and insights for further analysis, but that it also marked the point of arrival of a lifetime's study. I believe that, after his passing, scholars will no longer be able to visit George Gissing country without feeling Pierre's presence. Indissolubly and monologically attached to his author, I imagine Pierre Coustillas to be like the shadow of Virgil accompanying Dante-Gissing from 'the nether world' to the highest heavens.

The Immortal Coustillas: Pierre in Memory

MITSU HARU MATSUOKA
Nagoya University, Japan

I understand that Pierre had entrusted himself to Hélène's tender care for the past few years. Any communication difficulty in the last weeks, I believe, would have mattered no more to them than to Basil and Veranilda: "Where they sat together there was sunshine, and before them gleamed an eternity of cloudless azure."

It was two years after my website, "Gissing in Cyberspace," was launched on the 138th birthday of the author (22 November 1995) that I first came into contact with Pierre via snail mail. A notable aspect of the website was that almost all the works of Gissing I had digitised were available for public perusal online. In order to add to the appeal of the website, I asked for "A Message from Professor Pierre Coustillas, Editor of *The Gissing Journal*." He readily agreed to my audacious request and sent the message with a profile photo in his letter dated 7 December 1997. Whenever you miss him, therefore, you can see his dignified face at <http://victorian-studies.net/gissing/coustillas.html>. While Pierre probably frowned at the large number of typos remaining in my Gissing e-texts, he acknowledged the potential value of "A Hyper-Concordance to the Works of George Gissing" </gissing/concordance.html>. I was more than pleased that the leading authority on Gissing studies found the concordance useful.

Pierre began using email in the last year of the 20th century. To be precise, Hélène received and sent emails on behalf of Pierre, but this facilitated our communication in making the life and works of Gissing better known on the Internet. I have wasted so many hours before my PC every day that my

academic output is only a small fraction of Pierre's. Nevertheless, I have edited a pair of critical anthologies on Gissing, though in Japanese. One marks the centennial of Gissing's death and is entitled *The World of Gissing: Overall Picture of the Novelist* (Tokyo: Eihosha, 2003). Pierre was kind enough to write a long preface, as well as to provide a paper titled, "A Cavalcade of Gissing Criticism in the Last Hundred Years," for my Japanese translation, before reading it at the Gissing Centenary Conference. The title of the other anthology edited for the sesquicentennial of Gissing's birth is *Society and Culture in the Times of George Gissing* (Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2007). Pierre wrote a new biographical sketch of Gissing and contributed an article titled, "Gissing and Pacifism: A Temperament in the Light of History." Henry Ryecroft mirrors Gissing's thoughts as a pacifist: "I see [science] bringing a time of vast conflicts, which will pale into insignificance 'the thousand wars of old,' and as likely as not, will overwhelm all the laborious advances of mankind in blood-drenched chaos." Pierre's analysis of Gissing's pacifism in the context of British imperialism reveals the intrinsic value sustained in the latter's works even for modern society. This is noticeable in examples such as our reaction to the recent statement of a particular U. S. President that he was ready for a new nuclear arms race and confident of final victory. At all events, my gratitude for Pierre's contribution to those critical anthologies is beyond words.

Let me cast back to the summer of 1964, which saw Pierre rendezvous with Jacob Korg (USA) and Shigeru Koike (JP) at and around the British Library to begin publishing *The Gissing Newsletter*. Moreover, a few weeks later, Jacob solicited Herbert Rosengarten (UK) to complete the multinational group with his participation. Pierre took over the editor's role from Jacob in January 1969. From then on, Hélène reportedly served as assistant editor of the *Newsletter* and its subsequent serial publication, *The Gissing Journal*. With Pierre's permission, I digitised all the back numbers of the *Newsletter* (1965-1990) and the *Journal* (1991-2000), and Hélène patiently proofread all 144 issues. You can now open and read PDF files up to vol. 46, no. 4 (October 2008) at "Gissing in Cyberspace." I intend to ask Hélène for the rest of the camera-ready copies on which Pierre worked as editor of the *Journal* until January 2013. I see it as my duty and as a mark of respect for the immortal Coustillas to perpetuate his great scholarly fame online.

I am currently editing a new critical anthology entitled *Dickens and Gissing: Subterranean Similarities and Differences*, scheduled for publication in December. It seems fittingly poignant to dedicate this book to Pierre as a *liber amicorum*. The last book that I presented to him was my Japanese translation, published in 2016, of Gissing's early short stories including "R.I.P." Let me conclude this valedictory with a prayer that Pierre's soul

may rest in peace. And may Hélène, who is such an angel of a woman that she expressed concern for my family and my cat even during this sad time, go on forever!

Pierre Coustillas

ROGER MILBRANDT
University of Alberta

Like all of us who have done scholarly work on George Gissing, I am in awe at Pierre Coustillas's achievement as a scholar. Rather than attempting to appraise this achievement, however, I would like to offer a personal testimony concerning an important ancillary to Pierre's own scholarly work: his extremely constructive encouragement and assistance of other Gissing enthusiasts.

Certainly, I am not the only person who came to know Pierre through an email conversation. He surely knew nothing about me as we began our conversation in 2005, but he always had time to provide thorough answers to every query I posed and to do so in an utterly respectful and courteous manner. Before I had even written anything on Gissing, Pierre made me feel like I was part of the Gissing community.

When I attended the Gissing Conference in Lille in 2008 I of course looked forward eagerly but with some anxiety to meeting the indisputably leading figure in Gissing studies. My anxieties were utterly misplaced. At an early point in the Conference, Pierre approached me, called me by name, and inquired about the progress on an article on Gissing's income which I had undertaken to write. The conversation that ensued had nothing of the air of a conversation between an icon and an acolyte; on the contrary, it was a conversation between two people who in a sense were equalised by their shared interest in a Victorian writer and who desired, for distinct but wholly compatible reasons, a satisfactory outcome of the project under discussion.

A few years later I was doing some work on Gissing's essay "The Hope of Pessimism" and noticed three incongruous word-choices which I suspected were the consequences of errant transcription. I alerted Pierre and was astounded that within a very short time – I believe it was less than a day – he responded, pointing out that he had checked the photocopies of the essay and learned that in fact the three cases were matters of mistaken transcription. One sensed that Pierre felt that if there were any sign of disorder in the Gissing universe it would need to be corrected as soon as possible and that Pierre

himself would do anything within his power to ensure that the correction was expeditiously and competently carried out.

It occurred to me later that a new transcription of “The Hope of Pessimism” ought to be undertaken. The transcription Pierre had published in 1970 in *George Gissing: Essays & Fiction* had been prepared in very difficult circumstances. Pierre had had to do all the work within the confines of the Pforzheimer Library where the original manuscript of the essay was held and he could not avail himself of photocopies. It was with some trepidation that I alerted Pierre of my interest in producing a new transcription of the essay but he was immediately supportive. Both he and Hélène engaged in detailed discussions with me about some of the perplexing choices I needed to make in the course of this undertaking. As a result, the new transcription of “The Hope of Pessimism” in *The Gissing Journal* in July 2017 benefits substantially from their advice.

In short, the full measurement of Pierre Coustillas’s contribution to Gissing scholarship would have to include not only the gigantic output of Pierre’s own industry but also the more modest contributions of people like me who would likely have contributed nothing had Pierre not been the remarkably accommodating and supportive human being he was.

Pierre Coustillas: a Scholar and a Mentor to Many

FREDERICK NESTA
UCL Qatar

I was first introduced to Gissing by Al Slotnik at the Gotham Book Mart. Future visits to the Gotham would always take me to the two shelves near the front of the shop that housed their current Gissing collection. A few years later, casting about for a doctoral thesis topic I realised that I now had a number of Gissing biographies and studies on my own shelves. A quick search brought up Pierre’s ‘Aspects of the Late Victorian Publishing Scene: George Gissing and His Publishers’ (1996). I wrote to Pierre asking his opinion of the viability of a thesis on Gissing and he immediately sent me an encouraging and enthusiastic reply and was always supportive of my research in the years that followed. He very kindly consented to be on a SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing) conference panel in Lyon in 2004, presenting a paper on Gissing in translation. Visiting his house in Lille a few years ago we discovered that he and Hélène had a close connection with Al Slotnik and his widow that went

back many years. I first met Pierre in person at the Gissing Conference in London in 2003. I remember seeing a person who was a bubble of enthusiasm and realised instantly that that had to be Pierre. I learned a lot about Gissing from him, the topic of my doctoral thesis, and even more about scholarship.

Pierre Coustillas

HERBERT ROSENGARTEN
University of British Columbia

When I first met Pierre Coustillas, I was a raw graduate student in Oxford writing a thesis on Gissing and late-Victorian publishing. I knew of Pierre through Jack Korg, with whom I had corresponded when his fine biography of Gissing appeared in 1963. Pierre was already venturing into the waters of Gissing bibliography, and we discovered a mutual interest in early editions of Gissing's novels. When Pierre offered to come visit me to exchange notes on our respective findings, I was flabbergasted: a published scholar with a growing reputation, taking valuable time to visit *me*? Of course, at that time the Gissing community was quite small, and not at all exclusive, so everyone who contributed to Gissing studies was valued and welcomed into our little fraternity.

Our meeting proved to be valuable to my work – Pierre's knowledge of Gissing's life and work was encyclopaedic even then – and mildly helpful to him, since I was able to provide him with the title of a short story that had eluded him. But what sticks in my memory is the kindness and generosity he showed me on that and subsequent occasions; he was extraordinarily willing to share the results of his research, and to show a stumbling beginner like me how and where to locate the materials I would need to give some much-needed substance to my thesis.

Pierre and I, along with Shigeru Koike, were recruited by Jack Korg to join him in editing the first numbers of *The Gissing Newsletter*, and from the outset Pierre showed the attention to detail, the indefatigable dedication to unearthing the truth, that characterised his whole career and took him from the Gestetnered pages of the *Newsletter* to the magnificent achievement of the three-volume Gissing biography and a major role in the epic *Collected Letters* that won the MLA's Morton N. Cohen Prize. In his deep, almost uncanny understanding of Gissing the man as well as Gissing the writer, and in his determination to promote and protect the reputation of an author who

is not always easy to love, he was the acknowledged leader of Gissing scholarship over many decades.

Any tribute to Pierre Coustillas would be incomplete without recognition of the role played by his loyal and tireless wife H  l  ne, who was by turns amanuensis, bibliographer, copy-editor and research assistant. If only Gissing had been as fortunate in his choice of life partner; but then he might not have achieved the status of tragic hero that so aroused and inspired his greatest admirer to spend a lifetime bringing him out of the shadows.

Pierre Coustillas

ROBERT SELIG
Denver

The death of Pierre Coustillas is very sad news. More than the work of any of the rest of us involved in Gissing studies, Pierre's long decades of deepest devotion to George Robert Gissing helped to revive this partially forgotten late-Victorian to a place that he justly deserved: as a major English novelist, brilliant short story writer, as well as a remarkable essayist. Thank you, Pierre.

Tribute to Pierre Coustillas

ROGER W. SMITH
Maspeth, NY

I first became aware of George Gissing's writings from reading an excerpt from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in a college class. I first became aware (and appreciative) of Pierre Coustillas through the Harvester Press editions of Gissing. With their splendid design, layout, and (especially) typography. And, with their editorial apparatus, notably the introductions of one Pierre Coustillas.

For me, the main interest (as it should be) is the author, not the critic. But, what was so gratifying was that Gissing's novels, most long out of print, were being reissued in handsome, expertly edited editions – beginning with a critical edition of *Isabel Clarendon* (Harvester, 1969) edited by Professor Coustillas. The book had until then been almost impossible to find.

As my interest in and appreciation of Gissing deepened, I was eager to learn more about him, both from a biographical point of view and *qua* writer:

his working methods, his influences, his evolution as a writer, the life as it pertained to the works.

I began to build up my own Gissing collection, which is not exhaustive, but contains perhaps half of his works and as many books about Gissing as I could get my hands on. My most recent purchases, besides a reprint edition of Samuel Vogt Gapp's *George Gissing: Classicist*, include Professor Coustillas's magisterial three-volume biography of Gissing.

In the rest of the space allotted to me for contributing to this commemorative issue, I would like to mention a few things that have struck me while reading Professor Coustillas's works and the works of Gissing he has edited.

The wealth of detail about Gissing which Professor Coustillas unearthed over the years is astounding and of extraordinary value. It would not, in probably ninety percent or more of the instances, have otherwise been found. See, as an illustrative example, footnote 25 on pages 337-338 in Part I of his Gissing biography, or footnote 6 on page 339. From whom else but Professor Coustillas would we have been able to learn (as he noted in the introduction to his *George Gissing: Essays & Fiction*) that when Gissing was working on chapter 12 of *The Nether World*, he spent Easter Monday of 1888 at the Crystal Palace in London, "of all places [in Coustillas's words] one of the best in which to observe the holiday-making populace"?

Such discoveries were not limited to those about Gissing's works and their composition/publishing history, nor to the facts of his life. They also included overlooked and seemingly impossible-to-locate sources. And, of course, his diligence and industry in tracking down hitherto unavailable and unpublished letters of Gissing, an effort in which his ability to form relationships with Gissing descendants and descendants of Gissing's friends was invaluable.

Unlike the writings of many literary critics and scholars, Coustillas's on Gissing are not tendentious. He was not interested in propounding theories or making a winning serve with a critical point. He was always mindful and respectful of, maintained complete fidelity to, the facts of a writer's – Gissing's – literary career: what it entailed, what it means to be a novelist.

Coustillas's dense, pithy information-packed prose satisfies. His punchy style. "Such prudence in prognostication is not always necessary," he wrote in the introduction to *George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography*. "Fortunately the novels have since 1975 been generally read as imaginative works and no longer exclusively or mainly as sociology in fictional form[.]" he asserted in his introduction to the first volume of his Gissing biography. In his introduction to Gissing's *Diary*, he opined that "Exeter was to suit Henry Ryecroft better than it did George Gissing[.]" And he wrote: "The city, or more

accurately London, was [...] the residence best suited to his reputation. But it was evident throughout his life that he could be fully happy nowhere.”

Coustillas was a brilliant writer with an almost perfect command, to say nothing of a deep knowledge, of English. But sometimes, very rarely, his use of a word or a phrase would involve the choice of one or another word that seemed unlikely to have been made by a native speaker. Yet his coinages were ingenious and tended to fix the mind.

With his encyclopaedic knowledge of Gissing’s *oeuvre* and scholarship about him, Professor Coustillas was able to clearly see limitations, omissions, or prejudices found in studies of Gissing; and biased, tendentious, unfair, or unfounded views. “Coustillas’s extraordinary identification with his subject can make the tone of his tale rather defensive,” Gissing scholar Simon James wrote in a recent review of Coustillas’s biography. This is a valid point worth making, but it can be fairly said that Professor Coustillas usually erred on the right side.

One should not forget as well his ability and industry as a translator of Gissing’s works.

Pierre Coustillas

JOHN SPIERS
Brighton

Pierre’s work is not of the past, but of the future. All work on late-Victorian literature and in George Gissing’s pivotal cultural role must take account of the scholarship at 10 rue Gay-Lussac. That work casts a bright searchlight forwards.

My dear friend Pierre was a great scholar, and he was also *a great man*. He was a kind, gentle but determined man – and very witty in two languages. When Pierre began his work Gissing was almost forgotten, unread, and out of print. His central role in the revolution in Gissing studies was unprecedented and unexampled. He was persistent and consistent. He was never uninteresting, and always original. His output is formidable, and consistently on the highest level. He gave much support to many other scholars, too, who owe him much. Despite having himself undertaken a great burden of original research work, writing, and editing, he always answered a huge number of scholarly queries swiftly and in detail. He always made the time for others. He was regular and disciplined in his working habits, too, with a restless love of literature and his work about creative writing. He had

a genuine poetic feeling for style, structure, and literary purposes, and a quick appreciation of people. The results are extraordinary, and will never be replaced.

We know that he held his views with determination and sometimes even obstinacy. For example, he fired all barrels at inept critics, and rightly he had no time for the sloppy “scholarship” of some, notably Michael Collie and John Halperin. But if he was ever a martinet, this was chiefly to himself, for he never stopped working. Indeed, as I said in my obituary of Pierre for *The Times* of London, work was his hobby and his hobby was work. Otherwise, he lived in a simple, plain but scholarly manner. He was fortunate to enjoy for decades a loving, sympathetic, supportive partnership with H  l  ne. She gave him unstinting help with research and writing – and somehow coped with his spidery handwriting, and his eccentric driving too. Her aid in the past few years greatly eased Pierre’s difficulties with his fading health. Her decades-long contribution to Pierre’s life and work should be most fully recognised. She united the artistic with the practical. H  l  ne helped make everything happen. Her constant and loving care and watchfulness, without fuss or parade, was vital to Pierre. The integrity and the strength of intellect which they brought to their work together has also been unexampled.

I have known Pierre and H  l  ne for 50 years. We were first in touch in 1968, when I was a graduate student at the University of Sussex. I was in a new university, with a handsome new library, designed by Sir Basil Spence. There were funds aplenty, but insufficient books. I wanted to work with George Gissing’s novels, but there weren’t many in the library. Later, some came with the gift of G. D. H. Cole’s library. The AMS Press in New York also reprinted most of Gissing’s books, but not the impossibly scarce *Isabel Clarendon* (Chapman & Hall, 2 vols., 1886). Their editor unaccountably omitted that title. It seems that fire at the printer’s in South London or at Chapman & Hall’s warehouse had left very few copies to circulate. Only six copies of the first edition seem to be known. So I decided to set up a small firm – which became The Harvester Press – and to issue the novel again. I asked Pierre to prepare this edition. So began our long and happy association, which produced scholarly and now standard editions of 20 of Gissing’s books and his previously unpublished diary.

When I wrote to him Pierre was serving overseas in the Malagasy Republic. In 1971 he assisted me in organising the exhibition *The Rediscovery of George Gissing* at the National Book League’s rather grand premises in Albemarle Street, Piccadilly. In 2003 I was glad to be able to take part in the centenary celebrations with Pierre, H  l  ne, Jane Gissing, my wife Leigh and others in the Basque country when Gissing’s grave was refurbished.

Despite his sagacious and deliberate accomplishments, his shrewdness and discrimination, Pierre was a man of humility as well as confidence. He was a radical liberal in his principles and feelings; he had no religious convictions, but he did have other non-literary enthusiasms. He was always interested in social reform. He also followed two football teams: Lille, and The Arsenal. He noted their accomplishments, trials and anxieties, carefully, and understood their difficulties. Here, too, the life and shadow of George Gissing probably helped.

We can confidently say that in Pierre, and H  l  ne, their friends have known two remarkable persons to whom we owe so much. Each has been a rare presence in our lives. We share H  l  ne's deep grief, and will never easily accept that we shall never hear Pierre's joyful, intense, witty, cultivated voice again. We shall never be able to think of a word that Gissing wrote without thinking of Pierre and H  l  ne. That, too, is a huge cultural heritage for which many thousands now and in the future will be grateful.

Au revoir, cher Pierre – repose en paix!

WULFHARD STAHL
Bern

Now that you are gone, dear Pierre, and now that our 'friendship in letters' has definitely come to an end, I find it surprisingly delicate to recall how we met and what we shared over a period of roughly more than four decades.

In the beginning there was, of course, George Gissing: A seminar on *New Grub Street* at the University of Hannover, in summer 1974, then an eye-opener for an innocent reader. Hunting for Jacob Korg's *Critical Biography* during my first visit to New York City, in spring 1976, turned out to be one of those few lucky *kairos* moments in life: entering Manhattan's Gotham Book Mart in W 47 Street, I happened to be introduced to, and then got acquainted with, a bookdealer and fascinating Gissing collector, Alfred Slotnick by name. The ensuing invitation for dinner at his Brooklyn home brimful of books, autographs and the like, opened up new doors and vistas rekindling my interest in the late-Victorian author. Al renewed his invitation the next year, and it was then that he suggested – purely *en passant*, if I remember correctly – I turn to you, dear Pierre, for further advice as to how to focus and deepen my 'thoughts' on Gissing. Write to you I did in late 1977, and we started corresponding in a fairly intense way. It was in late March 1978 that I visited you and H  l  ne and your daughter Fran  oise for

the first time in La Madeleine (you picked me up at Gare Lille-Flandres) – your hospitality and open-mindedness were as overwhelming as your sense of humour. Your generosity surpassed it all in that you spoilt me to the core in both an intellectual and a practical sense: in other words, the number of Gissing-related hints and pieces of advice, the number of articles and books you gave me were impressive, to say the least, and filled me with a hitherto unknown feeling of gratefulness.

Our common trip to Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, in late December 1978, accompanied by Al Slotnick, is as vividly remembered as the speech you delivered at what I consider to have become the ur-Gissing Conference, a set of sessions during a meeting of the Modern Language Association held at that time in New York City.

The thesis I had then been planning – on Gissing, his way of writing and the changing points of view – came to nothing. Instead, I gradually became entangled with studies on Eduard Bertz inspired by the constant flow of questions you had with regard to the Germany-related material that you needed while preparing the edition of *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (later on, you made a present to me of all the volumes, with a dedication in each of them: certainly, *the* everlasting memory of you!). Only too happily I tried to meet your demands by gathering all the information asked for – and all of a sudden I found myself compiling a bio-bibliography on Gissing's close German friend which seemed just the most natural thing to do. What at first, almost playfully, started with a few sheets only, developed over the years into a serious hobbyhorse, with several articles on Bertz published, a.o., in *The Gissing Journal*, and a yet incomplete bibliography covering c. 70 leaves. I cannot thank you enough for having put me on the Bertz trail!

A most welcome side effect of your continuous inspiration has been my growing interest in, and sound research with a few publications on, a "personal friend" of Gissing's, namely Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, the Austrian writer he met a few times in 1899 in Paris and whom he would have liked to engage as a translator of *The Odd Women*. Her *Confession de ma vie* might have been interesting for you because of a fair amount of allusions to French political and cultural affairs.

Your and Hélène's visit to Bern in 1989 shall never be forgotten, nor the meeting with the two of you in Venice, in fall 1996, when we saw the exhibition on "The Western Greeks" sharing our mutual interest in Gissing's long journey through Calabria.

Now there won't be any "More soon" any more, the farewell greeting in a large number of letters from you with which you used to quote Al Slotnick. There will remain, however, my collection of many a fine edition of Gissing's

works you were responsible for, and my recollection of the wonderfully enthusing spirit with which you carried on during all those years – a gift people may envy you for, and a strength Hélène has had a fair share in. I freely confess that I can call myself fortunate to have met you both and to have kept up contact over such a long period of time. – R.I.P., dear Pierre!

Pierre Coustillas

MICHAEL STEWART
Crowhurst, UK

My first acquaintance with Pierre Coustillas and George Gissing took place in the summer of 1974 in Blackheath village. Whiling away a summer morning, I was browsing in the local bookshop and espied a copy of Gillian Tindall's *The Born Exile*. I was struck by the powerful, haunting gaze of George Gissing, of whom I knew nothing, and purchased the book immediately.

This began my lifelong obsession with Gissing and indirectly my introduction to Pierre Coustillas. My next step was to purchase the facsimile editions of Gissing's work as they were published by Harvester Press, which in turn introduced me to the scholarship of Pierre Coustillas, his critical writings, novel introductions, and of course *The Gissing Newsletter* as it was then.

Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to meet him personally but on the one occasion I sought information on Gissing prior to a visit to Naples he responded with generosity and timeliness.

In many ways he has been my constant companion whether browsing through *The Collected Letters*, consulting his bibliography or enjoying his critical analysis. At all times Pierre's voice has been there, guiding, explaining, and challenging.

His devotion to Gissing, the man and the novelist was extraordinary and he has enriched my understanding of the writer, and his meticulous scholarship has ensured that what Gissing bequeathed is preserved and his reputation as a great Victorian novelist enhanced and recognised as it should be.

Pierre Coustillas's devotion to George Gissing is in its own way 'heroic' and Pierre deserves the many accolades he has and will receive for his championing of such a wonderful novelist.

Remembering Pierre Coustillas

ROS STINTON
Idle, Bradford

The Scene: Clifford Brook's front room in Wakefield.

The Occasion: The handing over of *The Gissing Newsletter* (to become *The Gissing Journal*) to The Gissing Trust in 1992.

The Participants: Members of The Gissing Trust (Clifford Brook, Tony Petyt, Ros Stinton) the previous publisher of *The Gissing Newsletter*, Chris Kohler, and the editor, Pierre Coustillas.

A business meeting? To start with, yes, but once that had been satisfactorily concluded, it turned into a social occasion and there is no doubt who was the star of the show. Pierre will be remembered by many as a meticulous scholar, a passionate enthusiast, a fanatical book collector; all true, but what is missing is how entertaining he could be. He had a lively mind and was extremely witty and humorous on occasions. This was one of them and we laughed until it hurt.

So, despite the extent and the excellence of his works on Gissing, despite the magisterial *Heroic Life*, despite his masterpiece (to me) *The Definitive Bibliography* and despite the fact that he, almost single-handedly, restored the reputation of an almost forgotten Victorian novelist, in the end it is Pierre Coustillas the man that I mourn. I was proud to be his friend and I will miss him.

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

D. J. TAYLOR
London

I first came across Pierre Coustillas's name in 1978, reading a *Spectator* review of his edition of Gissing's diaries, of which the reviewer jocularly concluded that the whole enterprise was clearly a plot got up by the Society of Authors to deter newcomers to an already overcrowded trade. The price – an eye-watering £28.50 – was well beyond my teenage budget, but a couple of years later, by which time I had proceeded to university, the Harvester Press inaugurated a short-lived 'academic book club,' full of Gissing titles at knock-down prices. I signed up on the spot, whereupon Pierre became the conduit to a world that has held me in its thrall ever since.

Plenty of scholars have devoted themselves to the task of re-establishing a dead writer's reputation: one thinks of Gordon N. Ray with Thackeray, Leslie A. Marchand with Byron or Ernest Mehew with Stevenson. None of them did so with quite the fanaticism or steely resolve that Pierre brought to his half-century engagement with Gissing. Without him Gissing would have remained a minor figure on the late-Victorian periphery rather than the last great Victorian novelist. If he was indefatigable in Gissing's pursuit, then he was also remorseless in his defence. There are several occasions in his great three-volume biography where he gives the impression of practically shaking with rage at the effrontery of some *fin de siècle* hack who has failed to award his star pupil an A+, and you imagine that if the ghost of Clement Shorter (plausibly canvassed as the original of Fadge in *New Grub Street*) had ever floated into his study in Lille he would have thrown an inkwell at him.

To my lasting regret I never met Pierre *vis-à-vis*. But the sound of his precise, scholarly voice on the telephone, or the receipt of one of his impossibly erudite letters always irradiated the day – as, towards the end, when his strength failed him, did a message from Hélène, to whose constant efforts on his behalf every Gissing fan should always remember and applaud. He was a great man, and the world of late-Victorian literary studies is forever in his debt.

Goodbye Pierre

GILLIAN TINDALL
London

Long ago in the early 1970s, when I was young and not much had yet been written about George Gissing, I was fortunate enough to be commissioned by a publisher to write a book about him. I had so far read only a few of the novels, in what George Orwell memorably described as “soup-stained editions from public libraries”: very few were in print and *Workers in the Dawn*, was almost unobtainable. However, it did not take me long to discover that the epicentre of Gissing studies, that were to develop so significantly in the following decade, was in a residential suburb of Lille, and there I made my way. With me were my husband and then small son: we were in fact at the beginning of the holiday expedition that would carry us to Gissing's last lodging, at the foot of the Pyrenees, and to the cemetery where he lies in St Jean de Luz.

Pierre, who had evidently looked me up, even as I had looked him up when his name was helpfully mentioned to me by a book dealer, was a little wary of

me at first. He thought, given my earlier literary career, I might be planning to turn Gissing into a novel. However, I managed to reassure him that I had no such aim in mind, and very soon his enthusiasm for anyone who shared his appreciation for Gissing overcame his doubts. He and H  l  ne welcomed us, and quickly became friends. Soon he supplied an introduction to the owners of the grandiose 19th century ch  teau in the Ni  vre owned by relations of Gabrielle Fleury, where Gissing had been a visitor in 1900. This was not far from where we had recently acquired our own entirely un-grand holiday home, and the hospitable Le Malliers too became part of our social network.

I am a French speaker, but I soon realised that this ability was not only redundant in view of Pierre – and H  l  ne’s – really excellent English, but that it was oddly inappropriate. Pierre, with his innate ethic of plain living and high-thinking, his unpretentiousness, his generosity to those who shared his intellectual passions, and his absolute lack of concern for good food or wine – or indeed for holiday sunshine, sightseeing, the theatre, the cinema, socialising, or almost, any intellectual activity unconnected with 19th century literature – always seemed to us a natural-born Englishman of a particular kind. The odd thing was that he had turned up in a French family.

He had been an only child, and possibly rather a lonely one. He once confided in me, when I got to know him better, that he had been born “in modest circumstances,” and that though his father had eventually become a station master near the Orl  ans railway-hub this achievement in itself had represented a significant step up. Knowing this helped me to ‘place’ both Pierre’s own considerable career achievement – his chair at Lille University – and his blind spots. He had grown up knowing that his future comfort and intellectual satisfaction depended entirely on his performance in the academic assault course, but by the same token he was, I suspect, consistently allowed by his family to pursue ‘his studies’ rather than, say, lend a hand with a garden, let alone the washing-up. Indeed, so much did he – like Gissing – regard the idea of having to peel vegetables with some horror, and domestic matters in general as an unwanted distraction from research, that inviting him to a meal, as I once or twice managed to when he visited London, was an oddly unrewarding experience. It was as if he did not know he was supposed to enjoy it!

I am afraid that my moving on professionally from Gissing to quite other topics was something he never really understood either. It was this same unworldliness, which made him ignore the wider picture of the publishing world, that also made him wonderfully receptive to any query that interested him. I remember once telling him that I had never found a satisfactory French equivalent to the quintessentially English remark “Don’t

make such a fuss!” He pondered with enthusiasm, and came up with a range of suggestions. I also recall fondly that my very last contact with him, after I had seen him at home in a much-reduced state, was over the names of certain families in central France about whom I had recently written an essay in French. I had given him a copy. He was intrigued by the typically Berrichon nomenclature and we had a brief correspondence about this – a true spark of the old, interested Pierre before illness, exhaustion, and apathy finally claimed him.

Pierre Coustillas

TOM UE

Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada

Pierre Coustillas’s dedication to Gissing is rivalled only by his generosity towards emerging scholars. I vividly remember writing to Pierre for the first time in 2008 regarding the Gissing-Shakespeare connection. As an undergraduate student reading *New Grub Street* (1891), I was struck by a pair of scenes where characters draw on *The Tempest*: on his deathbed, Reardon begins to quote to Biffen from the play; and Biffen repeats it more fully before poisoning himself. At first glance, these allusions seem incongruent: what do Shakespeare and Prospero have to offer these writer characters in their most desperate moments? Closer inspection reveals many more references. Reardon recites from *Antony and Cleopatra* in the backstreets of Islington. Why, I wondered, did Gissing so regularly turn to Shakespeare? Such questions prompted my Senior Essay, written at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and I return to them in my Ph.D. and in my forthcoming monograph.

Conversation with Pierre – his timely, informative, and incisive responses to my persistent queries – was something that I could always rely on. When I submitted my first article to *The Gissing Journal*, I got to know Pierre and H  l  ne as editors. My essay examined two of Gissing’s first-person short stories to argue that his characterisation stages the reader’s expectations, and that this narrative strategy contributes to, as much as it compromises, the realism of his stories. I was elated to hear Pierre call it “a sophisticated production” that “point[ed] to narrative complexities which have been overlooked by commentators so far.” Both Pierre and H  l  ne responded to my work with characteristic care; inspected my transcriptions meticulously and thus saved me from a number of errors; and demonstrated to me that kindness and scholarly rigour need not be mutually exclusive. The focus of my research

on literary connections, intertextuality, and book history has placed me centrally in Pierre's debt.

Readers of Gissing will recognise the central role that Pierre played in the writer's rediscovery. In addition to *The Gissing Newsletter* and subsequently *The Gissing Journal*, the organ for Gissing studies, which Pierre edited from 1969 to April 2013, his numerous editions, articles, book chapters, and reviews demonstrate the value of single-author scholarship and its capacity to deepen our knowledge of the nineteenth century. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (1990-1997), which he co-edited with Paul F. Mattheisen and Arthur C. Young, foregrounds the numerous literary and cultural conversations in which Gissing was actively engaged and opens up new avenues for inquiry: what was his influence on younger generations of writers such as E. W. Hornung? I am sorry that Pierre never got to read the books that evolved from our discussions: they most certainly would not have existed without his encouragement and support. I can only aspire to Pierre's example through my own scholarship, mentorship, and teaching; and I hope to inspire new generations of Gissingites as he has me. As I look upon my well-thumbed copies of *George Gissing: A Definitive Bibliography* (2005) and *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* (2011-2012), I think of Pierre's own heroic life as researcher and teacher: I will miss him, and I will always cherish our friendship. He would appreciate this gem from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903). It is a work that he knew well, having produced, in 1966, a model bilingual edition.

Let every land have joy of its poet; for the poet is the land itself, all its greatness and its sweetness, all that incommunicable heritage for which men live and die. As I close the book, love and reverence possess me. Whether does my full heart turn to the great Enchanter, or to the Island upon which he has laid his spell? I know not. I cannot think of them apart. In the love and reverence awakened by this voice of voices, Shakespeare and England are but one.

Que chaque pays se réjouisse d'avoir son poète, car le poète, c'est la terre même, toute sa grandeur et sa douceur, tout ce patrimoine intransmissible pour lequel les hommes vivent et meurent. En refermant mon livre, je suis pénétré d'amour et de respect. Mon cœur plein d'émoi se tourne-t-il vers l'Enchanteur suprême, ou vers l'Île sur laquelle il a jeté son charme? Je ne sais. Ma pensée est impuissante à les dissocier. Dans l'amour et le respect qu'éveille cette voix des voix, Shakespeare et l'Angleterre ne font qu'un. (pp. 312-313)

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Pierre Coustillas

MARTHA VOGELER
Fullerton, CA

Having discarded my early scholarship, including letters, to facilitate a recent move, I cannot now be sure when my correspondence with Pierre began, but I recall a letter from him during his years in Madagascar in the 1960s. I had by then begun to update my 1959 dissertation on the formative years of Frederic Harrison. It would take me two more decades to cover his long life (1831-1923), including his now well-known rescue of Gissing from poverty.

Meanwhile, by the 1970s I had met Pierre and his wife H  l  ne and they twice generously picked up my husband and me in Paris for a drive to their house outside Lille. Both times we were staying with my brother and his family, Americans like us, but living in the city for a few years where he had business interests. When he greeted our visitors at his apartment door in a spate of broken French the first time, Pierre, I still remember, fell back as if attacked, but quickly recovered and then was entirely cordial. During the second visit my brother continued to watch a sports event on television while the rest of us talked about Gissing. What Pierre thought about that can be imagined.

Our invitation this time was to stay overnight, which allowed time for browsing in Pierre's growing collection of books by and about Gissing. I learned where some of these had probably come when I ran into Pierre chatting with dealers at the Bloomsbury Book Fair, and later met several of them in their shops in Surrey. I concluded from these encounters that Pierre was no unworldly scholar. He knew the market value of books.

When my study of Harrison finally appeared in 1984, Pierre's review in *The Gissing Newsletter* was the longest it received and gratified me by praising it as a "scholarly work of the first order." He paid much attention to its organisation, which showed how closely he had studied the text. But he concluded that my account of Harrison's "personality" lacked "depth." Naturally that disappointed me. How could it not? But I decided to consider it an example of Pierre's intellectual integrity: he would not allow what he wrote about a work to be compromised by his friendship with the author.

Pierre's growing reputation among Gissing scholars resulted in the decision of two American academics, Paul F. Mattheisen and Arthur C. Young, to invite him to join them in preparing the first modern edition of Gissing's letters. He eventually contributed the introductions and documentation to five of the edition's nine volumes, completed in 1997. It won the Modern Language Association's annual award for the best edition of letters that year, announced at its annual December conference held that year in Chicago. Pierre and H  l  ne

attended, as did his co-editors and other American Gissing scholars. As an MLA member I was able to organise a special session to celebrate the honour, and also a dinner on the top floor of a major Chicago hotel. The night sky we viewed while waiting for our table was filled with the lights of the city, and I feel sure that then or during the dinner conversation someone reminded us what Gissing had seen in the city.

That I never learned much from my correspondence with Pierre about other honours his work continued to receive in America and Europe is in part due to his modesty, a virtue that should not be overlooked in any account of his career. Nor should his editing *The Gissing Newsletter* for more than forty years be forgotten, especially since the time it took had to compete with what he could have used for his own research, writing, and teaching. His willingness to help others obtain information for their own projects will be remembered by the many he helped. In short, Pierre was one of those who in George Eliot's Positivist poem on the "Choir Invisible" are said to live after death "in minds made better by their presence."

A Suitable Tribute to a Long-time Friend

CYRIL WYATT
Deloraine, Tasmania

Pierre first wrote to me in 1981 suggesting we "recapitulate" details of George Gissing's Colonial editions in our respective collections. This was timely, as with the recent passing of Alfred Slotnick I had lost my only regular contact with a Gissing enthusiast wanting to share his knowledge of our hero and his works. During the next 30 or so years we exchanged dozens of letters and hundreds of emails. All these I have kept, providing, as they do, not only a remarkable archive of obscure and engaging information, but also a precious reminder of what was the most significant and intellectually rewarding correspondence of my life.

Pierre has been in my thoughts a great deal lately due to frequent reference to his bibliography in the course of cataloguing the remnants of my Gissing collection. He would have been delighted to know that I have made yet more discoveries on my shelves not recorded by him. His appreciation of my help in unearthing material in Australian newspapers, on eBay, ABE and elsewhere, was always generously acknowledged, both in print and privately. His inscription in my copy of his bibliography exemplifies the latter, where he writes: "Our correspondence and exchange of information about Gissing's

works has considerably enriched this international stock-taking, which has been a most stimulating intellectual adventure.”

We traded many books over the years and I take great satisfaction in knowing that I augmented his collection by giving him the opportunity to fill the gaps with items from my shelves when I decided to cease collecting several years ago. Communicating with Pierre gave me more pleasure than words are able to express. I for one will not forget him and neither, I am sure, will the world of Gissing scholarship to which he made such an immense and unique contribution.

Model Academic and Colleague

ARLENE YOUNG
University of Manitoba

Pierre Coustillas’s name is synonymous with Gissing studies and he will be sadly missed by Gissing scholars around the world. He was not only a renowned authority on the works, life, and times of George Gissing, but he was also a tireless mentor to new scholars in the field, always willing to provide guidance, insight, and constructive criticism. No Gissing conference was complete without him!

A meticulous scholar, Pierre was truly the model of what a researcher and a colleague should be. He leaves us bereft of his supportive presence, but he also leaves behind a lifetime of brilliant and authoritative scholarship, most notably his definitive three-volume biography of Gissing. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for his foundational work in Gissing studies and in founding *The Gissing Journal*, for his contributions to the Gissing conference, and for his leadership in the many decades that he dominated the field.

[From a belated review by Sylvère Monod of the 1969 Harvester Press edition in two volumes of *Isabel Clarendon* edited by Pierre Coustillas (*Études Anglaises*, 26:1 (1973), pp. 108-109).

La nouvelle carrière qu’Isabel Clarendon doit à Pierre Coustillas et à ses éditeurs servira la réputation de Gissing. Il est permis, sans chauvinisme, de se réjouir que cette mission de résurrection ait été confiée au spécialiste français de Gissing. On ne voit guère qui aurait pu s’en acquitter avec plus de science et de talent.

COLLECTING GEORGE GISSING

by Pierre Coustillas

University of Madagascar

As a rule, book collectors devote their loving care to first editions, perhaps to a well-defined species of books, illustrated, or bearing on a definite subject; in some cases, they will attach special value to books issued by a particular press or having a recognised status—first one-volume editions of three-volume novels or yellow-backs or sixpenny reprints—but I have come across no collector who, like me, will try to secure all the editions or impressions that have been published of a certain author's works. The tenth printing of a book is not usually sought after; yet where George Gissing is concerned, I treasure it like any other, and some Swedish or Dutch translations seem to me as precious as a particular novel reputedly hard to secure. Perhaps I have been led to this style of collecting by the fact that I live abroad, at a certain remove from the English second-hand or antiquarian bookdealers. Things that are relatively abundant where they grow, are apt to look like curiosities away from their home ground. Japanese films are readily granted by Europeans qualities which the natives of Tokyo would not think of attributing to them. Similarly, a 1906 pocket edition of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, perhaps Gissing's best known book, is a real find in Paris, and takes on a glamour it would lack in the bookshops near the British Museum. But geographical reasons will not suffice. Book collecting can be an expensive hobby and there are personal and material problems in a man's life that will have precedence of it. However grumblingly, one tries to adapt one's fancies to one's purse.

Gissing's novels have never appealed to the reading public at large, but early in the novelist's lifetime there were people who collected him passionately. For instance, Mrs. Henry Norman, whose husband was the literary editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, once told Gissing that she had bought all the first editions of his novels, and on another occasion the author received from an unknown correspondent a letter saying that he had founded a Gissing library, and lent the volumes to his friends in a spirit of propaganda. In the nineteen-twenties, the works seem to have been collected by greater numbers than before or after. As is revealed by the files of *The Bookman's Journal and Print Collector* for the early twenties, antiquarian booksellers were submerged by requests for first editions of his books. If statistics were made for the period October 1922-March 1924, they would show that, with the exception of W. H. Hudson's works, Gissing's first editions were the most widely searched for. It was about the same time that his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, published in 1880 by Remington & Co. at the author's expense, fetched a fantastic price at Sotheby's. The Allhusen-Quinn copy was sold for £850, whereas another copy, presented by the Publishers to Charles Bradlaugh with an inserted two-page ALS from the author dated October 28, 1891, was sold to Halliday for £325 on July 2, 1929. This was surely an inflated price for, when the same copy reappeared at Sotheby's on November 30, 1931, the price fell to £135. Yet, in those years, the craze for Gissing's first novel would cause a remaindered edition of the same three-decker bound in one volume in rather indifferent condition, to fetch £66. Such a copy would be difficult to price nowadays. It would probably vary between the seven guineas a friend of mine was lucky enough to pay for a similar remaindered copy, and the £120 I was recently asked to pay for a rather soiled copy of the authentic three-volume edition. Certainly, Walter T. Spencer described a situation not altogether extinct when he wrote in 1923: "The romance of the Gissing books does not depend on any single vagary: it is the record of a dozen vagaries."

My first acquaintance with Gissing's world and ideas was made through the *History of English Literature* by Legouis and Cazamian, in its English version. This was some fifteen

Excerpt from first page of Pierre Coustillas's article "Collecting George Gissing" in *Book Collecting & Library Monthly*, 1 (May 1968) (Markus Neacey 2018)

